

**STAKEHOLDERS' VIEWS OF A VOCATIONAL
COLLEGE OPERATING AS A COMMUNITY
LEARNING CENTRE**

by

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to

David, Prashanth and Késhan

*"I am everything I am,
because you loved me!"*



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ABSTRACT

The revamp of the education system in South Africa, is of crucial importance given the new democratic dispensation and the need to transform education. This has primarily been to enable disadvantaged groups to participate, direct and take control of their own learning and development in the achievement of life-long learning. Thus, all stakeholders have new rights and responsibilities in terms of their input in, and the way in which, educational institutions are run.

Given this, I argue that if the community of an institution does not 'own' it and 'drive' it, the development of the institution as an organization will be limited and it will be operating in isolation from the community in which it is situated. I utilized a vocational college on the East Rand, where interviews (a combination of both focus group and semi-structured interviews) were conducted with people whose opinions and ideas were pertinent to my investigation of exploring stakeholders' views of a vocational college operating as a community learning centre.

The empirical investigation has been informed by research literature in community education and I draw from the theories offered by Sergiovanni (1993), Emile Durkheim (as quoted by Sergiovanni, 1994) and Townsend (1984), amongst others, to serve as a theoretical framework for this study.

The findings of this research has revealed that all stakeholders were in agreement that the vocational college could serve as a community learning centre, providing that the following be implemented: courses for community development be introduced in addition to academic courses; a higher degree of stakeholder participation is initiated; the services of professional be employed to assist students with career guidance and counselling; an alliance with the private sector is forged; the increased employment of staff of colour; and, that the college should not be run as a business venture only.

Thus, the stakeholder' responses contained valuable information on the views of stakeholders' and the ideas of how the vocational college could operate as a community learning centre. This research was concluded by recommendations that could possibly be used by vocational colleges in its quest to conform to the ideals of a community learning centre.

1. INTRODUCTION

I would like to commence this study with the words of the well-known Canadian educator, Doris Marshall:

Ordinary people all over the world feeling their own worth and seeking the same worth in other people. It is ordinary people taking responsibility for what's left of the world's resources, together. This cannot be done from the top down, but only by ordinary people, imbued with their own power". It is the epitome of a successful popular education effort for the people to say, We have done it ourselves.

I believe that the above quotation aptly describes the revamp of the education system in South Africa, given that the new democratic dispensation encourages disadvantaged groups to participate, direct and take control of their own learning and development in the achievement of life-long learning. Thus, "the ordinary people",, are the stakeholders, who have new rights and responsibilities in terms of their input in, and the way in which, educational institutions are run.

Given this, my personal experience at Springs College, a vocational college on the East Rand, is that despite offering an excellent standard of tuition, updated technology and beautiful amenities and facilities, it neglects important aspects of the principles of a community learning centre. Some of these are the importance of dialogue, participation and decision-making regarding stakeholder involvement.

In defining a community learning centre in South Africa, I have drawn heavily on the literature of the American-based model of the community college. It is my contention that with a few adaptations to suit the local situation, this will fit the Further Education and Training (FET) visions that seeks to foster community participation in vocational education.

I argue that the community's partnership with stakeholders in the community learning centre can give direction and determine how the college should operate. This is in keeping with the FET Act of 1998, which is to encourage participation, democratisation, decision-making and critical awareness by those instituting

education, and those accessing it. The educational needs and training of the community could be accommodated by the community learning centre.

The research reported on in this essay focused on establishing the views of stakeholders' on the vocational college operating as a community learning centre. The first part of the essay commences with a background to the research problem under investigation, followed by the statement of the problem, the aim of the study, and my assumptions and presuppositions. This is followed by a literature review, which draws on literature on community education focusing on community learning centres. Thereafter, I describe the research methodology used and the process of data analysis. Following this, is a presentation of the findings as well as a discussion thereof. The essay concludes with some recommendations for a vocational college operating as a community learning centre.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Since 1994 when the first democratically elected government of South Africa was instated, there have been significant changes in education and training policies in the country. These were designed to change educational provision from a fragmented system to a more integrated one, improve the country's international competitiveness and contribute to the solution of internal economic and social problems, by allowing both adults and out-of-school youth the opportunity to also benefit from the education system. Part of the restructuring process involved the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) of which the Further Education and Training (FET) band is one component. In terms of the new Further Education and Training Act of 1998 (FET Act of 1998), Vocational Colleges (N1-N3) would form part of the same band together with Grades 10-12 in the school sector.

The new FET Act of 1998 dictates that the system will give access to high quality education and training within a differentiated system that will offer a wide range of learning options to a diverse range of learners, be responsive to the needs of the community, be efficient, effective and accountable to its clients and stakeholders, in other words, operate as a community learning centre. According to Gleazer (1980:16) the most acceptable mission of colleges operating as community learning

centres is “to encourage and facilitate lifelong learning, with community as process and product”.

Thus, the new FET Act of 1998, in keeping with the literature on community education, dictates that all stakeholders must be involved in the decision-making that will positively influence students’ attitudes towards vocational study, their academic progress, and their levels of motivation and increase community involvement, thereby preventing the college from becoming isolated from the community. In my opinion, Springs College, despite being an excellent academic institution, is not properly aligned to the aims of the FET Act of 1998.

In the light of the preceding background the research question guiding this inquiry can be phrased as follows:

What are the views of stakeholders on the Springs College for Vocational Education operating as a community learning centre?

3. THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH



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The aim of the study is to gain an understanding of the perceptions of stakeholders’ on a vocational college operating as a community learning centre.

4. ASSUMPTIONS AND PRESUPPOSITIONS

I am presently employed by Springs College as Senior Lecturer in the Business Studies division and hold this institution in very high regard. Before embarking on this study, I held the following assumptions: I had observed that students at vocational colleges produce dismal results (Appendix F: Sunday Times Careers – dated Sunday, 29 October 2000), and assumed that this was a result of students using the college as the ‘last chance’ route, due to uncertainty regarding their life orientations, interests and abilities. I am also of the opinion that this is related to the fact that vocational colleges operate as separate entities within the community, and that the community and other stakeholders, have not been invited to the ‘table’, (as opposed to the new FET Act of 1998). I further believe that vocational colleges operate as business ventures, disregarding essential services such as career

guidance, counselling, health education, and financial aid, all factors which if provided, could allow vocational colleges to operate as community learning centres.

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

5.1 Introduction

Recently in South Africa, the involvement of stakeholders in educational institutions is being encouraged. The views of stakeholders are therefore necessary, as the partnership that exists between them determines how the institution should operate. In this review, I argue that if the community of an institution does not 'own' it and 'drive' it, the development of the institution as an organization will be limited and it will be operating in isolation from the community in which it is situated.

This study was aimed at gaining the views of stakeholders with regard to a vocational college operating as a community learning centre. The empirical investigation has been informed by research literature in community education and I draw from the theories offered by Sergiovanni (1993), Emile Durkheim (as discussed by Sergiovanni, 1994) and Townsend (1984). I have also drawn on relevant and applicable literature from various other researchers on community colleges, such as Venter (1986), Rhoads and Valadez (1996) and Strydom et al (1995) amongst others, to serve as a theoretical framework for this study.

I will firstly define some terms pertinent to the study. Thereafter, I will explain the vocational college community and discuss some issues around the notion of community learning centres and the participatory and collaborative relationships, which should transpire between stakeholders. I will then offer an explanation on the "core-plus curriculum" (Townsend, 1994) and "popular education" approach (Freire, 1994), which I consider to be worth considering, for vocational colleges to operate as community learning centres. Pen-ultimately, I will discuss the importance of social support services for students when a vocational college operates as a community learning centre. I will conclude with a diagrammatic representation of my study.

5.2 Definitions of the terms

To ensure clarity, specific concepts, which are relevant and will feature predominantly in this study, are defined.

5.2.1 The Vocational College

The Gauteng College Education and Training Act, 1998, (Act. No. 13 of 1998), defines a college as one established in terms of section 5(1) or deemed to have been established in terms of section 16(1) or 17(3), other than a higher education institution. Every college may provide further education programmes, vocational and technological education programmes, community education programmes and services approved by the Executive Council.

5.2.2 Community Learning Centre

This concept is succinctly defined by Venter (1996:11) when he states that a community college (which I refer to in my study as a community learning center), "is a public, comprehensive institution offering general education, including academic transfer, technical-vocational education and training, compensatory, remedial and community education. The institution has its foundation in the community (local population, business and industry), and responds to the needs of that community".

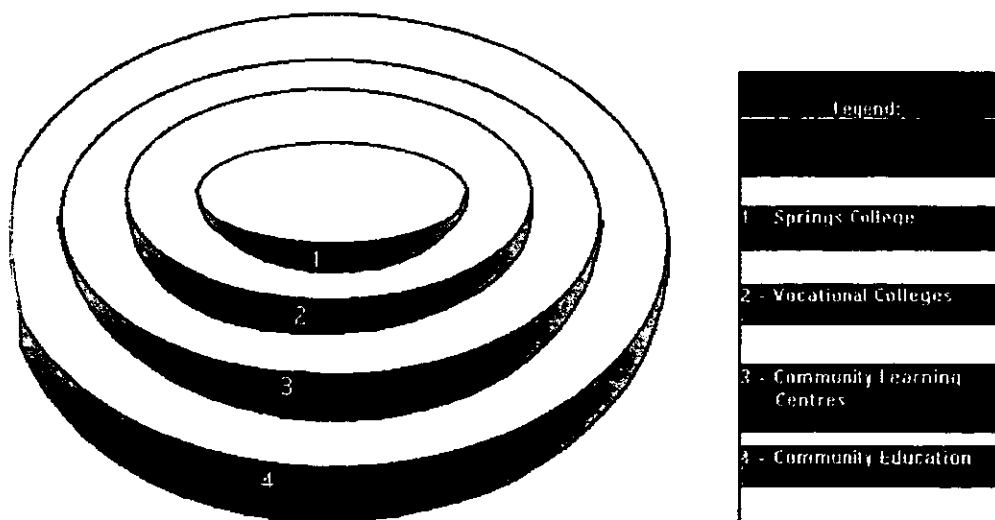
5.2.3 Stakeholders of a college

According to Gauteng College Education and Training Act, 1998, Act no. 13 of 1998, stakeholders of the vocational college are listed as the Rector, College Council, Lecturers, Parents/Community members, and members of the Students' Representative Council (SRC).

5.3 The inter-related web of vocational colleges, community learning centres and community education

Having elucidated the important concepts that will be used in this study, I contend that the use of concentric circles, could highlight the inter-related web of relationships, which exist between community education, community learning centres and vocational colleges. Springs College is but one nexus, grounded in this interconnected web. I will offer a discussion on the inter-connectedness between the different institutions as depicted in the diagram.

It is my contention that the area, as indicated by the numbers **1 – 4**, bears testimony to the magnitude of community education. Within this large circle, the section labelled as **3**, indicates the location of community learning centres, but still has as its 'undercoat' the issues of community education to contend with. Vocational colleges (**2**) are then located within the aspirations of community learning centres, and ultimately, community education. I have indicated Springs College (**1**) as being one of many vocational colleges in this interrelated nexus. Thus, what emerges from this diagram is that the issues of 'community education and involvement' pervade both vocational colleges and community learning centres, and is located within the context of community education which seeks to "redress inequalities and provide education to deal with the dire need for skills development within the framework of the formal system", (Venter, 1996:8). I will now offer a detailed account of the inter-relatedness of community education, community learning centres and vocational colleges.



Inter-related web of community education, community learning centres and vocational colleges

The vision of vocational colleges as stipulated by the FET Act of 1998 dictates that the FET system will give access to high quality education and training within a differentiated system that will offer a wide range of learning options to a diverse range of learners.

With the implementation of the new FET Act (FET Act of 1998), one of the mechanisms for addressing the need for broad-based education and articulation is the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which offers the potential for the development of the curriculum modules that will be available to learners irrespective of age, place and time of delivery. The NQF will guide the registration of standards and accreditation of all education and training programmes offered in South Africa. It will further propose the establishment of the South African Qualifications Authority, which will direct the process of setting standards, accreditation and quality assurance.

Most importantly, the new system will be responsive to the needs of the people, be efficient, effective and accountable to its clients and stakeholders (College management, college council, lecturers, students and parents). I believe that the inter-related web of the educational institutions ensures that the aims of the vocational college are grounded in those of the community learning centre.

Venter (1996:11) defines a community learning centre as a "public, comprehensive institution offering general education, including academic transfer, technical-vocational education and training, compensatory, remedial and community education". He further contends that the institution has its foundation in the community (local population, business and industry), and responds to the needs of that community.

According to Venter (1996:12) the goals of community learning centres encompass a host of activities which also include the provisioning of programmes for basic and adult education; other activities which address significant community problems (e.g. environmental and governmental concerns, health, safety, child-rearing and education, consumer economics, human relations, etc); the provisioning of remedial programs; providing open-door access to persons from the community to attend

courses for self-improvement; and, to provide an outlet for leisure learning. It is my contention that all these qualities could be adopted in ensuring that vocational colleges operate as community learning centres.

Given the apartheid legacy of South Africa, I believe that the principal goal of nation building has to start with the engagement of all members of the community, regardless of their age, in the learning process. The concept of life-long learning dictates that learning takes place from the 'cradle to the grave'. Community education is thus, education that can be called upon to alleviate poverty, to instil manual and technical skills and to serve as the vanguard in directing social and economic changes. It stresses civic involvement, volunteer services, leadership skills and manual empowerment skills. Community education strives for the democratisation of educational aims and objectives, organization, methods and control from the central authority to the local sphere of operation (Millar, 1991:35). Thus, it reflects local interests, achievements, aspirations and needs that fit the notions of a community learning centre.

The main aim of community education is to render the individual more efficient in his or her condition of life, whatever it may be, and to promote the advancement of the community as a whole through the improvement of all human activities. Community education should therefore be based on the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and traditions of the people of South Africa. The entire community education policy should therefore be dictated by the need to mould a single united nation out of a plural society. It should conserve, as far as it is possible, all sound and healthy elements in the fabric of social life, adapting them where necessary to the changing circumstances and progressive ideas, as an agent of natural growth and evolution. These principles are not only the basis of community education, but also the building blocks of community learning centres. Thus, I believe that it is to this aim that the vocational college as a community learning centre, should be striving.

According to Townsend (1994:53), the "encouragement and access" given to the community by the learning institution allows the community to become meaningfully involved. Townsend (1994:114) sums up community education as "the involvement of people in the process of identification, development, implementation and

evaluation of the sorts of activities required of a college, (Townsend, 1994:114). He also contends that community education is a process that “concerns itself with everything that affects the well-being of all citizens within a given community, (Townsend, 194:123).

It is my contention that once the inter-relatedness of the vocational college, community learning centre and community education, as offered above, is seen in perspective, the idea of the vocational college operating as a community learning centre can be visualized.

5.4 The notions of ‘*gemeinschaft*’ and ‘*gesellschaft*’

The history of the vocational education system in South Africa is a legacy of apartheid, which has resulted in vocational colleges largely operating in isolation from the community. I argue that it is when colleges are viewed as organizations in society, the principles that allow the individual to be isolated from the group are inadvertently applied. The French theorist, Emile Durkheim (as quoted by Sergiovanni, 1994:64-64), termed this “anomie”, which embodies the modern individual’s lack of integration with norms, traditions, customs, values and goals of the community of birth and of living.

The theory that informs me the most in this regard, has been the work of the German social theorist, Tönnies, (as quoted by Sergiovanni, 1994:5), who coined the terms “*Gemeinschaft*” (community) and “*Gesellschaft*” (society) as terms in exploring the notion of the college as a community serving society. He contended that those who live in a society are ruled by the ‘I’, where they do things for their own benefit whilst those who live in a community motivate each other to greater prosperity.

I agree with Sergiovanni (1994:63), when he says that colleges should be seen as communities of learners and of professionals, who share duty, attachment and self-determination. He emphasized that people who live in a community have mutual commitments and aspirations that allow them to ‘empower’ themselves.

Sergiovanni (1994) refers to empowerment in an organization as “typically understood as having something to do with shared decision-making, site-based

management, and similar schemes". This empowerment of the community should be seen 'as community of mind' emerging from the binding of people to common goals, shared values and shared conceptions of being and doing.

These concepts strengthen my argument that stakeholders of the vocational college should take cognisance of each others visions, values and interests in order that vocational colleges operate as community learning centres. I believe that when students enter into the vocational college, they seek more than academic experience only. It is my contention that they would be looking for a sense of personal worth, acceptance and encouragement, and their place and role in society in addition to acquiring educational qualifications.

It is for these reasons, I propose that a vocational college must be structured to suit the needs of community and not just to fit into some previous mould. It is my belief the input by members of the community can ensure that those who have relevant educational experiences and other skills, can contribute to the vocational college serving as a community learning centre.

I use the ideas of Sergiovanni (1994:xvii), when he outlines various his ideas of a community learning centre. As I see it, his suggestions are worth noting if vocational colleges were to operate as community learning centres. Sergiovanni contends that colleges can become *caring* communities where members make a total commitment to each other; *learning* communities where learning is an attitude as well as an activity; *professional* communities where the ideas of professional virtue flourish; *collegial* communities where members are tied together by a sense of felt interdependence and mutual obligation; *inclusive* communities where differences are brought together into a mutually respectful whole; and *enquiring* communities where members commit themselves to a spirit of collective inquiry. It is thus very clear that Sergiovanni's recommendations for a community learning centre embraces the principles of developing the community as a whole. I therefore contend that once a vocational college has such a community-based governance, members of the community will feel strong ownership over it and will be motivated to be interested in the activities of the vocational college. I believe that Sergiovanni (1994:71-72) echoes this when he contends that to be all the above, the college must first become

“purposive communities”, where members have developed a “community of mind that bonds them together in a special way and binds them to a shared ideology”.

In order to do this, I argue that the vocational college must have people who understand the trials and tribulations of students, including those who were disadvantaged educationally by the previous apartheid government, and others who are committed to the task of building community in colleges. Staff must be mentally ready to bring about change. They should be totally committed and dedicated, and able to see the needs of the community. This means that the staff should be ready to devote time and energy in ensuring that the vocational college serves the educational needs of its community. Only when they conform to these inherent principles of community learning centres, can the vocational college operate as such. Thus, the college must be the place where the community lives, works and learns. It is my belief that it is essential for stakeholders to have a clear understanding of the college “as a community serving society”, (Sergiovanni, 1994:1-14).

5.5 The role of the vocational college as a community learning centre

Bearing in mind the vocational college community, it is crucial that I discuss the role of the vocational college as a community learning centre.

The roles of the community learning centres are borne out in the Report by the National Institute for Community Education (NICE) Report (1995), which states that community colleges (community learning centres) in South Africa should provide vocationally orientated education, which cater for workers’ retraining, numeracy, oracy and literary skills, and entrepreneurial skills development. Furthermore, it states that community learning centres should provide adult education, leading to the acquisition of knowledge, skills and training leading to educational certificates and skills development, all of which contributes to the process of life-long learning.

The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proclaims that vocational education is too limited and the introduction of community learning centres may alleviate the problems of limited vocational education, by

offering a broad spectrum of education as needed by a community. Community learning centres should thus form an integral part of the future community education and training systems where national policy development will be informed by regional co-ordination and local implementation (Venter, 1996).

Thus, vocational colleges as community learning centres can be seen as instruments for providing employable vocational skills, and skills for social and community development to a student population, which will enable them to secure employment and assist local industries to compete in global markets. This can be done by conducting needs analysis in the community, and co-opting private sector involvement, so that those kinds of things are applicable to the community can be accommodated in the community learning centre.

Ramano (1986) contends that by providing skills needed for entrepreneurship, community learning centres can make people more productive in the labour market and better able to participate in democracy, wealth and health. Strydom (1995), who states that community learning centres in South Africa have to balance different roles such as “transfer, remediation, vocational training, and community services”, strengthens this argument. Thus, an educational college that can assist in the economic development of all people, regardless of age and irrespective of their cultural background, can be considered a community learning centre.

Furthermore, Venter (1996) argues that a community learning centre should be established in collaboration with the community within which it is situated, and it should provide programmes and activities, which address significant community problems, in other words, programmes and activities which are relevant to the lives of those who access the facilities of the community learning centre. I therefore argue that the vocational college should operate as a community learning centre, in order to be responsive to the educational and training needs of students and the broader community served by the college, by facilitating access to participation in decision-making processes that concern them.

However, at this point, I would like to bring in two different schools of thought on the role that community learning centres could play. There are defenders and critics of

community learning centres. I will focus on the two sociological perspectives of functionalism and Marxism.

According to Rhoads and Valadez (1996), functionalists are defenders of community learning centres. They describe several vital social needs, such as the provision of college opportunities to students who do not meet the academic requirements to enter university. They argue that community learning centres “democratize college access through open door policy, vocational options and lower prices” (Rhoads & Valadez, 1996:40). Furthermore, functionalists argue that many people, including the poor, will be accommodated in these institutions. This view is supported by Venter (1996), when he says that open access would make it possible for many people to succeed at obtaining relevant skills and training and finding employment, a condition that will boost their self-image and self-worth.

In opposition to this, another perspective is offered by the Marxists, who argue that community learning centres maintain inequalities by channelling working class students into working-class jobs. They further state that reproductions in the inequalities, such as preserving the four year degree for an elite capitalist class of students, will not be eliminated (Rhoads & Valadez, 1996:41). Marxists argue that this system is serving the needs of capitalists by producing the workforce for them.

According to Venter (1996), what the Marxists are saying can be avoided by not allowing community learning centres to develop into second class institutions. I concur with Venter (1996), when he says that community learning centres can play a vital role in the upliftment of people’s lives by providing easy access and employable skills and training. This is especially relevant and realistic given the present situation of a large number of the South African population who have limited opportunities to access further education.

However, Diener (1986), cautions proponents of community learning centres against what he calls “a revolving door”, which allows easy entry and exit to educational opportunities, as he believes that the notion of access may be misused. In this sense, there is this fear that standards may be lowered, learners’ grades inflated, and learners may fail to make the grade at institutions of higher learning. In this

respect, Marxists also express the concern that if community learning centres focus considerably on sub-college roles such as commitment to access and assistance of under-prepared students, the quality of the curricula and academic standards may be diluted.

In this debate, Rhoads and Valadez (1996), add that access must be seen to mean more than just the admissions policy, but must incorporate opportunities that could empower the student to participate in economic, political and social activities by providing platforms for students to voice their opinions. I believe that when students engage in discussions that increase their understanding of the world they live in, they can make informed decisions about careers and where they see themselves in relation to others, all of which are principles which are embodied in aims of community learning centres. These are thus important issues that should be considered to ensure that the vocational college operates as a community learning centre.

In the light of the above perspectives, I believe that it is crucial that community learning centres should not develop as second-class institutions designed only for the disadvantaged or a particular sector of the South African population. It is important that the heritage of the previous apartheid system of education in South Africa, with its hierarchical structures of yester-year, with 'top down' structures, must not be perpetuated. Having noted both the views of the Functionalists and Marxists, I therefore contend that the vocational college as a community learning centre has long-term investment in the community with its main aim being to invest and work with the community, by providing a wide range of learning options, for the purpose of life-long learning, to a diverse range of learners. Furthermore, if the vocational college can be flexible enough to accept and encourage its students, it will establish a sense of community amongst those it serves and be an "agent of change" (Gleazer, 1973:58), in providing "better education for more people", thus fulfilling the aim of operating as a community learning centre. It is thus important that collaborative relationships exist among all stakeholders of the vocational college.

5.6 Factors influencing collaborative relationships amongst stakeholders

It is my contention that the relationship between the college and its stakeholders must be such that the college governance, in conjunction with community structures and stakeholders, make necessary decisions in consultation with them, whilst still conforming to national policy. Thus, in order to discover an accurate reflection of the community's needs, desires and problems, open communication channels between the college and the community must be created.

In my view, the principle that the education institution serves the community, and must therefore respect the customs and codes of the community as far as this is concerned, is educationally justified. There must be love and trust between the college and the community. In this context, 'love' refers to egocentric love, which is based on working together to achieve something that would benefit both the college and the community.

According to Sergioivanni (1993:29), when "Egocentric love is the motive, each of the parties to the relationship enters into an implicit contract with the other for the exchange of needs and satisfactions that benefit both". Thus, it is imperative that the vocational college in wanting to operate as a community learning centre, use its influence and authority to encourage and create an atmosphere which is conducive to community participation (Oosthuizen, et al, 1994:143). The community learning centre must be legitimate and render a real service to the community (Venter, 1996:10). When all stakeholders of the institution understand what their partnership entails, the possibility of developing the college in particular, and the community at large, is ensured.

I therefore argue that in order to stimulate collaborative relationships between the community and the vocational college, so upholding the image of community learning centre, it is important to share skills and information community structures and stakeholder groups in an open, honest manner which would include a recognition of each other's strengths, weaknesses, skills and limitations based on sound educational values such as "equity, democracy, effectiveness and development" (Venter, 1996:9). In this way, vibrant networks including groups of people from various backgrounds and points of view can develop multiple

perspectives and enhance the relationship between the different stakeholders' of vocational colleges.

Lambert, et al (1996) argue that involving the community in planning and delivering education can go a long way towards giving the community ownership of the vocational college and a stake in its success. A strong sense of community with supportive and caring relationships amongst stakeholders can provide a sense of security, interaction and comradeship. Competent community members could also be used as mentors, tutors and volunteers, so allowing weaker students to improve their results. Hence, when all stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process of education, students are more likely to excel in their work.

I therefore contend that if the vocational college is to operate as a community learning centre, the Rector and college council must be exemplary, transparent and accountable to all the other stakeholders. The instruction and training imparted must also be up-to-date and relevant (Venter, 1996:17). This would ensure confidence and trust in the vocational college and result in the college meeting the needs of the students and the community, and in improving its image of being relevant and effective. The stakeholders (students, lecturers and wider community), would strive towards jointly preparing the student for life within the community.

It is my opinion that the relationships, which exist between lecturers and students also needs to be examined if the vocational college wants to operate as a community learning centre. Most of the lecturers appointed at Springs College are recruited from secondary schools, a majority of which come from a completely different socio-economic stratum, with little contact with people who are culturally different. Gleazer (1973:28) contends that lecturers "need to know what people are thinking, what they can do, where they live". It is also possible that these lecturers are not adept at teaching adults, as the teaching of adults differ to that of teaching children.

I thus maintain that if the vocational college wants to operate as a community learning centre, it is imperative that the college embarks on a sustainable human resource development programme to retrain lecturers to understand and meet the needs of the student body (Venter, 1996:36). Lecturers should become committed

to the philosophy “that all are to be served and that all are capable of learning”, (Gleazer, 1973:37). It is my contention that when students are in an environment characterized by warmth and support, it would improve student self-esteem, motivation and confidence and directly result in an improvement in their academic progress.

I hold the view that in its quest to instil a measure of ‘camaraderie’ amongst its college community, it is important that cognisance be taken of the process of restructuring the South African education system to incorporate the participation of all stakeholders. In this regard, innovative administrative models will have to be considered. Several models of community education could be referred to in wanting vocational colleges to apply and uphold the principles of community learning centres and community education.

I am of the opinion that the “core-plus” model and “popular education” approach, as will be discussed, are worth considering in the quest to convert vocational colleges into community learning centres.

5.7 A model and an approach which can be instituted to allow vocational colleges to operate as community learning centres

I use Townsend’s model of the ‘core-plus’ school to illustrate the use of a more integrated curriculum for vocational colleges operating as community learning centres. Even though Townsend’s model is school-oriented, I believe that many of the processes and principles it expands upon, is applicable to most educational institutions, including vocational colleges.

Townsend (1994) is the proponent of the ‘core-plus’ framework, which is described as one in which the effectiveness of the educational institution is determined by the achievement of its goals. This means that the government determines the general goals for the institution, which is the part referred to as the ‘core’ of the core-plus. This can refer to multi-purpose curriculum and methodology that ensure effective teaching, flexible times and locations. In adapting this for the vocational college, it can be proposed that when the resources of the college are not in use, the community should be at liberty to utilize these. The community can use a college’s

available resources to acquire skills and to participate in literacy classes for semi-literate adults in the community. This is what Townsend calls the core-plus curriculum. Townsend's (1994) view is that the core-plus curriculum has to incorporate the development of personal skills, leadership skills and the involvement of the people.

I believe that the "core-plus" model stresses the fact that the range of educational goals must be broader than the strictly academic perspective. This will contribute to the vocational college serving the needs of the community at large (courses for ABET, out-of-school youth, recreational study), resulting in it operating as a community learning centre. It is also my view that some courses used by vocational colleges are based on foreign designs and do not consider the local situation. In using Townsend's (1994) model, the vocational college could adapt and reshape its organization and programmes in accordance with the dynamic, unique and changing needs of the community. In the concept of 'service' and the notion of 'plus', the curriculum is seen as profoundly interactive with its community of place (Sergiovanni, 1994).



I further contend that the educational institution must work within a community, drawing from the community's resources. Given the South African legacy of apartheid education, it has resulted in students accepting, what Freire (1994) called the "banking system" of education, which is the traditional, teacher-centred approach to teaching, which treated the students as empty vessels into which the teacher deposited parcels of knowledge. As a result, education was perceived as something done to students by an all-knowing teacher, who possessed all the authority and power.

On the contrary, popular education seeks to create change by raising critical consciousness regarding the common concerns of the community and is closely linked to the Freirian (1994) concept of 'conscientisation'. It assumes that people are able to participate but are temporarily unwilling to do so because they lack consciousness, competence and confidence.

I believe that given the opportunity, communities can create colleges for change. The strengths of popular education can be used to bring together isolated individuals with a history of acquiescence, and engage them in a learning process that strengthens the basis for collective action. Stakeholders in a vocational college could be motivated to do things together and radically transform their lives through decision-making mechanisms that are participatory yet meet the educational needs of the community. It is thus my view that vocational colleges could implement programmes, which could use the strategy of popular education in transforming people's lives, and raising critical consciousness. If the people can become aware of their position in the community, they could also become motivated to see the need to change their mindsets.

Given this, the implications for the approach towards problems we experience in colleges' needs to be assessed. It is my contention that students lack discipline (duty) and a sense of responsibility to the community. I argue that this is probably due to a lack of attachment to the values, traditions and interests of the community. Students join a learning-society, which has no connection to their cultural roots. This is in opposition to the real idea of a "learning society" that prescribes that the moment one appears to be prepared for life, with formal schooling completed, the actual need to start learning for the rest of one's life only begins (Atchoarena, 1995). People in a learning society consider learning to be an ongoing, deliberate endeavour to increase one's knowledge and skills in order to have economic and social skills that could benefit the larger community. This endeavour extends beyond initial school-going years and continues throughout one's life (Atchorena, 1995:3).

I believe that ultimately, society benefits from colleges being a place of shared values and a sense of family, instead of a place where competition rules and discipline is a system of rewards and punishment, instead of being the duty to the collective. In wanting to establish 'a sense of family', and establishing itself as a community learning centre, it is incumbent on stakeholders to take cognisance of the problems that students encounter in trying to obtain vocational education.

5.8 The importance of social support services

The former apartheid education system in South Africa, mainly placed emphasis on the three "R's", Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. I hold the view that it disregarded other essential, related needs such as skills development and community involvement that were equally important for students to achieve. Thus, many students entering a vocational college lack skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that are needed for them to make informed decisions and succeed in their chosen fields (Venter, 1996:43).

It is my view that in trying to fill the gaps that have been left by the former education system, vocational colleges must be designed to take into account student needs for support systems. I believe that it is essential that vocational colleges have an established student support service with learning resource centres, a career guidance and counselling unit, and a student financial bureau. This view, is echoed by Venter (1996:49), who also believed that student needs include issues such as "health, family support and education centres to provide education on parenting and related issues".

Furthermore, I consider that the provision of these services could assist students at vocational colleges, in finding solutions to the myriad problems that confront them. Given the post-apartheid situation in South Africa, vocational college students enter the college with different life experiences. Some students are filled with insecurity, confusion, despair or shame, leading to stress through no fault of their own. Berry and Cash (1998:21) contend that stress occurs when there no positive social support services available to students. Furthermore, when students are emotionally distressed, it affects their performance and results in underachievement, (John, 1973:19). In line with the expectations of a community learning centre, Venter (1996:43) also suggests that students should be provided with "mental" counselling on personal matters and so that the necessary referrals to appropriate agencies may be made, for example, FAMSA.

I believe that a type of social support service that is most necessary to vocational college students, is career guidance. Both Venter (1996:47) and Watts (1977:169) contend that career guidance is a necessity, as it provides students with the awareness of the working world that they are going to enter. Career counselling must be offered so that students can be advised at an early stage about career choices and employment.

This means that vocational colleges should introduce the necessary student support services, as well as re-focus educational programmes to emphasize both intellectual rewards and its marketability skills. A great number of students register for subjects, which do not provide the skills that the market requires. This results in students struggling to find employment and also restricts transfer from one institution to another. Students also need to become aware of their capabilities and attributes such as "abilities, aptitudes, practical skills, personal qualities and physical strength", (Watts, 1977:170). Watt argues that interest, values and aptitudes can help students to make informed choices about the career they want to follow. Venter (1996:47), concurs with this viewpoint, when he contends that career guidance information must be made available to all students.

Vocational college students, by virtue of the fact that they are adults seeking further education, play multiple roles, one of which could be the role of parent. In order to operate as a community learning centre, I support the view held by Venter (1996:49) that the vocational college should provide child-minding facilities to assist student parents. It is my contention that if students were ensured that their children were in a safe and secure environment, they would attend classes regularly (so reducing the dropout rate), and automatically result in students achieving better results. Given the high rate of child abuse as reported by the newspapers in recent months, the importance of safe and reliable childcare cannot be over-emphasized. With the knowledge that their children are being well cared for, will probably also motivate many women to commit to tertiary education.

Many students entering a vocational college, do not have access to essential services such as computers, photocopiers, fax facilities, Internet, reading materials and other important facilities. In order to operate as a community learning centre, it

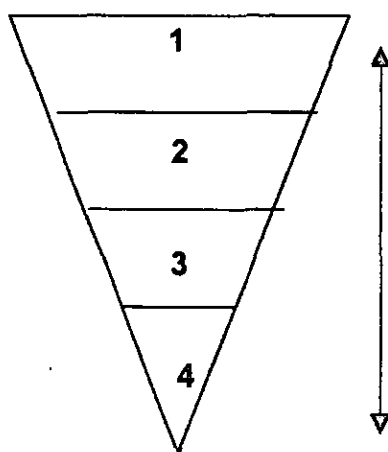
is essential that the vocational college makes provision for the establishment of a fully resourced media center to assist students and the broader community (Venter, 1996:47). With the provision of such facilities, students could have access to resources and weaker students (Venter, 1996:49), could be provided with the opportunity for extra tuition outside of the fixed timetable hours. The vocational college must be recognized as "the community's college, a vital part of an integrated system of community services" (Gleazer, 1980:38).

It is thus my view that a vocational college, in order to operate as community learning centres, must provide the services for students to become aware of their interests and abilities, which would allow them to make decisions about their career choices, based on the knowledge they possess of themselves. However, I believe that it is most important that the college does not become a second rate institution by compromising aspects of its academic instruction in its quest to build community within its structures. This would ensure that student results improve and students are given a relevant education leading to lifelong learning.



5.9 Diagrammatic representation

I have utilized a diagram indicating the necessary 'movement' from level 1 to 4:



At the base this hierarchy (4), I would indicate needs such as a college, physical building, finance, technology, and safety. Following this (3), I would indicate the curriculum (core-plus) – the core as dictated by the education authorities, and the plus as determined by the community. Pen-ultimately, the important tier (2) follows,

which is commitment and ownership of the college (Rector, staff, students, community – all stakeholders). The most important tier (1), is achieved through the culmination of the other levels – increased success of the individual through community participation in the college. Simply put, the diagrammatic representation indicates that ‘movement’ from levels 4 to 1 (thereafter vice versa), is of paramount importance in the legitimation of the vocational college operating as a community learning centre.

5.10 Conclusion

In this literature review, I have defined terms pertinent to my study and explained the vocational college community and issues around the notion of the community learning centres and the importance of participatory and collaborative relationships which ought to exist between the stakeholders. I then offered an explanation on the main tenets of both the ‘core-plus’ curriculum and the adoption of a ‘popular education’ approach as the basis for the vocational college to operate as a community learning centre. The importance of student support services was highlighted and I concluded with a diagrammatic representation of my study.

Thus, from the literature review presented, it is evident that for vocational colleges to operate as community learning centres, of prime importance is the involvement of all stakeholders in the matters of the college, as this contributes and improves the culture of learning and instruction. I conclude that the perceptions of stakeholders’ in respect of college management and instruction, and the strategies they would employ to improve community involvement in the vocational college, are positive factors in ensuring that the vocational college operates as a community learning centre.

6. RESEARCH STRATEGY AND METHODS

6.1 Research Paradigm

In the research design for this inquiry, I positioned myself as a socio-constructivist researcher, who wished to understand the views of the stakeholders on a vocational

college operating as a community learning centre. Cresswell (1994:4) states that "the qualitative paradigm is termed the constructivist approach or naturalistic, the interpretative approach". This view is echoed by Merriam (1998:4), as she defines the qualitative paradigm, as the knowledge, which is gained from "an inductive, hypothesis- or theory generating mode of inquiry". The main tenets of this paradigm places emphasis on people's lived experiences which are fundamentally well suited for locating the meanings people place "in the events, processes and structures of their perceptions, assumptions, prejudgements, presuppositions and for connecting these meanings to the world around them", (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Thus, the interpretative paradigm dictates that I had to go where the stakeholders were and interview them in real-life conditions. Individuals who were involved in the research situation give meaning and data are qualitative. I am interested in understanding the views of stakeholders on the vocational college operating as a community learning centre, as the partnerships which exist between the different stakeholders will determine how the vocational college should operate.

This is therefore a descriptive and qualitative piece of research, which is also explorative and contextual. One of the most important considerations in descriptive (reported in words as opposed to numbers) studies is to collect accurate information or data on the domain phenomena, which is under investigation (Mouton & Marais, 1999). This study is a contextual one because the phenomenon under consideration is being studied both for its intrinsic interest and in terms of its immediate context. In my study, stakeholders have been interviewed according to their 'position' within the college community.

My ontological position in this inquiry is that reality is multi-faceted. This in turn, resonates in my epistemological position that knowledge is socially-constructed by individuals themselves and not 'deposited' in their minds by others (Freire, 1994). Thus as a researcher, I aimed to capture the realities of the stakeholders who were interviewed.

I utilized a vocational college, Springs College on the East Rand, where interviews (a combination of both focus group and semi-structured interviews) were conducted

with people whose opinions and ideas were pertinent to my investigation of exploring stakeholders' views of a vocational college operating as a community learning centre". I strived in my study, to familiarize, to be factual and descriptive in order to represent participants in their own settings and to give a lived sense of their opinions and their concerns and problems as stakeholders of the vocational college.

6.2 Sampling

I utilized purposive sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, to select participants from a store of "information rich cases" (Merriam 1998 and Patton, 1990), whose opinions and ideas about issues would be of central importance to the purpose of my study.

The aim of my study was to assess the views of stakeholders on a vocational college operating as a community learning centre. Therefore, the sample chosen to reflect the views of stakeholders consisted of the Rector, a College Council member, four lecturers, a parent and two SRC members.

6.3 Data collection methods

Bogden and Biklen (1992:106) define data as, "..... the rough materials researchers collect from the world they are studying". Data includes materials, which researchers record such as interview transcripts and participants' observation field notes. In this study, the stakeholders were interviewed according to their 'position' within the community. The data was collected via a combination of focus group and individual semi-structured interviews.

The in-depth interviews made it possible for me to probe salient issues while the focus group discussions gave me the opportunity to check on issues, which emerged from the in-depth interviews. The power relations between the various stakeholders, dictated the use of different interviewing methods for different stakeholders, as disclosing information to me, could have negative repercussions for them.

6.3.1 The Interview

Interviews were the most suitable method for gathering data in this research study, because it was my intention is to understand the views of participants at vocational colleges about whether the college was operating as a community learning centre.

An interview is a method of data collection that may be described as an interaction involving the interviewer and the interviewee (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). This method of interview is influenced by the personal characteristics of the interviewer including race, class, ethnicity and gender (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The most important aspect of the interviewer's approach concerns conveying the idea that participants' information is acceptable and valuable.

A high quality tape recorder, strategically placed to capture the dialogue between the participants and the researcher (myself), was employed. A brief explanation of the focus group interview and the semi-structured in-depth interviews will follow, as well as my motivation for employing them within the content of this study.

6.3.1.1 *Focus group interviews*

Focus groups usually include four to twelve participants (Basch, 1987; Krueger, 1988 as quoted by Kingry, 1990:124). Homogeneity is the key principle in forming the focus group. What determines the homogeneity is the purpose of the study. A focus group is thus "a carefully planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment", (Kingry et al, 1990:124). Careful planning with respect to participants, the environment, and the questions to be asked are keys to conducting focus groups.

The advantages of the focus group interview is that it places people in natural, real-life situations and provides a stimulating and secure setting for people to express ideas without fear of criticism. The synergy of the group has the potential to uncover important constructs, which may be lost with individually-generated data (Kingry, et al, 1990:125). Group interaction stimulated new ideas from participants. I utilized

this form of interview to its maximum in order to extract the different views of the lecturers as stakeholders, and allowed them to clarify their thoughts within the group. The attitudes and perceptions relating to the topic were developed in part by interaction with each other in the group. It was therefore the intent of this focus group interview to promote self-disclosure among the participants.

6.3.1.2 *Semi-structured in-depth interviews*

I utilized this method of interviewing in order to interview the Rector, College Council member, Parent, and SRC member). The main purpose of using this method was to get information directly from the interviewees. I also utilized this method of interviewing as I felt that there would be a degree of intimidation should I interview the different stakeholders as part of a group, with varying opinions about the vocational college.

Marshall and Rossman (1995:80) maintain that in-depth interviewing may be described as a qualitative method of data collection, which is like a "conversation with a purpose". According to Schumacher and McMillan, semi-structured interviews do not have choices from which the respondents select an answer. Rather, "the question is phrased to allow for individual response. This format is flexible, and allows the interviewer to respond to situations at hand, to the emerging world-view of the respondent and the new ideas on the topic", (1993:25).

I argue that my design logic, focus group interviews and semi-structured in-depth interviews, linked very well to my research question, and design type, and allowed me to collect the necessary data. In planning the interview, I had given consideration to issues such as participation, venue and time, procedure, duration of interview, and signed consent forms.

Firstly, I contacted the Rector of the college to gain permission to conduct the interviews at college (Appendix A). Once permission had been granted, I contacted the individual participants by letter (Appendix B). The topic of my study was furnished to the participants and reassurance was given as to the confidentiality and anonymity of the interview. The date and anticipated duration of the interview was

clearly indicated. On the day of the interview, I asked the participants to complete the consent form distributed to them (Appendix C). In focus groups, the moderator and researcher (myself) are the same person. My task as moderator was to include question development, facilitate the interview session, document and analyze the interpretation of the outcome. As moderator, I introduced and directed the discussion of the topic and activated participation during the controlled conversation.

In conducting both the focus and in-depth interviews, I strived to seek responses from the participants to the kinds of questions as listed in my interview guide. I used the interview guide (also included as Appendices D and E) to serve as a checklist during the interview. It was done to ensure that all the relevant questions were covered (and the same kind of information was obtained by covering the same material Patton, 1990). The advantage of using an interview guide (Patton, 1987), is that it ensures the interviewer has carefully decided how best to use the limited time available in an interview situation.

I utilized different interviewing techniques such as reflective listening, paraphrasing, the "tell me more" probing technique, asking suitable questions, non-verbal action, reframing of questions, and an expansion of questions (Patton, 1990:324). Care was exercised in not asking any leading questions, thereby directing the course of the interview. By doing this, I ensured that all information came from the respondents themselves. However, it was crucial that within an interview (both semi-structured and focus group interviews), I needed to formulate very direct, well-formulated questions, if I wanted to get the focus of my study. In seeking to build community at colleges, I aimed to elicit responses to questions as listed in the interview guide below:

1. Who are the stakeholders of the college? Briefly explain what you think the role of each should be.
2. Do you think that Springs College addresses the needs of the community? Explain.
3. Do you think that the community has anything in common with Springs College?
4. Do you believe parents or community members should be involved in some of the decision-making processes of Springs College?

5. Do you think support services are necessary at vocational colleges?
6. Do you think that Springs College for Vocational Education can be regarded as a community learning centre?

6.4 Data Analysis

Data collection and data analysis are tightly interwoven processes, and must occur simultaneously because the analysis directs the sampling of data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990:59). Patton (1987), contends that data analysis is the process of bringing order to the data and organizing it into patterns, categories and basic descriptive units. According to Merriam (1998:156), data analysis is “an intuitive process” and its goal is to come up with reasonable conclusions and “generalisations based on preponderance of data”, (Merriam 1998:130).

Merriam (1998) contends that data analysis is also the process of making sense out of the data. This involves “consolidating, reducing, and interpreting” what people have said and what the researcher has “seen and heard”. These meanings or understandings or insights constitute the “findings” of a study. It involves examining the meanings of “people’s words and actions”, (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:121).

The transcripts of the interviews were analysed by means of the constant comparative method of analysis, as prescribed by Maykut and Morehouse (1994:126-144). A detailed account of the data analysis process follows in Section 7.

6.5 Reliability and validity of the study

I have, firstly, at the outset of my study, declared and explained my assumptions and presuppositions, worldview and theoretical orientation (Merriam, 1998:204-205). Secondly, I have tried to ensure that the inferences drawn from this study were consistent with the data collected by progressively building up a clear and unambiguous “audit trail” (Guba & Lincoln, 1989:243, Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:146). This consisted of original transcripts, the unitised data, and the discovery sheet. I have “described in detail how the data was collected, how the categories

were derived and how decisions were made throughout the enquiry” (Merriam, 1998:207).

Merriam (1998) also distinguishes between internal validity and external validity. Internal validity has to do with reality and how people construct reality. Merriam (1998:204) describes six basic strategies to enhance internal validity, which stands on the same level as reliability, that is, that the results are consistent and dependable in relation to the data, which is ensured by a clear audit trail.

Once I have completed the data analysis process and identified the categories and sub-categories, I conducted “member checking” and “peer examination”, (Merriam, 1998:204) in an attempt to enhance the internal validity of the study. These were respectively undertaken by consulting three of the participants on the credibility and plausibility of the findings, and by asking a colleague to comment on the findings as these emerged.

External validity, on the other hand, is concerned with the extent to which the findings can be applied to other situations (Merriam, 1998:211). However, external validity cannot take place without internal validity since as Guba and Lincoln (1981:115, quoted in Merriam, 1998:206), state, “there is no point in asking whether meaningless information has any general applicability”. I have thus provided sufficient rich and thick descriptions of the research context, processes and outcomes so that others can determine whether or not the findings match their own situations and can, make it possible for other to understand the context and experience, and experience it vicariously (Guba & Lincoln, 1989:260-262).

6.6 Ethical considerations

The process of interviewing carries with it both risks and benefits to the participants. During the interview participants may feel their privacy has been invaded, they may be embarrassed by certain questions, and they may reveal things they had never intended to reveal (Merriam, 1998:214). I was aware of the fact that disclosing information to me, could have negative consequences for them. Thus, to prevent their identities being revealed, I used the pseudonyms Somaya, Chris, Lara, Richard,

Lebang, Sizwe and Paul in the discussion of findings (Section 8.2). My role as interviewer was to be neither a judge nor a therapist or a "cold slab of granite – unresponsive to the human issues, including great suffering and pain that may unfold during an interview" (Merriam, 1998:214).

It was for these reasons, that I made provision for a personal code of ethics during the research process. I based this code on that provided by Patton (1989:356), which included the following: promises and reciprocity - promises made must be kept; risk assessment. In what way, if any, will conducting the interview put people at risk?; Confidentiality; and, informed consent.

It is thus important that my stance as researcher should be "first and foremost to gather data, not change people" (Patton, 1990:354). However, Patton and others recommend being able to make referrals to resources for assistance in dealing with problems that may surface during an interview. Diener and Crandall (1978, quoted in Merriam, 1998:216) contend that there is "simply no ethical alternative to being as non-biased, accurate, honest as is humanly possible in all phases of research". Kimmel (1988) suggests considering possible consequences of the research before undertaking it; presenting results with as little distortion as possible, while maximizing the potential benefits of the research; and taking special care in disseminating the results.

Actual ethical practice comes down to the individual researcher's own values and ethics and ultimately my conscience will inform the decisions. As a researcher, I committed myself to be conscious of the ethical issues that pervade the research process.

7. DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

The constant comparative method of data-analysis was utilized (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In this approach, all data collected are related to a focus of inquiry. At the heart of this method, is the construction of categories and sub-categories, derived from the data, which are continuously compared with incidents, respondents' remarks, and so on (Merriam, 1998:178; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:127-143). i

followed this process of data analysis in conjunction with data collection as Merriam (1998:180-181) advises.

Data was collected through a mixture of focus group and in-depth interviews, which had been recorded using a tape recorder. As I had mentioned previously, the focus group comprising of lecturers, provided a stimulating and secure setting for the interviewees to interact with each other. I conducted individual in-depth interviews with other stakeholders, as the 'protocol/hierarchy' of the interviewees could have intimidated stakeholders with varying opinions about the vocational college. These interviews were transcribed verbatim from the audiocassette. Maykut and Morehouse (1994:127), suggested that each interview be coded to their source, in order to facilitate working with different interviews. For example, I used T/P-1 for the interview with the parent, where the T indicated transcript, P indicated parent and 1 indicated page 1. Thus, the next page of this interview was T/P-2, and I continued this way until each page had been numbered. This was indicated on the top right-hand section of each page.

Similarly, the interviews with the other stakeholders were also prepared prior to the process of data analysis. Once this process was complete, I made photocopies of the original data set. I set aside the original data set and used the photocopies for unitising and subsequent data analysis. By keeping the original copy intact, I could continually refer units of data back to the transcript as a whole.

Taking the interview I conducted with the parent (T/P), I read the transcription a few times in order to form a holistic understanding of what was contained within the interview. My next step was to identify chunks or units of meaning in the data (Merriam, 1998:179), a process that is also referred to by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as "unitizing the data". This search for meaning was accomplished by first identifying the smaller units of meaning in the data which later served as the basis for determining larger categories. Each unit of meaning identified in the data unit was able to "stand by itself", i.e. it had to be understandable without additional information, except for knowledge of the researcher's focus of enquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

After having read the transcript and identified a unit of meaning, I drew a horizontal line across the page to separate this unit of meaning from the next unit, as proposed by Maykut and Morehouse (1994:129). I then indicated in the left-hand margin where the data was located in the data set, (e.g. T/P-3, indicating that this was on the third page of the transcript from an interview with a parent). Following this, I then allocated a word or a phrase that reflected the essence of the units meaning and wrote this beneath the notation of the data source. This process of unitizing was continued throughout the entire transcript of the interview. From the interview with a parent, approximately ten categories emerged. Some of these are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Example of some provisional categories from interview with Parent

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course revision to encompass community needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College infrastructure/facilities commendable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication structures are inadequate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private sector involvement needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High academic standards maintained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parental involvement – formal and distant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career guidance necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business-like orientation of college

I then cut apart the units of meaning that I identified in the data, and pasted each of this onto separate 5" x 8" index cards (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:129). I utilized the reverse, blank side of the card to complete any other important information (such as gender, age) relevant to the data analysis procedure, as recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985). I adopted this process of unitizing the data for all the other interviews I had conducted.

I then re-read the data I had collected and the notes I had made in my researcher's journal, ensuring that I familiarized myself with the data and ideas. I was now ready for the "discovery process", (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:132), where I asked myself questions such as "What are the recurring words, phrases, and topics in the data?"

What concepts do the participants use to capture what they say or do? Can you think of other concepts that capture some recurring phenomenon in the data that help sensitize you to recognize it when it recurs again? Can you identify any emerging themes in your data, expressed as a phrase, proposition or question? Do you see any patterns?" (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:133).

On a large clean sheet, I began answering these questions. I generated an array of recurring concepts, phrases, topics, patterns and themes drawn in from my interviews, field notes, documents and other sources of data. This was recorded and posted on the wall of the room I had allocated for my data analysis. On another page, I wrote out my focus of inquiry and posted this alongside my discovery sheet (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:133).

I was then in a position to commence the data analysis process. I taped large sheets of paper on the wall to be used as my working surface, and as a record of my analysis.

Using the discovery sheet of recurring concepts and themes, I selected one prominent idea (which served as a provisional category). I wrote it down on an index card and taped it to the left-hand side of one of the sheets of paper I had attached to the wall. I then carefully looked through the unitized cards to see if I could find a card that fitted the provisional category. On finding it, I taped this card under the category card. When I found the second data card that I thought fitted the category, I first read the first data card and compared it to the second card. I then used the "look/feel-alike" criteria to place this card in the same category (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data that did not fit into a particular provisional category, was categorized elsewhere, or tentatively named to begin a new provisional category. Following this I looked at the properties of the group containing approximately six to eight data cards clustered together, and tried to write a rule to distil the meaning carried in the data cards (formulate a rule of inclusion for the category). This rule of inclusion then became the basis for the inclusion of further units/data cards and I continued in this way with all the data cards.

Table 2

Excerpt from a provisional category (Need for student support services) including units of meaning, the rule of inclusion and direct quotes from interviews

CATEGORY	RULE OF INCLUSION
<p>1. Need for student support services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Guidance and Counselling o Health Education o Emergency services 	<p><i>All participants deemed student support services, such as career guidance and counselling, a necessity if the college was to be regarded as a community learning centre.</i></p>

T/R-7

Have we ever said to a student, "Do you know what Electronics is all about? Do you know that once you have a qualification in that course, where are you going to find work? What are you going to do with your qualification?". Now I must say that this is starting, to very slowly come into colleges ... that there is a measure of guidance, and its becoming more and more ... guidance given to students ... but we student support services, this is what we really need. To give a student guidance that if you obtain this qualification, you will be able to do a job of work.

TA-13

When they come to the college, they only know that this is Springs College. The courses offered at Springs college, they are not hundred percent sure. Its only two percent of them who know exactly what they are here for, what the courses are. The information that we provide them during registration is not enough. Because they come with these results of theirs and they say I want to do Tourism. But when you look at their results, and their subjects as well. Okay, if we do not have Tourism, then what else do we offer them. We'll just say we have got marketing, we've got Financial Accounting, we've got secretarial, and with your subjects we like choose for them. That's the problem. We like choose for them ...

T/SRC-8

Yes, like a counsellor. You can't talk about everything at home. It would help students, especially like you have a problem at school, you won't talk about it at home ... if you could talk about it here, it could help.

TIP-2

They should be able to receive guidance, most probably be able to receive lectures outside of the courses they are following, most probably practical guidance and definitely counselling of some sort so that they are actually prepared when they enter the outside world.

T/C-CM-6

These persons also come from affluent suburbs, poorer suburbs, rural areas, townships and squatter camps. The college cannot understand all the students. We must co-opt professionals to do this!

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Guided by my research question, and by experimentation and exploration, I systematically gained a deeper understanding of the categories that began to form. The rules for inclusion were adjusted, and redefined, where necessary. These were then compared to identify those that stood alone and those that formed salient relationships and patterns. The outcomes of these comparisons were then written as outcome statements (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:144), and formed the framework of the findings. The process of data analysis, as recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1990:188), continued until the “theoretical saturation point was reached”, and the categories and relationships between the categories were well supported. When no new relevant information was uncovered, a process that had been described as reaching “redundancy” in the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) indicated the end of the data analysis procedure.

Outcomes were prioritised according to the outcome proposition in the light of their importance in contributing to the focus of the inquiry and their prominence in the data (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:158). The frequency with which the units of meaning and categories recurred was an indication of their importance. Excerpts or quotations, which contributed significantly to each outcome statement were identified and selected for use in the next stage of the report. These findings will now be discussed.

8. FINDINGS

8.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to gain an understanding of the perceptions of stakeholders’ on a vocational college operating as a community learning centre. The interviews assisted me to “walk a mile in the participants’ shoes” and experience the world in a similar way (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:18). After having transcribed and analysed these experiences, a number of themes or categories of data were established. In this section, the consolidated, analyzed data will be interpreted according to order of priority (Table 3), against the background of the theoretical and conceptual framework. The research findings and their implications will also be discussed briefly in the light of the research question.

Table 3

A table of categories and sub-categories and their outcome statements derived from the process of data analysis

CATEGORY AND SUB-CATEGORIES	OUTCOME STATEMENT
<p>1. The need for the college to be viewed as more than just a business venture, but also as an institution providing a diverse range of courses for community development, in addition to the present academic courses offered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Needs analysis - More courses for community development - Recreation courses 	<p>Participants generally expressed appreciation for the quality of work and provision of facilities. However, all participants were unanimous in their belief that the college was run as a business venture. Some of the participants believed that in its quest to cover expenses, the college allowed the 'human factor' to be compromised. It was also believed that the college largely remained unresponsive to the needs of the community and suggested that a needs analysis would enable the institution of courses for community development and recreational purposes.</p>
<p>2. Stakeholder participation and relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - channels of communication open - need for transparency - community involvement necessary 	<p>One major concern was that the prevailing channels of communication, between the college and its stakeholders were inadequate. The participants indicated the need for transparency, and better relationships between the stakeholders, especially from management down to the students, between college and the community, and between the lecturers and students.</p>
<p>3. Student support services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - expressed satisfaction with media center - need faxing and internet-access - emergency services - guidance and counselling - health support services (e.g. clinic) - financial aid bureau 	<p>All participants were satisfied with the facilities afforded by the Media Center but were unanimous in their belief that the essential student support services such as faxing and internet-access, emergency services, guidance and counselling, health support services, legal services and a financial aid bureau, were essential.</p>
<p>4. Private sector involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - partnership to ensure employment - conduct presentations - orkshop sessions 	<p>All participants felt that there was a need for more private sector involvement in the vocational college. This partnership could enable students finding employment once they had completed their studies. The private sector could also be invited to conduct presentations and workshops, exposing students to the 'real' working world.</p>
<p>5. Language and culture is a barrier</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Different socio-economic strata - English Second Language - Lecturers must be representative 	<p>The differences in language and culture between the different stakeholders appeared to be a relevant issue. Some participants believed that the fact that English was not a first language to most students, had a negative effect on the communication and interaction process. To eliminate the problem of different cultures between lecturers and students being a barrier to learning, some participants voiced a need for lecturers to be representative of the students who attend the college.</p>

8.2 Discussion of Findings

8.2.1 The need for the college to be viewed as more than just a business venture, but also as an institution providing a diverse range of courses for community development, in addition to the present courses offered

All stakeholders expressed an appreciation for the present conditions and quality of work done at the college. In quoting Sizwe (a student), he believed, “... *education-wise, ... we know what we are doing here*”. Paul (a parent) further contributed by indicating *“that in terms of educational needs related to a specific or chosen course, the subjects are adequate”*.

All stakeholders were unanimous in their belief that the college was run as a business venture with its main intention being to defray expenses. Whilst this was considered to be one of the necessary aims of the college, some of the stakeholders felt that in so doing, the college was not operating as a community learning centre, catering to the needs and upliftment of the community. As Paul believed that *“the college should not be run on a pure business-orientated basis and I think that this is the case at the moment. I’ve basically been given the already set school fee. It is a one-way street ... there is definitely the need for learners to be treated not just as paying bearers who make up the budget at the end of the day, but also as members of the community ...”*. A lecturer stakeholder, Lara, agreed and contended that *“here I’m very honest, you sometimes get the idea that they have the students here for one purpose only, and that’s to get the money”*. It is my contention that running the college like a business venture to the exclusion of the human factor, is in direct contrast to the aims of a community learning centre.

However, this did not appear to be a problem with the college management, whilst all the other stakeholders were unanimous in their belief that in the quest to generate funds, the ‘human factor’ was being compromised. Both stakeholders of management, were very clear on the fact that the college was only state-aided, where only the salaries of the staff, were paid by the educational authorities. In some cases, additional members of staff were employed and were paid from the coffers of the college, with all the other fringe benefits enjoyed by the departmental members. With the exception of salaries, all other expenses had to be borne by the college. This is endorsed by a management stakeholder’s words

but unfortunately, that's the system. The system, let's use the word in inverted commas, "forces" you to do this because the more students you get, the more subsidy you have, the more staff you get. So the whole system, the whole funding is based on student numbers.

Thus, money did play a very important part in providing the facilities for students to be educated. The lack of money could result in many aspects of education being compromised, if income was cut. This is supported by the words of a management stakeholder, *"everything you provide costs money ... we're a business. We have to finance ourselves. We don't get money from the department to pay overheads and things ... even capital expenditure. If we have to appoint extra staff, we have to remunerate them out of our own funds, on a self-supporting basis"*. However, some of the stakeholders, believed that a change in attitude, compassion, and other factors, were more important than the sterile collection and distribution of money.

A further problem identified by the stakeholders Paul, Sizwe, Somaya (student) and Lara (lecturer), believed that the college remained largely unresponsive to the needs of the community. A stakeholder, Richard, believed that *"... there must be a paradigm shift in colleges we are too theoretically inclined we can offer the same courses in a different way. We have to restructure our courses ... yes, we can do more to uplift the community"*. The suggestions from most stakeholders were that courses should be implemented after a needs analysis has been conducted, *"they should send out questionnaires and know people more, not just assume ..."*, so that courses for community development and recreational purposes could be identified and instituted. This is an important factor if the vocational college is to operate as a community learning centre. Somaya (a student stakeholder), expressed the need for the College *"to go to the community and find out what the needs of the community are. Her comments, "Don't enrol students because they want to obtain a qualification", further echoes this. This was further cemented by a comment by a lecturer, Lara, when she states that there was a need for "a bit more programmes for interesting programmes ... like maybe needlework, you know pottery, maybe computer graphics, you know that type of thing, which the community would also like to take, not only just prescribed courses, but a bit more interesting type of extra type of courses"*.

All stakeholders contended that the main aim of the vocational college was to develop the community. Whilst the management of the college thought that this is what it was presently doing, there appeared to be a conflict in what the other stakeholders (parent, lecturers, students) believed. These stakeholders believed that the first concern of the college should be that of empowering people in the community in which it is located. They believed that in order to do this, it was necessary to take cognisance of people's individual needs. Many people would like to do more than consume 'ready-made packages', unsuited to their needs. Venter (1996:50) lends credence to this when he argues that community learning centres should provide a comprehensive range of courses, tailor-made for the specific communities within which they operate. Furthermore, courses offered in one college will differ from those that are offered in another, depending on the identified needs of the community. This notion is verified by the views of Diener (1986), who suggests that a college must always adapt and reshape its organization and courses in accordance with the changing needs of the society.

It is therefore necessary for the college to set learning outcomes that should reflect and address the interests, needs and aspirations of the community. These findings concur with that of Townsend (1994) who proposed that the 'core-plus' curriculum be instituted to address the needs of the community. The idea of a 'community active curriculum' means community involvement through community resources and expertise, which can be offered by colleges operating as community learning centres. An emergent theme was the stakeholders' belief that the college could assist them in improving the quality of their lives by instituting courses to improve their entrepreneurial skills, as indicated by the Richard when he says "*the college has a very, very big role to play in the community ... people want to be trained, they want a qualification*". Another stakeholder Lebang (a lecturer) believed that

we must look at our courses. Very much so. We really need to do that. It's so disastrous. Now we are trying to inculcate entrepreneurial skills. They don't know what you are talking about when you talk about entrepreneurship. So we need to inculcate that as well, into the whole system of education.

The training of people for skills needed to empower the community could help address the burden of unemployment. Thus, the kinds of courses that will equip students for self-employment or participation in the informal sector, are vital if the college strives to

operate as a community learning centre. As Paul said, *"I think we must send our students out of college better trained"*. These views find resonance in the writings by Townsend (1994), who states that the 'core-plus' framework is a support system in which academic citizenship and employment roles are complemented by a curriculum that incorporates skills. Thus, the nucleus of the college should focus on the development of the learners to acquire transitional skills to be able to perform college work, to transfer the curriculum to institutions of higher education, and ensure that students are able to receive skills and training, which will enable them to secure employment or self-employment. Paul believed that *"when these courses are offered, one should survey the market and see if the market can actually absorb these students that are being churned out"*.

However, the findings of this study also revealed that although the college management were in full agreement that some of the courses offered by the college were limited and ought be community-based, the major obstacle in instituting this, was due to monetary constraints. This was verified by a stakeholder in management who says *"... you cannot offer any courses to uplift the community, if you don't have income ... because you have to generate income to pay staff and again the section of the community that you really want to uplift, you will find that 80-90% of them are unemployed"*.

It also was suggested by some of the stakeholders that the college should therefore look at the educational and skills training issues, which members of the community identify as being important, and then offer assistance in the implementation of these. These findings are in line with those of Freire (1970), who also emphasized that education has to be a mutual learning process. It is also my contention that the role of education is to create the fundamental background necessary for the full participation of every citizen in the development of a 'new society', characterized by participation and joint decision-making. These are integral facets for the college to operate as a community learning centre.

8.2.2 Inadequate stakeholder participation and relationship

An issue of major concern was the prevailing channels of communication, which are described as being inadequate, existed between the college and its stakeholders. This is indicated by a student stakeholder, Somaya when she says, *"nobody gets*

informed. We don't know nothing ... nobody tells us ...". The words by Lara (a lecturer), *"so I feel there should be openness, they should know where they stand"*, and by Chris, *"we should be open with whatever the reasons are why we do certain things"*, indicated the need for transparency, and better relationships between the stakeholders, especially from management down to the students, between college and the community, and between the lecturers and students. As Lara said, *"I think participation from everybody is necessary, when decisions need to be made. Information must be flown through right from the top to the bottom because I think that there is a lack of that"*. These findings concur with the views of Sergiovanni (1994) who believed that communities provide warmth, care, togetherness as they strive towards sameness. In communities or *gemeinschaft*, the will to want to help others is strong. Non-involvement could lead to the feeling of 'isolation' which is reflected by the comments such as *"they don't even know who the Rector of the College is, they pass him but they don't know that he is the Rector ... really when do they ever see him. There is no assembly ..."* and *"a lecturer is an enemy ... that's all I can say"*, are all indicative of the necessity of establishing better relationships between the stakeholders, if the college is to operate as a community learning centre.

This notion is verified by Sergiovanni (1994) when he contends that communication in communities is made possible because of the symbolic parameters which make *gemeinschaft* unique because of the relationship members of the communities have, such as amongst others, language, family, ideas and, of course, location.

All stakeholders believed that the way in which information is disseminated is very important. The ability of an institution to move forward with purpose and conviction rests largely on its communication with its stakeholders. All stakeholders must therefore be informed and consulted in the decision-making processes of the institution. A lack of this process was indicated by Paul when he says, *"we didn't get told or given any brochure of that sort, which explained, or made mention of even a motto not at all. Everything that you know about the college you actually got to phone in and find out"*.

It is my contention that since the college is part of a larger community in which it is situated, it should take the initiative and invite the community to participate and get involved in the matters of the college. This notion as expressed by Sergiovanni (1994:6), explains one of his three forms of *gemeinschaft*, the *gemeinschaft* of kinship, which comes "from a unity of being", as the participation of all stakeholders, as the

cornerstone to development. As this is in line with the aspirations of a community learning centre, it is important that the college conforms to this practice. Lebang (a lecturer), contended that *"much as it (the college) gets the fees from the community, it has a role in the community in that it has to go back to the community, to inform them ..."*.

All stakeholders believed that there must be a 'partnership' between the different stakeholders, if the college is to operate as a community learning centre. They were aware that the democratisation of education, meant that they had a right to participate in the activities of the college, and should therefore have a say in the way in which it is run. Thus, as stakeholders they should therefore be given a 'voice', kept informed and consulted, and given the opportunity of participating in college activities.

The findings also reveal that some of the stakeholders considered the college to be an 'island', far removed from the community in which it is situated. This sentiment is echoed by a student when she says, *"the only way my parents know, is if I tell them. Other than that, they don't know anything"*. Thus, it is my contention that if the college does not co-opt the co-operation of the other stakeholders, contrary to the aims and objectives of a community learning centre, it will not be able to design and set learning opportunities that would reflect the interests, needs and aspirations of the community. Given this, it is crucial that the college educate the community to reject the assumption *"that they are really in the world, not with the world and others, that they are spectators and not recreators"*, (Freire, 1978:11).

The relationship between stakeholders should be that of commitment to a joint venture in the spirit of "Masakhane" (let's build together). All stakeholders, especially community members and parents, should not be 'onlookers' and 'spectators'. Parents must not go to the college in the manner of responding to a 'call'. As a lecturer, Lebang, said *"it (the college) has not extended that hand to the parent, to say whenever you have problems ... come. It is only when lecturers are concerned about the absentees of the students, it is when they start contacting the parents invite the parents, come and have tea with our students and then you can talk to them (college management)"*. These findings concur with the views of Sergiovanni (1994) who believed that "community of mind" is based on an understanding of what is

shared. This is an important principle in ensuring that the college operates as a community learning

The findings revealed that building a community within this college and ensuring that it operates as a community learning centre could provide an important strategy in restoring participatory management of the college. This could restore the 'we' identity and could promote interdependence. Sergiovanni (1994:33) lends credence to these findings in his contention that a college, which is a true community consists of a group of individuals who have learned to communicate honestly with one another. A stakeholder in management, sums this up aptly when he says *"we must work on better relationships ... we share common interests, we are all here in the interest of education ... we all want to educate"*. These findings are supported by the views of Venter (1996:8) who believed that re-orientation courses for officials and lecturers should be pursued so that a total paradigm shift and a change of mind-sets can be achieved. This is crucial for success of the college for the radical improvement necessary to the realization of participatory democracy, and is closely aligned to the principles of a community learning centre. Thus, it is my contention that the college needs to subscribe to these principles in ensuring that it operates as a community learning centre.

8.2.3 Student support services need to be supplemented

All stakeholders were satisfied with the facilities afforded by the Media Center. As a stakeholder Chris says, *"... been revamped into this reference library, computer facility, study area, and I think it is serving a far greater purpose now, because a lot more people are making use of the facilities"*.

All stakeholders were unanimous in their belief that student support services such as faxing and internet-access, emergency services, child care, guidance and counselling, health support services, legal services and a financial aid bureau, were essential. This is borne out by a stakeholder in management, when he mentions *"that is a big problem we have, is that we don't have a good student support service. We have to be honest about this. Our student support should be, and can be much better the problem is that we haven't got staff to do this type of thing ..."*. All the stakeholders in my

study were in agreement that the services of professional services such as career guidance and counselling would be beneficial to the students. As mentioned by a lecturer, Lebang, *"so at the end of the day, they don't know what they are taking the course for ..."*. Lara made a startling revelation when she said *"I often get N6 students when it comes to the end of the block, then they start asking, madam, what can I now do? What can I do with my course I've done. Now they've completed N6, and they don't know what to do with this qualification!"*

Watts (1977) concurs with this view, as career guidance would eradicate the confusion they experience as students. It is common knowledge that that many students studying at colleges often come from impoverished backgrounds, have a poor educational foundation, and limited knowledge of career opportunities. The stakeholders also expressed the notion that perhaps the underachievement of students could also be attributed to emotional or other problems. This is borne out by Somaya when she says *"you can't talk about everything at home if you could talk about it here, it could help"*. The student stakeholders highlighted the need for a professional counsellor in which they could confide. I thus believe that the provision of student support services such as career guidance and counselling are important to students as it would decrease emotional dysfunction, increase positive self-perception and most importantly, contribute to the efforts by the college to operate as a community learning centre. This view is in line with that of Watts (1977:170), when he contends that students need to become aware of their personalities, which includes attributes such as "abilities, aptitudes, practical skills, personal qualities and physical strength".

In addition to career guidance and counselling, some of the stakeholders indicated that a large number of students at the vocational college are parents, and expressed the need for childcare facilities on the college campus. This is borne out by Sizwe when he say *"..... because many of the students here are mothers, some are fathers. So sometimes they don't come to college because nobody can take care of their children. The lecturers think they are lazy"*, whilst Somaya says that *"it will make it easier for the students. They would know that their children are safe, they are near them"*.

With the recent shocking revelations of child rape in South Africa, the need for establishing a safe haven for the children of students is of utmost importance and is

one of the factors involved in ensuring that the vocational college operates as a community learning centre. This is in line with the view of Roditti (1995:1059), when he says that a childcare centre could help reduce the high dropout rate of students, as they will be able to attend classes regularly and will be secure in the knowledge that their children are in a safe and secure environment.

However, from the information received from Richard, the non-provision of these services to students, were again, due to financial constraints. He highlighted the effects of *“money as being profound, where money is available, better services and facilities are available to the students and the environment is more favourable”*. Thus, if the state contributed more, money paid as fees could be directed to other needed sources such as career guidance and counselling. The limited provision of student support services has been noted by the Ministry of Education and in the new FET Act of 1998 efforts to *“provide counselling, financial support, relevant educational programmes, career counselling and job placement services”* are on the agenda for implementation by the year 2004. It is my contention that the provisions of these services are essential in ensuring that the college operates as a community learning centre.

8.2.4 Private sector involvement

All stakeholders believed that there was a need for links to be fostered with the private sector. In defining what is meant by the private sector, Shim and Siegel (1995:278) define this as the households and business segments of the economy that are independent of government control and carries on principally for profit.

All the stakeholders interviewed felt that an effort could be made to ensure that students find employment once they have completed their studies. The act of ensuring employment for students is of crucial importance in the equation, given the aims of vocational colleges. The student stakeholder expresses his view that the *“college must help us to get jobs in the big companies we can't do it .”*

The importance of private sector involvement is echoed by Richard when he says that *without involvement of commerce and industry, how do you train people to do a job of work, because you have to train the person according to the needs of commerce*

and industry ... so if you don't have the co-operation between the educational institution and commerce, then I think you are on the wrong track.

Paul further contended that *"students should be in constant contact with what's going on in a working environment"* and that the private sector could also be invited to conduct presentations and workshops, exposing students to the 'real' working world.

Townsend's (1994) notion of a 'core-plus' institution also recommended that members of the community, with differing levels of expertise, could assist in educating students and establish networks of support. As a stakeholder Paul, commented *"maybe speakers could be brought in, or people that are in the outside world in a specific field brought in to give them (students) some sort of background"*. A stakeholder Lara also verifies this, when she says, *"if you ask them (students) how many of them have been to an interview, 90% said that they have never been to an interview. They don't know, you know, the basic questions or skills"*. These findings concur with those of Townsend (1994), who believed that the practical orientation as contained in the "plus" of the core-plus curriculum prepares the student for employment in the private sector.

It is my contention that the private sector would, most probably, need to turn to, and involve itself in vocational education, because it cannot provide basic education to prepare prospective workers for private sector employment and training. For obvious reasons then, the private sector is interested in educated employees because it cannot train an uneducated workforce and does not have the capacity and skills to do so. The most dramatic success of private sector involvement in the college is the positive perception that the private sector has of the local college. This positive perception is significant to all stakeholders within the confines of the college because it compels everybody to regard whatever is being done as a collective responsibility that must be carried out at all times. I believe that such a shared understanding and meaning can only enhance private sector-education relations.

These findings necessitating private sector involvement concur with those of Wise (1968:214), when he says that *"the business community is prepared to invest money in education, but at the same time effects that this investment will enhance the level of education, and that the college will turn out workers with a better level of education"*. I believe that it is thus imperative that the college should maintain links with the business community as an effort to secure jobs for students. The strong

links between the college and the business sector may serve as the basis for sponsorships. The private sector can only take an active role in colleges if the information supplied to them is correct, well controlled and closely aligned with the needs of the business institution.

8.2.5 Language and culture are barriers to learning

The findings of this study have also revealed that the diverse culture of the different stakeholders has a bearing on the way in which they view each other. This is borne out by the comments of a student stakeholder Somaya, when she objects to the stereotypical images that she believes that some of the lecturers have of Black students. She states that *"if I'm Black, it means I'm from Kwa-Thema, I steal, I'm unreasonable, I'm just a Black person ... that's what they (College) know ... if you are Black you can't be trustworthy ... they just think of you the worst .. you know how stereo-typed people think of Black people ... and sometimes I'm not like that. They don't even know who I am, where I come from, how I was raised ... if I'm Black, I was raised like this and this is how you get to be treated and how you are ... no, it's not like that!! We were not born in that era, this is a new era!"*.

Lara, a lecturer, also expressed a problem with regard to the different culture of the students who attend the college. She says, *"I understand my culture and my students, and I want to apply that to other fellow students that I teach, but then the culture clash because our cultures are not the same. I think that it is a problem that has to be addressed"*. The parent stakeholder supports this view when he says *"that a spectrum of lecturers that is representative of the students who understand the different students, who understand the culture of the students ... be employed"*. Thus, the prevalent feeling amongst most of the stakeholders, was that all persons involved in the college needed to develop an understanding of the community where the learners come from, in order to inform their instruction and interaction with students. Understanding and respecting the cultures of all stakeholders is an essential ingredient in ensuring that the college operates as a community learning centre.

Added to the problem of different cultures, was the fact that English, the medium of instruction at the college, was a second or even a third language to most students.

This resulted in a problem with interaction and communication with each other, and is borne out by a student stakeholder when she says, *“some lecturers have like a very small heart. For instance there are sometimes different people. I may be brilliant, somebody may be stupid ... not stupid, but a slow learner, some of them might take long, they don't know English so well, you might talk to them, but then they don't understand you. The only thing that you want is your homework and everything, whether the student understood or didn't understand ... that's not your problem. All you want is your homework”*.

However, my findings have also revealed that many of the stakeholders also believed that this was a situation that could be remedied, given time. This is evident in the words of a lecturer stakeholder who indicated, *“.. the department has to start changing their way of training lecturers”* and thus agreed that staff members could be retrained to handle the effects of a more diverse college community. Some of the stakeholders also voiced their belief that there was a need for lecturers to be representative of the students who attend the college. The sentiment expressed by a parent *“that a spectrum of lecturers that is representative of the students who attend this college”*, is indicative of this.

However, what clearly emerged from this research was the fact that the lecturers were in total sympathy with the language and culture problems experienced by students, but felt that they were unable to remedy this, as they were governed by a need to complete a fixed syllabus and gear students towards an examination. However, the need to enhance and motivate student progress is an essential component in ensuring that the college operates as a community learning centre. Whilst lecturers were undoubtedly committed to their role of facilitation, they believed that they did not have the time or resources available to ensure that every student present in their lectures, understood the medium of instruction. Lara supports this, when she says,

all our training, because it is actually training, is done with one view, and that is to write an exam, and to get the students to pass. Nothing more than that. That's what it is going for here. And the better results you can have, the better for yourself, because you are measured according to your results, not at what you achieve outside that situation.

I believe that for many stakeholders - students, parents, lecturers and management - change has been thrust upon them, by virtue of the policies instituted by the new government that came into power in 1994. Even though change may be a slow process, it is inevitable, and once all stakeholders are aware of the norms, values and beliefs of each other, this could positively affect the learning situation. At all costs, I contend that the pitfall where students join a society in which achievement is the main goal, and where they are not 'connected' to cultural roots, must be avoided if the vocational college is to operate as a community learning centre.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings from the qualitative investigation of this research, the following recommendations could possibly be used in ensuring that the vocational college operates as a community learning centre. Both the goals of vocational colleges and a community learning centres run a close parallel, as they concern themselves with the training of skills to empower members of the community. Vocational colleges, like community learning centres, form an integral part of the infrastructure for community education. From my research, however, it appears as though Springs College, to an extent, operates without adequately addressing the needs of the community in which it is situated.

From the findings of this research, the following implications have emerged:

- Vocational colleges should recognize that people have diverse needs, that these needs should be identified through consultation with the community for prioritisation. Background research and consultation with communities is very important, before implementing any programme. It is my contention that the vocational college as a community learning centre will have to prepare and develop new skills within the community and involve the process of preparing the learner for life and the world of work.
- In the spirit of satisfying the needs of diverse segments of the community at all times of their lives, Gleazer (1980:16), as mentioned previously, states that the mission of community learning centres is "to encourage and facilitate life-long

learning, with community as process and product". The need therefore exists in transforming vocational colleges to community learning centres, which will be established in collaboration with the community in which it is situated. Thus, it is recommended that all stakeholders be well-informed, consulted and well-orientated with regard to any educational innovations, such as community learning centre development, if such innovations are to succeed. The government must also provide guiding policies and principles, as well as material and fiscal support. The nucleus of the community learning centre should focus on the development of the students to acquire transitional skills to be able to perform college level work, to transfer the school's curriculum to that of college and to ensure that students are able to receive vocational training which will enable them to secure employment or self-employment.

- The present college programmes places a constraint on the type of community-based learning opportunities. Vocational colleges should not succumb to the pressures imposed by workload generated by academic subjects, and should design programmes to empower all stakeholders in terms of their functions, their role and the legal parameters within which they can operate.
- Communication channels between students, staff and management, should be addressed by ensuring clear lines of communication between the management of the college and the lecturers at 'grass-root' level.
- That the vocational college addresses the urgent need for student support services such as career guidance, counselling, financial aid and health education.
- Vocational colleges will continue to decide what is good for the community and what is not for as long as stakeholders maintain their "culture of silence". It is recommended that stakeholders be encouraged to say what they feel is not right for their beneficiaries. Vocational colleges should take the initiatives to invite the community to participate in educational programmes, remind them about their right as stakeholders in transforming education, as enshrined in the constitution.

- Education planners in this vocational college should be responsive to the fact that its students are culturally diverse, with the majority of the students being Black. This means that there is an urgent need to address the racial composition of staff by drawing in educators of colour. This would assist in making the college staff representative of the students who attend the college. In addition, informative programmes, relating to the diverse culture of students attending the college, could be implemented for the benefit of all lecturers currently employed by the college.
- That the vocational college attract staff who see change as necessary in the development of a learning community, for whom the basic official criteria is offset by evidence of initiative, commitment and inspiration in ensuring that the vocational college operates as a community learning centre.
- That more governmental funding should be provided to help institutions such as vocational colleges to develop. The problem of inadequate funding appears to be a major reason why the college cannot provide the services, necessary for it to operate as a community learning centre. However, if the state contributed more money, this could be directed to other necessary services, which could all assist in the development of the community in which the college is situated.

I conclude the recommendations by concurring with the views of the Minister of Education (2001:02) that the “creation of a new ethos (in vocational education) is necessary for the 21st century”. It is my hope that the findings and recommendations of this research will contribute to this vision.

10. CONCLUSION

The research that was reported in this essay focussed on ascertaining the views of stakeholders’ on a vocational college operating as community learning centre. For this purpose, I utilized the qualitative method of inquiry and collected data via interviews. Before conducting these interviews, I held certain assumptions and presuppositions. Some of these were confirmed while others were not found to be relevant to this research. Furthermore, I conducted a review of the relevant literature

in order to place the research aim within a theoretical framework. Thereafter I discussed the research strategy that has been followed and the data analysis, followed by the discussion of the findings. The final section of the research contains certain recommendations that could possibly be used by the vocational college in its quest to conform to the ideals of a community learning centre.

In this study, it is envisaged that a community learning centre will serve the needs of local communities, with the accent on previously disadvantaged sectors. It is therefore recommended that the government and relevant stakeholders look at practical and sustainable plans for the establishment of community learning centres to ensure that the necessary measures are put into place, as soon as it is possible. The stakeholder' responses in the interviews contained valuable information on the view of stakeholders' and the ideas of how the vocational college could operate as a community learning centre. Lecturers need to acknowledge and internalize their role not as passive transmitters of knowledge, but as creators and interpreters of knowledge, values, attitudes and ideologies. Not only do lecturers provide frameworks, assistance and support, but by being involved with the students as learners themselves and as learning coaches, they model higher-order thinking processes and problem-solving skills. The community of 'mind' that students and lecturers share as its core, the importance of providing students with intellectually challenging rigorous academic experiences that will make them resourceful life-long learners (Sergiovanni, 1993:41).

In conclusion, this research invites additional study. As I write, vocational colleges are involved in a major restructuring process leading to the transformation and merging of colleges. January 2002, will see all vocational colleges becoming FET institutions. Given that the merging process would eliminate the need for duplication of positions, the personnel declared redundant could be trained and utilized to perform other essential services. With the availability of staff, the college could open its door for all other community-orientated activities and vocational colleges, and in the words of Professor Kader Asmal (Minister of Education), "serve as center-pieces of the community and meet this challenge with good service, realistic programmes and the best possible career advice".

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APPENDIX A

THE LETTER OF PERMISSION: RECTOR

5 September 2001

The Rector
Springs College
Private Bag X21
SPRINGS
1560

Dear Sir

LETTER OF PERMISSION

As you are aware, I am a candidate for the final year of the M.Ed. Degree in Adult and Community Education. Part of my course requirements dictate that I conduct research on a topic of my choice.

The proposed topic that I am researching is the following:

“Stakeholders’ views of a vocational college operating as a community learning centre”.

I therefore require your permission to please conduct interviews at Springs College at a time and place convenient to all the stakeholders.

I would also like to assure you that all information given to me will be treated in a confidential manner, and that at no time whatsoever, will the names or addresses of the stakeholders, be reflected in my study.

Once permission has been granted to me, I will select my participants and set up the relevant interview sessions.

I thank you and await your response to my letter.

Yours sincerely

MRS S. NAIDOO

N.B.: E-mail Address: saloshana@email.com

APPENDIX B:

THE INTERVIEW LETTER: LECTURERS

10 September 2001

Dear Colleague

In my capacity as student, I am conducting research on "Stakeholders' views of a vocational college operating as a community learning centre". I have thus decided on four members of staff who will form part of a focus group, i.e. four participants who will be interviewed as a team.

I have addressed this letter to you, in the hope that you will volunteer to be part of this group. According to the time-table, you do not have a lecturing period during the last period on a Wednesday. It would therefore be convenient to conduct this interview on Wednesday, 12 September 2001 at 14:00 (to 15:00), in my office (E1.7) at College.

The Rector has granted me permission to conduct the interviews, but I have not disclosed to him the names of the participants. You can be assured that all information given to me will be treated in a highly confidential manner, and that at no time whatsoever, will the names or addresses of the participants be disclosed to anyone, or be reflected in my study.

I thank you and hope that you will be willing to assist me in this task. Please contact me at the following number/s to confirm your participation in this interview:

733-3822 (H) 083 378-5308 (Cell)

Yours sincerely

MRS S. NAIDOO

APPENDIX C

LETTER OF CONSENT

NAME AND SURNAME:

HOME LANGUAGE:

DESIGNATION: Please place a cross in the applicable box

Rector	College Council Member	Lecturer	Parent	SRC Member
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PERMISSION GRANTED:

I, the undersigned, Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms (please print full name), hereby grant consent to Mrs Saloshana Naidoo, to conduct an interview with me for her research, in partial fulfilment of her Master's Degree (Adult and Community Education).

This consent I granted on the proviso that my personal details are kept confidential and that my permission is procured before revealing any information to interested parties.

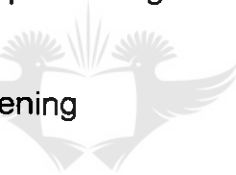
.....
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....
DATE

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE I

1. Welcome to participant/s.
2. Obtain approval for using audio-recorder.
3. Confirmation of confidentiality agreement – participant/s understand that their identity will not be revealed.
4. Inform participant/s that audio recorder can be turned off at any time during the interview.
5. Ask participant/s to sign the consent form.
6. Introduce the topic.
7. Utilize the following questioning techniques:
 - Probing
 - Tell-me-more
 - Reflective listening
 - Paraphrasing
8. Questions (Appendix E).
9. Re-confirm confidentiality agreement.
10. End with thanks for participation.



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APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDE II

These are the questions I intended covering with the participants, i.e. the different stakeholders of the vocational college (Rector, College Council member, Lecturers, Parent, Student Representatives). This was essentially to ensure that the same kind of information was obtained from my participants by covering the same material.

The questions were compiled as a guide, and will not strictly adhere to this format. The questions I would address to the different stakeholders may differ slightly in the nature of the questioning.

1. Who are the stakeholders of the college? Briefly explain what you think the role of each should be.
2. Do you think that Springs College addresses the needs of the community? Explain.
3. Do you think that the community has anything in common with Springs College?
4. Do you believe parents or community members should be involved in some of the decision-making processes of Springs College?
5. Do you think support services are necessary?
6. Do you think that Springs College for Vocational Education can be regarded as a community learning centre?

EXTRACTS FROM SUNDAY TIMES BUSINESS TIMES

(dated 29 October 2000)

2 Sunday Times Business Times October 29 2000

State spends R359m on tech students who fail

Many technical colleges have low pass rates and high drop-out rates, writes CORNIA PRETORIUS

TECHNICAL colleges are poor value for money, often providing inadequate and outdated skills training for students, 40% of whom fail their exams, according to a major audit of the sector.

At some technical colleges, bricklaying students don't lay a single brick during training. At one rural college, students can reach the school only in a 4x4 vehicle.

The audit, conducted for the Colleges Collaboration Fund, a project run by the Business Trust and the National Business Initiative, provides data that can serve as the basis for future planning.

The audit, based on 1998 data, uncovered massive wastage in the system.

The nine provincial education departments collectively spent R780-million on technical colleges. Of this sum, R359-million was spent on students who failed or didn't complete their course.

The results of the audit raise questions about the effectiveness of colleges, about whether they are providing value for money, about the programmes they offer and why they are not serving a broader student population, including adult students.

The audit reveals that:

- There are 152 technical colleges with 80 satellite campuses.

- Of those, 85% are historically disadvantaged.

- They serve about 302 550 students, the majority of whom are aged 15 to 24.

- Of those students, 71% are black, 18% are white, 9% are coloured and 1% are Indian.

- Fifty-six percent of students are males and 44% are females.

- Eighty-six percent of the 122 740 full-time equivalent students study engineering or business studies.

- Half of all colleges have a pass rate lower than 60%.

- The throughput rate (students who don't drop out) is 54%.

- At 26 institutions the throughput rate is between zero and 40%.

- Of the 6 079 teaching staff, 61% are white, 28% are African, 3% are Indian and 8% are coloured.

- Only 12% of teachers hold higher degrees, 44% have degrees or higher diplomas, 25% hold diplomas and 18% are either underqualified or unqualified.

- Of the 3 000 non-teaching staff, 90% are paid by provincial education departments.

Ros Jaff, who worked on the audit, says there are major differences in the quality of facilities offered at rural as against urban colleges.

She says the Eastern Cape college that can be reached only in a 4x4 vehicle has no electricity or telephone lines. When necessary,

the principal climbs a hill next to the college to use his cellphone.

Jaff says that facilities such as toilets are so bad at some colleges that "no respectable mother" would send her daughter there.

She found that the sector was "fragmented and inefficient, with too many small, weak institutions", there is poor knowledge of policy, limited human resources, both in institutions and in provincial education departments, and inequity in terms of gender and race distribution.

Jaff says training is urgently needed to boost the quality of the running of institutions.

She also found that there was minimal support for students.

The gap between theory and practice is highlighted by a student who told her: "There is no practical training. A bricklayer can leave the institutions without laying a brick."

Said a catering lecturer: "Imagine what I could do with my course if I could spend three months in a restaurant."

Jaff interviewed technical college staff and provincial education department officials, and conducted onsite visits.

The audit also found that despite a change in the racial profile of students, African learners still have a low overall participation rate compared with the population distribution.

Careers

OCTOBER 29 2000

Asmal spells out plans for technical colleges

The government has promised to act to help 'Cinderella sector', writes CORNIA PRETORIUS

THE Cinderella sector of SA education came one step closer to becoming the belle of the ball after the first annual Further Education and Training (FET) convention last week. As the "ladder" between formal schooling and the world of work or higher education, FET is responsible for providing the skills training that will offer new life chances to South Africans of all ages. Since the Further Education and Training Act was passed in 1998, training institutions, particularly SA's 152 technical colleges, have been waiting for a clear "signal" from the government on the way forward.

When Minister of Education Ndriso Asmal took the podium at the convention, he acknowledged that the time was overdue for us to spell out our intentions.

He outlined his department's plans, which include:

- Stronger leadership and co-operation between the national department of education and the provincial departments, which are responsible for FET provisioning, to ensure that the restructuring of the sector happens at the same pace and takes a similar shape across the board.
- Continuing efforts to develop partnerships with the international community to strengthen the FET sector.
- The establishment of a task team to determine the future landscape of technical colleges, similar to the "size and shape" exercise in higher education.
- A new funding formula to boost colleges' cost effectiveness and to enhance responsiveness to society's needs.
- The launch of a pilot project, together with the Department of Labour, that will see the introduction of on-the-job training in 36 colleges to ensure that courses are relevant to SA's economic needs.
- Ongoing development,

together with the Netherlands government, of tools to quality check individual colleges and the system as a whole.

An important development was the release last week of the results of the first comprehensive audit of technical colleges.

Despite examples of innovation, the overall picture was gloomier than expected.

In addition to vast inequalities in resources, colleges are not cost effective and are failing to respond to skills needs.

Asmal said the analysis confirmed his view that SA needed a system of 50 to 60 strong colleges nationally instead of the current 152.

At the conference, it became clear that the Department of Education wants to see movement in the restructuring of the FET sector.

Khetsi Lehoko, deputy director-general of FET in the department, says: "We have to deal decisively with colleges. If we waffle for the

next five years, we are going to be under tremendous pressure for human resources development."

Molly Venter, rector of the Pretoria College and chairman of the Association for Further Education and Training Institutions of SA, says Asmal and Lehoko provided the direction for which the technical colleges have been waiting.

Venter says "colleges have to merge to be successful", but that the prospect of job losses brought great uncertainty and fear to employees.

She also emphasised the importance of the national education department driving the mergers to ensure uniformity.

Glen Fisher, director of the Colleges Collaboration Fund, set up to examine the poor skills base in the country, says there is now a "reasonable level" of understanding and consensus within the sector about the way forward.

He says a key message at the convention was the need

to build stronger links between colleges and the industries they service.

This, says Fisher, shouldn't only be about handing out money, but about industry representatives sitting on technical college councils and providing mentorship opportunities.

Delegates acknowledged that the positive outcome of the conference didn't mean all FET's problems were fixed.

These problems include less than total unity in the sector, some resistance to restructuring, and a need for increased incentives for technical college principals who are on the same post levels as school principals. Students must also be taken along in the process to ensure a smooth transition.

Despite the difficulties, the latest developments are building on existing initiatives to strengthen FET.

The Colleges Collaboration Fund, which by 2004 will have received R100-million from the Business Trust, is working on increasing enrolments at technical colleges, helping 65% of college graduates to find jobs within six months of graduating and providing training to managers and council managers.

See Page 2 on why and how technical colleges are failing.

The Sunday Times Career Junction

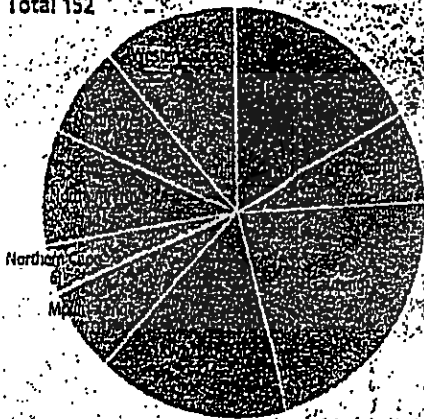
FIND YOUR DREAM JOB

www.sundaytimes.co.za/careers

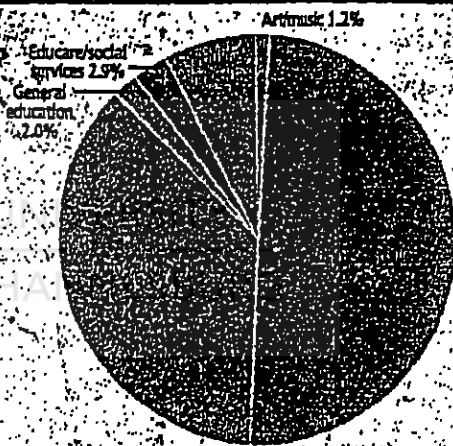
Sunday Times Career Junction

NUMBER OF TECHNICAL COLLEGES BY PROVINCE

Total 152

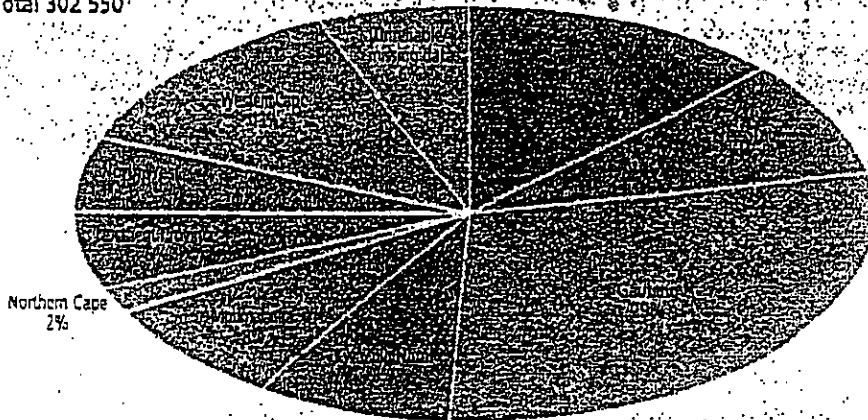


NATIONAL FET ENROLMENTS BY VOCATIONAL FIELD



HEADCOUNTS BY PROVINCE

Total 302 550



APPENDIX G

TRANSCRIPT OF AN INTERVIEW

I would like to welcome you to this interview. I thank you for your time and for being willing to participate in this interview.

My topic is:

“Stakeholders views of a vocational college operating as a community learning centre”.

INTERVIEWER: I would like to start off my asking you a general question. Your understanding What do you understand by “Community Education”?

PARTICIPANT: My understanding in terms of community education, general education of not only the learner by the institution, by spreading the learning to the community at large as well.

INTERVIEWER: Please tell me more about community education with regard to the college.

PARTICIPANT: The college must educate the community. In terms of learning, maybe adult education, or education of more than just the learner, maybe his parents, in terms of extra-mural activities, ...

INTERVIEWER: Do you know of any courses being offered to the community right now?

PARTICIPANT: I know there are part-time courses offered, although they are not directed at the community at large, but more likely the community could benefit from these part-time courses, although offered in the evenings.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you say “not directed to the community at large”?

PARTICIPANT: I know that courses are offered for people who have matric, day and evening, but I don't know about adult literacy classes and other novelty subjects ...

INTERVIEWER: Tell me more about what you know about the day classes ...

PARTICIPANT: In terms of educational needs related to a specific or chosen course, the subjects I would say are adequate. Yes, but definitely the needs of the students in terms of the working environment that they fit in to thereafter, most probably should be looked at when courses are being offered.

INTERVIEWER: What are the courses you would recommend?

PARTICIPANT: Actually when these courses are offered one should survey the market and see if the market can actually absorb these students that are being churned out at Springs College, because they have been doing it just on the basis of financial and economic requirements and needs of the college, and not looking at the learners interest at the end of the day. We are defeating the objective of offering some of these courses. What about career guidance in self-development courses?

INTERVIEWER: How do you suggest that this could be instituted?

- PARTICIPANT:** Yes, I think students should be able to be in constant contact with what's going on in the outside world, especially in terms of chosen career paths. They should be able to receive guidance, most probably be able to receive lectures outside of the courses they are following, most probably practical guidance and definitely counselling of some sort so that they are actually prepared when they enter the outside world. And they are not just walking away with a piece of paper, saying that here I have passed X, Y and Z, and then find that when they get outside world, it is a totally different place and they cannot fit in because they haven't been exposed. They may have the relevant qualifications, but they are not actually exposed to what actually goes on in a working environment.
- INTERVIEWER:** So you think that they should have that exposure.
- PARTICIPANT:** There should be maybe speakers brought in, or people that are in the outside world in a specific field brought in to give them some sort of more background.
- INTERVIEWER:** Whilst your child has been at college for almost a year, do you know of anybody who has come in to speak to them.
- PARTICIPANT:** Absolutely, not. I haven't heard of any speakers having been brought in to college in any field, and I think definitely, they need this type of exposure.
- INTERVIEWER:** What steps should the college adopt? How do you think we could go about this process?
- PARTICIPANT:** May be the college could have a body ... a type of committee who decides this. Then they can do this ...
- INTERVIEWER:** A committee consisting of who do you think?
- PARTICIPANT:** I would assume that it is a body consisting of management and some parents. Also extending to our children. They should all be allowed to have a choice in learning subjects. They all have a vested interest in the college.
- INTERVIEWER:** Would you say that they are "stakeholders"?
- PARTICIPANT:** Definitely so. Therefore they must be involved in the decision-making processes at college.
- INTERVIEWER:** Is this happening presently?
- PARTICIPANT:** Most certainly, not. Okay. On having enrolled my son at college, other than having received the fee structure for the year and the courses offered for the year, and my son's courses, basically that was it! I mean we didn't get told or given any brochure of that sort, which explained, or made mention of even a motto, or even what the vision of the college was. Nothing. So I am not aware of anything else!! Not at all. Everything that you know about the college you actually got to phone in and find out. There is absolutely no circularization of information via the press or college newsletters, and I think that is something that should actually be introduced. The networking channels are really poor!
- INTERVIEWER:** And as a parent now, like again we have said your child is at college for a year, how many times have you visited college?
- PARTICIPANT:** I have visited on the basis that I needed to know certain things and I needed to keep abreast of his performance, and on that basis, yes I have visited. But on a formal basis we have not been, as parents, invited officially to either look at the facilities or to even tour the premises as such.

- INTERVIEWER:** So you said earlier, besides paying the fees, you have not come in to our college and seen our lovely computer rooms and facilities ...?
- PARTICIPANT:** Nothing, ... those opportunities have not been open to us members of the community at large.
- INTERVIEWER:** Would you have wanted to be involved in this?
- PARTICIPANT:** There should definitely be parent involvement and I sincerely feel that the college should not be run on a pure business-orientated basis and I think that this is the case at the moment. I've basically have been given the already set, school fee and we don't even have, as parents, any interface in terms of determining what the fees should be or what and how they should actually be linked to inflation or whatever else. And that is actually sad.
- INTERVIEWER:** When you say you do not have interface with the college, you are talking in terms of fees. Are you saying that you have interface with other aspects of the college, such as its management?
- PARTICIPANT:** No, other then knowing the Rector, or having had interface, no I don't know
- INTERVIEWER:** Have you met the management of the College?
- PARTICIPANT:** Telephonic interface, only.
- INTERVIEWER:** Telephonic ... Do you know the names of any of them?
- PARTICIPANT:** Yes, but I cannot recall at the moment! It's Doctor somebody
- INTERVIEWER:** Have you met lecturers of your child?
- PARTICIPANT:** I have, once again, met some of the lecturers of my child, purely on the basis that we needed to query some of his results, or keep abreast of developments. And on that basis, Yes, but there has been no, or nothing arranged formally by the college where they actually have some sort of interface between lecturer and parent.
- INTERVIEWER:** Would you like to meet with the lecturers on a regular basis?
- PARTICIPANT:** Most certainly yes, but the thing is if you have an open channel of communication with the lecturers, via some sort of meeting that the college sets up, you will actually make that process much simpler. If the opportunities were presented.
- INTERVIEWER:** How do you think, if you were given the opportunities, how would you become involved in the activities of the college? What kind of input would you be able to make?
- PARTICIPANT:** Definitely in terms of extra-curricular activities. As a parent, I would definitely be able to be involved in committees set up for that purpose. I will also be able to, in terms of guidance and like I said, arranging some sort of presentation by people from the working environment, yes definitely I could become involved in those ways.
- INTERVIEWER:** So you do have access to people that could be of benefit to the college?
- PARTICIPANT:** Most certainly, yes.
- INTERVIEWER:** Earlier on, you spoke about the lecturers. Tell me more about this

- PARTICIPANT:** I don't ... not knowing definitely, but I seem to think, that a spectrum of lecturers that is representative of the students would understand the culture of the different students who attend the college. They definitely don't.
- INTERVIEWER:** So if you think that the culture of the students are not understood, how do you think the college could overcome these problems?
- PARTICIPANT:** Employing staff representation, of colour. Also getting people who understand the students at the college to visit the college. Like prominent community members, maybe even people to help the students with other problems. A college psychologist ... A college psychologist is part of the services that can be offered to the students.
- INTERVIEWER:** Do you know of any other services offered to students?
- PARTICIPANT:** I am not certain of other services being offered by the College other than the media center and other than that, it is a matter of attending classes for the chosen courses that you have enrolled for, and basically all that is offered.
- INTERVIEWER:** And the media center Do you think that the media center is adequate?
- PARTICIPANT:** For the courses that he attends, yes there is material available, but to what extent the material available generally for everything that is being offered, I'm not to certain about this.
- INTERVIEWER:** Do you believe that these services are sufficient for the students?
- PARTICIPANT:** I think I also spoke about a college psychologist, could be financial assistance, and so on ... The community could also help get involved with this ...
- INTERVIEWER:** I see, ... Do you believe then that if we have shared values amongst all of us, if we have a shared interest, we could possibly contribute ...
- PARTICIPANT:** Yes we could be united in our efforts. Raising that awareness amongst the community in exactly what the college does. Then most certainly, it will benefit the community and it will benefit the college as well. And our values would then be shared. At this point in time, it is a one-way street, where the college has basically got their mind set on what they need to achieve in terms of most probably a budget that they have, and I think that is basically how far they actually go in terms of getting involvement of the community, and that's not sufficient ...
- INTERVIEWER:** What do you think needs to be done?
- PARTICIPANT:** The building of a relationship whereby there is full parent involvement, which is, at this point in time, does not exist. And there is definitely the need for learners to be treated not just as paying students, or paying bearers who make up the budget at the end of the day, but also as members of the community who would, having been involved as stakeholders, get the community at large, also involved with the college.
- INTERVIEWER:** That actually concludes my interview with you. Before I conclude completely, would you like to say something ...
- PARTICIPANT:** Yes, definitely. Based on the answers that I have actually given you, I sincerely feel that Springs College, other than being viewed, at this point in time by myself, as purely a business unit, should look at community orientated and should, from a point of view of representation, in order to become community orientated, the representation at all levels, should be seriously looked at.
- INTERVIEWER:** I thank you very much for the interview.