

**ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY**

**VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN RURAL ZIMBABWE:  
THE CASE OF MUREWA DISTRICT**

**FACULTY OF HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE AND EDUCATION**

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**A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Anglia Ruskin University  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Submitted: August 2016**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere gratitude goes to my two supervisors, Dr Geraldine Davis and Dr Jaki Lilly whose unwavering support, guidance and challenging insights inspired me as I moved from one level to the next throughout the five years of study. The timely feedback and wise advice was invaluable in keeping me on track.

Special mention goes to The British Educational Leadership Management and Administration Society (BELMAS) who funded the final and crucial two years of my research study.

Profound thanks to my fellow brothers in the struggle, Dr Fungisai Nota, Dr Frederick Nyakudya, Dr Washington Karumazondo, Dr Bassam Omar and my dear sister Dr. Kumbirayi Rosalie Katsande, whose encouragement always came at the right time when it all seemed impossible.

I am very grateful to the government of Zimbabwe for valuing and showing interest in my study. The students and teachers who participated in this study deserve my profound appreciation.

To my beloved wife Cathrine, no words can express my deep appreciation for her kindness and understanding. Cathrine selflessly allowed me to devote five years to this study. I am deeply indebted to Cathrine for her care and affection when I needed it most.

I am particularly grateful to my mother, Mrs Tabitha Katsande, for her prayerful support, which kept me going and open to possibilities. My special thanks are also extended to my children, Nyasha, Vimbai, Tadiwa, Kevin and son-in-law Nicholas, who all clearly understood the challenge.

I dedicate this thesis to my father, the late Reverend Alfred K. Katsande, whose staunch commitment to bettering the lives of others and unwavering resilience in the face of adversity I admire and endeavour to emulate.

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

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As young people's opportunities in the digital and globalised world of work generally dwindle, the situation for rurally based young people in Zimbabwe gets increasingly complex. The Ministry of Youth, Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment reports that young people in Zimbabwe are the hardest hit by unemployment (Murinda, 2014). The 2012 Zimbabwe population census data indicates that young people aged 15-34 years constitute 84 per cent of the unemployed (Murinda, 2014). Governments in both industrialised and developing countries are calling for vocational education reform in the search for remedies for economic crises and youth unemployment. This thesis seeks to establish the place of VET in rural Zimbabwe and, from the perspective of students, teachers and education inspectors, the contemporary factors that influence attitudes to VET.

The methodology selected for this study is the explanatory case study approach. Six schools in Murewa district were selected for the study. The research methods included semi-structured questionnaires, focus groups and in-depth interviews with primary and secondary school students, teachers and education inspectors. This study makes methodological contributions to the effective use of multiple data collection methods.

My original contribution to knowledge is the exploration of the contemporary views of rurally based students and teachers whose voices are rarely heard in educational policy formulation. A disconnection was discernible between policy-makers, education inspectors, teachers and students. There is evidence that poor teacher motivation, the low status ascribed to VET and the way VET is delivered influence young people's attitudes. Some young people questioned the relevance of VET, whilst others viewed it as an alternative if the academic route failed. It emerged that many students are discouraged by the way VET is taught and its lack of relevance to their desired careers. Primary school students had more positive perceptions of VET than secondary school students. Lack of professional careers guidance was found to contribute to VET apathy. This study makes theoretical contributions to the VET agenda by proposing a framework of the key factors influencing the vocational student's learning journey and providing a foundation for perception and attitudinal transformation.

This study contributes to an ongoing review of the Zimbabwean education system, which is focusing on young people's needs and aspirations. This research will inform policy-makers, educationalists and industrialists about how VET can be tailored to meet young people's aspirations. The study will inform future research on effective careers

guidance and curriculum development and will apprise policy-makers of the institutional and cultural *status quo* of VET in Zimbabwean rural schools.

**Keywords**

Attitudes, perceptions, the relevance of VET, young people and work aspirations, vocational education and training

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS ABBREVIATIONS

AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BIBB	Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training
BSAC	British South Africa Company
BTECH	Business and Technology Education Council
CBET	Competence Based Vocational Education and Training
CDU	Curriculum Development Unit
Cedefop	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CGLI	City & Guilds is a global leader in skills development
CPVE	Certificate of Pre-vocational Education
DFEE	Department for Education and Employment
DFES	Department for Education and Skills
EFA	Education Funding Agency
EWP	Education with Production
FE	Further Education
FEFC	Further Education Funding Council for England
FREP	Faculty Research Ethics Panel
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GNVQ	General National Vocational Qualifications,
HE	Higher Education
HEXCO	Higher Education Examinations Council
HND	Higher National Diploma
IAG	Information Advice and Guidance
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ITAB	Industry Training Advisory Body
ITB	Industrial Training Boards
ITO	Industry Training Organisations

LEA	Local Education Authorities
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MOHET	Ministry of Higher Education and Technology
MSC	Manpower Services Commission
Nacro	National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders
NAMACO	National Manpower Advisory Council
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NCVQ	National Council for Vocational Qualifications
NFC	National Foundation Certificate
NGO	Non-governmental Organisations
NVQ	National Vocational Qualifications
NYP	National Youth Policy of Zimbabwe
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
QCG	Qualification in Careers Guidance
QIA	Quality Instruction in Informal Apprenticeships
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADCC	Southern African Development Coordination Conference
SDERU	Standards Development and Research Unit
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
TREE	Training for Rural Economic Empowerment
TVEI	Technical and Vocational Education Initiative
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCO-IBE	UNESCO-International Bureau of Education
UNESCO-UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNESCO-UNEVOC	UNESCO-International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UTC	University Technical College
VET	Vocational Education and Training
YOP	Youth Opportunities Programme

YTS	Youth Training Scheme
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union
ZIMSEC	Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council
ZIMSTAT	Zimbabwe National Statistics
ZJC	Zimbabwe Junior Certificate

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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

### ***1.0 Introduction***

The plethora of literature on Vocational Education and Training (VET) signifies the magnitude of the controversy that surrounded VET in the past and still does so in the present. Recent research has indicated a heightened interest in VET, which has seen many countries reviewing and reassessing its role and value. Despite extensive research on vocational education, the voices of students and teachers are rarely heard. This study focuses primarily on students', teachers' and education inspectors' experiences of VET. Using audio and questionnaire data gathered from November 2012 to August 2013 I explore their views, opinions and attitudes towards VET. My starting point is to trace the historical background of VET to ascertain the complex cultural and attitudinal developments of VET in rural Zimbabwe. I then examine VET developments in colonial Zimbabwe and draw comparisons with those in the former mother country, the United Kingdom (UK). A brief study of international experience of VET is also presented to provide insight into successful VET models. This introductory chapter explains my motivation for undertaking this study; defines VET and the research questions; explains the study's contribution to knowledge; and presents the structure of my thesis.

### ***1.1 Background and Motivation***

The new Zimbabwe majority government came to power in 1980 keen to redress the imbalances of the colonial regime by promoting local government, social services and economic growth in the former Tribal Trust Lands or Native Reserves (Gasper, 2008). The new government introduced industrial and developmental zones known as 'growth points' which were meant to be economic nuclei. The 'growth points' were deliberately created with the hope of stimulating industrial development and subsequently setting in motion a process of economic growth that would lead to improved quality of life in the depressed rural areas (Manyanhaire et al., 2009). It was hoped that the 'growth points' would help reduce the developmental gap between rural areas and urban areas. Despite the Zimbabwe government's concerted efforts the 'growth points' have yielded only limited returns.

As the socio-economic gap between rural and urban areas continues to widen, Zimbabwe's rural development programmes are increasingly coming under scrutiny.

Zimbabwe indisputably has a plethora of human and natural resources which remain untapped. The socio-economic *status quo* remains polarised. On one hand, there is unequal rural/urban development and unskilled school-leavers who fare badly in the informal sector due to lack of training, while on the other hand, industry is unhappy with university graduates who lack practical experience. Paradoxically, young people's failure to progress to tertiary education signals virtual failure to gain employment and participate actively in the economy.

Stephen Mpofu (2010) has reported in the Zimbabwean newspaper, 'The Herald' that the Minister of Small and Medium Enterprises Sithembiso Nyoni has endeavoured to give rural areas a new social and economic lease of life. Mpofu (2010) acknowledges that the 'growth points', introduced in 1980 have not risen to the challenge of becoming economic nuclei, instead they have remained monumental and underdeveloped. There is evidence of stagnation and retarded growth within the 'growth points' which have simply remained small service centres with a few backyard industries and bars. In the same vein, land reform, which raised the hopes of many communal farmers, is yet to win back Zimbabwe's reputation as the granary and bread basket of Southern Africa. This study seeks to establish or re-establish the place of vocational training in Zimbabwe's quest for economic growth and rural development and the factors that influence attitudes towards VET. There is evidence of a gap between leaving school and gaining qualification for employment.

**Figure 1.1: Political Map of Zimbabwe**



Source: Maps of the World (2012)

Map used with due permission of MapsofWorld.com

Zimbabwe is an agriculturally based landlocked country in Southern Africa abounding with a range of natural resources. It shares borders with South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Mozambique. The country is made up of eight provinces and Harare is the capital city (see figure 1.1). Murewa rural district is in Mashonaland East province and is situated between Mutoko in the east and Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe. Once dubbed ‘the bread basket of Africa’, Zimbabwe was a leading producer of maize, wheat, tobacco, sunflowers, groundnuts, sorghum, soya beans, deciduous and tropical fruits, and flowers (UNESCO, 2013-2015). In addition, livestock including cattle, goats, pigs, sheep and poultry are produced in both rural and commercial sectors (UNESCO, 2013-2015). In its heyday Zimbabwe had a vibrant mining sector based on large reserves of diamonds, platinum, gold, coal, asbestos,

copper, lithium, tin, iron ore, chrome, emeralds and amethysts (UNESCO, 2013-2015). The country also has a potentially thriving tourism sector, which benefits from abundant wildlife and five World Heritage sites (UNESCO, 2013-2015). Between 2000 and 2008 Zimbabwe experienced serious political instability and subsequently, an economic meltdown, which saw the country's economy shrink by approximately 50.3 per cent (UNESCO, 2013-2015). These developments led to a sharp rise in poverty and unemployment, infrastructure collapse and a colossal haemorrhage of human resources (UNESCO, 2013-2015). UNESCO (2013-2015) estimates that 3 to 4 million untrained, trained and experienced personnel left Zimbabwe for neighbouring countries between 2000 and 2008.

In both developing and developed countries young people are the hardest hit by economic hardship and unemployment. In Zimbabwe, Murinda (2014) and, in the UK, Aassve, Cottini and Vitali (2013) have found that economic crises have left young people at high risk of unemployment, poverty and financial difficulties. Following the 2008 global economic crisis, the period from 2010 onwards witnessed a worldwide demand for "a new approach to technical and vocational education and training in response to marked economic changes, continued technological change, increased demand for sustainable energy use, and social and demographic changes" (Catts, Falk and Wallace, 2011, p.1). In Europe, 2010 marked the end of the 10-year Lisbon Strategy of reform, which identified VET as key in the quest for a European 'knowledge economy' (Catts, Falk and Wallace, 2011, p.1). During the same period the Zimbabwe Ministry of Education was seriously questioning the country's system of education and reviewing the role of VET. In the same vein, UNESCO revealed in 2010 that the Zimbabwean education system was urban-based and not fit for purpose. The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) argued that VET provision must equip learners, irrespective of age or social background, with relevant skills and competences to combat skill shortages (Cedefop, 2011). Leading and developing economies in the world have over the past decades embraced apprenticeships and on-the-job training as vehicles for economic development. Despite global approval of VET, Cedefop maintains that VET has been viewed as a second-best option which carries a social stigma in many countries.

The purpose of my research is to examine the place of VET in rural Zimbabwe and the factors that influence attitudes to VET from students', teachers' and education inspectors' perspectives. Having worked in Murewa District for over 10 years as a secondary school teacher, I grew increasingly downhearted by the emphasis on

academic subjects at the expense of practical subjects (technical subjects). I was also dispirited by the growing number of students who were leaving secondary school without the required five O-Levels that would enable them to progress to further education or training. Failure to achieve the five academic O-Levels was not only resulting in the exclusion of thousands of rural students from further education and training, but it was also contributing to a rise in youth unemployment. I was inspired to investigate the experiences and feelings of students and their educators regarding the *status quo* in order to make recommendations to the Zimbabwean government concerning improvements needed in VET.

A review of the relevant literature revealed that the history of VET the world over is characterised by periods of high regard and periods of low regard. Amid the applause for, and criticism of, VET, the students are seen, but not heard (Needham and Papier, 2011). The views of students and teachers as regards VET have received little attention from academia. This study seeks to contribute to filling this gap in the academic literature, by investigating the views of students as regards vocational education in the course of the transition from primary to secondary school. This study also seeks the perceptions of teachers and education inspectors, who have the task of delivering and monitoring the vocational curriculum respectively.

It is within the context above that this study reviews contemporary perceptions of rural students who by and large have little or no negative feelings about colonial rule apart from what their parents may have imparted to them. Primary and secondary school students' opinions were sought to understand how they feel about vocational education and the factors that influence their opinions.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The fact that over 300,000 students who leave school, college and university cannot secure employment in Zimbabwe is a national tragedy, yet there continues to be a deliberate expansion of academic education at the expense of VET. This lack of interest in VET has been reflected in the low uptake of practical subjects in recent years. In 1996 it was reported that 167,937 candidates sat O-Level examinations in practical subjects compared to 682,090 in academic subjects (Mufanechiya and Mufanechiya, 2011). In 2013 only 211 candidates registered for music, 4,874 for food and nutrition, 1,533 for computer studies, 3,633 for business studies and just 43 for home management (Nleya, 2014). Despite this scenario the government has over the past decade paid lip service to the recommendations made by the 1999 Caiphas

Nzirasanga Commission of inquiry into education, which recommended experiential learning to foster the development of desirable traits and competences (Mupondi, 2015). The Nzirasanga Commission conducted a nation-wide consultation with specialists in education and training, industry and commerce, religious groups and other stakeholders. The commission's recommendations were described by Nzirasanga (1999) as radical. The commission recommend a complete overhaul of the education system, the curriculum, the examination system and the funding, in order to deliver quality education that is relevant to the needs of the country and the individual learner (Nzirasanga, 1999, p.xxv). Among the key recommendations the commission proposed:

- Nine years of basic education;
- Developing skills in information and communications technologies;
- Introducing vocational education in primary school and vocational training in secondary school, leading to professional, academic, practical and technical qualifications;
- Providing guidance and counselling;
- Giving special attention to marginalised groups, such as girls, the disabled and underprivileged children.

(Nzirasanga, 1999, pp.xxv-xxvi).

Most of the recommendations relating to vocational education have not been implemented which has raised questions of the government's commitment to VET development. Education ministers have called for a review of the country's education system, but students and teachers have been excluded from the consultation process. Thus the failure of the current education system to meet the needs of young people and to satisfy the country's labour needs, coupled with declining interest in practical subjects, among other issues, have raised questions that this study will seek to answer.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The overarching research question for this study is:

What is the place of VET in rural Zimbabwe and, from the perspective of students, teachers, and education inspectors, what are the contemporary factors that influence attitudes to VET?

Based on the themes derived from the literature review, the research topic will be addressed by seeking answers to the following research questions:

- What is the contemporary meaning and purpose of VET in rural Zimbabwe?
- What are the views and attitudes of students, teachers and education inspectors towards vocational training and employment?
- Do students' attitudes change in the course of the transition from primary to secondary school?
- What impact do historical and cultural influences have on students' aspirations and the status of VET qualifications?

#### ***1.4 Research Propositions***

This research began in September 2011 with the aim of examining and evaluating the role of VET in rural Zimbabwe. The research was carried out against the backdrop of a proposed review and reform of the Zimbabwe education system. This research sought to establish the contemporary place of VET and generate ideas and views to inform the review. The study addresses areas identified by other scholars as needing further research, thus it seeks to fill in gaps in knowledge.

This study will produce new information regarding students' opinions of, and attitudes towards VET in Murewa District. The teachers' and education inspectors' voices which have been silent or faint in previous research will be amplified. The role of VET and attitudes will be explored in the contemporary context of mass migrations and global economic turmoil.

The impact of school culture and the value ascribed to VET will be explored. While past research has established that VET was socially and economically beneficial, this study delves into its contemporary role to see if it has a place in students' minds, ambitions or career options.

#### ***1.5 Contribution to Knowledge***

This study aims to contribute to a better understanding of contemporary issues concerning the perceptions and opinions of students and teachers towards VET in rural Zimbabwe. The research addresses gaps in knowledge identified by leading researchers and policy-makers in the field.

In a speech delivered on February 10, 2011 at the Greatness Career Conference in Harare, the Minister of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture, David Coltart, acknowledged that throughout primary and secondary schooling students rarely make any decisions for themselves. They rely heavily on their parents and teachers, but on completing secondary school, they are instantaneously faced with “an incredibly confusing decision making process” of “what to do with their lives” (Coltart, 2011). The Education Minister reflected on how career decisions that students make at a crucial point in their lives are bound to be based on romantic notions rather than knowledge and understanding. The minister revealed a failure on the part of the education system to prepare students for the transition into further education and training or employment.

The ‘Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy’ (2007) highlighted the need for research on changing attitudes to vocational learning. In the same vein, the Convention on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2010 found that VET was undervalued despite its invaluable role in creating opportunities and raising achievement. This study will respond to observations by ‘Skills for Scotland’ and will also explore Edward, Weedon and Riddell’s (2008) recommendations for qualitative research using interviews to:

- seek young people’s learning experiences of the transition from school to employment or further education;
- explore their attitudes to different types of vocational learning;
- explore parents’ and family members’ influence on young people’s choices; and
- explore attitudes of teachers and education inspectors.

Threats and opportunities that learners face during their journey to qualifications will be explored (OECD, 2010). In view of the OECD’s recommendations this study will contribute to a better understanding of young people’s views and aspirations weighed against teacher and family expectations.

Furthermore, Edward, Weedon and Riddell (2008) called on educationists to recognise cultural and organisational factors in schools which hamper participation in VET. Rojewski (1997) advocated research into whether young people’s participation in VET was due to self-concept, academic ability or personal interests. This study sought vocational learners’ experiences in order to identify institutional factors that shape their attitudes towards VET and employment.



This research responds to the recommendations made by Atchoarena (2006), UNESCO-IBE (2010), Zimbabwe Education Minister, David Coltart (2011), Edward, Weedon and Riddell (2008), OECD (2010) and Rojewski (1997) *inter alia*. The study contributes new contextual knowledge surrounding Zimbabwe's rural vocational learners' attitudes, and their cultural and institutional experiences. The place of VET and issues that impact upon young people's career choices were investigated from the perspective of both staff and students. This thesis presents evidence of a dichotomy of views among students, teachers and education inspectors as regards the value and place of VET. The study identifies a discord between the vision of decision-makers and that of teachers of practical subjects.

Findings from the study aim to contribute to knowledge of the nature and value of Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) that rurally based students receive. The impact of school culture on attitudes towards VET is revealed. Unlike previous studies that focused on secondary and post-secondary school students alone, both primary and secondary school students were included in this study to gain an insight into whether or not students' views change during the transition to secondary school. Most importantly, the place of VET in rural Zimbabwe and attitudes towards it are explored within a contemporary context of increased rural-to-urban migration, emigration and global economic turmoil. This research presents not only contemporary views, but also rurally based in-depth qualitative data that will broaden knowledge and understanding of vocational education recipients' needs and aspirations in order to enable effective curriculum development and thoughtful school management.

This study makes methodological contributions to knowledge. It subscribes to a growing trend in educational research that upholds the case study approach and its use of multiple data collection methods. The present study suggests that the case study approach offers a valid and rigorous means to assess attitudes and the diverse educational experiences of students and educators.

My main contribution to knowledge has been to explore views and feelings of students and teachers who are rarely consulted in educational policy formulation in Zimbabwe. Their opinions and viewpoints are outlined and presented for policy-makers' consideration. This study aims to empower students, teachers and education inspectors whose sentiments have been revealed and will be fed back to the Zimbabwe Ministry of Education with the aim of developing effective education policies.

The study contributes new knowledge about the lack of shared vision and a disconnection between policy-makers, teachers and education inspectors, as evidenced by differences in opinion discussed in chapter 6, sections 6.1.3 and 6.4.8. Gender biases in VET were affirmed. There were statistically significant differences in interest between boys and girls in relation to English Literature, fashion and fabrics, textiles and design and food and nutrition. It was also confirmed that the relevance and status ascribed to VET and the way VET is delivered influences students' attitudes.

Furthermore, contrary to previous studies that suggested that students dislike VET, this study established that students from primary school age onwards appreciate VET. The literature reviewed mainly focused on secondary and post-secondary school students. This study sought opinions of both primary and secondary school students. The results indicate that their opinions differ, suggesting that changes occur during the transition to secondary school. Table 5.7 shows that fashion and fabrics, woodwork, food and nutrition and technical drawing were more popular with primary school students than secondary school students.

This study further draws attention to the plight of primary school students who showed limited awareness of the range of subjects on offer at secondary school, indicating lack of information, advice and guidance. Thus students were leaving primary school ill-prepared for secondary education. In fact, there was evidence that both primary and secondary school students had limited knowledge of the range of practical subjects on offer, and this also extended to some academic science subjects. This limited knowledge has been linked to lack of, or *ad hoc*, professional careers guidance. There is evidence that almost half of the participants in this study had not received careers guidance. The education inspectors also indicated that careers guidance was either non-existent or was only an annual event. Some students had unrealistic aspirations and showed lack of understanding of the demands of specific occupations.

Student placement in classes was found to be inconsistent and a bone of contention for students and teachers in the schools. Due to pressure to produce good results some teachers were selecting students who were presumed to be academically oriented and drilling them for academic examinations. In this way, the inequalities of the colonial era are inadvertently perpetuated.

On the basis of the evidence presented, I conclude by proposing a framework for

reviewing the factors affecting the vocational learner's journey to qualifications and employment (figure 6.1). In addition, I propose a framework for perception transformation, attitudinal change and cultural change (figure 6.2).

This study therefore generates new knowledge of rural students' views and aspirations, which is invaluable to the ongoing consultation and review of the Zimbabwean education system. The research could inform policy-makers, educators and industrialists of the *status quo* of VET in rural Zimbabwean schools. The Zimbabwean government has expressed interest in the findings of this study and the Permanent Secretary for Education has requested for a copy of the thesis to be submitted to the Ministry of Education. This knowledge could help the Zimbabwean government and other African nations who share similar societal contexts and economic infrastructures with relevant information to support future policy development.

### **1.6 Definition of Vocational Education and Training (VET)**

The term 'technical and vocational education and training (TVET)' has been adopted by UNESCO to define formal or informal learning experienced in educational institutions or in the work place (Catts, Falk and Wallace, 2011). The term also includes skills training undertaken by students before employment and 're-skilling' and 'up-skilling' vocational training undertaken by adults at work (Catts, Falk and Wallace, 2011. p. ix, citing UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2006). Maclean, Wilson and Chinien (2009, p.ix) see VET as something that is concerned with "the acquisition of knowledge and skills for the world of work to increase opportunities for productive work, sustainable livelihoods, personal empowerment and socio-economic development."

Bello, Danjuma and Adamu (2007) cite Okoro (1993) who defines vocational education as any learning that is primarily designed to prepare people for employment in specific jobs. Bello, Danjuma and Adamu (2007) describe VET as education that provides practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge of particular occupations in different sectors of economic and social life. Further, Bello, Danjuma and Adamu (2007) cite the Nigerian National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004), which identifies the following as key features of vocational education:

- It is an essential part of general education;
- It provides job-related training that prepares students for effective participation in the world of work;

- It propagates lifelong learning and prepares students for effective social and economic participation;
- It provides for eco-friendly and sustainable development;
- It is a vehicle for poverty alleviation.

Edward, Weedon and Riddell (2008) define vocational learning as education, training or learning designed to equip individuals with skills for specific occupations in order to prepare them for successful participation in the world of work. In a study of seven African countries Oketch (2007) found that VET is used to describe a range of learning experiences occurring in educational institutions and the workplace. VET prepares individuals for direct entry or re-entry into the labour market or for self-employment in both the rural agricultural sector and the urban informal sector (Oketch, 2007). The term 'informal sector' in this study will be used to refer to small-scale subsistence activities, including backyard industries, cross-border trading, street vending and waste-picking.

Gordon (ca2000) makes reference to *vocationalism* which they defined as, "the method used by schools, particularly high schools, to organize their curriculum so the students may develop skills, both vocational and academic, that will give them the strategic labour market advantages needed to compete for good jobs." Gordon (ca2000) notes that instead of being purely designed for direct entry into specific jobs, contemporary vocational programmes are combining an academic curriculum with technical skills training to enhance students' ability to move into further education or employment after high school.

The element of skills acquisition for sustainable employment resonates in all the definitions above. Bello, Danjuma and Adamu (2007), citing Abdullahi (1993), state that vocational education is expected, among other things, to assist students to acquire relevant occupational and technical skills, attitudes and work habits necessary for successful transition from school to occupational life. The contemporary trend towards combining academic and vocational training highlighted by Gordon (ca2000) indicates an interesting departure from traditional vocational programmes towards a holistic approach to learning. Zimbabwe embraced the combination of academic curriculum with vocational programmes in the 1990s in order to widen progression routes for young people.

For the purposes of this study I adopted Gordon's definition of VET which sits well with the vocationalisation of education programme introduced in Zimbabwe in the 1990s. It involved the embedding of practical subjects within the secondary school academic curriculum to enable students to study practical subjects alongside academic subjects.

### ***1.7 Limitations and Delimitations***

This study was limited to six schools in one district, which raises issues of generalisability. In the same vein, there are methodological limitations to this study in terms of generalisability to, and replication in, wider contexts, and these are detailed in Chapter 4 section 4.14. It should, however, be pointed out that the study had a rural focus and rural schools in Zimbabwe and, to a large extent in most African countries, are very similar in many respects so that the results of this study may be found to be applicable and transferrable to other rural settings.

Another limitation was the failure to interview the Minister of Education and the Permanent Secretary for Education, who had important national engagements. The Permanent Secretary was, nevertheless, able to delegate the Head of the Standards Development and Research Unit (SDERU), who had the latest and most comprehensive information concerning current developments in VET in the country, which added robustness to the study. The Permanent Secretary also expressed the Ministry of Education's interest in this study and requested that a copy of this thesis be submitted to the Ministry of Education on completion.

The challenge of potential teacher bias was encountered during the selection of student participants. The researcher was aware that teachers might want to select students whom they considered 'suitable'. The researcher requested minimum teacher involvement in the selection of students and allowed students to voluntarily sign up to take part.

There was also trepidation among some teacher participants who were anxious about possible repercussions if they expressed their views openly. Explanations of confidentiality, anonymity and the strict ethical boundaries within which the study was conducted helped allay these fears.

### ***1.8 Structure of Thesis***

In pursuit of students' and teachers' perspectives and experiences of VET in rural Zimbabwe, it was necessary to establish how VET has been provided in the past so as

to understand how people feel about it today. The starting point for this study was therefore a review of the historical background and related VET literature. Fieldwork was then undertaken to establish where we are (i.e. contemporary perspectives and experiences of students and educators). The discussion and recommendations chapters as a final point set out where we want to be and how we can get there.

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This chapter introduces the reader to the whole research project and acquaints them with the research questions. The reader is then taken through an overview of the research, the historical background and the study's contribution to knowledge. The methodology is introduced together with a glimpse of the forthcoming chapters in the form of brief descriptions of each chapter.

### **Chapter 2: Historical Background**

In chapter 2 the historical development of VET in Zimbabwe is traced from the colonial period through to independence. The historical background outlines the birth of a controversial vocational education policy in Zimbabwe and identifies the origins of prejudices that have bedevilled VET in Zimbabwe. The connection between colonial Zimbabwe and the former colonial power, the UK, is presented to draw comparisons between VET experiences of the two countries. An examination of some vocational success stories of countries like Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Australia that have developed strong vocational systems through apprenticeships, institution-based vocational programmes and partnerships with industry is also undertaken.

### **Chapter 3: Review of Related Literature and Research Studies**

Chapter 3 explores scholarly works on VET. Relevant literature is critically analysed to establish what is known in the field and identify gaps in knowledge. Areas for further study identified by other researchers are noted and placed within the context of this research. The review brings together facts and concepts relating to VET to provide a theoretical basis for this study.

### **Chapter 4: Research Design and Methodology**

The explanatory case study research design combining qualitative and quantitative data collection methods was adopted for this study and reasons for its adoption are explained in chapter 4. A description of the research instruments and how they were developed is outlined. Details of sample sizes, composition of participants and ethical considerations taken are also presented. The data analysis method selected is

described and justified. Limitations of the methodology and research instruments are acknowledged, including the measures taken to offset the limitations.

## **Chapter 5: Vocational Education in Rural Zimbabwe through the Eyes of Students, Teachers and Education Inspectors – Fieldwork Findings**

Chapter 5 presents the overall data analysis of the interviews, questionnaires and focus group discussions. The results of the research project are analysed and presented in the form of readable text, quotations, tables and visual illustrations. The research results are considered in light of the research questions and the underlying theoretical framework.

## **Chapters 6: Discussion and Main Conclusions**

Chapter 6 highlights key findings and outlines where this study sits in the body of research on VET. Research findings are cross-referenced with facts emerging from the literature to confirm or negate existing knowledge. The chapter discusses new knowledge emerging from the study in terms of the relationships between students, teachers and education inspectors; views of primary school students versus those of secondary students; teacher and parental influences; issues of IAG, as well as, addressing gaps in knowledge identified by previous VET researchers. Implications for educational policy and further research are underscored and form the basis for the recommendations presented in chapter 7.

## **Chapter 7: Recommendations**

This study makes 14 recommendations for policy-makers, teacher trainers, school managers, school teachers and students. The recommendations offer options for addressing the gaps, shortcomings and uncertainties in VET identified in this study. The suggestions aim to make a timely contribution to the ongoing review of Zimbabwe's education system. Based on the findings, recommendations are made in relation to the need for attitudinal and cultural changes towards VET; relevant careers advice focused on students; smooth transition from primary to secondary school; effective publicity; tailored VET models; and innovation in the learning and teaching of VET in addition to government commitment to VET through legislation and funding.

### **1.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has introduced the context within which this study was undertaken. The predicament of rurally based young people whose futures are blighted by the lack of career and training opportunities inspired this study. VET in Zimbabwe has been

susceptible to the prevailing political climate since the colonial period. In a nutshell, the political developments in Zimbabwe since the colonial epoch and the impact on education in general, and VET in particular, have been outlined in this chapter.

The research questions and the main features of VET within the context of this study have been defined and the key objectives of the study have been stated. This chapter has presented the study's contribution to the understanding of contemporary views of rurally based students and educators, which will inform policy-makers about the current situation of VET in rural Zimbabwe.

As every small-scale study has its limitations, those affecting this study have been acknowledged. The structure of the thesis has been provided to offer brief descriptions of each chapter and how the investigation has been crafted to seek answers to the research questions. Attention has also been drawn to the recommendations chapter which may be of interest to policy-makers and school managers.



## CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### ***2.0 Introduction***

A new Zimbabwean educational policy was ushered in at Independence in 1980, motivated by the strong social and political ambitions of the new black majority government. The 'wrongs' of the colonial legacy had to be 'righted' and the expectations of the masses had to be met, regardless. The post-independence years saw the rise of mass education, which brought Zimbabwe's educational system to unprecedented levels in Africa. That ascendancy involved radical policy and curriculum changes that heralded the demise of the colonial two-tier curriculum which, on one hand, had an academic 'bottleneck' favouring the whites and on the other, separate vocational training for black Zimbabweans. The new black majority government set in motion the 'free education for all' drive, which received popular acclaim from black Zimbabweans who, for nearly a century, had longed for equal access to educational opportunities and white-collar jobs. Vocational education did not receive the same acceptance because of its colonial legacy. However, by the mid-1990s the government had begun to rethink the place of VET in the education system, and it embarked on a vocationalisation initiative centred on school-based vocational education. Vocationalisation was aimed at stimulating economic growth, equipping students with employability and self-employment skills, while at the same time, eradicating the colonial stigma attached to vocational education. There was a deliberate attempt to boost the significance and relevance of vocational subjects in order to win the hearts and minds of industrialists, parents and students. Vocational subjects are referred to as 'practical subjects' in Zimbabwe, and this term will be used throughout this study to refer to metalwork, fashion and fabrics, textiles and design, food and nutrition, woodwork, technical drawing, building studies and agriculture. Practical subjects are pre-vocational subjects taken at Zimbabwe Junior Certificate (ZJC) and O-Level. In 1998 President Mugabe appointed Dr Caiphas T. Nziramasanga to lead a Commission of Inquiry into Zimbabwe's education system. The Nziramasanga Commission carried out a review of the education system and recommended a 'four-pathway' senior school system with deliberate emphasis on practical and technical subjects (Chitate, 2015). Having completed its task in 1999, the Commission recommended an outcomes-based, employment and skills-related curriculum with a broad base of subjects on offer (UNESCO-IBE, 2002). The recommendations made by the Commission were half-heartedly received and to date have not been fully implemented. According to Mandiudza, Chindedza and Makaye (2013) policy circulars produced by the director and secretary of education directing the implementation of the Commission's

recommendations were not disseminated until 2010. Secondly, continuous assessment of students in order to properly channel them into suitable pathways at O-Level was not adopted. Thirdly, there was no input into curriculum development from commerce and industry to ensure that relevant skills were being taught (Mandiudza, Chindedza and Makaye, 2013). The recommended experiential learning was never adopted as teachers were teaching for examinations. Fourthly, time was not set aside for students to undertake attachment/work experience in industry and commerce (Mandiudza, Chindedza and Makaye, 2013). Thus, lack of commitment by policy-makers and lack of relevant policies, coupled with lack of preparedness by schools to allocate time and material resources, hindered the implementation of the Commission's recommendations.

Zimbabwe's endeavour to vocationalise education was not the first and will not be the last. As far back as Adam Smith's 'Wealth of Nations' in 1776, through to Phillip Foster's 1965 'Vocational School Fallacy', James Callaghan's 1976 speech at Ruskin College Oxford, and more recently, the Wolf Report 2011, the great vocational education debate has raged unabated. Support for VET among scholars, educationists, politicians, economists and global development agencies such as UNESCO and the World Bank continue to dominate economic forums. Lillis and Hogan (1983, p.89) found that the endeavours that have been undertaken in many countries to vocationalise education have been designed "to alleviate unemployment; to reorientate student attitudes towards rural society; to halt urban migration; to transmit skills and attitudes useful in employment, etc." Zimbabwe has been no exception. The new majority government emerged from a repressive colonial regime imbued with Marxist-Leninist ideological fervour to redistribute the country's wealth, open up opportunities for young people and quench the nation's thirst for equal opportunities. Socialist countries have made efforts to reorient student attitudes towards work and society through structural changes in the educational system (Lillis and Hogan, 1983). The new Zimbabwean regime welcomed the principle of integrating education with productive labour and derived inspiration from Julius Nyerere's 'Education for Self-Reliance' reforms in Tanzania. Julius Nyerere, the founding President of the Republic of Tanzania, argued that the educational system should produce students who question the leaders and challenge government policy rather than being passive recipients (Nyerere, 1967). Nyerere advocated an educational system that would develop enquiring minds that could learn from others and adapt the knowledge to their society's needs.

Two decades after Zimbabwe's vocationalisation drive was set in motion, this study seeks to establish students' aspirations and viewpoints regarding VET as a vehicle for rural development and alleviation of unemployment. A glance at the historical development of VET in Zimbabwe and elsewhere can provide an insight into cultural and political circumstances that shape people's attitudes to it. As Bowker (2001, p.5) notes, "beliefs evolve out of previous cultural constructions as all beliefs are a part of their historical and cultural context." Historical and theoretical perspectives discussed in this chapter will show that in both the developed and developing worlds vocational education has been subject to different initiatives and philosophies. According to West and Steedman (2003), this chequered past and rollercoaster character of VET has caused confusion, anxiety and cynicism amongst young people, parents, employers, and education and training providers.

Vocational education has historically played second fiddle to academic education and, as such, attitudes have generally been less favourable towards VET. The colonial two-tier education system in Zimbabwe did not aid the matter as VET became associated with colonial imbalances. Thus the negative connotations attached to VET have been passed on from generation to generation. Research findings have established close links between cultural stereotypes and students' inspirations or aspirations (Usher and Kober, 2012). These studies have revealed that feelings of discrimination have the potential to lower the confidence of students of colour leading to academic disengagement (Usher and Kober, 2012). Among other aims, this study sought to investigate whether the historical and cultural prejudices regarding VET affect students in primary school and whether this persists into secondary school.

In order to gain a better understanding of the development of VET in Zimbabwe it is pivotal to look into the historical background, both in Zimbabwe and internationally. This chapter traces the development of VET in Zimbabwe from the colonial epoch to the period after independence. As a former colony of Britain, the Zimbabwe education system in general and VET in particular, bears a resemblance to that of the former mother country. The development of VET in the UK will thus be explored to establish the external factors that influenced the development of VET in Zimbabwe.

### ***2.1 The Historical Legacy and the Development of VET in Zimbabwe***

A policy review on Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Zimbabwe, commissioned by UNESCO for the Ministry of Higher Education and Technology (MOHET, 2005), brought to light interesting historical insights into the evolution of VET

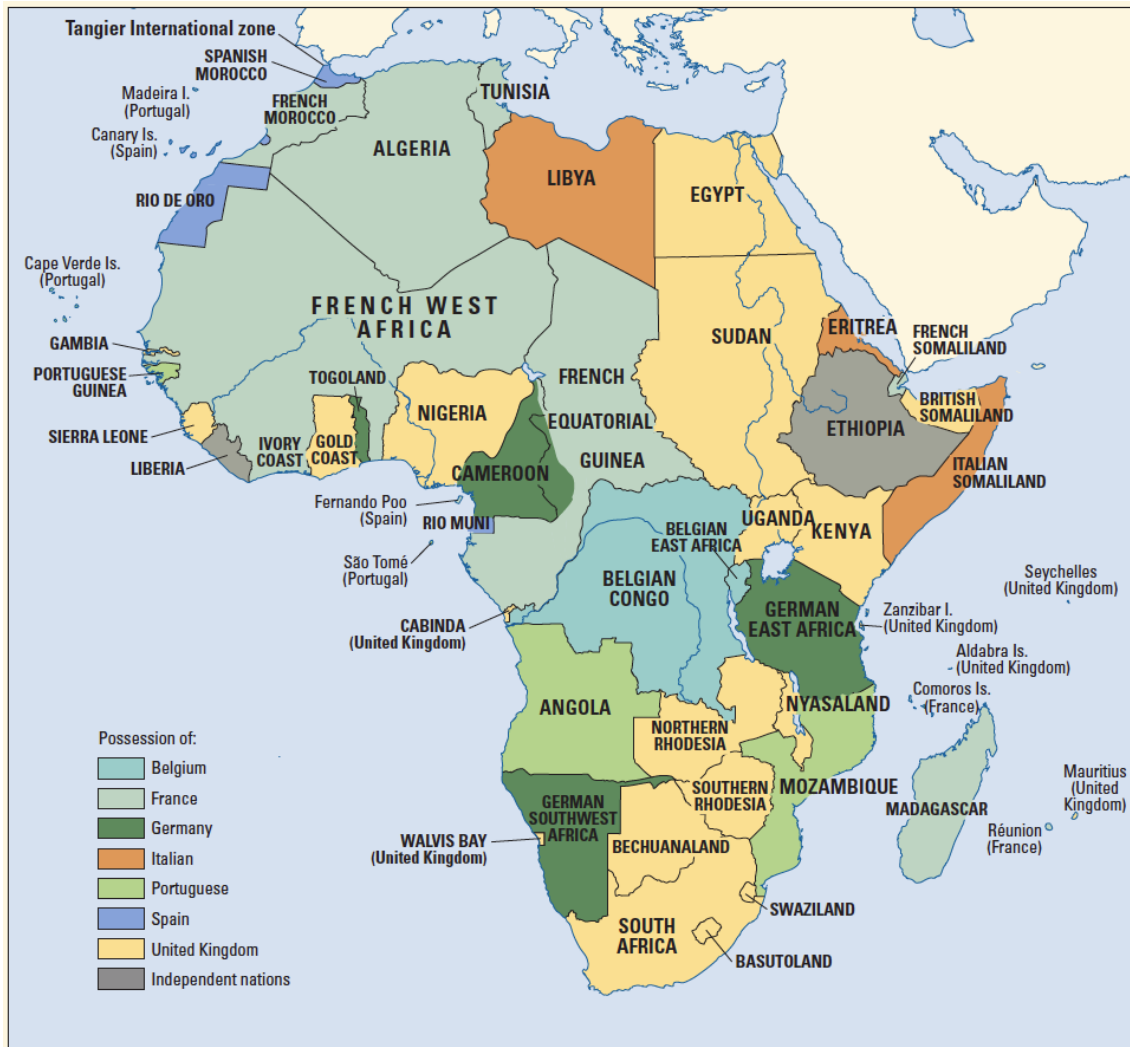
in Zimbabwe. The review traces the origins of VET back to the pre-colonial eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the Rozvi and Munhumutapa Empires where elaborate skills-based economies and apprenticeship systems thrived. Trades, such as forge-work, ironmongery, sculpture, basketry, pottery, architecture, weaving, art and painting, were the mainstay of the economy (MOHET, 2005). The advent of colonialism dismantled the indigenous skills-based economies to make way to a new mercantilist economic dispensation.

By the 1880s powerful European nations had taken direct control of most parts of the world with the exception of the African continent. As late as 1870, only 10 per cent of Africa had been colonised as it was regarded a 'dark continent' not suitable for settlement by Europeans (David, 2011). Africa became the focus of new commercial interest and cutthroat competition, which has been best described as the 'Scramble for Africa' was ushered in. The German Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck convened a meeting of 13 European powers to decide Africa's destiny and to regularise territorial claims in Africa. On the agenda was the commitment to defeat slavery (David, 2011). The abolition of the slave trade between 1562 and 1807 introduced new social, political and commercial developments to the African continent. Before his death in 1873, the distinguished missionary-explorer David Livingstone expressed the need to eradicate the slave trade. Livingstone was of the conviction that Africa could only be liberated from the bondage of the slave trade through the 'three Cs' - commerce, Christianity and civilisation (David, 2011). David (2011) was rather sceptical of the philanthropic crusade and saw the need to protect old markets and the opening up of new commercial hubs as the real forces behind abolition. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) argues that the economic crisis in Britain, which was fuelled by overproduction and underconsumption, prompted the need for new markets, new sources of raw materials and job opportunities.

Britain's pressing desire to safeguard commercial interests in India made Egypt and South Africa key strategic territories. The acquisition of Egypt and South Africa excited imperialist adventurers like Cecil Rhodes, who advocated the expansion of the British territory in Africa and visualised a Cape-to-Cairo railway (David, 2011). The discovery of diamonds and gold in Transvaal, South Africa in the mid-1880s magnified the commercial potential of Africa thus encouraging Britain to bring under its control more than 30 per cent of Africa's population (David, 2011). Britain's share of the African territory comprised Egypt, the Sudan, British East Africa (Kenya and Uganda), British Somaliland, Southern and Northern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe and Zambia), Bechuanaland (Botswana), Orange Free State and the Transvaal (South Africa), Gambia, Sierra

Leone, Nigeria, British Gold Coast (Ghana) and Nyasaland (Malawi). Zimbabwe (formerly Southern Rhodesia depicted in figure 2.1) was acquired by the British South African Company (BSAC) for Britain in 1890.

**Figure 2.1: Colonial Map of Africa in 1912**



Source: World Bank (2009, p.284)

The BSAC was a mercantile company with capitalist interests founded by Cecil Rhodes and modelled on the East India Company (Boddy-Evans, 2014). On 29 October 1889 the BSAC was granted a 25-year charter by the British Prime Minister Lord Salisbury to annex and develop the territory for European settlement in south-central Africa (Boddy-Evans, 2014). It was envisaged that British taxpayers would not be expected to fund the administration and protection of settlers in the territory; instead, they would be funded by profits from diamond and gold investments (Boddy-Evans, 2014).

**Table 2.1: The Colonisation of Zimbabwe Timeline**

**1888 October 29:** Lord Salisbury, British Prime Minister, granted Cecil Rhodes a charter for the BSAC.

**1889 July:** Queen Victoria granted the BSAC a royal charter to rule Zimbabwe.

**1889:** Cecil Rhodes and his associates led by the concession-seeker, Charles Rudd, deceived King Lobengula into signing away his jurisdiction over the Ndebele kingdom through the infamous and fraudulent Rudd Concession (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009).

**1889 October 29:** Cecil Rhodes founded a chartered company (the BSAC) using the Rudd Concession as the legal basis and justification for colonising Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). The BSAC had the rights to occupy, settle and govern territories and raise its own police force.

**1890 September 13:** Cecil Rhodes's associates symbolically concluded the occupation of Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) by hoisting the Union Jack flag in Mashonaland.

**1890-1899:** Under Cecil Rhodes's leadership British settlers moved into Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) from South Africa and usurped huge tracts of arable land.

**1923-24:** BSA Company rule ended and was replaced by Responsible Government. In 1924 The British Colonial Office took over.

**1953 -1963:** The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was formalised until its demise in 1963.

**1962:** The Judges Commission introduced a technically-oriented F2 curriculum parallel to the more the academically-oriented F1 stream

**1965 November 11:** The Rhodesia Front Party made a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI).

**1966 April 16:** Rhodesian PM Ian Smith broke diplomatic relations with Britain.

**1970 March 1:** The white government of Rhodesia declared independence from Britain.

**1972-1979:** The liberation struggle began. Black liberation fighters engaged in guerrilla warfare against minority white rule.

**1979 December 21:** Following negotiations between ZANU and ZAPU and the Rhodesia government, represented by Bishop Abel Muzorewa and Ian Smith, the Lancaster House Agreement was signed in London ending segregationist rule in Rhodesia.

**1980 April 18:** Zimbabwe attained formal political independence from Britain with Robert Mugabe as Prime Minister.

Adapted from: Timelines of History (2013)

The BSAC pursued a racially and gender segregated, elitist and academically oriented VET policy, similar to that of South Africa, which supported the company and its shareholders' commercial interests at the expense of those of the Africans (Zengeya, 2007, citing Mungazi, 1994). On assuming power in 1923 the Responsible Government promoted policies from Britain, which in essence maintained the BSAC's racial and academic subjects bias (Zengeya, 2007). Native Commissioners H.S. Keigwin and Harold Jowitt are credited with introducing technical and vocational education in the then Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in the 1920s, which saw the birth of Tjolotjo and Domboshawa, building studies, carpentry and agriculture training centres (MOHET, 2005, citing Atkinson, 1972, 1985). Keigwin strongly supported government-sponsored education for Africans to train as clerks, builders, policemen, among other occupations (Summers, 2002).

The development of VET in Zimbabwe was further hampered by the creation of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (now Malawi) in 1953. The Rhodesian government took charge of VET provision for Europeans and ensured that it was adequately funded, while VET for Africans was placed under the control of the Federal government and consequently suffered funding deficiencies as resources had to be shared across the federation. The 1960s saw the revolutionary, albeit controversial, introduction of the F2 system in secondary education. The 1962 Judges Commission instituted this technically oriented curriculum (the F2) in parallel with the more highly regarded and well-funded academically oriented F1 stream (MOHET, 2005). The new system was greatly despised by black people for its racial bias and lack of prospects for progression. Black people widely viewed technical F2s as inferior and specifically designed for them but not for white people, Asian people or 'mixed-race' people (Shizha and Kariwo, 2011). These F2s catered for 35 per cent of the 50 per cent of black primary school leavers and were considered to be for the less academically gifted students (Mupinga, Burnett and Redmann, 2005, citing Chinyamunzore, 1995). F2 graduates could not proceed to further education or training but were expected to return and use the acquired skills in the then 'reserves' or rural areas (MOHET, 2005).

The Federation collapsed in 1963 due to the Rhodesian government's reluctance to respond to Britain's demand for African political participation (Zengeya, 2007). The situation was exacerbated by the ascendance to power of the Rhodesia Front Party in 1965, which was determined to exclude the black majority from political involvement. The Rhodesia Front unleashed more racist policies than ever before (Zengeya, 2007).

The colonial government was not prepared to invest in African education, arguing that this was unsustainable. There was also a general fear that an increase in the number of educated and unemployed Africans would lead to political strife (Weinrich, 1973). Funding for African children fell well below what was spent on European children - £8 was spent on every African child, while £120 was allocated to every European child in school (Weinrich, 1973). The imbalance in the distribution of resources was evident in 1965 when the Rhodesian government spent £6.6 million on the white population and the same amount on the African population which was 10 times larger (Hansard, 1967). The Minister of Education justified the unequal funding allocation in 1969 arguing that allocating the funds equally to both 'races' would increase the benefit for the African child by just £9 while the European child would lose £98 a year. Christian missionaries, who have been heavily criticised for helping to facilitate the signing of the Rudd Concession (see table 2.1), are credited with advancing African education in Rhodesia faster than in most African countries. Private Christian mission schools by 1967 catered for 90 per cent of all African education with only 10 per cent in government schools (Weinrich, 1973). Conversely, only 17 per cent of European children went to private schools, while the rest went to government schools (Weinrich, 1973).

In an act of rebellion against the mother country, the Rhodesian Prime Minister, Ian Smith, made a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) on 11 November 1965. Britain's failure to take action to end UDI gave an impetus to African nationalist movements led by Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole and Robert Mugabe of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), and Joshua Nkomo's Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), who resorted to an armed struggle against the white-settler Rhodesians (Boddy-Evans, 2014).

During the liberation struggle the African nationalists derived inspiration from socialist and Pan-Africanist ideologies. On gaining independence in 1980, the black majority government, accordingly, took action to root out the racial inequalities characteristic of the colonial regime. VET was recognised as an effective agent to promote decolonisation and social transformation (Zengeya, 2007). VET policy reforms that were rooted in Pan-Africanist/socialist philosophies were initiated to facilitate the democratisation of education and the vocationalisation of the secondary school curriculum which had remained largely academic under colonial governments (Zengeya, 2007). Thus VET in Zimbabwe went through dramatic changes in the first decade after independence.



The twentieth century colonial era was thus characterised by colonial inequalities and growing tension between blacks and the colonial government. Vocational education in Zimbabwe was fostered by white missionaries who wished to raise the standards of living of Africans and equip them with arithmetic, reading and writing skills so that they could access religious materials. The colonial government for their part wanted blacks who were educated enough to be employed as subordinate and faithful servants providing cheap labour for the settler regime (Shizha and Kariwo, 2011; Chinyamunzore, 1995). Thus up to 1980 the education curriculum in Zimbabwe was racially and politically controlled to stifle black competition and safeguard white supremacy (Chinyamunzore, 1995, citing Nherera, 1994 and Zvobgo, 1994). A separate system for whites, Asians and 'mixed-race' people was developed, giving rise to technical high schools, like Allan Wilson in Salisbury (Harare), and post-secondary technical institutions, like the Salisbury Polytechnic College and the Bulawayo Technical College. These colleges trained highly qualified artisans and technicians who qualified with City and Guilds qualifications from the United Kingdom. The Luveve Technical College was established in Bulawayo exclusively for blacks to produce black skilled workers. Unfortunately, the Luveve College was closed down due to the competition the black skilled workers were creating for their white counterparts (MOHET, 2005).

It is not surprising therefore that, on attaining independence, the new black majority government set out to redress the racially divided VET system by abolishing the F2 schools in 1981. The new socialist-inclined government acted to correct the perceived injustices of the colonial regime by transforming the curriculum with the aim of promoting social mobility. There was a general feeling that VET perpetuated the social inequalities of the colonial era hence there was less emphasis on technical education in the early 1980s (Chinyamunzore, 1995). The situation changed in the 1990s as emphasis shifted back to vocational and technical education, leading to more vocational colleges and youth training centres being established. Prominence was given to the creation of employment and the indigenisation of the economy in order to incorporate blacks who had been excluded from the national economy.

Chinyamunzore (1995) concludes that the devolution and evolution of the education curriculum in Zimbabwe over the years has left educationists in a quandary, which prompts the following questions:

- Should Zimbabwe revisit the colonial F2 type of vocational training to tackle unemployment? (Mupinga, Burnett and Redmann, 2005, citing Nherera, 1999).
- What are students' and parents' thoughts about reverting to the F2 system?
- Could F2 vocational training be a vehicle for rural youth empowerment?

Though the colonial system was designed to keep the black population in the rural areas and allow them to develop separately, it is worth exploring whether the same idea could be adopted for rural development. Mupinga, Burnett and Redmann (2005) uphold the World Bank's 1997 recommendation for Zimbabwe to review the curriculum and revisit the academic (F1) and technical (F2) secondary school systems. Rising unemployment in Zimbabwe has prompted some people to support the infamous F2 system. Tilak (2002) cites Thomas Balogh (1969) who argued that technical and vocational education was vital to rural youth and ideal for rural socio-economic development. Advocates of VET see it as the means to diversify the secondary education curriculum thus reducing unemployment and the higher education bill (Tilak, 2002). Boateng (2012) citing Lewin (1997) holds the conviction that governments in developing countries and the developed world should invest in VET so as to:

- Increase relevance of education by teaching skills and knowledge that enable individuals to fulfil society's needs;
- Offer options and opportunities to individuals who cannot pursue the academic route, thus reducing unemployment;
- Improve the skills of the working population leading to increased economic development;
- Increase well-paid job opportunities for the working population thereby reducing poverty;
- Improve employment prospects of VET trainees thereby transforming people's attitudes towards vocational qualifications.

This represents a departure from the traditionally held view in the earlier historical period which was dismissive of VET's possible contribution.

It was evident during the colonial period that graduates from the well-funded technical high schools and technical colleges graduated with superior qualifications and secured better, more highly paid jobs. Thus in 1997 the World Bank recommended a review of Zimbabwe's curriculum in terms of the role of vocational and academic education.

## ***2.2 Vocational Education in the United Kingdom: Legacy of the Mother Country***

The historical background outlined above has shown how colonialism influenced the development of a controversial vocational education policy in Zimbabwe. In order to understand the controversies and turbulence associated with VET, we must explore how and why VET has developed over time in the UK. As Wollschläger and Guggenheim (2004, p.6) put it, "to decide where we are going, we must find out where we are coming from." It is important to establish the connection between colonial Zimbabwe and the mother country, the UK, in order to have a fuller picture of the factors influencing people's attitudes and perceptions of VET. In this section I consider the development of VET in the UK and Zimbabwe. The past colonial relationship between Zimbabwe and the UK provides an opportunity to draw parallels and identify divergences to widen understanding of shared experiences and to remove parochialism from this study (Maringe, 2005). The challenges that have bedevilled VET in the UK can shed light on the current situation in Zimbabwe and provide lessons for the future of VET in Zimbabwe. In addition, this study acknowledges that different countries offer different models of VET, and these models have different strengths and weaknesses. To enhance the opportunities to learn from models used by other countries, this section also explores how other countries cater for the youth cohort that does not take the higher education (HE) pathway. In this way, comparisons of VET delivery in Australia, Germany and the UK will be drawn to enable a broader understanding of existing models.

In order to put everything into perspective, it is worth taking a historical tour of the UK's vocational education and the key milestones. The main international influence on the development of VET policy in Zimbabwe, according to Zengeya (2007), came from the UK and South Africa. The Industrial Revolution, which began in the second half of the eighteenth century in the UK, brought new labour demands and prompted the UK government to formulate a national education system that could provide a labour force possessing the skills needed in the emerging industries (Gillard, 2011). Notable landmarks in the development of VET in the UK include the Royal Commissions that were held at the end of the nineteenth century. The Royal Commissions acknowledged the need to invest in technical skills to support the new economic dispensation and

argued for a tripartite system of public, grammar and technical schools. This argument had a huge influence on education in the early twentieth century until opinion shifted in support of comprehensive schooling in 1965 following the Newsom Report. Middle-class parents and proponents of social justice and equality criticised the shortcomings of the tripartite system and supported comprehensive schooling (Chitty, 1989). Following this, the much-celebrated Ruskin Speech of 1976, delivered by the Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan at Ruskin College Oxford, heralded the Great Debate on vocational education. That debate gave birth to major reforms in further education from 1976 to the turn of the century. The period from 1977 to 1989 saw incredible changes; among them were the introduction of 25 training schemes and the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), aimed at 14-18 year olds (Gillard, 2011). These developments led to the formation of the Manpower Services Commission and the introduction of National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). This 'turbulent history', as West and Steedman (2003 p.12) put it, ushered in a very wide range of courses, awards and institutions, which fuelled the debate on the role of vocational education.

This historical legacy had a bearing on the colonial Eurocentric educational system in the then Rhodesia, which was strongly tuned to that of the mother country up to independence in 1980. There was a close resemblance between vocational education policy in colonial Zimbabwe and the UK, so much so that developments in the latter had ripple effects in Zimbabwe. After Southern Rhodesia's union with South Africa was rejected in a referendum on 27 October 1922, the Responsible Government looked to the mother country for policy guidance and Commissions of Enquiry chairpersons were largely recruited from the UK (Zengeya, 2007). Incidentally, VET policy was greatly influenced by developments in the UK to the extent that the technical college curriculum that was introduced in the late 1920s, which was originally South African, evolved into City and Guilds of London Institute syllabuses (Zengeya, 2007, citing Technical School Magazines, 1930-1950). Vocational education policy in colonial Zimbabwe was based on Victorian principles and for a hundred years it was devoid of local focus and clarity (Zengeya, 2007). As a result VET failed to provide for Zimbabwe's training needs. Similarly, by 1880, the VET institutions in the UK were under fire for failing to meet society's and individuals' needs (Zengeya, 2007, citing Ensor, 1968 and Kelly, 1962).

Education and training in the UK began as unregulated private enterprise and was gradually taken over by local education authorities (Zengeya, 2007). VET in the UK was characterised by technical training in schools and colleges, and apprenticeships.

VET policy and development in the UK was largely centred on traditional apprenticeships (Zengeya, 2007). The Elizabethan 1563 Statute of Artificers is considered to be the starting date for the history of British vocational education and training (Foreman-Peck, 2004). The passing of the Statute of Artificers of 1564, which aimed at standardising the training of artisans, has been seen as the first formal VET policy statement in the UK (Zengeya, 2007, citing Kelly, 1972 and Good, 1960). The 1564 statute was followed by several education bills, notably, the Elementary Education Act of 1870, which gave birth to 2,500 school districts, followed by the Education Act of 1880, which ushered in compulsory education up to age 10 (Zengeya, 2007, citing Ensor, 1968) and the Education Act of 1902, which subsequently brought to an end the 2,568 school boards and brought secondary and technical schools under Local Education Authority (LEA) control. Additionally, the Education Act of 1918 increased government funding for LEAs, and the Education Act of 1944 led to the formation of a Ministry of Education replacing the Board of Education (Zengeya, 2007, citing Wilson, 1992 and Ensor, 1968). Butler's 1944 Education Act represents a key milestone in the development of state-funded UK education. This Education Act provided for the development of a tripartite system of education comprising grammar schools, secondary technical schools and secondary modern schools (Hart, Moro and Roberts, 2012). The 11+ examination taken at the end of primary school or age 11 determined the type of school a child would attend and their career pathway. The grammar schools were intended for academically inclined children and offered an academically oriented curriculum focusing on subjects such as mathematics, science, literature and languages (Hart, Moro and Roberts, 2012). The secondary technical schools were designed for children with a technical or scientific flair and focused on applied mechanical sciences and engineering, while the secondary modern curriculum offered practical and basic subjects, such as arithmetic, woodwork, metalwork and domestic work (Hart, Moro and Roberts, 2012). Grammar schools prepared students for entry to university, the professions and non-manual work, while the vocationally oriented technical schools prepared students for entry into skilled work in industry (Heath and Jacobs, 1999).

The 1944 UK Education Act did not produce the envisaged technical schools (Martin, 2015). Between 1947 and 1964 only 275 poorly staffed and under-resourced technical schools were on average in existence at any one time (Hart, Moro and Roberts, 2012). Despite the Act's failure to result in the creation of the intended technical schools, day-release courses in engineering, craft construction and manufacturing delivered by the City and Guilds of London Institute (CGLI) and linked to apprenticeships had been

introduced in further education colleges by the 1960s. These were supported by several Industrial Training Boards set up under the 1964 Industrial Training Act (West and Steedman, 2003). Within the next two decades the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) courses were born in 1983 out of a merger of the Business Education Council and the Technology Education Council. BTEC courses had a wider vocational thrust than CGLI and were designed to progress students from secondary to sub-degree level. The BTEC also developed full-time courses leading to diplomas rather than the part-time certificate courses. By the late 1980s BTEC was offering full-time level 2 vocational qualifications, and advanced-level National Diplomas as well as Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) delivered by further education colleges and polytechnics (West and Steedman, 2003).

The UK tripartite system made up of grammar, secondary technical and secondary modern schools has striking similarities with the technically oriented F2 and the academically oriented F1 streams introduced in colonial Zimbabwe in 1962, albeit for different reasons. The UK Education Act pronounced the principle of universal and free secondary education for all, raised compulsory education from age 10 to 16 and introduced the concept of continuing education or further education (Martin, 2015; Zengeya, 2007). The provisions of the UK Education Act are also comparable to those of Zimbabwe's post-independence Education Act 2004, which protected every child's right to education. Both acts introduced compulsory and free education. In the UK, as in Zimbabwe, the academic pathway was generally viewed as more desirable by most parents. The 11+ IQ examinations were seen to embed social class divisions in the UK, while in colonial Zimbabwe a similar examination was seen by blacks as entrenching racial imbalances. Thus the Labour government's ascendance to power in 1964 and the 1968 Education Act heralded the demise of the tripartite system and the advent of mixed-ability comprehensive education in the UK. In Zimbabwe the black majority government abolished the two-tier F1/F2 system. The 1979 Education Act in Zimbabwe replaced the F2 system and transformed the secondary school curriculum into a predominantly academic one (Bvekerwa et al., 2011).

As in colonial Zimbabwe, technical schools in the UK between 1947 and 1964 lacked qualified teachers and adequate funding and were comparatively few in number, averaging 275 (Hart, Moro and Roberts, 2012). Critics of the three-way education system lambasted it for reinforcing social class divisions between middle-class and working-class children. The system was found to favour children from middle-class backgrounds who outperformed working class children in the 11+ examination (Hart,

Moro and Roberts, 2012; Trowler, 2003). Middle-class children were more likely to derive inspiration from their family background to aspire to attend a grammar school than their working-class counterparts. Middle-class parents were more likely to have higher regard for secondary and university education, as well as professional and managerial careers for their children (Hart, Moro and Roberts, 2012). In addition, middle-class families could afford to reside within the catchment area of a grammar school and could also afford extra tuition to help their children with early reading and out-of-class remedial work (Hart, Moro and Roberts, 2012, citing Vernon, 1957). Consequently, grammar schools became a preserve of middle-class children, while the secondary modern schools were predominantly for working class children. While the UK system was criticised by the working classes for entrenching social class divisions, the colonial Zimbabwean system was criticised by black people for embedding racial divisions. The systems in the two countries had similar outcomes that resulted in negative attitudes towards vocational education. Children who did not pass the 11+ examination were viewed by teachers and parents as failures. The children also considered themselves to be lacking in some way and this perception often became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Thus detractors condemned the random choice of age 11.

The criticism that the Zimbabwean education system has faced in recent years bears a striking resemblance to the criticism levelled against the UK's VET institutions in the 1880s. Such institutions were criticised for failing to meet individuals' and society's needs, which prompted the passing of the Technical Instruction Act of 1889 empowering councils to levy industry in order to fund the expansion of VET (Zengeya, 2007, citing Ensor, 1968 and Kelly, 1962). Until 1964 VET was funded by employers. The Industrial Training Act of 1964 heralded the UK government's involvement in VET, which was evidenced by the establishment of 24 Industrial Training Boards (ITBs) (Zengeya, 2007, citing Kelly, 1962 and Wilson, 1992). The Industrial Training Act of 1964 was superseded by the Employment and Training Act of 1973 which transferred VET administration and funding from industry to the government and replaced ITBs with the Manpower Services Commission (MSC), inspired by the German dual system of education and training (Zengeya, 2007).

The 1970s represent a key landmark in the development of vocational education in the UK. In 1976 James Callaghan ignited a national debate on the UK's education and examination systems. He raised concerns over the introduction of informal teaching methods whose outcomes were inconsistent and questionable in some instances. He drew the nation's attention to the need for accountability in the management of

resources and the inspectorate's responsibility for maintaining national standards (Gillard, 2011). Callaghan invited the nation to re-examine the connection between parents, schools and industry and challenged politicians to address the issue of a National Curriculum (Gillard, 2011). He lamented industrialists' criticism of school leavers' lack of relevant skills. Paradoxically, university and polytechnic graduates were shunning industry in favour of academia and the civil service.

As in colonial Zimbabwe, the education system in the UK tended to be used by dominant groups to perpetuate inequality and preserve their privileges. Dating back to the beginning of the eighteenth century, as Gillard (2011) observes, educating the common people was not favoured by the privileged classes who believed that educating the masses would raise their aspirations and destabilise the *status quo*. Gillard (2011) cites Chitty (2007, p.14) who asserts that "proponents of liberal political economy objected to all forms of education for the poor - and particularly Charity Schools - as dangerous and misconceived prototypes of benevolence." Callaghan criticised the UK education system for aiming to provide children from inferior backgrounds with just enough education to earn a living wage in industry. He further questioned the controversial examinations system, which disadvantaged less academically inclined students who had to leave school at 16 before realising their full potential. In Zimbabwe, colonial education for black children was designed to equip them with enough knowledge to earn a living in the rural areas or secure lower-paid employment in industry without creating competition for the privileged whites.

Callaghan's speech greatly influenced UK educational policy. It heralded a change of policy, called for a change of culture and a movement away from preserving of the privileges of the few members of the wealthy classes towards encouraging widening participation and promoting the talents of all children. This development is comparable to post-independence Zimbabwe's 'education for all' policy aimed at addressing colonial inequalities.

With youth employment rising, Callaghan's speech gave birth to new educational reforms (Atkins, Flint and Oldfield, 2011). The era of the 'new vocationalism' came into being characterised by the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP), Youth Training Scheme (YTS), Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), and the Certificate in Pre-Vocational Education (CPVE) (Atkins, Flint and Oldfield, 2011). The 'new vocationalism' set in motion an economically driven education policy which saw the Department of Education and Science (DES) ceding vocational programmes to



industrial bodies. The Department for Industry created TVEI while the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) took charge of YTS programmes (Atkins, Flint and Oldfield, 2011). By the mid-1970s the MSC was suffering as a result of unemployment and reduced industrial training emanating from the Thatcher government's economic restructuring programme (Zengeya, 2007, citing Wilson, 1992 and Ainley and Green, 1996). The number of apprenticeships was drastically reduced as a result of the decline of manufacturing industry, giving way to the YOP and the YTS introduced in 1978 and 1983, respectively. The Manpower Services Commission championed the TVEI in 1982 to initiate a distinctively vocational education pathway for non-academic students aged 14 - 18 (Yeomans, 2002). The TVEI and GNVQ were introduced in an attempt to reform VET provision which was failing to meet the needs of young people in the UK (Yeomans, 2002). High unemployment brought new challenges for apprenticeships, which prompted the introduction of the CPVE in 1985 to absorb post-compulsory education young people who would formerly have undertaken apprenticeships (West and Steedman, 2003). These new initiatives divided opinion between politicians and academics. The reforms struck a chord with politicians who welcomed the initiatives' potential to address social inequalities but were unpopular with academics who felt that the reforms were a departure from traditional apprenticeships which prepared students for employment (Atkins, Flint and Oldfield, 2011).

Developments in the 1980s saw more twists and turns in VET policy with the advent of the Employment Act of 1987, which reformed the MSC, becoming the Training Commission and taking VET funding away from the government and returning it to the employers (Zengeya, 2007). Notwithstanding the disagreements, the transformation of vocational education was relentless throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The DES 1991 White Paper, 'Education and Training for the 21st Century,' outlined the need to widen participation and achievement in post-compulsory education and training (Atkins, Flint and Oldfield, 2011). The White Paper report gave rise to the introduction of Level 3 (advanced) and Level 2 (Intermediate) GNVQ awards in 1992 and Level 1 (Foundation) awards in 1993. The CPVE was superseded by General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) at foundation, intermediate and advanced levels. Modelled on the occupational content and progression stages of the BTEC, GNVQs were developed to cater for those students who were not prepared to pursue a specialised NVQ qualification (West and Steedman, 2003). They were linked to the NVQ framework to make provision for progression to NVQ. The new GNVQs were, however, bedevilled by numerous modifications, grading criteria inconsistencies and uncertainties over their

potential to replace the various specialised vocational qualifications offered in FE colleges (West and Steedman, 2003). These awards, however, were reviewed under the Curriculum 2000 reforms and were discontinued in 2006 in favour of the specialised diplomas which came into effect in 2008 (Atkins, Flint and Oldfield, 2011).

Further developments in the 1990s brought vocational education to a new level with the enactment of the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, which created the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in 1993. The Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 marked a shift from a German model to a North American model leading to National Vocational Competencies and Qualifications (NVCQs) (Zengeya, 2007, citing Ainley and Green, 1996). Funding of colleges was ceded to the FEFC from LEAs. Courses that were formerly uncertified were transformed into awards validated by the Open College Network, which comprised a number of regional awarding bodies (Hillier, 2009). Thus new validation bodies and qualifications were introduced to what West and Steedman (2003) dubbed the 'qualifications jungle'. Parenthetically, many students were getting lost in that jungle. The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) found that an increasing number of students were losing interest in school when they reached the age of 14-16. In 1996 the DfEE introduced work-related vocational options for disaffected young people or those struggling at school as they drew closer to the end of compulsory education. It was envisaged that basic skills training in the workplace would motivate the students and help them develop good work ethics, such as punctuality and attendance (DfEE, 1996). Thus VET was introduced to some lower secondary level students, and in 2001/2 one third of schools (representing 5% of all students) offered vocational options in place of two GCSE subjects (West and Steedman, 2003, citing DfES, 2002). Funding was allocated to allow students at Key Stage 4 to access one or two days' vocational training in FE colleges or with training providers (West and Steedman, 2003).

The four decades between 1960 and 2000 witnessed numerous restructuring initiatives in vocational education in the UK. These included the creation of 23 Industrial Training Boards in 1964; the Manpower Services Commission of 1973; the replacement of most ITBs with about 150 Industry Training Organisations in 1981; regulation of NVQ standards by lead bodies and ITOs in 1986; replacement of ITOs, lead bodies and Occupational Skills Councils by about 75 National Training Organisations in 1997; replacement of NTOs by about 25 Sector Skills Councils in 2002 (West and Steedman, 2003; German Academic Institute, 2010). These developments, it should be noted,

entailed constant changes in relationships, industrial knowledge and uniformity of programmes delivered.

West and Steedman (2003) criticise the fact that amid all the changes and reforms, which were aimed at providing industry with skilled employees, there was a lack of involvement on the part of the industrial and commercial sectors in the regulation of training to ensure that it was in line with the skills needed in industry. The development of vocational education in the UK, as in other countries, evidently has not been spared a great deal of turbulence. Despite concerted efforts by commissions, policy reviews and several attempts at restructuring vocational qualifications, a unified system of vocational education has not been achieved. The 23 Industrial Training Boards had different assessment criteria and consulted independently with industry regarding the content of qualifications. Consequently, when the majority of the training bodies were dissolved in the 1980s, the recognition of their qualifications by employers became contentious (West and Steedman, 2003). The DfES recognised that work-based learning is generally regarded as an inferior alternative to academic education (West and Steedman, 2003). This is a fact that the UK government has also acknowledged. In response to the 2011 Wolf Review of Vocational Education, the DFE (2011) concluded that the current UK vocational education system is failing too many young people. One of the reasons for this failure is the attitude that vocational education is a second choice and an easy option for less able students (DFE, 2011). Like the Zimbabwean Minister of Education, David Coltart, Charles Clarke a British Labour Party politician and former Home Secretary criticised UK education policy for its inability to cater for those interested in pursuing a vocational pathway (West and Steedman, 2003). West and Steedman (2003) contend that the role of vocational education should be determined by its ability to facilitate progression into skilled employment and further education. Foreman-Peck (2004) criticises the British style of market-driven VET for its dependence on stable economic and employment conditions, which has meant that long-term planning has been difficult. VET has expanded during economic booms when employment was stable and has shrunk during economic slumps.

In Zimbabwe the VET scenario is quite similar to that of the UK. Munowenyu (1999) notes that the Zimbabwe curriculum was failing to help school-leavers to become more skilled, better educated and confident problem-solvers. Shizha and Kariwo (2011) observe that in spite of more than three decades of political decolonisation, post-colonial education in Zimbabwe still maintains knowledge assumptions from the

colonial era and fails to meet indigenous and local needs. The Zimbabwe Education Act of 1991 was enacted on the understanding that vocationalisation in school curricula would result in quality and relevance in education (Raftopoulos, 2003). Technical education programmes in the high schools, which were previously labour-specific and skill-oriented, were watered down to general technical education with an emphasis on design and technology (Shizha and Kariwo, 2011). This policy was adopted despite increased demand for a multi-skilled workforce. Consequently, VET was not delivering adequate technical skills at a time when unemployment was at an all-time high of 95 per cent in 2011 (Shizha and Kariwo, 2011). Worse still, there was a conspicuous absence of policy documents that clearly stated the official purpose of technical education in Zimbabwe's high schools, apart from the goals and objectives outlined by education officers in syllabuses and circulars (Mupinga et al., 2005). The 1999 Nziramasanga Commission created hope that its recommendations would address this situation but it yielded little more than recommending that equal emphasis should be placed on practical subjects and academic subjects in the last two years of secondary school (Shizha and Kariwo, 2011). Shizha and Kariwo (2011, p.82) thus call for, "alternative models of knowledge or multicultural knowledge" that "liberates the repressed voices of indigenous people in Zimbabwe". Shizha and Kariwo (2011) advocate the integration of indigenous knowledge and Western knowledge as paramount in order to effect the decolonisation of indigenous people. In this respect, it is worthwhile looking at developments and VET models on the international scene.

### ***2.3 International VET Experience***

Since the Industrial Revolution three different forms of vocational training have been discernible in many European countries (Cedefop, 2004; Greinert, 2005). The first type, characteristic of the UK's vocational training, is determined by industrial/economic demands. The UK pursues a 'voluntarist' or market-led approach which places emphasis on economics (Barrett and Dewson, 1998). Training is influenced by the requirements of the job market (Cedefop, 2004). Type two is represented by France. France has an 'interventionist' approach where politics plays a leading role. Government control and political factors influence the training provided; academic education is the dominant principle (Cedefop, 2004; Greinert, 2005). In the third type, represented by Germany, a 'corporatist' approach is used (Barrett and Dewson, 1998; Greinert, 2005). Training is regulated by both market forces and the government – vocational training is the supreme principle (Cedefop, 2004).

Among developed countries with strong vocational programmes West and Steedman (2003) have identified three categories. The first group, comprising Germany, Switzerland and Austria, offers apprenticeships to a considerable number of students in place of upper secondary education (West and Steedman, 2003). The second group, offering vocational subjects as options within a general upper secondary school curriculum, includes the USA and Canada to a large extent and Sweden and Finland to a limited extent (West and Steedman, 2003). The third group of countries provides separate and prominent full-time vocational education. In this group Sweden, Finland and France deliver three year vocational programmes, with Sweden offering 14 national vocational programmes, while in France students have 30 varieties of the Bac Pro (*baccalauréat professionnel*) from which to choose (West and Steedman, 2003).

The UK and Germany in Europe and Australia outside Europe have prominent VET systems and models. This next section draws comparisons between the VET systems of the three countries. In a report compiled for the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Misko (2006) asserts that there is a convergence of approach and noticeable similarities as regards VET policies, though differences are apparent in the practical implementation. VET is deeply embedded in German society and widely respected in the country (German Academic Institute, 2010). Apprenticeship pathways are also highly regarded in Australia, while in the UK there are attempts to restore the prominence of apprenticeships and improve the level of workplace skills (German Academic Institute, 2010; Smith, 2002).

### **2.3.1 Compulsory Education in Australia, Germany and the UK**

In Australia, depending on the state, compulsory education starts at 5 or 6 years and continues to age 15 or 16. Work experience is an integral part of general education. On completion of compulsory education students have the option to go into employment, take up apprenticeships (combining paid work and training) and traineeships or enrol in non-industry-specific VET programmes (Misko, 2006). Those who stay on for post-compulsory years 11 and 12 will graduate with a senior secondary school certificate which gives them entry to university or VET institutions (Misko, 2006). Compulsory education in government schools is state-funded, while qualifying students receive subsidies and income support to fund university and VET fees.

In the UK compulsory education is from 5 to 16 years of age and divided into four key stages with English, mathematics and science examinations at the end of each stage. As in Australia, state education is free, while private schools charge fees. Students

have the opportunity at secondary school to undertake work experience in industry-related vocational courses, such as tourism, leisure, health, manufacturing, business, engineering and social care (Misko, 2006). Scotland offers vocation-based examinations leading to the Scottish Vocational Qualifications Certificate. At the end of compulsory education students in the UK will sit the General Certificate of Secondary Education examinations (GCSEs) while in Scotland they have the Scottish Certificate of Education or Standard Grade (Misko, 2006). As in Australia, after GCSEs students can stay in education for Advanced General Certificate of Education (A-Levels) for entry to university or they may choose to apply for apprenticeships (combining paid work and training), enter further education, or seek employment (Misko, 2006). Students also have the option to provide evidence that they possess occupational skills and knowledge relevant to industrial occupations and apply for National Vocational Qualifications or Scottish Vocational Qualifications (Misko, 2006). The Department for Education and Skills has since 2005 introduced reforms to encourage 14 to 19-year-olds to value skills acquisition and stay in further education and training up to 19 years of age (Misko, 2006).

In Germany compulsory education starts from age 6 up to age 15 in 11 states and up to age 16 in the remaining five states. The German compulsory education system is quite different from those of the UK and Australia. In Germany students complete four years of primary education (*Grundschule*) and have the option to choose from four different routes when it comes to compulsory secondary education. Students can enter secondary modern or special schools (*Hauptschule*); secondary schools (*Realschulen*); grammar schools (*Gymnasium*), which prepare students for academic university, technical or polytechnic education; and comprehensive schools (*Gesamtschule*), which offer the same courses as those provided in the secondary modern, grammar and secondary schools (Misko, 2006). On completing compulsory education, graduates of any pathway can undertake full-time vocational training in vocational schools or take up apprenticeships for two, three or four years. The apprenticeships provide paid work and graduates can upgrade their qualifications to master craftsman/technician level or pursue higher education (Misko, 2006).

### **2.3.2 Industry's Participation and Involvement in VET**

Industry's involvement and contribution to the development of the curriculum and the delivery and assessment of VET is key in all three countries. Australia consolidated 29 national industry training advisory bodies (ITABs) into 10 industry skills councils funded by the Commonwealth Government (Misko, 2006). A network of ITABs has, however,

been preserved and is funded by state and territory governments (Vogler-Ludwig, Giernalczyk and Stock, 2012). These bodies inform industry and the government about current developments and future skills and training needs of the country and have a crucial role in developing national industry training products and packages (Vogler-Ludwig, Giernalczyk and Stock, 2012). The UK has similar sector skills councils, which link employers in the industrial sector aiming to encourage cooperation and reduce skills gaps and shortages; improve business and workforce productivity; promote equal opportunities; raise standards in education; train apprentices; and promote higher education (Misko, 2006). In Germany industry takes a keen interest in VET. While the state oversees education and qualifications in schools and full-time vocational schools, industry actively participates in the development of regulations and guidelines for VET in the dual system (Hensen and Hippach-Schneider, 2013). Industry works hand in glove with the federal government to develop VET curriculum training programmes that meet the skills, knowledge and level of training required by industry. The Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) is the main advisory body and sets standards (Keating, et al., 2002). There are about 480 chambers covering different industry trades, craft trades, public services and liberal professions, and these set the qualifying examinations for apprentices (Misko, 2006).

The three countries clearly consider industry's input into the VET curriculum and competency standards as crucial. Germany, notably, has more industrial involvement than the other two, as evidenced by the chambers' key role in monitoring the quality of in-company training and examining apprentices (Hensen and Hippach-Schneider, 2013). In Australia and the UK the government or delegated bodies instead of skills councils are responsible for quality assurance and assessment (Misko, 2006). The UK, nevertheless, has a wider range of awarding bodies responsible for National Vocational Qualifications as compared with Australia where very few registered training organisations provide training and assessment (Misko, 2006).

### **2.3.3 Apprenticeships**

Apprenticeships date back to the medieval craft guilds of Western Europe and, as noted earlier, in Zimbabwe apprenticeships originated in the Rozvi and Munhumutapa Empires. Young apprentices lived with a master craftsman and learned craft trades until they qualified as an independent craftsman. Modern-day apprenticeships in Australia, Germany and the UK combine paid work with training.

In Australia apprenticeships are offered in trades and crafts such as engineering, building and construction, plumbing, automotive mechanics, commercial cookery, hairdressing, and printing (Misko, 2006). Traineeships lasting one to two years are also offered in information technology, retail, childcare, tourism and hospitality (Misko, 2006). There are no age restrictions for either programmes, enabling those who have technical skills but no qualifications to gain qualifications in their areas of expertise (Smith, 2002). Secondary school students can also pursue part-time school-based apprenticeships, which were initially introduced in 1996, and then in 1998 as part of the New Apprenticeship reform package (Knight, 2012). Since 1998 apprentices and trainees have been able to undertake both on-the-job and off-the-job training in the workplace (Smith, 2002). Registered training organisations work closely with employers to develop training programmes and units of workplace competence that students are expected to achieve (Misko, 2006).

The United Kingdom offers apprenticeships following full-time compulsory education, and apprentices should have a work placement or a full-time job. Employers provide on-the-job training, while learning providers deliver, monitor and assess off-the-job training (Misko, 2006). The period between the 1980s and 1990s saw a marked decline in the popularity of apprenticeships among students and employers (Harris, 2003). Due to skills shortages resulting from the decline of apprenticeships the UK introduced modern apprenticeships in 1994 and Scotland introduced them in 1995 to enable 16 to 24-year-olds to develop skills needed by industry and attain NVQ Level 3 qualifications (Misko, 2006). Efforts were made from April 2004 to raise the profile of apprenticeships and sell their benefits to employers. The Foundation Modern Apprenticeship Scheme was replaced by apprenticeships which were extended to younger apprentices from ages 14 to 16. Pre-apprenticeships were also introduced to prepare 16 to 25-year-olds for apprenticeships. In addition, apprenticeships aimed at NVQ Level 2 and advanced apprenticeships aimed at NVQ 3 were introduced for 16 to 25-year-olds who were ready to undertake them (Misko, 2006). Opportunities to take up apprenticeships were also extended to mature apprentices over 25 (Misko, 2006).

In Germany about two-thirds of school leavers enter the dual system in which apprentices combine paid work with practical and vocational training for two, three or four years (Misko, 2006; Vogler-Ludwig, Giernalczyk and Stock, 2012). Approximately 60 per cent of young people in Germany take the vocational route at upper secondary level (UK Parliament, 2016). Germany boasts of formal training in 354 occupations, which are classified into seven training sectors, namely, industry and trades, craft



trades, public service, liberal professions, domestic service, agriculture and maritime and shipping (Misko, 2006). Apprentices work under the supervision of skilled workers until they have gained the necessary basic skills to work independently. Apprentices also attend part-time vocational schools to learn theory and technical skills and should receive a certificate awarded by the chamber as well as one awarded by the vocational school (Misko, 2006). The chamber qualification is generally more highly regarded by employers than its theory-based counterpart. Graduate apprentices from the traditional industrial and craft trades have the opportunity to progress to journeyman status and subsequently master-craftsman (*Meister*) (German Academic Institute, 2010). The Vocational Training Act 2004 made provision for smaller companies without the capacity to offer comprehensive training in a particular trade to provide intercompany training. The Act allowed full-time students from vocational schools to access chamber examinations to gain a skilled worker qualification equal to that awarded to graduates of the dual system (German Academic Institute, 2010). Despite the robust support for apprenticeships which saw a total of around 1.6 million apprentices in training in 2003, there has been a steady degeneration since 2000 due to a dip in the economy. This prompted the government to enter into a national training agreement with industry to prop up career and skills training, which saw the creation of 15,300 new training places in 2004 (Misko, 2006). Close partnership between employers, trade unions and the government is a key feature of the German VET system (Hensen and Hippach-Schneider, 2013).

Group training companies and training contracts between employers and apprentices which allow apprentices to earn a training wage exist in all the three countries. Australian, German and UK apprenticeships combine on-the-job practical training and theoretical off-the-job training. Australia and Germany are renowned for placing a high value on apprenticeships. Despite efforts in Australia and the UK to reform their apprenticeship system, Germany has remained the leader. Germany outshines Australia and the UK with two-thirds of German school leavers taking the apprenticeship route, while in the UK it stands at one in four (European Commission, 2013; UK Parliament, 2016).

#### **2.3.4 Institution-Based Vocational Programmes**

Institution-based vocational education training pathways are observed in Australia, Germany and the United Kingdom. In Australia institution-based VET programmes are offered by registered training organisations, while in the UK it is mainly the responsibility of further education and sixth form colleges as well as some higher

education institutions which offer specialised training (Misko, 2006). In Germany there are full-time vocational schools and vocational academies. Australia and the UK offer a wider range of institution-based programmes compared to Germany (Misko, 2006).

Australia, Germany and the UK offer institution-based vocational programmes for those who do not wish to pursue vocational qualifications or apprenticeships. In Australia students can take up vocational training with public or private providers before or after completing the secondary school certificate. These registered training organisations deliver industry training packages, which are accredited by government authorities (Misko, 2006). There are also school-based VET programmes leading to accredited VET qualifications (AQF certificates I or II) which students can undertake at the end of secondary school (Misko, 2006). These courses, which include formal work placements in industry, are usually taken by students who do not intend to go to university, but they are also available to those who will proceed to university after school. Since 2004 Australia has made a deliberate move to expand the VET in Schools programmes, as evidenced by the Minister for Education, Science and Training's plan to set up 24 technical colleges.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has shown the historical developments in VET in Zimbabwe and the UK to help reveal people's attitudes to VET. The timeline provides a snapshot of the tempestuous political journey that VET in Zimbabwe has travelled. The Zimbabwean colonial education system was divided on the basis of 'race', while the division of the UK's tripartite education was based on social class. It has been shown that though the education systems in both countries were designed for different purposes, they had similar negative outcomes in relation to perpetuating negative attitudes towards VET. It is evident from this chapter that the history of VET in Zimbabwe and in the UK, as well as other countries, has been beset by instability and constant changes due to its failure to meet individual and society's needs. That absence of consistency has consequently created a lack of confidence in VET, not only among educators and employers, but also among parents and students, leaving policy-makers in a quandary.

Three paradigmatic contexts of VET have been identified in the UK, France and Germany. The three countries have different approaches to industrial relations and labour. While the UK places emphasis on economics, in France it is the political factor and in Germany societal responsibility which dominates. The effectiveness of each approach has been outlined and they present viable options that can be adopted singly

or in combination. The involvement of industry in VET curriculum development and assessment plays a vital role in the three countries. The German model of VET stands out for its emphasis on industry's contribution to the VET curriculum and assessment of apprentices.

Australia, Germany and the UK offer different VET options which liberate students to pursue their chosen route, be they school-based, work-based or higher education vocational programmes. The study of these models has presented an international reference point of models and programmes for consideration and a basis for recommendations for the future development of VET in Zimbabwe. The lack of a robust Zimbabwean secondary school VET policy makes studies of VET models in other countries worthwhile.

The historical background presented in this chapter leads us to the next chapter, which offers a critical review of selected literature on VET in the Zimbabwean and global contexts. The review will delve into attitudes of parents and educators and how they shape students' choices and decisions as regards VET.

## CHAPTER 3: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH STUDIES

### ***3.0 Introduction***

The historical background presented in chapter 2 highlighted the controversies and turbulence that have beleaguered VET in Zimbabwe and other countries in past and present times. Recent research indicates a heightened interest in VET and concerted efforts to review its role and value in contemporary societies. The European Union endorsed VET as an important means of equipping students with the skills needed to keep Europe competitive and innovative in the face of increased global competition and modern economics (European Commission, 2011). The Wolf Report of 2011 in the UK, for instance, has prompted VET providers, parents and industrialists to revisit the place of VET. There is growing realisation that VET ought to respond in a timely way to the unprecedented global developments in information and communication technology, financial markets, business and management practices (Hogstedt, Wegman and Kjellstrom, 2007). Despite a renewed interest, attitudes towards VET in the UK were found to be negative. VET in the UK was seen as only suitable for less academically gifted students, while in Germany the popularity of VET was found to be rapidly dwindling due to reduced employment opportunities for VET graduates (Lucas, Claxton and Webster, 2010).

This chapter critically reviews a selection of literature from different perspectives on the role, value and purpose of VET in the global setting and in the Zimbabwean situation. This review outlines the specific theories and the underlying principles on which this study draws. The review will also identify areas of controversy and consensus thereby generating themes and key questions for in-depth study. Notably, the vocational education versus general education debate and the efforts to transform VET from supply-driven to market-driven provision in Zimbabwe, including gender stereotyping and inequality, will be of particular interest.

The literature under review includes the following: secondary sources and primary research; academic critiques; policy documents, conceptual studies; university and research centres reports; reports by awarding bodies; lobbying organisations; policy reviews and government department reports. Literature produced by international agencies, such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

(OECD), and other publications which might shed light on the Zimbabwean situation are also reviewed.

### **3.1 Theoretical Framework**

This study drew on educational theories to guide the methods, data collection and research analysis. The functionalist, conflict and symbolic interactionist theories, including John Dewey's theories of education, constitute the theoretical basis of this research. While these educational theories may be considered somewhat dated to the contemporary contexts of some parts of the world, they are still very appropriate to the stage of development of VET in Zimbabwe. These theories stand the test of time and their philosophies have held up remarkably well, recurring in many societies including the Zimbabwean context. As Bennell (1998) observes, VET in Sub-Saharan Africa will require very significant improvements; there is general disillusionment with vocational training provision by government institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa. Since independence the delivery of VET in Zimbabwe has not improved much given that the recommendations of the Nziramasanga Commission (outlined in chapter 1, section 1.2) have not been fully implemented.

Emile Durkheim championed the functionalist theory which identifies the key role of education as that of socialising people into mainstream society. To Durkheim education is designed to promote social cohesion through social control (Duru-Bellat, 2010; Margolis, 2002). Durkheim claims that education is "the means by which society perpetually re-creates the conditions of its very existence" and it involves "a systematic socialization of the young generation" (Thompson, 2003, p.132, citing Émile Durkheim, 1956, pp.123-124). Functionalists also highlight education's role in classifying and separating students on the basis of merit. Talcott Parsons, Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore call this 'social placement' whereby schools channel the most capable people into the most important occupations to meet the needs of the society (Margolis, 2002).

This study seeks to establish links or disparities between primary school students' attitudes and those of secondary school students. Schools constitute key agents of socialisation through both the formal curriculum, which includes reading, writing, and arithmetic, and the hidden curriculum, which transmits the cultural values of the society in which the schools exist (Barkan, 2013). Functionalist theorists, like Talcott Parsons and Kingsley Davis, maintain that the function of schools is to transform children into products that can fit into the modern industrialised society (Lacey, 2012). Gilpin and Liston (2014) argued that the school has a dual role of preserving and changing the

political, economic and social structure of society. Thus, as students make progress through school they are exposed to different views. The messages and cultures that prevail in schools have a profound effect on shaping the thoughts and attitudes of students.

Conflict theory considers the role of education to be that of maintaining social inequality and preserving the power of the elite in the society. While functionalists view education's role as that of creating order in society, conflict theorists see education as preserving the privileges of the elite and subduing the lower classes into subservient workers (Thompson, 2013). Functionalists and conflict theorists agree on education's role in classifying students, but disagree on how the classification occurs. Functionalists argue that schools separate students on the basis of merit while conflict theorists argue that the process occurs along class and ethnic lines. The process of training students to accept their social class is referred to by conflict theorists as the hidden curriculum. Bowles and Gintis (1976) express the view that the hidden curriculum consists of the unspoken but powerful message that schools send to students about their ability, personality and career choice. The theory of the hidden curriculum developed from the works of different researchers, among them Dreeben (1967), Jackson (1968) and Vallance (1973) all of whom concur that the values and social relations that students develop through interaction with others constitutes the socialisation process (Kentli, 2009). Philip Jackson (1968) is recognised for initiating the term hidden curriculum in his book *Life in classrooms* (Konieczka, 2013). According to Anderson (2001) hidden curriculum explains how the environment and structures of educational institutions affect learning conditions. It refers to the categorisation, conditioning and cultural indoctrination that occurs in schools alongside the formal curriculum (Anderson, 2001). Through the hidden curriculum students form temporary social relationships, give-up aspects of their personality, and conform to social classification (Dreeben, 1967).

In primary and secondary school students spend a lot of time with teachers who are hence strong agents of secondary socialisation. Teachers' intentional and unintentional messages contribute significantly to the shaping and reshaping of students' attitudes. The teachers' attitudes as facilitators of learning are crucial to this study. Conflict theorists argue that schools impart the hidden curriculum by socialising children to behave in certain ways in accordance with the cultural values of the society in which the schools exist (Kentli, 2009; Margolis, 2002). Symbolic interactionism was the brainchild of George Herbert Mead and was expounded by John Dewey, Charles

Cooley, Herbert Blumer and others. Blumer believed that people do not simply react to others' actions but they attach meaning to other people's actions (Calhoun et al., 2012, citing Blumer, 1962). People establish meaning through symbols, such as cultural norms and values, and act in accordance with their own understanding of those symbols (Sandstrom et al., 2014). Symbolic interactionist theory places emphasis on what happens in the classroom. Symbolic interactionists look at how student attitudes, dispositions, perceptions and performance are influenced by teacher expectations (Sandstrom et al., 2014). Thus, the verbal and non-verbal messages that teachers communicate to students have a profound impact on the feelings and attitudes of students. Teachers do not only act as role models whom students look up to and emulate, but they also represent authority as custodians of knowledge. Their views and opinions therefore matter to students who look up to them for guidance. Accordingly, teachers' views were sought to establish links between students' attitudes and those of the teachers.

Among the several agents of socialisation the family stands out as the most important such agent for children and young people (Barkan, 2013). Usher and Kober's (2012) study confirms strong links between family background factors, such as income and parents' educational levels, and students' perceptions and aspirations. Family circumstances and parents' beliefs and expectations of the education of their children strongly determine the children's academic attitudes and aspirations (Usher and Kober, 2012). Parents' values and behaviour have a strong influence on those of their children (Barkan, 2013). This study looks at the role parents and siblings play in shaping the attitudes and subsequent career choices that students make. Barkan (2013) argues that children tend to resemble their parents as a result of the socialisation process, specifically through the messages they impart to their children. Parental traits, such as choices, actions and levels of involvement in their children's education, transmit beliefs, mind-sets, and values that impact children's perceptions of their identities, abilities, attitudes and goals (Usher and Kober, 2012; Patrikakou, 2008). These factors influence how students feel about themselves and their attitudes towards the value they place on the subjects they study. Usher and Kober (2012) believe that even when parents have limited knowledge of a subject area they wield significant influence over their children's feelings and positive attitudes towards education. In this way, parents' own positive perceptions strongly influence their children's perception of school, which, in turn, positively contributes to students' academic, social and emotional learning (Patrikakou, 2008).

Another theoretical aspect is the concept of VET as a vehicle for nurturing all-round learners. John Dewey's theories of education posited the idea that children learn more effectively through personal experience, and they learn faster by doing rather than being "mechanically drilled in prefabricated material" (Horvath, 2016 p.26). Hyslop-Margison (2000, p.24) applauds Dewey's 1916 "comprehensive democratic approach as a morally-appropriate model for vocational education" as opposed to "narrowly-conceived skills-based programs." McGrath (2011) subscribes to Dewey's view and argues that vocational education should not only be seen as a vehicle for skills acquisition, but should also inculcate high moral standards and good character suitable for the workplace. Dewey advocates vocational education that develops the student all round to enhance their occupational and social eminence (Hyslop-Margison, 2000). The concept of developing an all-round student is reflected in Maclean, Wilson and Chinien's (2009) definition of VET cited earlier in this chapter. Andy Powell agrees with Dewey's theory and proposes that,

*The benefits of practical and vocational learning are self-evident: if we learn by doing as well as by thinking, reading and writing, we develop skills and competence as well as knowledge. No-one becomes a graceful dancer or a world-class runner by reading and listening alone. They dance; they run. No-one becomes a dairy farmer or an airline pilot by reading and listening alone. They milk cows; they fly planes.*

(Lucas, Claxton, and Webster, 2010, p.iii).

The vocationalisation of education initiative undertaken by the Zimbabwean government in the 1990s was largely influenced by the desire to produce versatile and multitalented citizens to supply the country's labour market. Kincheloe (1995) argues that integrating academic and vocational education is more effective in educating students and introducing them to the complex physical, social, political and economic world. Dewey sees the primary role of education as that of developing autonomous scholars who have the ability to adapt to different life situations as opposed to preparing people for specific vocations. In this light, VET experience takes precedence over income and employment benefits. Vocational learning content can develop individuals' confidence and self-esteem and their engagement with their family and the wider society (Cedefop, 2011). The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training argues that VET provision should not simply focus on giving people the skills to do their job, but should go further to develop individuals' autonomy, competences



and the ability to deal with complex situations (Cedefop, 2011). VET provision should create learning environments where new social groups are formed and attitudes, motivations and values are developed as people interact and learn from each other (Cedefop, 2011).

### **3.2 Context and Rationale for the Study**

Zimbabwe is among many African countries that have been caught up in an economic meltdown, which has had a huge impact on young people. Boateng (2012) stresses the importance of transforming VET in line with developments in the job market. However, knowledge of youth attitudes and aspirations *vis-à-vis* training and careers is limited. Bennell et al. (1999) acknowledge the scarcity of contemporary research into VET in Africa, which makes this study a worthy contributor to the field.

Internationally, VET has struggled to define and promote its status in relation to academic subjects. Cedefop (2011) maintains that VET has been viewed as a second-best option which carries a social stigma in a number of countries. In 2010 the United Kingdom government tasked Professor Wolf to conduct a review of VET. Wolf (2011, p.6) proclaimed that VET had for a long time been seen as ‘the poor relation of academic learning.’

In Zimbabwe VET has generated considerable interest among academics and politicians. Shizha and Kariwo (2011), Mupinga, Burnett and Redmann (2005) and Chinyamunzore (1995) concur that the role of VET in Zimbabwe needs to be redefined. The Minister of Education David Coltart (2011) has expressed regret that Zimbabwe’s post-independence education system is too academic and falls short of meeting the needs of the youth. Despite the clamour for change in VET, the teachers delivering it and the students receiving the instruction are not being consulted.

This study is particularly important at a time when Zimbabwe has been subject to considerable social, political and economic turmoil since 2000. Political instability and economic decline have forced many companies to close down, leading to high unemployment. The resultant poverty, unemployment, infrastructure collapse and the ‘brain drain’ of skilled and experienced human resources has exacerbated the economic decline. Despite the fast-shrinking employment market, academic and university education continue to be the government’s priority, while VET remains underfunded and peripheral. It should be noted, though, that the academically skewed education policy has raised Zimbabwe’s literacy rate to great heights. UNESCO reports

that Zimbabwe has an estimated literacy rate of 92-97 per cent representing the highest in Africa (Munjanganja and Machawira, 2015). Paradoxically, Zimbabwe also has the highest unemployment rate in the world. The general unemployment rate was estimated at 80 per cent in 2005 rising to 95 per cent by 2009 (Central Intelligence Agency, 2016; Statista, 2016). It should be pointed out, though, that it is very difficult to give an accurate unemployment figure for Zimbabwe due to lack of primary data. It is, however, clear that Zimbabwe's rate of unemployment is extremely high.

An analysis of the plight of students caught between a national crisis and a constantly changing vocational sector makes a worthy contribution to the VET debate. This study aims to provide empirical evidence to inform ongoing discussions on the role of VET in Zimbabwe. The findings from this study will apprise educational policy-makers of the feelings of students and educators as well as the institutional and cultural *status quo* of VET.

Youth population records were broken in 2007 when the World Bank Development Report established that 1.3 billion 15 to 30-year-old young people were living in the developing world (Aring, 2011, citing World Bank, 2007). The younger generation constitutes close to half of the world's unemployed, thus developing countries will be imminently faced with a "generation of unemployed adults" unless they take drastic measures to reverse this trend (Aring, 2011, p.2). In times of rapid economic change nations look to vocational education for answers about how to absorb the ever-increasing population of unemployed young people. However, the attitudes, views and aspirations of the younger generation regarding training and careers have not been explored fully. Bennell et al. (1999) lament the scarcity of detailed and up-to-date empirical research on VET in Africa.

Despite the lack of conclusive studies on the benefits of VET for economic growth, there is persistent and renewed interest in VET worldwide. Maclean and Lai (2011) attribute the return of interest in VET to globalisation but point out that this branch of education is still regarded as second-class in some countries. McGrath (2012) dubs the revival of VET interest in the current decade the 'rebirth of vocational education and training', and observes that despite renewed interest in VET in Africa after a quarter of a century of dormancy, there has been no new research to prove its effectiveness. McGrath (2012) calls for new approaches to VET theory, policy and practice in Africa. McGrath (2012), further, notes that the heightened interest in VET's role in development runs counter to the academic debate. Due to lack of VET research the

international education and development forums remain unconvinced about the value of VET in development (McGrath, 2012).

In the wake of unprecedented regional and global socio-economic uncertainties, developing and developed worlds alike have in recent years adjusted their focus on VET. The Colchester Institute (2010) has identified an increased take-up of vocational qualifications by school leavers and also university graduates who are finding it increasingly difficult to find employment. Boateng (2012) expresses the need for VET to respond in a timely fashion to changes taking place in the job market in order to maintain its place and relevance in preparing individuals for employment. In Zimbabwe, UNESCO-IBE (2010) has found that Zimbabwe's current urban-based curriculum is not adequately addressing the socio-economic needs of the country and needs to be reviewed.

The Minister of Education, David Coltart, expresses regret that Zimbabwe's education system is heavily skewed towards academic subjects, such as mathematics, English and science. As a result, in the 1980s and 1990s the education system produced 300,000 graduates every year, but only 30,000 of them secured employment (Coltart, 2011). David Coltart dubs this "deficient" and "a shocking waste of national resources" (Coltart, 2011). David Coltart laments the fact that after independence Zimbabwe "built an education system that was almost exclusively academically orientated" (Coltart, 2012). Coltart notes that Zimbabwe's education curriculum has not been carefully reviewed since the 1980s. Thus, as Coltart puts it, Zimbabwe is producing academics for Wall Street, London, Sydney, Johannesburg and the rest of the world. The minister has exposed a gap between what the education system offers and the needs of students, as well as the economic needs of the country.

Minister Coltart has expressed his commitment to addressing the anomalies by conducting wide consultations with international partners, teachers, trade unions, and businesses, in order to understand the nature of problems facing the education sector. Apparently, students were missing from the list. The 'needs and aspirations' of students would best be expressed by the students themselves. There is clearly a drive by government to transform the academically oriented curriculum but there is little evidence to suggest that students' views will be sought to inform that process. This study will contribute towards bringing students' views to the fore.

In light of Aring's (2011), Bennell's (1999) and McGrath's (2012) observations and the efforts being made in Zimbabwe to review the education system and reassess the role of VET, this study is timely and worthwhile. In addition, the ongoing youth empowerment agenda in Zimbabwe not only makes an inquiry into the thoughts and aspirations of students with regards to VET relevant, but also provides an important point of reference for policy-makers and educationists. Leading scholars who have investigated the role of VET in Zimbabwe concur that it has gone through historical phases of tweaking and tinkering and the time has come for educators, industrialists, economists, funding agencies and politicians to debate the need for a complete reconditioning of the VET machinery (Mupinga, Burnett and Redmann (2005), citing Munowenyu, 1999, Chinyamunzore, 1995, Nherera, 1999, World Bank Group, 1997 and Mumbengegwi, 2001). Munowenyu (1999) is of the conviction that the existing curriculum in Zimbabwe does not adequately prepare school-leavers to become 'skilled and confident problem-solvers' and that it is imperative to bring in basic vocational education in schools. UNESCO-IBE (2010) has found that Zimbabwe's present urban-based curriculum has not adequately addressed the socio-economic needs of the country and needs to be reviewed. These studies have raised pertinent issues and observations which make it imperative for an inquiry into the views of students and teachers in the schools.

The Zimbabwe Ministry of Youth Development, Indigenisation and Empowerment's vision is to achieve true empowerment of Zimbabwean young people and indigenous citizens. In light of this, the Ministry of Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation conducted national and district consultations on the Zimbabwe Ministry of Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation in 2000. The consultation raised unemployment as the major issue affecting students. The Zimbabwe Ministry of Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation (2000) deemed the educational system to be too academic and irrelevant to current job markets. In addition to the failure to prepare young people for decision-making and participation in self-help programmes, the education system was criticised for favouring young males at the expense of young women (Zimbabwe Ministry of Youth Development, Gender and Employment Creation, 2000). Participation is the key to empowerment, hence true empowerment programmes should involve those to be empowered. For this reason, finding out students' views is a vital ingredient in the empowerment process.

The 1998 Nziramasanga Commission condemned the state of education in Zimbabwe and established that for the majority of students' schooling was irrelevant (WOZA,

2010). The Nziramasanga Commission strongly recommended vocationalisation of education with deliberate emphasis on practical and technical subjects in the last two years of secondary education (The Herald, 2010). In July 2010 the Minister of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture David Coltart announced the government's intention to "overhaul school curriculums" in line with the recommendations of the Nziramasanga Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education (The Herald, 2010).

The Rhodesian colonial custom and law created unequal access to education and, subsequently, uneven distribution of national income between 'races' (Weinrich, 1973). The Zimbabwe Education Act of 2004 reversed the colonial law and stipulated that all children should have the right to education and guaranteed to safeguard this right. The government showed its commitment to doing so and introduced free and compulsory education (Government of Zimbabwe, 2006). Education was seen as the key to black people's social and economic mobility. Access to education has therefore dramatically increased, so much that O-Levels have become the minimum level of education for most people in Zimbabwe. Credit should be given to the post-independence 'Education for All' drive instituted by the new majority government, which saw Zimbabwe's literacy rate soaring to 90.7 per cent by 2013 (The African Economist, 2013). The UNESCO 'Education for All 2015 National Review' reported an estimated literacy rate of 92 – 97 per cent representing the highest in the whole of Africa (Munjanganja and Machawira, 2015). Wilkinson (2015), however, notes that literacy measurements can be problematic as different definitions of literacy can be applied. A UNESCO Institute for Statistics estimate based on a nationally representative survey which tested reading skills to determine educational levels, put the figure at 83.6 per cent (Wilkinson, 2015, citing UNESCO, 2013). Whichever definition is used, the facts indicate high levels of literacy. Despite this huge success in raising literacy levels, concerns over the education system's ability to meet the needs of students and those of the country have equally soared over the years.

David Coltart has expressed the urgent need for a comprehensive review and reform and has called upon young men and women, teachers, the business community, churches and every sector of society to engage in the review.

*We need to build a curriculum in Zimbabwe which will serve Zimbabwe in future, which will be appropriate to Zimbabwe's needs in future, a curriculum which is responsive to the needs of Zimbabwe, and important and responsive to the needs and aspirations of our young men and women. And so we are now*

*embarking primarily on a process of consultation. We need your input; we need the input from business, from mining, from agriculture. We need input from the church and leaders...*

(Education Minister David Coltart to the Greatness Career Conference in Harare delivered on February 10, 2011)

In another speech at the Education World Forum in London in 2012, David Coltart has reiterated the need for an extensive curriculum review which has not taken place in Zimbabwe since 1986. Coltart (2012) has articulated the need to move from a heavily academic curriculum to a more vocational education system. Minister Coltart has reiterated the view that emphasis ought to be placed on practical and technical subjects so as to inculcate a culture of self-reliance (The Herald, 2010). The desire for VET is evident from academic to ministerial levels.

A study by the Centre for Labour Market Studies at the University of Leicester in 2004 recommended further research into the role, purpose, efficacy, delivery and value of vocational qualifications in the UK (Unwin et al., 2004, p.5). The Leicester University study's recommendations essentially highlight the quagmire with which Zimbabwe's policy-makers and academics have had to deal with over the past two decades. The study suggests several pertinent themes and the following were of particular relevance to this study:

1. The contemporary meaning and purpose of VET;
2. VET as a vehicle for youth empowerment and employment;
3. The role of employers, changing labour market needs, and the impact of globalisation and new technologies on workplace skills and knowledge;
4. The need to bring together the experiences of vocational teachers, trainers and other specialists who currently organise and deliver vocational qualifications but whose voices are largely absent from the existing research literature.

### **3.3 International Background and Vocational Training Models**

Vocational Education and Training has been the subject of extensive scholarly writing dating back to the days of Adam Smith's 'The Wealth of Nations'. Since then, blacksmiths, carpenters, lawyers or accountants have acquired their skills by training on the job or through apprenticeships. Labour force needs ushered in by industrialisation prompted educators in America to institute educational reforms aimed

at socialising students into new economic roles. Schools were expected to furnish the industrial urban centres and the agricultural rural areas with workers possessing the relevant skills needed by the emergent capitalist mode of production (Hyslop-Margison, 2000, citing Kantor, 1986).

Labour organisations wishing to safeguard the worker's interests and industrialist associations looking for a skilled labour force joined forces to lobby governments for state support for vocational training (Hyslop-Margison, 2000). In 1914 President Woodrow Wilson appointed a commission to investigate the need for state-funded vocational education in the US. David Snedden, the lead author of the subsequent report, suggested a form of vocational education that would channel non-academic learners into job roles which best suited the worker and the industry (Hyslop-Margison, 2000). Snedden was criticised by John Dewey who rejected his validation of class stratification and social predestination. Dewey proposed that vocational education should enable learners to develop their individual social and economic skills and capabilities as opposed to those that limited learners to skills required by industry. Dewey advanced a notion of training that would allow students to make independent employment choices rather than one determined by the commercial sector (Hyslop-Margison, 2000). Snedden and Dewey's debate over vocational education and general education has continued to this day.

Theorists of vocational training believe that training students in carpentry, dressmaking, mechanics, welding, catering and other vocations increases employment opportunities and reduces poverty (Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 2011). Industries and trades can work hand in glove with educational institutions to develop vocational education programmes allowing students to train on the job. The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia (2011) postulates that virtually all trades require apprenticeship or on-the-job training and outlines several successful vocational training models. Below are some examples:

**United Kingdom**

In the 1980s and 1990s, the Youth Training Programme, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) were developed. Publicly funded, work-based modern apprenticeships were introduced in 1994. There have been efforts by the Department for Children, Schools and Families to introduce apprenticeships as a mainstream part of the education system.

**Germany**

The dual education system in Germany integrates vocational education as an alternative to academic education. The 1969 Germany law (the *Berufsausbildungsgesetz*) unified VET-made provisions for shared responsibility between the government, industry and trade unions. Apprenticeships are highly regarded and the government has signed an agreement with industrial unions, which requires all big companies to take apprentices.

**Australia**

In Australia VET is mainly provided by registered training organisations as post-secondary training. Industry determines the content of the vocational qualifications rather than the government. There are 11 Industry Skills Councils responsible for developing and reviewing the VET qualifications.

**New Zealand**

New Zealand has 39 Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) that organise training in industry. ITOs recommend that more training should be delivered in the workplace instead of in simulated environments.

**Switzerland**

Around two-thirds of upper secondary school students take the vocational education and training route. Students devote one to two days per week to vocational education at school and three to four days to apprenticeships with host companies, or they may attend classes at the vocational school for some weeks and spend other weeks at an industrial training centre.

Adapted from: The Columbia Encyclopedia (2011)

Boateng (2012), citing Lillis and Hogan (1983), identifies four different approaches to vocational technical education. These are:

- a whole-school curriculum focused on providing occupational skills;
- a parallel system whereby vocational education is provided in juxtaposition to general education;



- a core-curriculum approach whereby vocational subjects are integrated into the school curriculum as compulsory core subjects;
- a non-formal system ideal for out-of-school youth to acquire vocational skills for formal employment or self-employment.

In Zimbabwe vocational education is currently provided by vocational technical institutions, polytechnic institutions, universities, institutes of technology and schools, all of which teach practical subjects. Zimbabwe has a core-curriculum system which is a departure from the racially segregated parallel system that was established during the colonial era.

### ***3.4 Vocational Education vs. General Education***

The Zimbabwean Education Minister David Coltart rekindled the vocational versus academic education debate in a speech entitled, 'We can't all be intellectuals' delivered at the Greatness Career Conference in Harare on February 10, 2011. Coltart (2011) raised the need to balance Zimbabwe's education system by recognising that people are gifted in different ways. He emphasised the need to nurture different talents in fields such as sport, art and carpentry alongside academic disciplines. Coltart applauded Finland's education system for assigning equal status to academic and vocational education. The Minister proposed that the curriculum should be looked at holistically and a comprehensive review and reform of the education system should be conducted.

The debate over vocational and academic education has raged for a long time without a clear winner. VET advocates contend that the economic benefits of VET outstrip those of general education in that, in addition to facilitating the transition from education to employment, VET can lead to high-earning specialist skills which on aggregate translate into economic growth (Pearson, 2014). General education proponents, on the other hand, strongly believe that the purpose of education is to develop flexible, adaptable, rounded members of society rather than to train people for specific jobs. General education exponents point to the fast-changing technological world, which requires a compliant workforce (Pearson, 2014). Pearson (2014) acknowledges that deciding which is preferable is complicated.

In the wake of globalisation Hyslop-Margison (2000) saw the need for VET to respond to the demands of the new global economy. Governments and corporations in the industrialised countries are calling for vocational education reform to act as a major catalyst for economic success. Globalisation refers to the rising financial, technological

and commercial interdependence of countries worldwide (Richardson, 2001, cited in Mureithi, 2009). Despite the huge demands of globalisation, which is forcing governments worldwide to take renewed interest in vocational education, it is still perceived by some as second-class (Maclean and Lai, 2011). The debate about whether skills-based education prepares students for their occupational life in a better way than traditional academic programmes has been active throughout the twentieth century (Hyslop-Margison, 2000).

Historically, vocational education has enjoyed times of appreciation and episodes when it has been undervalued, a situation that Benavot (1983) has dubbed, “the rise and fall of vocational education” (Mazonde, 2001, p.22, citing Benavot, 1983). Technical and vocational education has been credited with stimulating economic growth in some countries but has fallen short of expectations in others (Maclean and Lai, 2011). Subsequently, many developing countries have for years battled with the extent to which education should be vocationalised. Tilak (2002) felt that ‘to vocationalise or not to vocationalise’ is no longer the question to be asked, the question is ‘how much of the education system should be vocational and how much should be general in education’. Mazonde (2001), citing Benavot (1986), found that between 1955 and 1970 vocational education had more impact on economic growth than general education in developing countries, while some negative effect was reported between 1965 and 1980. Tilak also found that since colonial rule or the 1950s, most developing countries had shown renewed interest in vocational education. Oketch (2007) is convinced that VET is vital to Africa’s development and that VET needs transformation to reflect current trends in the labour market. On the other hand, Mazonde (2001) found no conclusive studies on the impact of vocational education on economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa.

Mupinga, Burnett and Redmann (2005, citing Nherera, 1999) have called upon educators, industrialists, economists, funding agencies and politicians to explore the vocational issue fully. They have concluded that the exact purpose of technical education in Zimbabwe’s high schools has not been well defined, with confusion caused by mixed messages and unclear policies. Other critics of VET, such as Philip Foster (1965) and Mark Blaug (1973) cited in Tilak (2002), have not been convinced that VET can help reduce unemployment and argue that it is a misconception. General education proponents, on one hand, argue that it creates ‘general human capital’ responsive to economic and labour needs while equipping the learner with transferable skills that can be used in one job or the next, or in one country or another (Oketch,

2007, citing Tilak, 2002). On the other hand, vocational education advocates argue that VET produces 'specific human capital', making individuals more employable and furnishing industry with relevant skills (Oketch, 2007, citing Tilak, 2002).

Bennell et al. (1999) postulate that sustainable economic development demands substantial advances in both basic education and technical training. Bello, Danjuma and Adamu (2007) argue that general education teaches values, knowledge, literacy and numeracy as well as problem-solving skills, which enhance the chances of socially disadvantaged people being able to enter training and employment. Good general education is therefore a prerequisite for sound vocational education (Bello, Danjuma and Adamu, 2007, citing Okoro, 1993). Bello, Danjuma and Adamu (2007) maintain that in addition to specific occupational skills, contemporary employers are also looking for basic academic, communication and employability skills. The ILO is in agreement with Bello, Danjuma and Adamu (2007) and Okoro (1993) who concur that basic skills, such as literacy and numeracy, are important for improved vocational education.

Bello, Danjuma and Adamu (2007) advocate the forging of close links between occupations and further education and support a broader pre-vocational skills provision. They further argue that vocational education and training facilitates the transition to employment, depending on the nature and level of the training undertaken. A recent development in the United Kingdom has seen a dramatic move towards the development of university technical colleges (UTCs). UTCs are academies for 14 to 19-year-olds, focusing on technical education that meets the needs of engineering, manufacturing, construction and bio-medical science industries and businesses (DFE, 2012). Over 200 major employers (Jaguar Land Rover, British Airways and Virgin Atlantic) and some world-class universities (University of Cambridge and Warwick University) will be involved, meaning that students will be given work placements and will benefit from curricula designed by experts in the field (DFE, 2012). Arguably, such experts have the relevant VET knowledge and experience as well as high-ranking profiles. Students will spend 60 per cent of their time receiving hands-on technical instruction in conjunction with studying for academic GCSEs and A-Levels thus delivering a strong combination of technical and academic education that will prepare them for work or further education (DFE, 2012). However, it can be argued that the emphasis on academic GCSEs and A-Levels represents a lack of recognition of vocational qualifications. Chinyamunzore (1995) cites Mandebvu (1994), Patel (1990), Krieger (1988) and Lauglo and Lillis (1988), all of whom agree that the inclusion of the

technical/vocational curriculum in general education is viewed by many countries as the panacea for economic and social problems.

By contrast, Hyslop-Margison (2000) cites Bestor (1956), who felt strongly that vocational courses had the effect of watering down academic content, and as such, should not be used for academic credits or offered to anyone under 17. Bestor viewed vocational education as the creation of commercial power politics and condemned it as unproductive, lacking in creativity and contrary to educational values (Hyslop-Margison, 2000). Philip Foster's 1965 study of Ghanaian youth is famed for refuting "the vocational school myth in Africa," arguing that small-scale vocational training should be the responsibility of those sectors that utilise the skills and, as such, should be detached from formal education (Oketch, 2007, p.220). While in the past vocational education has been more focused on training for work, Oketch (2007) sees contemporary VET as training for future training rather than just for employment. Thus for over four decades policy-makers have failed to reach a consensus over who should determine the role of vocational education.

The main criticisms that have been levelled against VET provision in Africa include high-cost yet poor-quality provision; training incompatible with prevailing socio-economic conditions; disregard of the informal sector's needs and labour market demands; and high unemployment rate among graduates (Oketch, 2007, citing Atchoarena and Delluc, 2001). Oketch (2007) also criticises VET for gender inequalities that have remained ingrained in most programmes. MOHET (2005) laments the apparent stereotyping which results in female participants largely pursuing courses socially perceived as feminine. Furthermore, MOHET (2005) has found that VET policies do not deliberately target people with disabilities or young people and women in the informal sector.

The rise of the informal sector and labour-market demands of globalisation have seen VET taking on more social roles in addition to the economic role. Nations are looking to VET to provide training for self-employment and the skills needed in the informal sector to alleviate poverty and youth unemployment (Oketch, 2007, citing Atchoarena and Delluc, 2001). Regrettably, globalisation brings with it rapid technological advances, new consumer tastes and cheaper imports that have had an adverse effect on the market and demand for locally produced goods (Mureithi, 2009). Ironically, despite the demands of globalisation, governments are reducing publicly funded VET provision and calling on the informal sector to assume more vocational training responsibilities.

VET is indisputably an expensive form of education that requires funding in order to succeed. In the 1970s and early 1980s VET provided by government institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa was rebuked for its poor quality and high cost while failing to produce the skills required by the labour market (Bennell et al., 1999). Thus by the late 1980s when economic structural adjustment programmes were instituted and donor funding fell in Africa, there were increased calls for VET reform. In recent years, there has been, paradoxically, a disparity between the clamour for skills and the level of funding offered by governments. Current national and international goals are moving resources from VET to meet Education for All (EFA) and Universal Primary Education (UPE) goals (Catts, Falk and Wallace, 2011). Funding for VET in Africa has been found to be generally improvised and often impromptu (African Union, 2007) and in many cases vocational training centres have either been abandoned or taken over by exclusively academic institutions (Mureithi, 2009). Middleton, Ziderman and Adams (1990) found that public pre-employment VET programmes tended to be too large and poorly funded coupled with poor policy objectives, poor quality and inflexible provision. Sub-Saharan African governments were seen to be clear about their role in funding basic education but not so clear about their role in funding VET (Bennell et al., 1999). The economic viability and effectiveness of state-funded VET programmes in meeting the needs of disadvantaged groups has thus been found wanting. Governments' pledges to value VET and skills development have remained political rhetoric in many countries. Such rhetoric remains in Zimbabwe where the Nziramasanga Commission's recommendations have received little more than lip service. The 'academic drift' which, according to Kersh and Juul (2015), places VET in a second-best position in relation to academic education, has characterised Zimbabwe's education policy since 1980. Thus Bennell et al. (1999) are convinced that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are best placed to provide relevant, low-cost training and technical assistance for VET programmes.

Lessons can be learnt from the Nigerian experience where teachers, school leavers and pre-vocational students highlighted lack of funds, lack of facilities, mismanagement of resources, lack of qualified personnel, and lack of cooperation from principals as major reasons for the failure of VET programmes (Bello, Danjuma and Adamu, 2007). Akubudike (2003, cited in Bello, Danjuma and Adamu, 2007) adds to the list with findings that show lack of adequate staffing, poor student attitudes towards work, inadequate guidance and counselling, lack of exposure to clubs and lack of public lectures and associations. Bello, Danjuma and Adamu (2007) cite Obiefuna (2003) who

casts the blame on students' poor attitudes, lamenting that most Nigerian students long to have the good things in life but are not prepared to persevere in the work place. The views expressed above will be of key interest to this study, in particular students' attitudes and the level of guidance they receive.

A survey of vocational training needs of 15 to 25-year-old out-of-school young people in Bauchi Metropolis in northern Nigeria conducted by Bello, Danjuma and Adamu (2007) reveals that the majority of vocational graduates have remained unemployed and have not gone into further education. The study questions the adequacy of vocational training in equipping students with both academic and vocational skills to encourage self-reliance and ensure entry into the job market. Educators are therefore faced with the difficult task of getting the right balance between general education and vocational/technical education to achieve schooling that educates and trains students adequately for the world of work (Chinyamunzore, 1995).

As evident from the literature reviewed in this study, VET has been championed as a key element in addressing social and economic issues in both developed and developing countries. In the 1990s some scholars were questioning the extent to which state-funded VET could fulfil that role. Among these scholars Middleton, Zideman and Adams (1990) asked whether VET could really stimulate economic growth; whether it could solve unemployment problems; and whether it had the capacity to meet economic and individuals' needs. In the case of Zimbabwe, Chinyamunzore (1995) has raised these questions over the issue of transferrable skills:

- What do students need to be able to do whatever jobs they get?
- Should education provide the skills needed in the world of work or skills necessary to learn further skills for work and survival?

In the face of decades of oscillation between indifference and renewed interest, there is no general consensus regarding the place of vocational education and training in either the developed or the developing world. In the developed world there is a greater inclination towards education that facilitates learning of qualities rather than specific skills, while the developing countries are more inclined towards skill-based vocational/technical education (Chinyamunzore, 1995, citing Mandebvu, 1994, Nicholson, 1988, in Pretorius, 1993). Mureithi (2009) emphasises the need for developing countries to develop practical solutions by adopting tailored technologies and theoretical concepts that are compatible with their situations.

West and Steedman (2003) have identified complementary roles of academic education and vocational education. Each field is valuable in its own right. Academic education imparts knowledge of the social sciences, mathematics, literature and our past and surroundings, which is useful in building problem-solving skills and developing civilised societies (West and Steedman, 2003). Conversely, vocational education offers practical skills and can be a pathway into other disciplines. They propose a marriage between vocational and academic education to produce a skilled workforce and to nurture cultural and scientific development. West and Steedman (2003) have identified conditions that are needed to make the role of vocational education more effective. There is need for:

- Strong links between the training provided and occupations or trades in order to meet demands of the labour market;
- Good-quality training to enable vocational graduates to progress to higher levels of education;
- Compromises over the amount of theory versus practical instruction. More theory than industrialists may consider necessary may be needed to prepare learners for advanced levels of education;
- A symbiotic relationship between educationalists and industrialists whereby the two parties compromise and cooperate to produce more robust training programmes.

West and Steedman (2003) are content that vocational education should play a reputable role in education in order to prepare individuals for work as well as to engage in cultural and scientific disciplines.

### ***3.5 Efforts to Transform VET from Supply-Driven to Market-Driven Provision in Zimbabwe***

In Zimbabwe efforts have been made to make VET more effective and relevant to both the trainees and the employers. The World Bank has recommended the movement from off-the-job, government-funded VET to on-the-job employer-provided training (Bennell et al., 1999). The World Bank has proposed that smallholder farmers, labour intensive exporters, small-scale enterprises, disadvantaged people and women should be targeted. Furthermore, it has suggested the provision of diverse training and greater private sector and foreign investment instead of reliance on donor funding. The World Bank has, however, been criticised for its demand-driven approach. Critics have highlighted the negative impact of reduced funding on public investment, which could

adversely limit the state's capacity to institute reform and provide vocational training in key skill areas (Bennell et al., 1999).

The Zimbabwe Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) provides supply-driven training programmes through polytechnics, technical colleges and vocational training centres. Polytechnics and vocational colleges provide pre-employment work-related training for the government and industry. VET provision in the 1990s was criticised for its lack of responsiveness to employers' needs, which forced the MOHE to make efforts to improve self-sufficiency in colleges and to link apprenticeships to employer's needs (Bennell et al., 1999). These reforms were deemed minor and did not fulfil the National Manpower Advisory Council (an advisory body that represents the interests of employers) and other stakeholders' quest for demand-driven VET. Bennell et al. (1999) felt that politicians and policy-makers were not pressured enough to institute reform, while, at the same time, the government's centralised and bureaucratic grip on colleges and resources did not help matters.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has identified informal apprenticeships as the leading provider of skills training in Zimbabwe and most African countries. The ILO, in partnership with the Danish Africa Commission Skills for Youth Employment and Rural Development has embarked on a five-year development programme in Zimbabwe. It is aimed at developing informal traditional apprenticeships and market-driven, community-based technical and vocational skills development for young women and men in rural areas (ILO, 2011). Following successful ILO Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE) Programmes in Bangladesh, the Philippines, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Niger, Burkina Faso and Madagascar, the Zimbabwean ILO TREE programme will focus on improved quality instruction in informal apprenticeship (QIA) delivery so as to bolster the informal economy (ILO, 2011).

The TREE approach is a departure from conventional vocational training programmes in that it has a bottom-up approach whereby the local community and social partners participate in identifying the projects, after which the training programme is tailored to meet the skills needed (ILO, 2011). Post-training support is made available in the form of technology transfer and access to credit. In partnership with local industry and experts, TREE is successfully delivering youth empowerment programmes, such as poultry farming in Mount Darwin, small-scale fish farming cooperatives in Norton and horticulture projects in Gokwe South, Marondera and Mutoko (ILO, 2011). In the urban centres of Bulawayo, Chitungwiza and Harare informal apprenticeship programmes are



working in close partnership with experts in industry to provide on-the-job skills training and mentoring in arts and crafts, welding and metalwork, carpentry and joinery, motor vehicle mechanics and renewable (solar) energy (ILO, 2011).

### **3.6 Themes and Perspectives**

#### **3.6.1 VET as an Agent for Youth Empowerment and Employment**

Catts, Falk and Wallace (2011) have found that despite the international agenda of Education for All (EFA), which seeks to ensure that all learners, including adult learners, have equal access to learning and skills development, the initiative has not always been closely linked to vocational education and training. UNESCO-UNEVOC advocate that VET should be expanded rapidly in order for the EFA agenda to be fully realised (Catts, Falk and Wallace, 2011).

UNESCO's 2010-2015 strategic plan, which seeks to promote TVET and skills development, hinges on the belief that,

*...in a globalized world, education and training, as part of a process of lifelong learning, are central to reducing poverty and significantly increase the likelihood of finding decent work or of generating income through self-employment. In the current macro-economic and financial environment, investment in TVET is therefore an instrument to accelerate and sustain economic recovery...*

(Catts, Falk and Wallace, 2011, citing UNESCO, 2010).

All sectors of education are increasingly being compelled to respond to the demands of globalisation. Contemporary workers will need to transform themselves in response to technological changes and the changing nature of work ushered in by global capitalism (Darwin, 2007, citing Anta, 2003). In the wake of intense global competition, "vocational learning should seek to empower learners to renew and adapt their work skills to rapidly changing work environments" (Catts, Falk and Wallace, 2011, p.viii). VET has a role to play in empowering students to make themselves employable as job markets across the world become increasingly competitive.

The OECD (2015) maintains that VET is pivotal in fulfilling labour-market needs through developing students' and adults' skill. While many countries acknowledge that high-quality VET contributes immensely to economic competitiveness, it is

conspicuously neglected in policy deliberations as academic education takes prominence (OECD, 2015). Conversely, 50 per cent of upper secondary school students participated in pre-vocational or vocational programmes in more than one-third of OECD countries in 2012. In Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, the Netherlands and the Slovak Republic 70 per cent of secondary school students undertook vocational programmes (OECD, 2015). It is therefore incomprehensible that, despite worldwide acclamation and the fact that over half of secondary school students undertake vocational programmes, VET continues to play second fiddle to academic education. A study carried out by Edward, Weedon and Riddell (2008) in Scotland also found that in comparison to academic subjects, vocational subjects were generally less popular. The study revealed clear links between gender, social class and post-compulsory education (Edward, Weedon and Riddell, 2008). Social-class background was also seen to have a bearing on the type and level of qualifications. Students from deprived backgrounds were found to take lower-level qualifications at stage 4 and stage 5, and more likely to take up vocational subjects (Edward, Weedon and Riddell, 2008). The central role of VET in skills development and youth economic empowerment is thus a research and development topic worthy of investigation.

### **3.6.2 Gender Stereotyping and Gender Inequality**

Gender disparities internationally stem from social, cultural, economic, political and educational systems. Patriarchy, customary law and the colonial legacy have been found to be major sources of women's social and economic disadvantage in Zimbabwe (Gudhlanga, Chirimuuta and Bhukuvhani, 2012). In comparison to academic education, VET has generally been known for its lack of gender equality. More males below 18 enter further education, while more females tend to access higher education from 18 onwards. Recent developments in the UK indicate that more women are accessing university education than men. In 2015 UK women aged 18 were 35 per cent more likely to enter university than men (UCAS, 2015).

The Department for Education and Skills identified notable gender differences in vocational subject choices. Work-related learning programmes introduced in the UK for 14 to 16-year-olds in 2002 attracted 56 per cent of males compared to 44 per cent of females (DfES, 2007). There were gender imbalances across the vocational fields. Hair and beauty, care, childcare and animal care were predominantly female areas, while construction, engineering, motor vehicle and manufacturing were dominated by males (DfES, 2007). The DfES (2007) also documented distinct gender differences in relation to subject choices at Key Stage 4, with girls more likely than boys to take double award

science (70% of girls vs. 67% of boys), while boys were more likely to take separate sciences than girls. In design and technology boys were more likely to take courses in resistant materials, graphic products, systems and control and electronic products, while girls were likely to study textiles technology and food technology, art and design, home economics, English Literature, drama and religious studies. Boys were more likely to opt for business studies, geography, physical education and Information Technology (DfES, 2007).

McCracken et al. (2015) identifies several studies that showed that 'streaming' children into academic and vocational education and the age at which they are streamed can aggravate gender stereotyping. A study by Pekkarinen carried out in Finland where the age at which students are streamed was increased from 10 to 16 indicated that girls' likelihood to choose an academic pathway increased by 25 per cent while that of boys decreased (McCracken et al., 2015). McCracken, et al. (2015) have found other studies that suggested that teachers and school managers generally regarded girls as having less ability in science, technology and engineering subjects, which they regarded as 'male' subjects, and therefore girls received little encouragement to take up these subjects. Thus women are not well represented in these fields and many women consider themselves less inclined towards these subjects due to socially constructed gender stereotypes.

The gender stereotypes evident in schools are naturally reflected and reinforced in the labour market. Despite efforts to eliminate gender disparities in the labour market, gender segregation in the work place still exists in many countries. In Norway efforts to tackle labour market segregation by promoting VET in health care were unsuccessful due to poor-quality training and limited career prospects (McCracken, et al., 2015). Such efforts are also derailed by gender wage gaps which are a disincentive to women who may wish to venture into male dominated fields. McCracken et al. (2015) note that while gender segregation is diminishing in most OECD and EU countries due to increased participation of women in the labour market, gender wage gaps continue to exist. Education systems have been blamed for failing to empower women and girls despite the fact that girls outperform boys in educational attainment in many European countries (McCracken et al., 2015).

In Africa Oketch's (2007) study found that females generally had more limited access to secondary school education when compared with their male counterparts. The African Union observed persistent underrepresentation and critical inequities regarding female

participation in vocational training. Some vocational courses, like dressmaking, hairdressing, and cookery, were considered a domain for less academically inclined girls (African Union, 2007). Jon Lauglo (in Lauglo and Maclean, 2005) found that Kenya, Ghana and Botswana had gender biases in vocational uptake. Home economics was almost exclusively a girls' domain, while building and construction was a boys' preserve. In addition, few girls took up further vocational training after school. In Niger, Ethiopia, Uganda, Eritrea, Malawi and Namibia women account for fewer than 15 per cent of VET enrolments. Bello, Danjuma and Adamu (2007) cite Stanwick (2005, 2006) and Sherman (2006) who found that in the first six months after training females fared badly in making the transition to employment in comparison to their male counterparts. Thus gender inequality continues to exist in VET.

In Zimbabwe the low participation rate of women in traditionally male-dominated fields has persisted over the years and it is clearly reflected in technical colleges and university enrolments, as evidenced by ZIMSTAT (2012) statistics in tables 3.1 and 3.2 below.

**Table 3.1: Summary of Enrolments in Technical Colleges by Subject Area and Sex, 2000, 2008, 2009 and 2010**

Subject Area	Enrolment in 2010			Per cent of Women			
	Male	Female	Total	2000	2008	2009	2010
Adult Education	110	206	316	18.0	76.7	71.5	65.2
Applied Art & Design	65	185	250	39.0	81.7	74.6	74.0
Applied Science	79	95	174	21.0	53.0	51.7	54.6
Automotive Engineering	1 180	44	1 224	6.0	2.9	3.2	3.6
Business Studies	1 900	2 322	4 222	35.0	47.0	57.0	55.0
Computer Science	271	155	426	37.0	36.2	33.3	36.4
Construction/Civil Engineering	710	155	865	9.0	11.5	12.6	17.9
Micro-Enterprises	15	11	26	n/a	39.5	45.0	42.3
Electrical Engineering	1 195	116	1 311	12.0	11.7	15.8	8.8
Health Service Management	36	25	61	n/a	44.4	32.6	41.0
Hair Dressing	n/a	n/a	n/a	82.0	100.0	100.0	n/a
Hotel Keeping/Catering	86	199	285	54.0	72.0	59.3	69.8
Horticulture	35	54	89	15.0	57.0	62.7	60.7
Instructor Training	27	45	72	33.0	51.3	n/a	62.5
Library & Information	66	99	165	43.0	60.0	45.5	60.0
Mass Communication	59	45	104	39.0	49.2	45.8	43.3
Mechanical Engineering	833	62	895	7.0	6.8	7.7	6.9
Plastic & Rubber Technology	n/a	n/a	n/a	15.0	50.0	40.0	n/a
Printing & Graphic Arts	56	25	81	16.0	20.0	23.0	30.9
Reed-Continues Education	13	13	26	n/a	68.6	n/a	50.0
Science Technology	409	386	795	23.0	44.9	43.3	48.6
Secretarial Studies	37	635	672	88.0	92.9	95.1	94.5
Textile/Clothing Tech	5	68	73	97.0	98.4	96.8	93.2
Wood Technology	26	2	28	16.0	23.8	0.0	7.1
Total	7 213	4 947	12 160	29.0	39.1	65.2	40.7

**n/a:** means no students enrolled for the course that year

**Source:** Statistics Unit, Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education

Clearly, electrical engineering, wood technology and automotive engineering have continued to be male-dominated, while hotel keeping/catering, secretarial studies and

textile/clothing are predominately female domains. The same situation prevails in the universities.

**Table 3.2: Summary of all University Enrolments by Faculty and Sex, 2009 and 2010**

Faculty	2009			2010		
			Per cent of			Per cent of
	Male	Female	Women	Male	Female	Women
Agriculture	1 020	529	34.2	1 187	585	33.0
Arts	3 133	3 031	49.2	2 608	3 104	54.3
Commerce	10 109	4 124	29.0	11 908	6 671	35.9
Education	948	788	45.4	1 228	1 345	52.3
Engineering	1 923	404	17.4	1 941	412	17.5
Humanities	2 525	3 161	57.3	404	512	55.9
Hospitality & Tourism	64	106	62.4	229	277	54.7
Lifelong Learning	102	98	49.0	120	213	64.0
Law	469	432	47.9	3 734	1 886	33.6
Medicine	1 226	657	34.9	775	505	39.5
Science	3 690	2 023	35.4	2 986	1 874	38.2
Social Studies	1 846	2 069	52.8	4 800	5 974	55.4
School of Technology	322	91	22.0	133	31	18.9
Veterinary Science	74	73	49.7	95	35	26.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>27 451</b>	<b>17 586</b>				

Source: Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (2012)

University enrolments for 2009 and 2010 evidently depict low participation of females in STEM-subject-related fields (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). Females are well represented in education, humanities, hospitality and social studies, while in engineering, law, medicine, science and technology the numbers are very low.

In light of the Zimbabwean situation, Bello, Danjuma and Adamu's (2007) observation that school-based apprenticeships that offer more direct pathways into areas such as engineering and construction may hold the answers to redressing the gender imbalance in these fields. Bennell et al. (1999) recommend that there should be a deliberate drive to encourage women's enrolment, including lowering entry

requirements (Bennell et. al., 1999). ILO (2011) argues that, given their strong foundation in local traditions and culture, informal apprenticeships can be an invaluable vehicle to encourage greater participation by young women in male-dominated trades.

### **3.6.3 Culture, Aspirations and Attitudes towards VET**

Vocational education has in past and present times suffered from negative perceptions on the part of students, parents and many sectors of society (Maclean and Lai, 2011). The Scottish Government (2007) has called for research on changing attitudes to vocational learning. In the same vein, the Convention on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2007 pointed out that VET was undervalued yet it was the most important way of creating opportunities and raising achievement. Some of the challenges facing vocational systems include lack of workplace training places and trainers, a rapid expansion of tertiary education at the expense of school-based VET (OECD, 2011, p.7). The OECD found that, compared to other parts of the education system, VET has been neglected and has often been regarded as having lower status in many countries (OECD, 2011, p.7). The OECD (2009) observed that VET research has not received the same attention as other areas of research in education. Edward, Weedon and Riddell (2008) endorsed the OECD's call for research into learner journeys to discover the obstacles, the nature of support and advice required, the threats and opportunities that learners come across in the course of their journey to obtaining qualifications. In view of the OECD's recommendations for research into learners' journeys and attitudes towards VET this study has sought students' views and aspirations weighed against employers' and family expectations.

Issues have been raised regarding the low-skills nature of VET which militates against progression to higher education and more desirable jobs. Oketch (2007) cites Atchoarena and Delluc (2001) who assert that learners who take the vocational route are destined for a dead end as regards higher education. Consequently, students and their families view vocational education negatively as it carries a stigma of failure, low aspirations and a feeling of not being good enough for higher levels of education (Oketch, 2007). Thus young people and families' perceptions and aspirations have been influenced by the colonial legacy in favour of general education. Consequently, VET's anticipated economic role finds itself in direct conflict with the public's expectations and students' dreams (Oketch, 2007, citing Atchoarena and Delluc, 2001).

Oketch found that in most of the seven African countries he studied, vocational education was considered to be more a remedy for youth unemployment and was

generally perceived as inferior to general education. While the perception of VET as inferior was found to be diminishing in Egypt, working-class people were more likely to undertake vocational training than the middle-classes (Oketch, 2007). In Ghana, Senegal, the Seychelles, Tunisia and Zimbabwe, Oketch found that VET was still viewed as low-status, inferior and ideal for the less academic students. Moreover, VET was generally regarded as leading to low-wage and less prestigious jobs.

Oketch has thus concluded that attitudes towards VET have remained the same since 1965 when Foster proclaimed the vocational school fallacy. In most African countries the purpose of VET as a stimulus to enhance the life chances of economically and academically disadvantaged youth has remained unchanged over the past 20 years (Oketch, 2007, citing Middleton et al., 1993). Many people view vocational qualifications as inferior and designed for students who have failed to achieve socially and academically (African Union, 2007; Mureithi, 2009; Agbenyo and Collett, 2014). The persistence of such views is bound to precipitate the social exclusion of students who are already disadvantaged. This study explores the views and attitudes towards VET of students in rural Zimbabwe against the backdrop of the findings of Oketch, Mureithi, Agbenyo and Collett, the African Union and the OECD.

#### **3.6.4 The Role of Teachers and the Family**

Students' decision to enrol for particular courses is influenced by several factors. Among these factors Saif Khamis Ahmed Alnaqbi (2016) highlights the influence of teachers, family members and peers.

A study by Blenkinsop et al. (2006) found that a teacher's personality and motivation strongly influenced students' decisions to study a subject. Teacher personality and motivation depends on a number of factors. Bennell and Akyeampong (2007) carried out an international research project on teacher motivation and incentives in 12 countries in Sub-Sahara Africa and South Asia. The study addressed the extent of poor motivation among teachers and how this and incentives affect teacher performance and overall effectiveness. The levels of job satisfaction and motivation of teachers in all the 12 countries directly affected teacher behaviour and performance. Poor management of teachers and lack of accountability contributed to underperformance and, in some cases, gross professional misconduct (Bennell and Akyeampong, 2007). A study by Ud Din et al. (2012) found that the majority of the teachers believed that motivational factors, such as rewards and incentives, self-confidence and economic status of teachers, affected their performance. Teachers' performance in turn has been



found to affect student attitudes. Research carried out by Chireshe and Shumba (2011) revealed that the challenges faced by Zimbabwean teachers have a knock-on effect on their attitudes towards teaching. In a survey of 62 primary school teachers, Chireshe and Shumba (2011) found that most teachers felt that teacher training in Zimbabwe did not adequately prepare them for the job and they would not choose teaching if they had another chance. The teachers raised the challenges listed in table 3.3 below.

**Table 3.3: Challenges Faced by Zimbabwean Teachers**

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Number of respondents</b>
Poor salaries	60 (96.8 %)
Lack of resources	55 (88.7 %)
Poor working conditions	50 (80.6 %)
Poor accommodation	45 (72.6 %)
Lack of respect	44 (71.0 %)
Overworking	42 (67.7 %)
Political harassment/Victimisation of teachers	39 (62.9 %)
HIV/AIDS pandemic/Poor health facilities	32 (51.6 %)
Lack of refresher courses	30 (48.4 %)
Lack of transport to some rural schools	25 (40.3 %)
Inability to cater for special needs children	24 (38.7 %)
Information technology incompetence	22 (35.5 %)
Imposed curriculum	15 (24.2 %)

(Chireshe and Shumba, 2011, p.116)

Clearly, the majority of teachers' morale was very low. They felt disrespected, poorly trained, poorly paid, poorly equipped and were working under difficult conditions which consequently impacted negatively on their motivation. As seen earlier, teachers are primary agents of socialisation and have key roles in motivating learners. Given the level of dissatisfaction reported by the teachers in Shumba and Chireshe's study, their ability to motivate students becomes highly questionable. Poor working conditions have the potential to de-professionalise teachers leading to poor performance. The impact of teachers' attitudes on the quality of teaching and students' attitudes and achievement is therefore an issue worth exploring.

The family is the main arena where nurturing and socialisation take place. Parents, siblings and friends have a major influence on career choices. Studies carried out by the European Commission (2011) and Payne (2003) have found that the most common source of educational and careers advice in the EU is parents or other family members. A study commissioned by the European Commission in 2011 revealed that 41 per cent of participants had received advice from their parents or family; 22 per cent said that their parents or family advised them to choose VET, and 19 per cent reported that their parents or family advised them to choose general secondary or higher education. It should be noted, however, that the family's influence cannot be generalised as this varies according to the individual (Payne, 2003). Some students may make decisions based on a selection of options, while others may rely heavily on the family or professional advice. While the European Commission (2011) study established that 56 per cent of EU citizens had received no advice from their family, Edward, Weedon and Riddell (2008) argue that even where parents do not directly influence decisions, their educational experience and socio-economic status means that there are elements of social and cultural capital that influence their children's decisions. Parent's expectations and perceptions play a major part in shaping the career choices of their children (Ferry, 2006). Other studies by Creamer and Laughlin (2005) and Agbenyo and Collett (2014) have found that parental influence in both Western and non-Western contexts have more impact on students' choices than that of teachers or career advisers. In the UK 68 per cent of students rely on their parents for career advice and guidance (Agbenyo and Collett, 2014). The role of parental influence on children's career choice is evidently significant.

An international survey of attitudes to skills development conducted by the City and Guilds Centre for Skills Development covering Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Hungary, India, Malaysia, South Africa and the UK found that 62 per cent of participants believed that attitudes towards VET had improved over the past decade (Lucas, Claxton and Webster, 2010). Parental attitudes were, however, found to be the major stumbling block to students' uptake of VET (Lucas, Claxton and Webster, 2010). The Edge Foundation, an independent education foundation that promotes practical and vocational learning, launched a campaign seeking to encourage parents to change their attitudes towards vocational education and allow children to make informed choices with regards to their desired careers. Based on an online survey of 5,271 parents of children aged 11-15, and from a YouGov survey of July 2007 involving 2,000 British adults, the Edge Foundation (2016) found that one in five students felt that they had been ill-advised mostly by their parents. Many parents were found to

have entrenched prejudices against vocational education. The Edge Foundation (2016) states that 35 per cent of parents are of the opinion that vocational learning is for less academic students. It is interesting to note that, in Scotland, Edward, Weedon and Riddell (2008) identified VET programmes in the past that deliberately targeted less academic students with some degree of success. It is therefore crucial that parents are well-informed and have a good understanding of vocational routes.

### **3.6.5 Perspectives on the Role of Vocational Education in Africa**

Though vocational education has historically been regarded as an effective remedy for social and economic problems, there is little empirical evidence to suggest that VET is the magic bullet to solve unemployment and related social problems (Hyslop-Margison, 2000). Catts, Falk and Wallace (2011) have found that while VET has been instrumental in economic growth in some countries, it has failed to deliver the expected benefits in other countries. In most of the countries studied by Oketch in 2007 there was no evidence that VET would lead students into further education and training for specific occupations (Oketch, 2007).

At different stages in history support for VET has been influenced by social, political and economic developments. Catts, Falk and Wallace (2011) assert that VET must develop in accordance with technological advancement, employment patterns and social and demographic developments of the communities they serve. Accordingly, as Zimbabwe goes through a dynamic social and economic phase beset by general unemployment, fluidity in the movement of unskilled, semi-skilled and highly-skilled labour force together with globalisation and worldwide financial crises, there is a need to take renewed interest in the contemporary role of VET.

The debate about whether VET prepares students better for the world of work than traditional academic instruction has been taken to a new level by the globalisation phenomenon. As scholars continue to question the significance of VET in Africa, it is estimated that worldwide some 80 per cent of all occupations are technical and vocational in nature (Maclean and Lai, 2011, citing UNESCO-UNEVOC & UNESCO-UIS, 2006). Mureithi (2009) concludes that, though riddled with a myriad of limitations, the role of vocational education in Africa should not be underestimated.

Employers in a Nigerian case study called for the development of closer links between industry and vocational education providers; positive marketing of vocational education; integration of academic and vocational education; promotion of transferable

employability skills, problem-solving and decision-making skills; and increased opportunities for work experience (Bello, Danjuma and Adamu, 2007).

Mureithi (2009) proposes that the way forward should involve:

- Investing in research and development, appropriate/modern equipment and general maintenance of institutions;
- Giving equal attention to general academic education and VET;
- Stimulating rural development to discourage rural-to-urban migration;
- emphasis on vocational training tailored to local community needs;
- Government policies that promote micro finances and friendly loans to the poor and young entrepreneurs;
- Government policies that protect local economies against cheap imports brought in by globalisation;
- Promoting market-driven provision and creating favourable conditions to encourage companies to deliver on-the-job training and apprenticeship programmes.

The African Union added to the list and called for efforts to encourage equitable access for girls to vocational training, including access to the male-dominated engineering or industrial sectors. Maclean and Lai (2011) propose renewed efforts to raise the public's awareness of vocational education and the promotion of vocational employment.

Rojewski (1997) highlights the need for educationists to be conscious of the potential of VET either to engage or socially exclude students. Rojewski calls for research studies into students' reasons for choosing vocational programmes. The studies should establish whether decisions are based on personal reasons, such as, self-concept, academic ability and personal interests, or whether students of lower educational and occupational aspirations are being channelled into VET programmes. Rojewski also calls for investigations into potential barriers that inhibit the flourishing of youth aspirations. These and other factors will be studied in the context of the Zimbabwean situation and in particular the Murewa District setting.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

This review has defined what the literature means for this study. Previous research and theories related to the research question have been identified. The review has delineated the context and rationale of the research and helped to develop themes for further exploration. Controversies and inconsistencies that have characterised the

development of VET have been discussed to provide a better understanding of where this study is situated within the body of VET research.

This study derives inspiration from functionalist and conflict theories which see education's role in the socialisation process as that of classifying and training students to become productive members of a modern industrialised society. Teachers and parents are role models and their beliefs and expectations have been found to influence students' attitudes and aspirations. Over and above the intellectual curriculum, the hidden curriculum influences children to behave in accordance with the cultural values of their school communities and home environments. Family background and parental attitudes have thus been found to be the most important factors influencing students' attitude towards education and training.

This review raises several points that are important for the study. The problem under investigation and specific knowledge gaps have been revealed. The World Bank and educators in Zimbabwe concur that the Zimbabwean education system has not only been failing young people, but the nation as a whole. This has been identified as one strand of the problem. Material and human resources are being lost due to an education system that is benefiting other nations through unprecedented migration of skilled and unskilled labour. Nonetheless, the Zimbabwean government continues to expand academic education despite the existence of a growing population of highly academically educated but unemployed youth. A second and important strand of the problem has been identified as the absence of students' and teachers' voices in discussions of educational policy review and youth unemployment. A third and very important strand of the problem is centred on the status of VET and how it manifests itself through parents' and policy-makers' attitudes and how practical subjects are generally viewed in comparison to academic subjects. In this vein, factors affecting the status of VET, which include parental, cultural, educational and gender-based biases, have been analysed.

It has been established that VET is generally characterised by low status and negative attitudes across the world. It is still considered a route for the less academic students, despite the fact that over 50 per cent of upper secondary school students undertake vocational programmes in OECD countries. In addition, the renewed interest in VET does not seem to tally with general perceptions of VET. Evidently, there are mixed feelings about VET, which makes this a complex topic requiring a multifaceted approach.

On the basis of this literature review the research questions were refined and a suitably eclectic research design, which is outlined in the next chapter, was selected. The theoretical framework presented in this chapter guided the selection of suitable data collection methods to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of students and educational professionals towards VET. The research was guided by the framework in its attempt to look beyond participants' perspectives and delve deeper into finding out *why* they hold the views they have and *how* those attitudes have developed. The concepts identified here form the boundaries within which the discussions about the literature, methodology and the results of this study were carried out.

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### 4.0 Introduction

Chapter 4 delineates the methodology that I adopted for this study and the methods I used to collect the data. Kothari (2004, pp.7-8) describes research methodology as “steps that are generally adopted by a researcher in studying his research problem along with the logic behind them.” In other words, *methodology* refers to the approach or paradigm that underpins the research. Creswell and Clark (2007, p. 4) define methodology as “the framework that relates to the entire process of research”, while research design refers to “the plan of action” that links the framework to “specific methods”. The methods are the specific “techniques of data collection and analysis”. Research methods are usually designed to collect quantitative or qualitative data. Both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were employed to generate data and to seek answers to the research questions. In this study the case study approach was employed. The methodology determined the methods I selected. *Method* relates to the tools, the techniques, the processes and the ways in which research data are obtained (Kothari, 2004). In determining the suitable approach I was drawn to the post-modern approach which is described by Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p.16) as a “contemporary sensibility, developing since World War II, that privileges no single authority, method or paradigm.” Post-modernism focuses on otherness, difference and heterogeneity as opposed to reliance on single, monolithic frameworks (Best and Kellner, 1997; Bowker, 2001). Bowker (2001) cites Firat and Venkatesh (1995) who highlight the fact that the post-modern approach is a departure from procedures that are limited by rigid disciplinary boundaries; instead, post-modernism proposes the use of varied forms of knowledge production.

The research design outlined in this chapter describes an eclectic methodological approach (Bowker, 2001) to studying the experiences of VET. A student questionnaire (appendix 1) and student focus group discussions (appendix 4) as well as thematic analyses of in-depth interviews with teachers (appendix 5) and education inspectors (appendix 6) were employed to investigate participants’ opinions of VET. The eclectic approach used in this study was in line with the notion that different approaches to knowledge produce deeper and wider understanding of the social world (Bowker, 2001). The use of different data collection methods is a major feature of the case study approach, which enables researchers to examine a case from different angles.

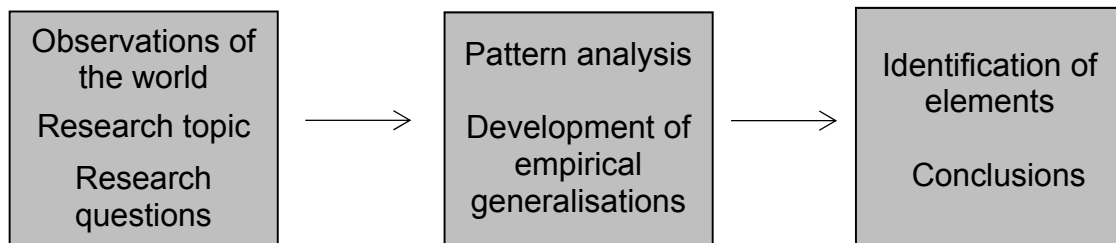
This chapter essentially addresses how the data were generated and analysed. The rationale for the selection of the research approach and empirical techniques used to generate research data from six schools in Murewa District will be outlined. The fieldwork was carried out between July and September 2013. The review of existing literature highlighted important concepts worth further investigation. The case study method was deemed most appropriate for obtaining in-depth insights into the experiences of students and educationists in Murewa District. This chapter describes the case study approach that was employed to answer the research questions. The multiple techniques used to generate research data included questionnaires, focus groups and semi-structured interviews. Focus groups were selected to generate information about collective views, to derive meanings behind these views and to produce a rich understanding of participants' experiences and beliefs (Gill, Stewart, and Chadwick, 2008). Research interviews were also ideal for exploring the views, experiences, beliefs and motivations of the students and educators (Gill, Stewart, and Chadwick, 2008). This chapter discusses in detail the research design, sampling, piloting of research instruments and data analysis. The scope and limitations of the research design is also delineated.

As explained in the introduction chapter, my motivation for undertaking this research emerged from observing the continued emphasis on academic subjects and the exclusion from further education of thousands of rural students whose views were being neglected because they had failed to achieve academically. I examined VET perceptions of primary and secondary school students, teachers, education inspectors and the head of Standards Development and Research Unit (SDERU). My research sought to determine, and clarify, the contemporary place of VET as seen through the eyes of students, who are at the receiving end, and the inspectors, who are responsible for formulating policy and delivering the curriculum. A qualitative case study approach was most desirable for the purpose of achieving the aims of this study as it allowed for a holistic and comprehensive exploration of the phenomena (Strauss and Corbin, 2015). The qualitative case study method as opposed to a quantitative method allowed me, as postulated by Strauss and Corbin (2015, p.5), "to explore inner experiences of participants; to explore how meanings are formed and transformed and to explore areas not yet thoroughly researched." The views of teachers and students on VET are rarely heard internationally and even less so in Zimbabwe. This approach enabled me to connect with participants and see things from their own perspectives (Strauss and Corbin, 2015). This inductive approach was ideal for gathering the observations of



students, teachers and education inspectors and in order to identify patterns and relationships between their experiences and draw conclusions.

**Figure 4.1: The Inductive Research Process**



As illustrated in figure 4.1, Neuman (2003, p.51) asserts that inductive studies start with a topic or detailed observations of the world and then move on to developing empirical generalisations and the identification of relationships between the identified elements in order to reach conclusions. While this study did not seek to develop universal generalisations, detailed analysis of the data enabled me to justify my findings and draw conclusions based on the case, some of which will be transferable to other settings.

Using research questions, I employed the inductive approach to narrow the scope of the research. Research questions “narrow the purpose statement to specific questions that researchers seek to answer” (Creswell, 2005a, p.117). In order to gain deeper understanding of a phenomenon, qualitative research asks *what* questions. Lichtman (2013, p.117) asserts that qualitative research requires research questions to be refined into *what* and *why* as opposed to *who* and *how many*. To gain in-depth understanding of the participants’ feelings and opinions, I asked the following research questions:

1. What is the contemporary meaning and purpose of VET in Zimbabwe?
2. What are the views and attitudes of students, teachers and education inspectors towards vocational training and employment?
3. Do students’ attitudes change during the transition from primary to secondary school?
4. What impact do historical and cultural influences have on students’ aspirations and the status of VET qualifications?

As seen in the preceding chapter, McGrath (2011) alludes to renewed interest in VET in Africa after a quarter century of dormancy. In the quest to gain a better

understanding of whether the worldwide renewed interest in VET is congruent with the experiences and feelings of students, teachers and education inspectors, I followed three main lines of inquiry:

1. Examining the colonial legacy of VET in Zimbabwe and the consequential cultural meaning of VET and the government's reaction to the colonial education policy;
2. Investigating students' attitude of VET and ascertaining whether these attitudes change during the transition from primary to secondary school;
3. Undertaking field research to define and classify the views of students, teachers and education inspectors regarding the value of VET as an economic stimulus and a vehicle to help students move into careers.

A three dimensional approach was employed for the investigation:

1. Review of literature on the background of VET in Zimbabwe and its international role in poverty alleviation and economic development;
2. The role of VET in skills development through a discussion of sociological theories and John Dewey's theories of education;
3. Analysis of research data from fieldwork to ascertain students' and educationists' views on poverty alleviation, employment creation and rural development. Students' attitudes towards VET in primary school and secondary school were investigated to ascertain whether their attitudes changed when they made the transition to secondary school.

#### ***4.1 Research Ethics and Procedure***

Ethical issues in social science research are increasingly being recognised as essential to avoid harm to participants (Maxwell, 2008, citing Christians, 2000, Denzin and Lincoln, 2000 and Fine, Weis, Weseen, and Wong, 2000). Maxwell (2008) is of the conviction that ethical concerns should be reflected in every aspect of the research design. Researchers ought to make ethical judgements from the formulation of research questions, selection of research methods and selection of participants through to data analysis and publication of results (Clough and Nutbrown, 2005; Maxwell, 2008). After obtaining ethical approval from the Faculty Research Ethics Panel (FREP) at Anglia Ruskin University in 2011, I sought permission from the Zimbabwe Ministry of Education and Culture to carry out fieldwork in Murewa District schools (see appendices 10 and 11). I carefully considered ethical issues for this case study, which was carried out in a district that had experienced political strife. Since the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 1999 as an opposition

party to the ruling ZANU PF party, teachers in Murewa District have found themselves caught in between two warring political parties. I had an obligation to ensure that my research activities would not cause any misunderstandings or put anyone at risk of harm.

I was fully aware of, and sensitive to, the difficult political climate in Murewa District and the anxiety of teachers and school heads regarding the political difficulties. As a researcher based in the United Kingdom, I was cognisant that I could be treated with suspicion and that the intentions of my study could easily be misconstrued. I had to think about my personal safety and that of my participants so I undertook a risk assessment (see appendix 14). Teachers and school heads had concerns about the potential political repercussions of their participation. To allay their fears, I went a step further than seeking the Ministry of Education's permission to conduct research, and introduced myself and the research to the local Senator. I presented the Senator with the permissions and an explanation of the research. After a thorough discussion of what the research was about and how it would benefit the district, the Senator granted me authorisation to enter the schools under his jurisdiction. I managed to alleviate the teachers' and school heads' concerns by explaining that the research was purely for educational purposes and that it had been approved by the Zimbabwe government and the local political office. In addition, I made it clear that schools' and participants' names would remain anonymous so that the information could not be traced back to schools or individuals. I adhered to strict confidentiality and anonymity requirements as outlined in the British Educational Research Association's (BERA, 2011) 'Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research'. No personal information of participants was used. Participants were also made aware of their right to withdraw from the research at any time if they felt uncomfortable about continuing or for any other reason.

In accordance with the ethical guidelines (BERA, 2011), securing participants' voluntary informed consent was my first step during the recruitment of participants. I gave participants information on the aims and purpose of the research, including assurance of confidentiality and participant autonomy (see appendix 7). I paid particular attention to the recruitment of student participants to ensure that no participant was coerced or felt compelled to participate. Based on the experience of the pilot study, I was aware of the temptation for teachers and heads of schools to select the students they felt would make a good impression in order to protect the reputation of the school. I requested permission to be allowed to talk to the students directly and give them the opportunity to independently make the decision to take part. I also gave

the students a written explanation to take home to their parents for discussion before seeking their consent. Students were allowed to show their parents the questionnaire to dispel any suspicions and to decide whether they still wanted their child to take part.

I held information sessions with potential participants before they signed up. I explained to all of them that the research was part of my PhD research study, which would be published as a thesis in the United Kingdom. I made clear that there was an agreement between myself and the Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe that a copy of the thesis would be shared and disseminated to the Zimbabwe Ministry of Education. Parental consent was sought for all students under the age of 18 via a signed and dated consent form (see appendix 8). Participants and their parents were made aware that there would be no payment or incentives for taking part.

After obtaining appropriate permissions and consent, I carefully planned the meetings with students and teachers to minimise disruption of classes and to avoid participants missing lessons. I timed the fieldwork to coincide with the end of term and the period after mid-year examinations when students and teachers had less pressure of work. I made flexible arrangements with school heads to meet participants during 'free periods' when no lessons were timetabled. I also made sure that all meetings adhered to the schools' Safeguarding and Child Protection policies and held meetings in appropriately designated and supervised areas. In order to allow students to express themselves freely, I permitted them to take questionnaires home. I gave them clear instructions that I needed their personal opinions and I emphasised that they should express their views freely and should not discuss them with anyone at home. In this way I was able to demonstrate my recognition of the autonomy of the participants and the value I placed on their views.

I conducted a pilot study in November 2012 to test the research instruments while at the same time developing rapport with school heads and students from participating schools. The pilot was effective in terms of gaining the confidence of the schools and the political officials who were satisfied that there was nothing sinister about the research. The pilot stimulated my intellectual curiosity and provided an opportunity to introduce the study to the Zimbabwe Ministry of Education, the local politicians and prospective participants. Education officials gladly endorsed the study for the contribution it would make to the ongoing review of the education system in Zimbabwe and in particular the renewed focus on vocational education. The pilot was followed by the major study between July and September 2013.

Pre-visit introductory telephone calls were made to heads of schools. This was followed by familiarisation visits to give information about the study and to build rapport with three secondary schools and three primary schools that participated in the research. Since I was stationed abroad, I made phone calls directly to heads of schools to book interviews and questionnaire administration appointments during their free periods. The research instruments were tested during the pilot study and refined for the major study. Questionnaire items were derived from questions developed and tested for validity by Professor Nherera for a 1994 PhD study on vocationalisation of education in Zimbabwe.

Continuous and detailed attention to ethical considerations was a critical part of this study. From the time I identified the problem up to the interpretation and writing up of the research findings I followed strict ethical guidelines so as to bolster the credibility of the study.

#### ***4.2 The Research Design***

The research design has a pivotal role in social research in making certain that the data collected lead us to the answers to the research questions. It is the overall strategy selected to integrate the different components of the study logically and coherently in order to address the research questions (De Vaus, 2001). In view of the recommendations of De Vaus (2001), Gorard, (2013), Vogt, Gardner and Haeffele, 2012, among other scholars, critical consideration of the research design was my initial task. At the outset, I established the information I needed in order to answer the research questions before considering the data collection methods. De Vaus (2001) emphasises the fact that the research problem should determine what the most suitable research design is. In this light, I adopted the qualitative case study research design for this study.

#### **The Case Study**

In addition to its suitability for answering the research questions, the case study was ideal because of its ability to gather in-depth information within the delineated unit of Murewa District and within a particular time-frame. This section offers definitions of case study methodology and explains my rationale for choosing this approach. The criticism against the case study approach is acknowledged and some misconceptions will be dispelled.

Robust qualitative case studies offer prospects for the exploration and description of phenomena *in situ* via multiple data sources (Baxter and Jack, 2008). This research study is an inductive study which is exploratory in nature in order to help us understand what is going on. Brown (2008) identifies Sharan Merriam, Robert Yin and Robert Stake as key proponents of case study research's place as a research strategy in both qualitative and quantitative studies. Merriam (1998), cited in Brown (2008), states that case study research delineates the 'case' or the 'object' or the 'unit' to be investigated. The case study approach focuses on "one instance (or a few instances) of a particular phenomenon with a view to providing an in-depth account of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in the particular instance" (Denscombe 2007, p.32). The case is distinguished by clear boundaries, such as a limited number of participants, a specific time-frame within which the study will be undertaken or the particular issue or concern to be investigated (Brown, 2008).

My choice of a case study approach was motivated by the need for intensive analysis of VET attitudes in Murewa District. Bent Flyvbjerg (2011, p.301) cites Merriam-Webster's dictionary (2009) which defines a case study as, *an intensive analysis of an individual unit (as a person or community) stressing developmental factors in relation to environment*. The *phenomenon* under investigation in this study is the attitudes towards, and opinions of, VET. The *case* is the students, teachers and education inspectors from Murewa District. Zimbabwe is made up of eight administrative provinces, which are divided into 59 districts. Murewa is one of the nine rural districts of Mashonaland East Province. The individual unit or case in this study was Murewa District, which I chose mainly because it is an area with which I am familiar and it is easily accessible from the capital city Harare. Zimbabwean rural schools follow more or less the same school curriculum and the students share a common socio-economic background, thus the Murewa District case would provide useful insights into the attitudes and opinions of students and educational professionals in the country as a whole.

The methodologist Robert Yin defines case study methodology as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (Yin, 1984, p.23). In light of this, the case study was ideal for finding out *what* is the place of VET in rural Zimbabwe and, from the perspective of students, teachers, and education inspectors, *what* are the contemporary factors that influence *attitudes* to VET? To find answers to the research

questions, I selected the most suitable method to answer the research questions as recommended by Flyvbjerg (2006, pp.26-27) who states that:

*Good social science is problem-driven and not methodology-driven, in the sense that it employs those methods which for a given problem best help answer the research questions at hand. More often than not, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods will do the task best.*

A quantitative or qualitative method on its own would not have provided a full understanding of the views and experiences of students and educators. The case study approach, combining various methods of data collection, was therefore ideal for capturing the complexities of human experience especially when used in conjunction with quantifiable measurement to answer the research questions. Baxter and Jack (2008) recognise six different types of case study, namely, explanatory, descriptive, multiple, intrinsic, instrumental and collective case studies. I chose the explanatory case study, which is most suitable for studies seeking to “explain the presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies” (Baxter and Jack, 2008, p.547, citing Yin, 2003). In a case study multiple data collection procedures are used to bring together detailed data over a limited time-frame (Baxter and Jack, 2008, citing Stake, 1995). The case study centres on holistic description and explanation and is not restricted to particular data collection methods (Brown, 2008, citing Merriam, 1998).

According to Tellis (1997), a case study is a triangulated research strategy. Stake (1995, cited in Tellis, 1997) indicates that triangulation refers to the procedures that are used to safeguard accuracy and alternative explanations. Denzin (1984, cited in Tellis, 1997) recognises four types of triangulation and, among them, methodological triangulation, in which one method precedes another. Methodological triangulation was used in this study to “increase confidence in the interpretation” (Denzin, 1984, cited in Tellis, 1997, p.2). Case studies are “multi-perspectival analyses”, that is to say, the researcher is concerned with both the voices and perspectives of the participants, as well as, the interaction between them (Tellis, 1997, p.1). Tellis (1997, p.1) argues that case studies “give a voice to the powerless and voiceless.” Students’ voices are rarely heard when educational policies are formulated. Teachers are usually powerless to influence educational policy and change, and educational policy is largely formulated from the policy-makers’ point of view. Accordingly, the case study method allowed me

to hear the voices of the students and teachers. Case studies elicit information from the viewpoint of the participants by using multiple sources of data (Tellis, 1997).

The purpose of conducting this research was to investigate the place of VET in rural Zimbabwe and, from the perspective of students, teachers, and education inspectors of Murewa District, establish the contemporary factors that influence their attitudes to VET. The case study method was best suited to achieving this goal as it focuses on “contextual conditions”, “contemporary events”, and the “experience of the actors” (Lacono, Brown and Holtham, 2011, p.57). In addition, the case study’s potential to encompass a range of techniques, such as interviews, questionnaires and focus groups (Potter, von Hellens and Nielsen, 2010), matched the need for a comprehensive investigation. Case studies are suitable for qualitative investigations that focus on words and meanings and explore questions of *how* or *why* (Potter, von Hellens and Nielsen, 2010). This was consistent and compatible with the goal of this study which was to gather participants’ experiences and views in their own words.

The chosen case study method has often been misunderstood and its limitations have frequently been overstated. This section justifies the credibility of the case study and identifies key misconceptions about case studies. The use of various data collection methods in this study was crucial to establishing credibility and trustworthiness of the results. From the onset I paid particular attention to good ethical practice, as outlined in section 4.1, which in turn supported the integrity of my data collection process. In addition, the rigorous data collection and analysis procedures described in sections 4.9 and 4.10 enabled me to produce credible and data-based findings.

**Table 4.1: The Case Study Framework**

Participating Schools	Data	Interviewees	Data
Secondary School A	Questionnaires and Focus groups with students	Practical subject teachers	In-depth interviews Research reports Review of literature
Secondary School B		Education inspectors	
Secondary School C		Head of Standards Development and Research	
Primary School D			
Primary School E			
Primary School F			

Adapted from Turijin (2012)

The case study approach involved combining data that were obtained from student questionnaires, focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with teachers and education inspectors. These data were then analysed within a framework derived from

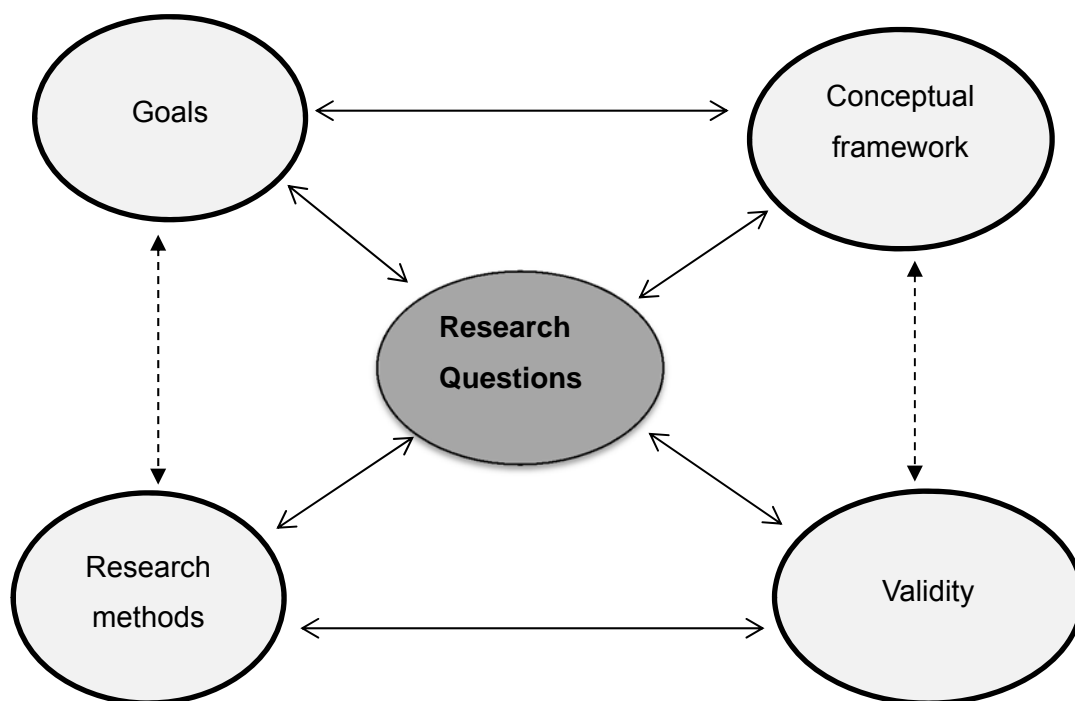


the relevant literature, including journals, research reports, doctoral theses, news articles and government reports.

### Research Design

The research design for this study was determined by the research questions. I was inspired by Maxwell's (2005b) interactive model of research design consisting of five components. These components were interlinked and played their part in answering the research questions in order to meet the objectives of the study.

**Figure 4.2: Maxwell's Interactive Model of Research Design**



Adapted from *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach* (Maxwell, 2005, in Maxwell, 2008)

### 4.3 Goals

I started off by establishing the purpose of the study and, in line with Maxwell's (2008) model, clear goals were set to establish its aims; the study's worth; implications for policy and practice; and contribution to knowledge, as outlined in chapter 1.

#### **4.4 Background and Context**

Maxwell (2008) outlines the need for the researcher to establish the background and context of the study in relation to the subjects and phenomena under investigation. As outlined in chapter 2, this study explored the historical and political background of VET in Zimbabwe and reviewed literature and vocational education theories. The study explored the underlying cultural, economic and political factors that influence people's views and decisions regarding VET. This was explored in the context of contemporary rural Zimbabwe and traced back to the colonial era.

#### **4.5 Research Questions**

The research questions (outlined in section 4.0 above and in figure 4.3 below) were the most essential component and closely linked to the other components. Maxwell (2008) emphasises the need to elaborate on existing theory and knowledge and to be clear about what exactly is being investigated. Research questions should generate answers that address the aims of the study, thus the links between the research questions and the goals of the study should be clearly demonstrated. The review of literature showed renewed interest in VET but raised questions about the contemporary role of VET, especially in rural Zimbabwe. The research questions were derived from the lack of evidence relating to what rural Zimbabwean children think about VET and its role in their future. The literature reviewed revealed that there were mixed feelings about the benefits of VET among educationists. The study was therefore in accord with Maxwell's recommendation to be clear on what exactly is being investigated.

#### **4.6 Research Methods**

Maxwell (2008) further highlights the need for the researcher to demonstrate how the research will be conducted. The approaches and techniques used to gather and analyse the data in order to answer the research questions are described and justified below.

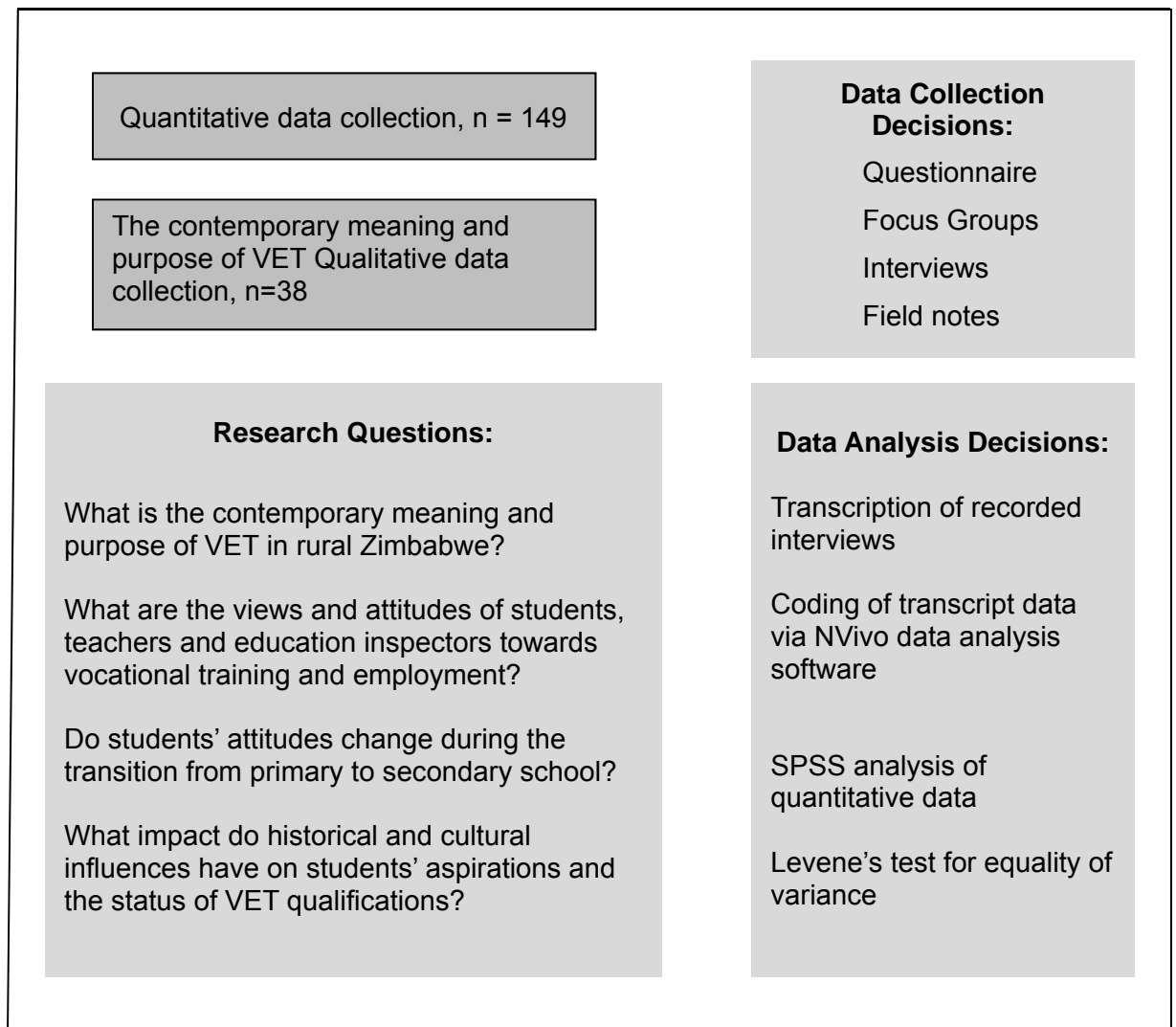
Taking heed of Hughes's (2006) advice to pay full attention to the purpose of the research and the research questions, these questions largely determined the methods I used to carry out this study. Hughes (2006) recommends that researchers should ask themselves what exactly they are trying to find out. This study sought to discover the attitudes and perceptions of different stakeholders in VET. Qualitative methods were ideal for investigating attitudes and perceptions, while quantitative methods were suitable for drawing comparisons. Thus multiple data collection methods were best suited to this study. Bryman (1988) backs the 'best of both worlds' approach and

applauds the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, and indeed this case study combined both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. Darke, Shanks, and Broadbent (1998) postulate that case studies ideally combine data collection techniques to provide descriptions of phenomena, develop theory and explore areas where existing knowledge is limited. This study used multiple data collection methods including interviews, questionnaires and focus group discussions to explore a variety of viewpoints.

Data collection methods used in this study included purposive sampling, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. I administered the questionnaires to students and conducted in-depth interviews with teachers, education inspectors and the Head of Standards Development and Research.

Creswell (2012) asserts that qualitative studies characteristically use multiple methods of data collection rather than depending on one source of data. I adapted Creswell's (2006) mixed methods model to develop a combined qualitative and quantitative data collection model (figure 4.3) for the case study.

**Figure 4.3: Multiple Data Collection Model**



Adapted from Creswell's (2006) mixed-methods model

A quantitative data collection method preceded the qualitative work and created background data from which the qualitative sample was drawn. The linear or staged approach, starting with a questionnaire, followed by focus groups and interviews enhanced the quality of analysis and augmented the case study. I started off by administering questionnaires to secondary and primary school students, and these questionnaires generated both quantitative and qualitative background data. They were followed up with focus group discussions with students who opted to take part. Focus groups provided in-depth contextual information and the opportunity to explore individual experiences with other student participants. The case study's strength was

that data were derived from multiple sources; qualitative or quantitative approaches alone could not have produced these. As Wolff, Knodel and Sittitrai (1993, p.119) noted:

*...surveys lack the flexibility of qualitative approaches to pursue particular issues in any greater depth or to accommodate a wider range of explanatory categories than foreseen in the original questionnaire design.*

The focus groups gave participants the opportunity to explain themselves. I was able to determine whether participants gave views that were different from the responses given in the questionnaires and had the opportunity to discover the reasons for any disparities. The integration of inductive and deductive methods (combining words and numbers) was more effective in depicting human experiences (Creswell, 2006). I was able to interact with participants and hear them speak for themselves and provide their own perspectives in words and actions (Hughes, 2006), while at the same time, drawing comparisons between them with figures and percentages.

### **Qualitative Data Collection**

Qualitative research seeks to establish “how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (Merriam, 2009, p.13). The use of language in qualitative data collection methods enables participants to reveal their experiences, feelings and emotions. The qualitative data collection method enabled me to investigate a range of feelings and to establish perspectives that differed between groups and categories of people (Mora, 2010). Underlying motivations and factors that influenced people’s decisions and opinions were also revealed (Mora, 2010).

### **Quantitative Data Collection**

Mupoperi (2007), citing Fitz-Gibbon and Morris (1987, p.10), explains that quantitative research uses numbers to answer such questions as ‘To what extent?’ and ‘How many?’ Mora (2010) recommends that quantitative approaches should be used to establish consensus on a particular issue and to extend the study to more participants. In this study the quantitative approach was included to find out whether students’ attitudes changed during the transition from primary to secondary school. The questionnaire generated quantitative data and also allowed the involvement of more students who could not be included in focus group discussions.

As Creswell (2006) observes, using a variety of data collection methods requires more time and in this study it meant that I had to be proficient in the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data. This opened up a window of opportunity for me to learn various methods in order to reap the richness of the blended approach. The complementary nature of the dual approach was able to provide different perspectives and obtain the best from each method (Mora, 2010). The qualitative findings added depth and richness to the quantitative findings (Hughes, 2006).

#### ***4.7 Validity, Credibility, Dependability and Transferability***

As recommended by Maxwell (2008), this section justifies the study's worth and acknowledges aspects of the study that could challenge its credibility. This study is intended to influence government policy in VET provision hence rigour, quality, dependability and credibility were paramount. Golafshani (2003) is content that the most important test of any qualitative study is its quality. Golafshani (2003) cites Lincoln and Guba (1985) who argue that the terms 'credibility', 'neutrality' or 'confirmability', 'consistency' or 'dependability' and 'applicability' or 'transferability' are the essential criteria for quality in the same way as 'reliability' and 'validity' are essential criteria for quality in quantitative paradigms. 'Dependability' in qualitative research is synonymous with 'reliability' in quantitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.300).

In order to achieve credibility and dependability I carefully considered what would be the most suitable methods. I took counsel from Golafshani (2003) who asserts that using multiple methods can lead to a more valid, reliable and diverse construction of realities. Using multiple methods enabled me to eliminate bias and increase the study's trustworthiness, as observed by Golafshani (2003). The choice of Murewa District case study was influenced by the need to achieve transferability of the research outcomes. The Murewa case study was chosen to represent the different types of community and levels of development characteristic of rural Zimbabwe. Murewa District possesses characteristics identical to those of most rural districts in Zimbabwe in terms of social and economic infrastructure. Most rural communities in Zimbabwe, and indeed the rest of Africa, have agrarian-based economies. They are afflicted by rural poverty and rural-to-urban migration, coupled with ever-rising youth unemployment and food insecurity. In addition, rural Zimbabwe possesses characteristics that are similar to those of most African rural areas. The experiences of students and teachers in rural Zimbabwe and rural Africa are therefore largely the same, which makes the results of this study transferrable to other rural settings in Zimbabwe and the rest of Africa. Thus integrating qualitative and quantitative data collection methods provided a much more robust

interpretation of the research context and validation for the research findings, which a single method alone would not have achieved (Bowker, 2001).

#### **4.8 Sampling**

Tellis (1997) concurs with Yin (1993), Stake (1995) and Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg (1991), among others, who argue that case study research is not sampling research. Nevertheless, Tellis (1997) and Flyvbjerg (2006) emphasise the need for careful selection of cases in order to enhance the outcomes of a study. Purposive sampling was best suited to this study. "In purposive sampling, subjects are selected because of some pre-set characteristics" (Sato et al., 2007, p.91). Grinnell and Unrau (2011) cite Rubin and Rubin (1995), who suggest that candidates for purposive sampling should have first-hand knowledge of the situation or experience under study, be willing to talk and be representative of the range of views. The choice of purposive sampling was based on my knowledge of Murewa District, the education system and the aims of my research. Student participants were only recruited from those who were studying practical subjects and thus possessed first-hand experience of vocational education. The students who participated in focus group discussions were drawn from those who had participated in the questionnaire. I also selected practical subject teachers and education inspectors who had the knowledge and understanding of the VET curriculum and delivery. Additionally, I selected schools that offered a range of practical subjects.

Murewa District was chosen as a case because of its rural location, accessibility and the availability of schools that offer practical subjects. The three most accessible secondary schools offering a wide range of practical subjects and three primary schools were involved. The full sample comprised 90 secondary school students studying practical subjects, 59 primary school students, six teachers, two education inspectors and the head of SDERU.

It should be noted that this was a cross-sectional study, not a longitudinal one. Consequently, secondary school participants were different individuals from the primary school participants.

**Table 4.2: Numbers of Student and Teacher Participants**

<b>Schools</b>	<b>Student Questionnaires</b>	<b>Focus Groups with Students</b>	<b>Practical Subject Teachers Interviewed</b>
Secondary School A	30	1 group of 6	2
Secondary School B	30	1 group of 6	2
Secondary School C	30	1 group of 6	2
Primary School D	20	1 group of 6	
Primary School E	20	1 group of 6	
Primary School F	19		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>6</b>

By involving different schools, a broader range of views was explored. The researcher was able to draw comparisons from questionnaire data and rich empirical data from interviews and focus group discussions provided by the sample.



**Table 4.3: Gender of Student Participants**

	School	Girls	Boys	Ages
<b>A</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	17	13	15-17+
<b>B</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	16	14	14-16
<b>C</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	18	12	15-17+
<b>D</b>	<b>Primary</b>	14	6	11-16
<b>E</b>	<b>Primary</b>	8	12	11-13
<b>F</b>	<b>Primary</b>	13	6	11-14
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>63</b>	

**Table 4.4: Ages of Student Participants**

Age	11	12	13	14	15	16	17+
<b>School A</b>					3	18	9
<b>School B</b>				1	23	6	
<b>School C</b>					1	24	5
<b>School D</b>	1	8	7	2	1	1	
<b>School E</b>	1	10	9				
<b>School F</b>	1	12	4	2			
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>14</b>

The primary and secondary school students who were aged between 11 and 18 shared similar family and educational backgrounds. Primary school students go through 7 grades before they transfer to secondary education at age 13+. At secondary school, students study at ZJC level for two years before undertaking O-Level at the age of 16/17+. All secondary school students were studying a practical subject at O-Level, which included woodwork, fashion and fabrics, food and nutrition, agriculture, building studies and technical drawing. A total of 149 students completed the questionnaires, while 30 of them were involved in focus groups. In-depth interviews were conducted with the teachers, education inspectors and the head of the Standards Development and Research Unit.

**Table 4.5: Composition of Student Participants by Age and Gender**

	<b>Age</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17+</b>
<b>Secondary School A</b>	Girls					2	11	4
	Boys					1	8	4
<b>Secondary School B</b>	Girls					12	4	
	Boys				1	11	2	
<b>Secondary School C</b>	Girls					1	15	2
	Boys						9	3
<b>Primary School D</b>	Girls	1	7	5	1			
	Boys		1	2	1	1	1	
<b>Primary School E</b>	Girls	1		7				
	Boys		5	7				
<b>Primary School F</b>	Girls	1	8	3	1			
	Boys		4	2				
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>13</b>

It was important to gather both girls' and boys' views for this study as previous studies have shown differences in subject preference between boys and girls. As shown in Table 4.5, there were 86 female and 63 male participants in total. Boys and girls were given equal opportunities to take part. More girls opted to take part than boys so the difference in the gender composition was due to more girls volunteering to participate than boys.

#### **4.9 Data Collection**

My selected research design formed the basis for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data (De Vaus, 2001). Creswell (2005b) identifies the researcher as an active participant in research studies. According to Strauss and Corbin (2015 p.4), "the researcher collects and interprets data, making the researcher as much a part of the research process as the participants and the data they provide." I was actively involved in gathering the data, analysing it and reporting on the findings. I collected research data using questionnaires which I distributed to students for them to take home to fill in. The questionnaires included Likert Scales which were suitable for my participants' age group. While Likert Scales were effective, I took note of Bertram's (2007) concerns that participants may intentionally avoid negative responses or give answers that they think the researcher is expecting. These limitations were, however, counteracted in focus group discussions when the same questions were explored in greater depth. The focus

group discussions were audio-recorded with participants' consent. Focus groups were effective for tracking patterns and themes arising from the individual questionnaires. Using an interview schedule (see appendices 5 and 6), audio-recorded interviews were conducted with teachers, education inspectors and the head of SDERU to gather professionals' views.

Adequate planning and communication with schools meant that suitable time was allocated for the researcher to distribute questionnaires and meet students outside their learning time. By so doing participants did not miss classes and were not disadvantaged in any way. Questionnaires were taken home by students to fill in at their convenience without the interference or influence of the teachers. Questionnaires were then collected on the following day. This safeguarded students' anonymity and allowed them to answer the questions truthfully and express their personal views on VET. In an environment where conformity is expected there was the likelihood of students making an effort to say the 'right thing'. Participants were requested to give their personal views and avoid discussing their responses with parents or other siblings at home. The focus group discussions were conducted within the child protection provisions of the schools to ensure safety and confidentiality.

Berry (1999) states that in-depth interviewing involves asking participants open-ended questions and probing their responses in order to achieve full understanding of the interviewee's point of view or situation. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with six teachers, two education inspectors and the head of SDERU. Open-ended questions were invaluable in pursuing and unravelling answers to the research questions. Focus group discussions based on responses to the questionnaire were conducted to elicit further information which would have been missed by the questionnaire. Focus groups are useful for gathering information on collective views and generating a better understanding of participants' experiences and why they hold particular views (Morgan, 1998). Six focus group interviews were conducted with students from both primary and secondary schools. Verbal and non-verbal communication from participants was noted and recorded in the field notes.

#### **4.10 Data Analysis**

Qualitative data were thematically analysed. Participants gave consent to be audio-taped and all interviews were transcribed into Word documents and uploaded into NVivo for coding and the identification of emergent themes. Emerging themes from focus groups and interviews were noted and categorised using the open-code method

(Fink, 2000). Commonalities and discrepancies across interviews were identified and noted. As (Fink, 2000) points out, qualitative research seeks to find out *why* while the quantitative research will ask *how many*, *how widespread* or *how old*. The qualitative data enabled me to identify and describe the categories thus helping me to derive meaning from them, while the quantitative data established the relationship between categories (Fink, 2000). The use of suitable data collection and analysis techniques generated the appropriate level of data needed to meet the objectives of the study and subsequently address the research question.

#### **4.11 The Qualitative Research Process**

The research processes of this study were influenced by the use of systematic approaches to data collection and data analysis. Fink (2000) applauds Kvale's (1996) seven stages of the research process: **thematising, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analysing, verifying and reporting**. It should be noted, however, that there was no attempt to follow these stages rigidly. The researcher was cognisant of Fink's (2000) acknowledgement that it is not always possible to follow the stages step by step.

**Thematising** according to Fink (2000), is the process of spelling out the *what*, *why* and *how* questions. Before undertaking the pilot study and fieldwork, I set out to establish *what* I was going to study, *why* I was going to study it, and *how* I was going to carry out the study. At the core of my study was the need to find out students' and professionals' attitudes, views and experiences. The qualitative research interview and focus groups were ideal techniques for obtaining and interpreting the meaning of the real-life experiences of participants (Fink, 2000, citing Kvale, 1996).

The **design** step involved determining which kind of interview to use (Fink, 2000). Focus group and personal interviews were selected for this study. Based on the research aim of finding out students' and educationists' views, 59 primary school students, 90 secondary school students, six teachers, two education inspectors and the head of SDERU were identified using the convenience sampling technique. Fink (2000) points out that qualitative techniques designed to generate in-depth information require limited numbers of participants as very large numbers can potentially undermine the development of deeper understanding of phenomena (Fink, 2000). Themed interview schedules were designed with open-ended questions to give participants the room to elaborate their answers as well as to give the researcher opportunities to probe for further details. The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. The

researcher was mindful of Fink's (2000) reminder that face-to-face interviews raise ethical responsibility issues due to their personal nature. Care was therefore taken to seek informed consent and ensure participants' anonymity.

**Transcription of interview recordings** was followed by coding, which involved labelling and categorising the data (Fink, 2000). I sought to make sense of the qualitative data, looking out for similarities between the categories (Fink, 2000). The interview recordings and focus group discussions generated a lot of information so I had to decide on the most effective way to manage and analyse the data thoroughly and transparently. I used NVivo qualitative data analysis software to organise and analyse content from the interviews and focus group discussions. I created an NVivo project where I inserted all the interview and focus group data and used three of the key features of NVivo, namely, sources section, classification section and the nodes/codes section. The sources section helped me to organise the data sources. The classification section enabled me to classify the data into interviews and focus groups and helped me to organise the demographics. The nodes/codes section allowed me to organise my coding structure into themes, and the themes below were identified:

- Access to resources
- Careers guidance
- Growth points as economic centres
- Impact of post-independence educational policy
- Nziramasanga Commission recommendations
- Parents' attitudes
- Reason for choosing practical subject teaching
- Student attitudes towards VET
- Students preferring academic subjects to VET
- Teacher attitudes
- Teacher competency
- VET curriculum industry involvement
- VET for employment and self-employment
- VET opinion
- VET potential for development

- VET relevance
- VET route versus academic route - the two-tier system
- VET status

I was able to review, merge and refine my coding as well identify key ideas and links between them. I was also able to link information back to a source thus allowing me to drill into my data to a greater extent than manual coding would have allowed. Using NVivo's powerful search and query tools, I was able to interrogate the data in depth and discover subtle connections by running queries such as word frequencies and coding comparisons. I was able to draw gender comparisons, for instance, of what females and males said on a particular theme as shown in table 4.6 below.

**Table 4.6: Gender Comparison - Male vs. Female**

	<b>Interview: gender male</b>	<b>Interview: gender female</b>
1 : Access to resources	3	4
2 : Careers guidance	3	6
3 : Growth points as economic centres	6	3
4 : Impact of post-independence educational policy	0	1
5 : Nziramasanga Commission recommendations	0	2
6 : Parents attitudes	2	3
7 : Reason for choosing practical subject teaching	1	3
8 : Student attitudes towards VET	6	1
9 : Students preferring academic subjects to VET	3	0
10 : Teacher attitudes	1	2
11 : Teacher competency	0	4
12 : VET curriculum industry involvement	1	2
13 : VET for employment and self-employment	0	11
14 : VET opinion	2	1
15 : VET potential for development	2	5
16 : VET relevance	4	3
17 : VET route vs academic route – two-tier system	1	4
18 : VET status	14	11

I was also able to compare the frequencies with which different groups of participants, for example, teachers and education inspectors, mentioned a particular theme, as shown in table 4.7.

**Table 4.7: Status of VET Comparison - Teachers vs. Education Inspectors**

	Interview: Status Teacher	Interview: Status School Inspector
1 : Access to resources	6	1
2 : Careers guidance	5	4
3 : Growth points as economic centres	6	3
4 : Impact of post-independence educational policy	0	1
5 : Nziramasanga Commission recommendations	0	2
6 : Parents attitudes	2	3
7 : Reason for choosing practical subject teaching	4	0
8 : Student attitudes towards VET	7	0
9 : Students preferring academic subjects to VET	3	0
10 : Teacher attitudes	1	2
11 : Teacher competency	0	4
12 : VET curriculum industry involvement	0	3
13 : VET for employment and self-employment	3	8
14 : VET opinion	1	2
15 : VET potential for development	3	4
26 : VET relevance	7	0
27 : VET route versus academic route - the two-tier system	2	3
28 : VET status	23	2

#### **4.12 Quantitative Data Analysis**

Participating schools were renamed using letters of the alphabet to ensure anonymity. Quantitative data from the questionnaires was collated onto an Excel spread-sheet and subsequently exported to SPSS software. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse data from the questionnaires. Similarities and differences between primary school and secondary school students' responses were drawn and the results were plotted on graphs and tables as numbers and percentages. Inferential statistics in the form of t-test analysis were used to compare students' interest in subjects.

SPSS software is an invaluable tool which offers a variety of data analysis tests. From among these I selected the independent-samples t-test to compare attitudes toward practical subjects by gender. I was interested in finding out whether boys and girls differed significantly in terms of their interest in subjects. I employed the independent-



samples t-test to check whether there was a statistically significant difference in the mean scores for the two groups of students. To run the independent-samples t-test, one categorical, independent variable (*boys/girls*); and one continuous, dependent variable (*interest in subjects*) were needed (Pallant, 2013). I used the independent-samples t-test to explore gender differences in students' interest in all subjects offered. The two variables used were *gender* and *interest in subjects* as shown in the t-test results in appendix 9. To answer the question about students' attitudes it was essential to establish whether girls had stronger preferences than boys for particular subjects. The independent-samples t-test was ideal for drawing those comparisons between the two groups.

#### **4.13 Questionnaire Reliability and Pilot Study**

Questionnaire reliability was paramount to ensure consistency of findings and to permit transferability. Ary et al. (2010, p.236) state that "the reliability of a measuring instrument is the degree of consistency with which it measures whatever it is measuring." The questionnaire design was derived from Professor Nherera's 1994 Ph.D. research project entitled, 'Vocationalisation of Secondary Education in Zimbabwe: a Theoretical and Empirical Investigation'. Professor Nherera confirmed in writing that he carried out a pilot study to test the validity and reliability of the research instruments (see confirmation email in appendix 2). In addition, the selected questions were put through Brian Scott's (n.d.) 'Readability Formulas and Text Readability Consensus Calculator' (see appendix 3) to ensure age and reading level appropriateness. The questions scored a reading grade level of 5: fairly easy to read; with a reader's age of 8-9 years old (Readability Formulas, 2012). My participants were aged 11-17 which means that the questionnaire was easy for both primary and secondary school participants to read and understand the questions. The questions which were relevant to the objectives of this study were further tested in a pilot study conducted in November 2012.

This study involved finding out attitudes and opinions thus the inclusion of Likert-type scales in the student questionnaire was fitting. Dr. Rensis Likert, a University of Michigan sociologist from 1946 to 1970, is credited with developing the technique which is outlined in his original report entitled, 'A Technique for the Measurement of Attitudes' published in 1932 (Joshi, Kale, Chandel, and Pal, 2015; Bertram, 2007; Uebersax, 2006). Dr. Rensis Likert aimed to develop a means of measuring psychological attitudes in a 'scientific' way (Uebersax, 2006). According to Hartley and Maclean (2006) Likert-type scales have better reliability and validity when used with

young people or people with lower literacy levels. They are easier to read and readily understood by participants and are therefore likely to produce more reliable responses. Using Likert-type scales, I asked students to show their level of interest in subjects by indicating whether they were: not interested; somewhat interested; or very interested. I also asked the students to show whether they thought practical subjects were not useful; just right; or very useful in fulfilling employment and other goals. Students were also given the opportunity to express which views about education and work they agreed or disagreed with. Likert scales enabled me to quantify the participants' responses and subject them to statistical analysis (Bertram, 2007).

#### ***4.14 Limitations and Delimitations***

All research methods have their merits and demerits. The methodological limitations of this study ought to be acknowledged. Firstly, this study did not include all schools in the district, which potentially limited the conclusions reached. Secondly, the quantitative approach has been criticised for missing important aspects of human phenomena (Fink, 2000, citing McCracken, 1988), while the qualitative method has been found to fall short in terms of generalisability and replication to wider contexts (Hughes 2006). When I identified the case study as the most desirable methodology for my study I initially felt trepidation over the issue of generalisability. While the case study was most suitable for generating specific knowledge and producing holistic explanations of participants' feelings and opinions about VET in Murewa District, I was cognisant of observations made by Potter, von Hellens and Nielsen (2010) and others who felt that individual attitudes and views may not be generalisable to wider situations or populations. My concerns were, nonetheless, dispelled after reading the works of Bent Flyvbjerg, Robert Stake, Robert Yin and Sharan Merriam, among others.

Potter, von Hellens and Nielsen's (2010) criticism has been challenged by Bent Flyvbjerg (2011) who argues strongly that it is wrong to say that a case study cannot provide reliable information. Flyvbjerg (2011, p.306) asserts that case studies are ideal for developing theories by establishing links between causes and outcomes; providing detailed examination of hypotheses; developing and analysing historical explanations; and developing new hypotheses and questions for investigation.

Flyvbjerg (2006) argues that the criticisms levelled against case studies may not necessarily be wrong, but they are overstated and misleading in their assumption that case studies cannot provide consistent information. Donald Campbell, a former critic of the case study method, changed his view and became a leading advocate of it.

(Flyvbjerg, 2006). Campbell's writings inspired Flyvbjerg who has identified five misunderstandings or oversimplifications with regard to case study research.

The first misunderstanding is that "general, theoretical (context-independent) knowledge is more valuable than concrete, practical (context-dependent) knowledge" (Flyvbjerg, 2006 p.7). Flyvbjerg (2006, p.7) declares that "predictive theories and universals" cannot be found in studies involving human relations or what people do and think. To Flyvbjerg, "concrete, context-dependent knowledge" is more valuable in such studies than futile emphasis on predictive theories and universals (2006, p.7).

The second misunderstanding is that "one cannot generalize on the basis of an individual case; therefore, the case study cannot contribute to scientific development" (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.12). Flyvbjerg refutes that contention and argues that formal generalisation is overrated while the strength of individual cases is underrated (Flyvbjerg, 2006). He maintains that it is possible to generalise on the basis of individual cases, and that the case study can effectively contribute to scientific development as an alternative or a supplementary method (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Flyvbjerg asserts that "generalisability of case studies can be increased by the strategic selection of cases" (2006, p.13). I strategically chose Murewa District as the case because of its strategic position in the country and carefully selected those schools and participants who would be able to offer valid information which would help to answer the research questions. The case study method can thus contribute exponentially to the growth of collective research knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

The third misunderstanding is that, while other methods are valuable for testing hypotheses and building theory, the case study is only useful for generating hypotheses at the initial stage of the research process (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Flyvbjerg (2006, p.13) contests that assertion, arguing that "the case study is useful for both generating and testing of hypotheses but is not limited to these research activities alone." Flyvbjerg (2006) cites Eckstein (1975, p.80) who argues that case studies are "valuable at all stages of the theory-building process" and more useful for testing rather than generating hypotheses. Furthermore, Flyvbjerg (2006) contends that a representative case or a random sample may not be suitable for studies seeking in-depth information because random samples bent on representativeness do not usually provide the richest information. Flyvbjerg (2006, p.13) considers that it is more useful to ascertain the causes and consequences of a given phenomenon than "to describe the

symptoms of the problem and how frequently they occur,” hence fewer cases selected on the basis of their validity are more appropriate.

The fourth misunderstanding is that the case study method has a bias towards confirming the researcher’s preconceived ideas, making the method’s scientific value questionable. Flyvbjerg disputes that assertion, arguing that the case study carries no greater bias towards confirming researchers’ predetermined views than other research methods; instead case studies have been found to be more biased towards altering preconceived ideas (Flyvbjerg, 2006). I found that the preconceived ideas that I had before undertaking this study were in fact not confirmed by the time I started analysing the results.

Flyvbjerg agrees with critics with regard to the fifth misunderstanding, namely, that it is usually difficult to summarise case studies. Flyvbjerg (2006), however, notes that the difficulties of summarising case studies emanate from aspects of what is being studied rather than from the case study method itself. Flyvbjerg further explains that summarising and generalising from case studies is not always appropriate as some case studies are best read as a complete story.

The Murewa case study was strategically selected to increase the reliability and validity of the data. The rural schools in Murewa District share many similarities in terms of infrastructure and students’ socio-economic backgrounds with other rural schools in the province and indeed the rest of the country. These similarities therefore make the findings of this case study useful and applicable to other rural settings. In addition, given the homogeneity of the schools in Zimbabwe, the outcomes of Murewa District case study are highly transferrable to other districts. Besides, increasing the number of districts and schools was unlikely to have yielded any new data. I was also fully aware of the subjective nature of case studies. In this light, I was careful to avoid biased representation of the evidence through meticulous analysis of the research data, making clear distinctions between facts and personal opinions (Lacono, Brown and Holtham, 2011) and allowing the data to speak for themselves.

#### **4.15 Conclusion**

Chapter 4 has outlined the methods used and explained why they were best suited to addressing the research questions of this study. The strengths and merits of using the chosen methods were analysed and discussed. It was shown that the weaknesses of

qualitative and quantitative approaches can be mitigated by a careful combination of the complementary methods.

This chapter has outlined how the research was conducted, starting from the research questions through to the reasoning behind the selection of the Murewa case study and the multiple data collection techniques used to generate the research data. In accordance with Maxwell's (2008) interactive model of research design the aims of this study, background and context of the study, the research questions and research methods have been described. It has been shown how the review of the literature, sociological theories and the fieldwork constituted a three-dimensional approach that combined existing knowledge with educational theory and fieldwork data in order to establish students' and educational professionals' views on the role of VET in Murewa District.

The methods used allowed a robust enquiry into intricate real-life situations. Human participants were allowed to express themselves in conversation with the researcher. Multiple methods were used to counteract the subjectivity which is characteristic of qualitative research. This chapter has shown that qualitative and quantitative data collection methods can be effectively combined to produce strong and reliable research evidence. The 'best of both' worlds approach was instrumental in answering the research questions addressed by this study. As Darke, Shanks and Broadbent (1998) propose, the methods adopted for this study effectively and successfully combined rigour, relevance and pragmatism.

The rationale for choosing the case study approach was inspired by the works of leading case study proponents, such as Baxter and Jack (2008), Brown (2008), Yin (1984), Stake (1995), Merriam (2009), Tellis (1997) and Flyvbjerg (2011). The ability of the case study to allow the use of multiple data collection methods enabled this study to benefit from the best of both approaches. On the basis of the arguments presented by Donald Campbell and Bent Flyvbjerg this chapter has established that the case study holds firm against other research methods and that the criticisms levelled against it are rather overstated. Creswell's (2006) mixed-methods model was adapted into a multiple data collection model, which enabled me to incorporate quantitative data collection methods into a qualitative case study.

The case study approach provided the depth I needed for this study, which larger samples would not have achieved. The criticisms relating to theory, reliability and

validity levelled against my chosen methodology were convincingly disputed by Flyvbjerg and Eckstein, among others. The careful selection of the case coupled with multiple data collection methods strengthened the reliability and validity of the data generated. The doubts about generalisability of case studies were quashed by Flyvbjerg who recommends strategic selection of cases to increase generalisability. I carefully selected my case study and participants, ensuring that only those students, teachers and education inspectors directly involved in VET took part in this study. The case study was clearly best suited to gathering contextual first-hand information in this study. Flyvbjerg (2006) is content that the case study holds firm against other research methods and that it is an essential and desirable method for particular tasks in social science research methodology. The works of Bent Flyvbjerg, Robert Stake, Robert Yin, and Sharan Merriam were instrumental in dispelling the myths surrounding the case study method, so much so that I adopted the case study approach with confidence.

This chapter has defined the ethical considerations taken into account to protect participants from potential harm. It has been shown how extra care was taken to work around the complexities of conducting research in a politically sensitive country and to deal with gatekeepers to avoid participants' safety and autonomy being compromised. From the very beginning I had to think seriously about ethical issues to ensure the safety of participants and myself. Gaining trust from local politicians and protecting the teachers and students from potential harm from political misunderstandings was the top priority. During the fieldwork I kept all participants informed of their right to withdraw without having to explain why. The other challenge I faced in the schools was the attempt by teachers to direct me to classes that they felt were 'smarter' and would give the 'right' answers. I used my knowledge of the school set up to avoid this and excluded teachers from the process of selecting participants but asked the head to work independently of teachers' influence. Impartiality was taken seriously to safeguard the credibility and trustworthiness of data collected.

In a nutshell, I followed the stages below to meet the research aims and address the research questions:

Stage 1: Introductory visit to schools, meetings with local Senator, school heads and prospective participants to explain the aims of the research and address ethical issues;

Stage 2: Recruitment of pilot study participants. Further ethical issues identified and research instruments tested and reviewed;

Stage 3: Sought local Senator's reassurance and permission to carry out major study.  
Recruitment of participants;

Stage 4: Semi-structured questionnaires administered to student participants to generate both quantitative and qualitative data;

Stage 5: Questionnaire data was reviewed and key themes identified for further exploration in focus groups;

Stage 6: Focus group discussions with self-selecting students conducted, audio-recorded and transcribed;

Stage 7: Audio-recorded in-depth semi-structured interviews held with teachers and education inspectors;

Stage 8: Audio-recorded semi-structured interview held with head of SDERU;

Stage 9: Transcription of interviews and participants given the opportunity to read and corroborate the content of their interview transcript;

Stage 10: Interview transcripts uploaded into NVivo for coding, categorisation and thematic analysis. Quantitative data exported into SPSS and descriptive statistical analysis, including inferential t-test analysis carried out.

Working systematically ensured that I did not miss crucial information, patterns or themes in my data. The findings and evidence that emerged from this rigorous and systematic research methodology are discussed in detail in the forthcoming fieldwork report chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5: VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN RURAL ZIMBABWE THROUGH THE EYES OF STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND EDUCATION INSPECTORS – FIELDWORK FINDINGS**

### ***5.0 Introduction***

In his 1994 study Professor Nherera established that students and parents shunned vocational education and preferred academic education which was perceived to have better employment and financial reward prospects. Twenty years on since Professor Nherera's study and 36 years after independence, this chapter presents fieldwork findings on the place of VET in rural Zimbabwe and, from the perspective of students, teachers and education inspectors, the contemporary factors that influence attitudes to VET. The study sought perceptions of students who by and large have little or no colonial rule misgivings, apart from what their parents may impart to them. The views of teachers and education inspectors were also sought to gain a better understanding of contemporary issues in vocational education in rural Zimbabwe. The fieldwork focused on establishing:

- The family background of primary and secondary school students;
- The educational and career aspirations of both primary and secondary school students;
- Students' post O-Level aspirations;
- Comparisons between primary and secondary school students' post-O-Level aspirations;
- Student interest in academic subjects contrasted with interest in practical subjects;
- Secondary school students' attitudes towards practical subjects set against those of primary school students;
- Students' preferred work locations vis-à-vis rural/urban environments;
- Teachers and education inspectors' perceptions of the place of practical subjects in the school curriculum.

Further, an investigation into how historical and cultural influences shape students' aspirations and the status they ascribe to VET qualifications was undertaken. Family educational background was a crucial starting point to gain understanding of students' thoughts and aspirations. Visual representations have been used in this chapter to depict the relationships between that data and to highlight conspicuous features, as recommended by Cooper and Shore (2010).



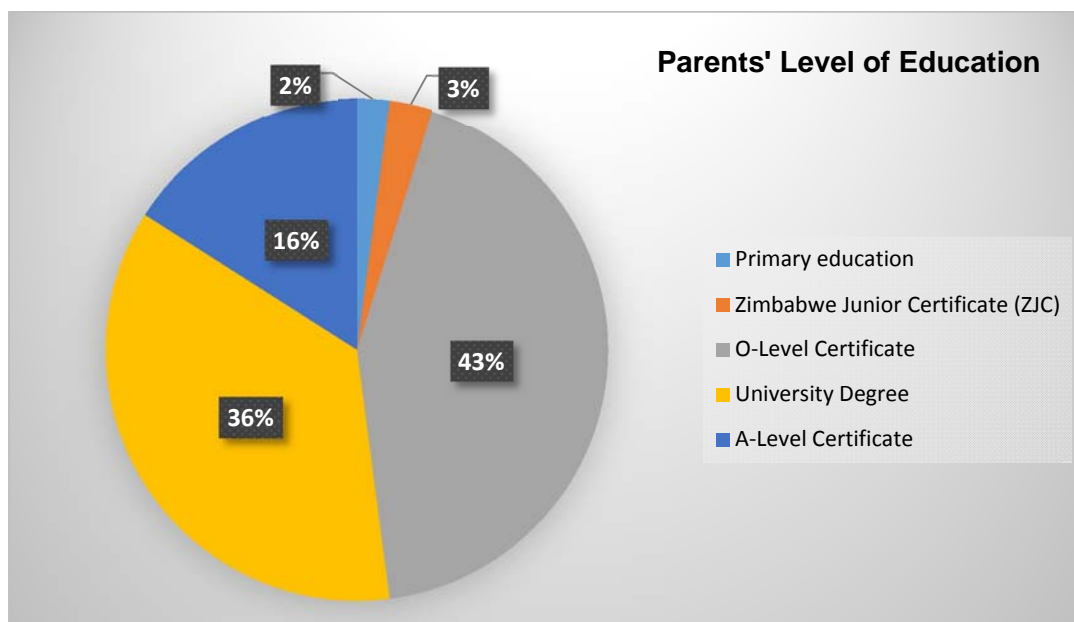
### 5.1 Parents' Level of Education vis-à-vis Students' Educational Aspirations

Studies by Simpson, 2003; Miller et al., 2003; Kniveton, 2004; Ferry, 2006, among other scholars, have shown that family background has a strong bearing on students' attitudes and career choices. Data were collected from primary and secondary school students. The students were asked to indicate their parents' highest educational level. Table 5.1 summarises the results. It was apparent that 43 per cent of parents were educated up to O-Level with 36 per cent holding university degrees.

**Table 5.1: Primary and Secondary School Parents' Educational Level**

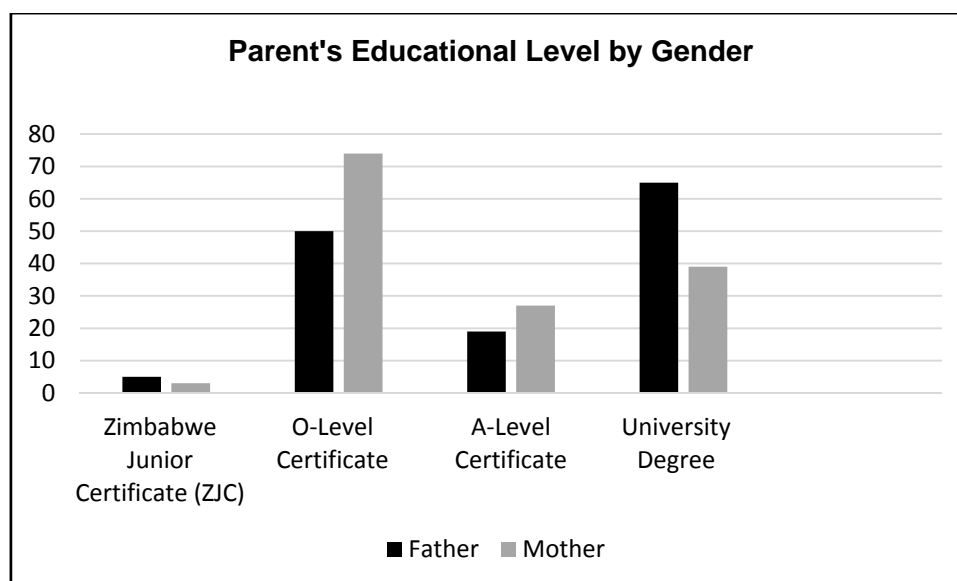
Parents Highest Educational Level	No.	Proportion
Primary Education	6	2%
Zimbabwe Junior Certificate (ZJC)	8	3%
O-Level Certificate	124	43%
A-Level Certificate	46	16%
University Degree	104	36%

**Figure 5.1: Primary and Secondary School Parents' Educational Level**



When analysed according to gender, more fathers turned out to have had a university education, while most mothers had been educated to O-Level, as shown in figure 5.2 below.

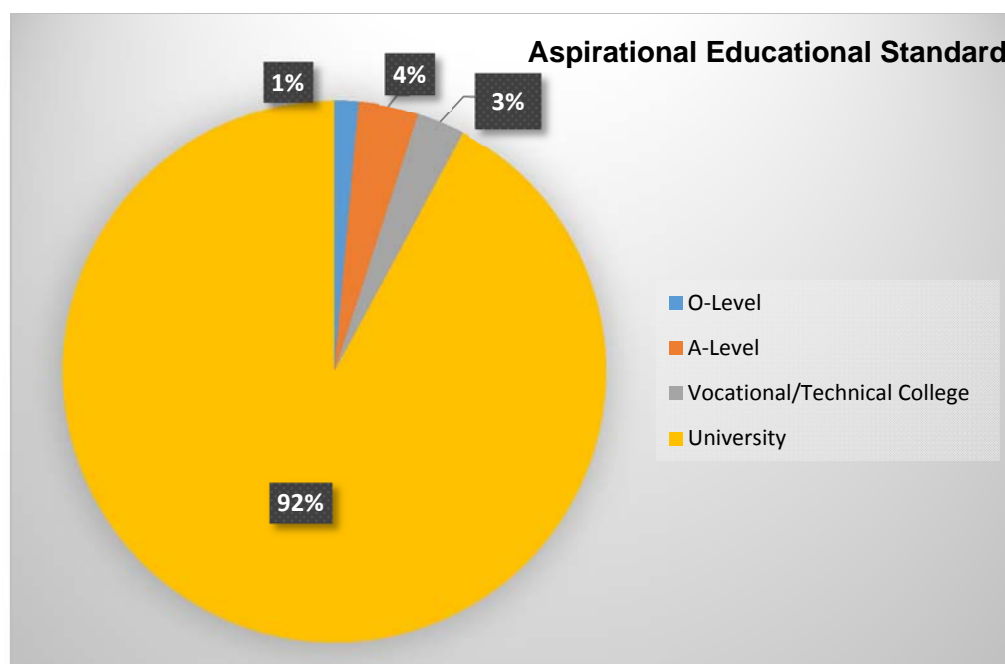
**Figure 5.2: Primary and Secondary School Parents' Educational Level by Gender**



### **5.2 Students' Educational Aspirations**

There is evidence to suggest that the levels of parents' education had a bearing on the majority of students' desire to attend university. The nature and level of parental education was found to influence students' attitudes and aspirations. Students' responses to the question - *Up to what level do you want to continue with your education?* - revealed that 92 per cent of students aspired to university education, which is largely academic in Zimbabwe. Students had no intention of exiting education after O- or A-Levels and only 3 per cent had their sights on vocational training, as shown in figure 5.3. These findings strongly support Davis-Kean and Schnabel's (2001) conclusions that there is a close relationship between parental education and children's aspirations. International studies examined by Davis-Kean and Schnabel show evidence that higher parental education is closely linked to higher expectations of students' achievement (Davis-Kean and Schnabel, 2001).

**Figure 5.3: Primary and Secondary School Students' Educational Aspiration**

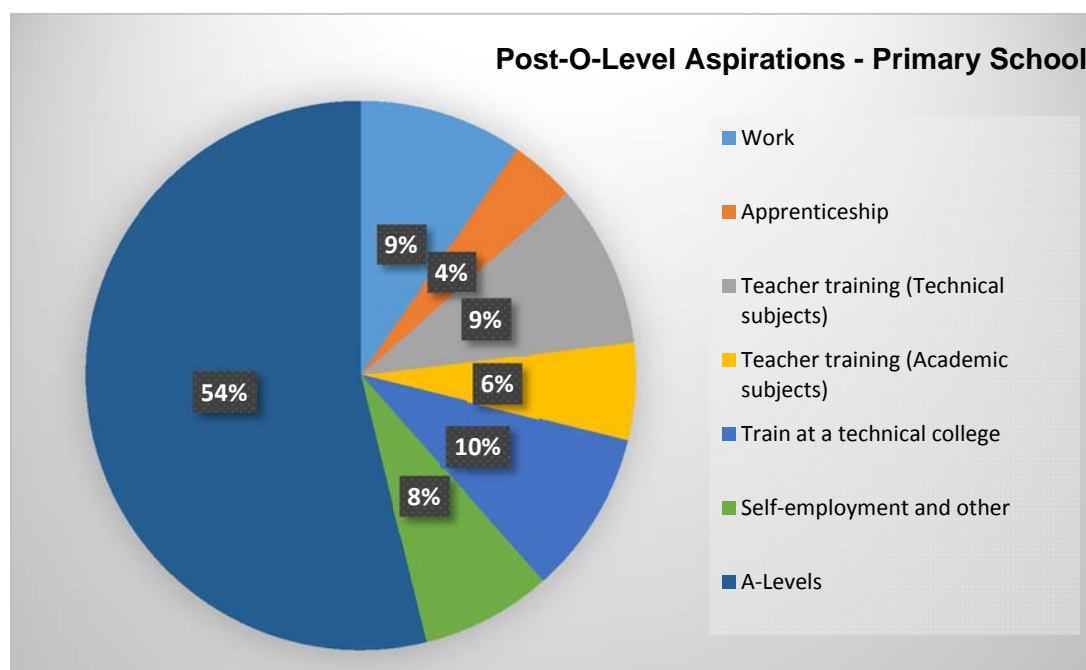


More detailed information was sought by asking students - *What do you want to do after your O-Levels?* The responses to this question affirmed students' high educational aspirations. In primary schools a majority of 54 per cent aspired to study at A-Level which is also an indication of the intention to proceed to university. It was interesting to note that in primary school 10 per cent wished to train at technical colleges and another 9 per cent were interested in training as technical subject teachers (see table 5.2. and Figure 5.4). However, when the same question was presented to secondary school students, there was a clear shift of interest with 91 per cent aspiring to take A-Levels, 0 per cent interested in technical training and just 2 per cent interested in training as technical subject teachers, as shown in table 5.3 and figure 5.5. While this study is not concerned with the links between parental education and their children's cognitive development, there is evidence to suggest close links between parents' levels of education and students' educational aspirations. It can thus be deduced that parental influence is an important factor affecting students' attitudes and aspirations.

**Table 5.2: Post-O-Level Aspirations of Primary School Students**

What do you want to do after your O-Levels?	
Work	9%
Apprenticeship	4%
Teacher training (Technical subjects)	9%
Teacher training (Academic subjects)	6%
Train at a technical college	10%
Self-employment and other	8%
A-Levels	54%

**Figure 5.4: Post-O-Level Aspirations of Primary School Students**



**Table 5.3: Post-O-Level Aspirations of Secondary School Students**

What do you want to do after your O-Levels?	
Work	0%
Apprenticeship	6%
Teacher training (Technical subjects)	2%
Teacher training (Academic subjects)	0%
Train at a technical college	0%
Self-employment and other	1%
A-Levels	91%

Figure 5.5: Post-O-Level Aspirations of Secondary School Students

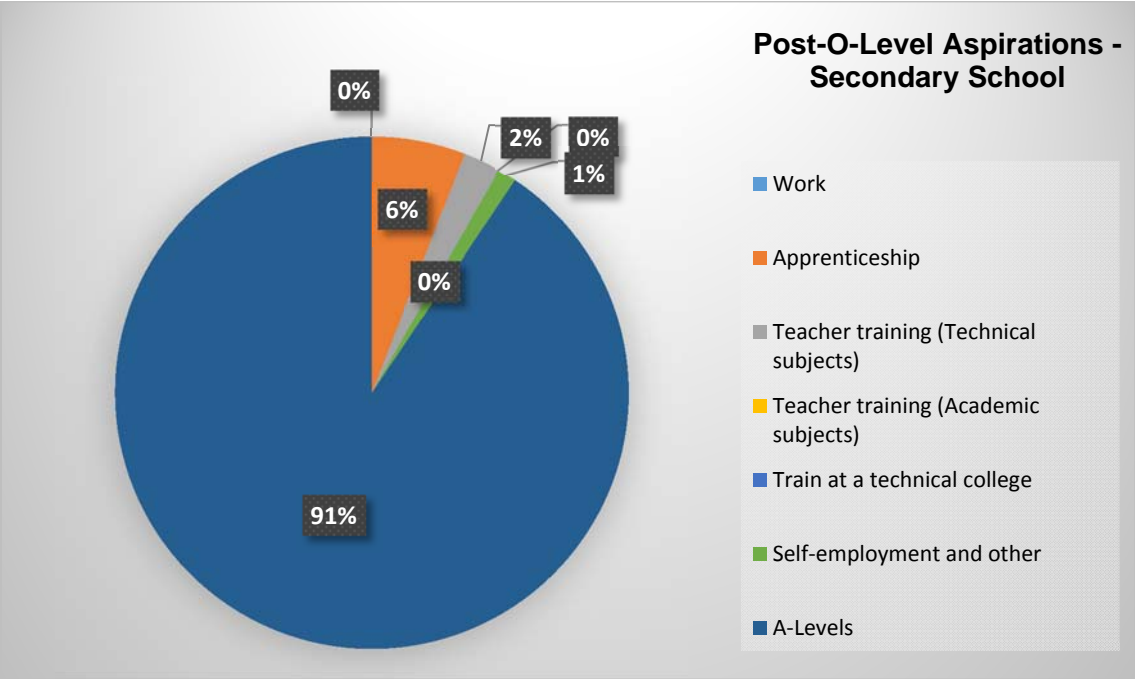
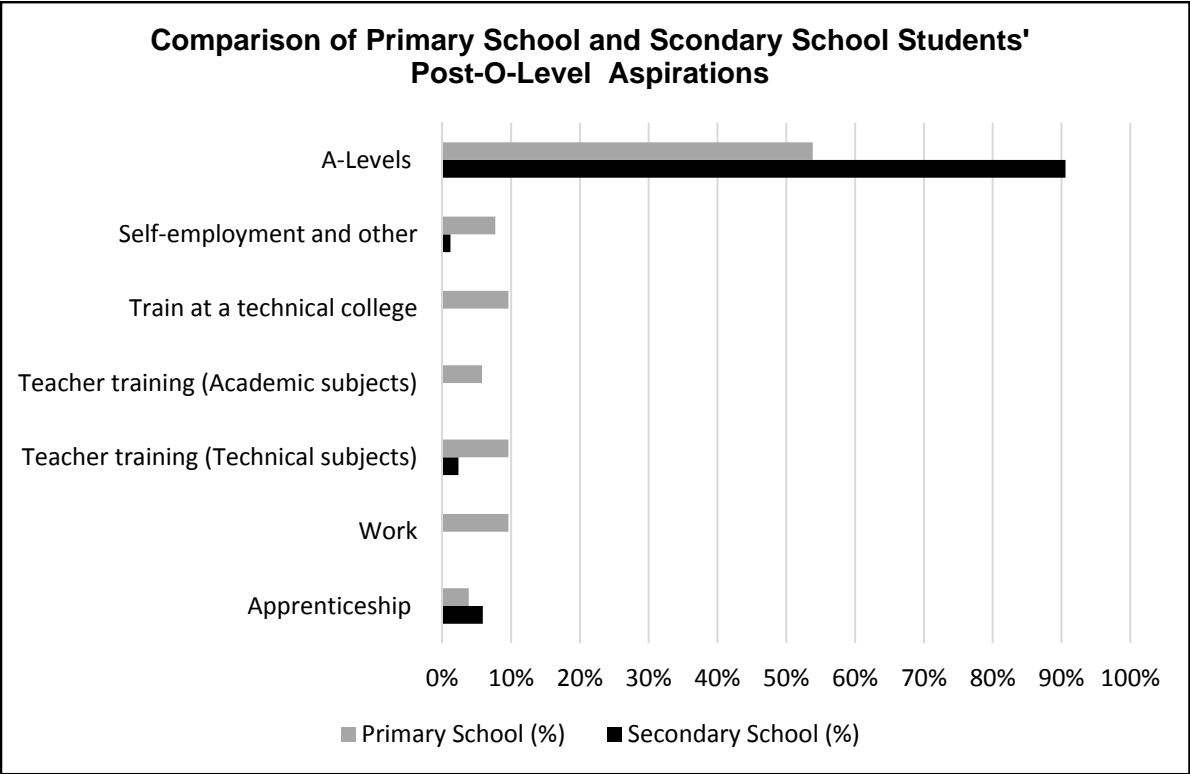


Figure 5.6: Comparison of Primary and Secondary School Students' Post-O-Level Aspirations



A comparison of secondary and primary school students' aspirations (figure 5.6) shows high aspirations to study for A-Levels in both groups. There were, nevertheless, interesting differences in terms of self-employment, technical training and work aspirations after O-Levels. Primary school students showed more interest in technical training, self-employment and seeking work after O-Levels than secondary school students.

When all participants were asked about their desired educational destination it was evident that the majority (92%) of both primary and secondary school students aspired to attend university, with only 3 per cent showing interest in vocational education and training, as depicted in table 5.4 below.

**Table 5.4: Aspirational Educational Standard**

<b>Aspirational Educational Standard</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
O-Level	2	1%
A-Level	5	4%
Vocational/Technical College	4	3%
University	129	92%

### ***5.3 Students' Feelings and Perspectives of VET***

#### **5.3.1 Primary School Students' Interest across all Subjects Offered**

Mathematics, science and English were the most popular subjects amongst primary school students. A remarkable 93 per cent of participants showed interest in mathematics. Students did not respond positively to agriculture and accounting. When asked in focus groups why they did not rank accounting, students explained that they did not know much about the subject. It was, however, different with agriculture where students were clear about the subject, but explained that farming was what they had grown up doing so they wished to pursue more prestigious careers.

**Table 5.5: Primary School Students' Interest in all Subjects Offered**

From the following list, show your level of interest in each of the subjects			
SUBJECT	1. Not interested	2. Somewhat interested	3. Very interested
English Language	2%	16%	83%
Mathematics	4%	4%	93%
General Science	5%	13%	82%
Shona (Vernacular Language)	5%	17%	78%
Bible Knowledge	0%	25%	75%
History	11%	18%	71%
Fashion and Fabrics	7%	21%	71%
Woodwork	13%	17%	71%
Food and Nutrition	4%	27%	69%
Geography	11%	22%	67%
Technical Drawing	8%	33%	58%
Textile & Design	8%	44%	48%
English Literature	7%	57%	36%
Building Studies	26%	39%	35%
Chemistry	45%	27%	27%
Physics	67%	8%	25%
Metalwork	31%	44%	25%
Accounting	0%	0%	0%
Agriculture	0%	0%	0%

 Practical subjects

Another striking revelation was the very low interest in physics and chemistry which scored 67 per cent and 45 per cent 'not interested' respectively. Students were aware that these were science subjects but explained that they did not understand the differences between them. Metalwork was also not very popular with 44 per cent of participants unsure about their interest in the subject. It was disclosed in the focus groups that lack of knowledge about subjects was the main reason for 'somewhat interested' responses by primary school respondents. The 0 per cent interest in accounting was also due to lack of knowledge of the subject. In most schools accounting is introduced to students at O-Level, which means that students may not be aware of this subject until they reach secondary school. Agriculture also scored 0 per cent and the reason given for this was that it was laborious. The students did not seem to make a connection between theory lessons in agriculture and the practical aspect. They associated agriculture with manual work and argued that their experience of

agriculture was digging and watering the school garden. They also expressed displeasure at having to bring their own hoes and watering cans from home, which demonstrated lack of equipment in schools.

### **5.3.2 Secondary School Students' Interest in all Subjects**

Secondary school respondents as shown in table 5.6 were more interested in academic subjects than practical subjects. Apart from English Literature all academic subjects including the core subjects mathematics, English and science, were very popular among students. English, mathematics, science, computers and geography ranked highest, while metalwork and woodwork were the least liked, scoring 74 per cent and 69 per cent 'not interested' respectively. The possible explanation for the popularity of mathematics and English could be due to the fact that these subjects are required for progression to higher education and employment. Students may not necessarily like them but they have to pass them to gain access to university, hence they may appear as subjects that are liked due to necessity rather than genuine preference.



**Table 5.6: Secondary School Students' Interest in all Subjects**

From the following list, show your level of interest in each of the subjects			
SUBJECT	1. Not interested	2. Somewhat interested	3. Very interested
English Language	0%	10%	90%
Computers	0%	12%	88%
Mathematics	5%	10%	85%
Geography	2%	18%	80%
History	2%	22%	76%
Accounting	0%	25%	75%
General Science	6%	20%	74%
Chemistry	10%	17%	73%
Physics	11%	18%	72%
Shona	6%	30%	65%
Bible Knowledge	25%	11%	64%
Agriculture	13%	38%	50%
Fashion and Fabrics	43%	13%	45%
Textile & Design	40%	19%	40%
Technical Drawing	39%	22%	39%
English Literature	33%	33%	35%
Building Studies	41%	25%	34%
Food and Nutrition	43%	29%	29%
Woodwork	69%	20%	11%
Metalwork	74%	20%	6%



Practical subjects

This is an interesting outcome given that metalwork and woodwork have the potential for employment in small-scale business enterprises or rural employment/self-employment. Agriculture, which is the mainstay of the rural economy, had 38 per cent of participants reporting a lukewarm feeling towards the subject. Nevertheless, 50 per cent of the secondary school students were very interested in agriculture.

### 5.3.3 Comparison of Primary and Secondary School Students' Interest in Practical Subjects

An interesting scenario emerges when close comparisons are made between primary and secondary school students' interest in practical subjects. There is ample evidence to suggest that primary school students' perceptions of particular practical subjects are remarkably different from those of secondary school students. Clear distinctions

manifested themselves in relation to fashion and fabrics where 71.4 per cent of primary school participants in contrast to 44.6 per cent of secondary school participants were very interested in the subject. In food and nutrition 69.2 per cent of primary school participants as opposed to 28.5 per cent of secondary school participants were very interested in the subject. In woodwork it was 70.8 per cent for primary school students contrasted with 16 per cent for those of secondary school, and metalwork stood at 25 per cent for primary school compared to 5.7 per cent for secondary school.

There were substantial numbers of 'no responses' from both primary and secondary school participants. The large numbers of such responses (listed in the 'no response' columns of table 5.7) stemmed from participants having little or 'no knowledge of the particular subject as revealed during the focus group discussions. Participants reported that they did not respond to some questions because they could not make a decision due to lack of adequate knowledge about the subjects. Many said they had heard of the subjects but were unsure about what they involved or the careers associated with them.

**Table 5.7: Comparison of Primary and Secondary School Students' Interest in Practical Subjects**

PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS					SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS				
SUBJECT	No response no. out of 59	Not interested %	Somewhat interested %	Very interested %	SUBJECT	No response no. out of 90	Not interested %	Somewhat interested %	Very interested %
Metalwork	43	31.2	43.7	25	Metalwork	55	74.2	20	5.7
Fashion & Fabrics	31	7.1	21.4	71.4	Fashion & Fabrics	43	42.5	12.7	44.6
Textile & Design	34	8	44	48	Textile & Design	48	40.4	19	40.4
Food & Nutrition	33	3.8	26.9	69.2	Food & Nutrition	55	42.8	28.5	28.5
Woodwork	35	12.5	16.6	70.8	Woodwork	55	68.5	20	16
Technical Drawing	35	8.3	33.3	58.3	Technical Drawing	54	38.8	22.2	38.8
Building Studies	36	26	39.1	34.7	Building Studies	46	79.2	25	34
Agriculture	59	0	0	0	Agriculture	82	12.5	37.5	50

There was not much difference in the interest in; textile and design – 48 per cent for primary against 40.4 per cent for secondary; technical drawing - 35 per cent for primary compared to 38.8 per cent for secondary and building studies - 36 per cent for primary

matched against 34 per cent for secondary. It was evident, nonetheless, that the popularity of academic subjects far outweighed that of practical subjects.

Another area of interest was the large percentage of ‘somewhat interested’ responses in Table 5.7 among primary school students across all practical subjects, particularly for metalwork, textile and design, food and nutrition, technical drawing and building studies. As alluded in section 5.3.1, students’ ‘somewhat interested’ responses were due to limited awareness of practical subjects, which might possibly have been linked to the lack of adequate careers guidance. When asked whether they had attended any careers advice sessions at school, the results were as shown in table 5.8 below.

**Table 5.8: Attendance of Careers Advice Sessions**

Have you attended any careers advice sessions at your school?				
	Primary School	Secondary School	Primary School (%)	Secondary School (%)
<b>Yes</b>	32	43	54%	48%
<b>No</b>	27	47	46%	52%
<b>Total</b>	59	90	100%	100%

The 54 per cent of primary school and 48 per cent of secondary students who answered yes indicated that the careers advice was mainly provided in the form of a careers’ day when presenters from industry and big firms came into the school once a year. A noteworthy 52 per cent of secondary school and 46 per cent of primary school students had not received any careers’ advice. Further exploration of these findings will be carried out in the discussion chapter.

### **5.3.4 Analysis of All Participants’ Interest in All Subjects by Gender**

Levene’s test for equality of variances (T-test) was employed to compare the average level of interest in subjects between boys and girls and to determine whether one gender had a stronger preference for a subject than the other. The independent-samples t-test made it possible to compare two unrelated groups (in this case females and males). It was not possible to determine the equality of variance by looking at the data so Levene’s test for this was run separately for each subject (see example in appendix 9). The test enabled the quantification of the level of interest in order to conclude whether there was a statistically significant difference. The results of Levene’s test allowed for the selection of the correct significance value for the t-test. A Sig. value for Levene’s test which was equal to or less than 0.05 Sig (2-tailed), meant

that there was a significant difference between boys' and girls' interest in a subject, as detailed below. If the value was above 0.05 (e.g. 0.06 or 0.10), there was no significant difference (Pallant, 2013).

**Table 5.9: Interest in Subjects by Gender: Independent Samples Test**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>T-test for equality of means Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	<b>Statistically significant differences Yes or No</b>
English	.077	No
Literature	.018	Yes
Shona	.143	No
General Science	.757	No
Physics	.587	No
Chemistry	.146	No
Biology	.167	No
Geography	.437	No
Maths	.631	No
History	.117	No
Bible Knowledge	.351	No
Metalwork	.243	No
Fashion and Fabrics	.000	Yes
Textiles and Design	.009	Yes
Food and Nutrition	.000	Yes
Woodwork	.466	No
Technical Drawing	.065	No
Building Studies	.129	No
Agriculture	1.000	No
Accounting	.629	No
Computers	Could not be computed to standards deviations of both groups are 0	

The t-test analysis presented in table 5.9 revealed that there was statistically significant difference in interest in three practical subjects namely, fashion and fabrics, textile and design, and food and nutrition. There was no statistically significant difference in interest between boys and girls in all academic subjects except English Literature. Girls had more interest in English Literature, fashion and fabrics, textiles and design, food and nutrition than boys. This result confirmed that the historical and cultural gender biases associated with some practical subjects still exist. In chapter 3, table 3.1, which summarised enrolments in technical colleges by subject area and sex, showed that textile/clothing technology was female dominated, while wood technology was largely a male dominion. Similarly, this study found that fashion and fabrics and textiles and design were popular with girls. Subjects such as fashion and fabrics and food and nutrition are also still considered to be female domains as shown by the level of

interest. Thus, historical and cultural influences emanating from the colonial era have continued to influence students' attitudes towards VET. It was, however, interesting to note that there was no statistically significant difference in interest in woodwork and building studies which were traditionally a preserve for males. This result seems to suggest a shift to a more equal pattern of interest in some subjects. It should be pointed out, nonetheless, that this is a limited case study and further research would be required to determine whether significant changes in gender preferences of practical subjects are occurring.

#### **5.3.5 Students' Views on the Usefulness of Practical Subjects**

After capturing the students' interests, their views on the usefulness of practical subjects were collated. Students were asked to indicate how useful they felt practical subjects were in preparing them for employment; preparing them for apprenticeship; developing a positive attitude towards manual work; preparing them for self-employment; and applying theoretical knowledge practically.

Table 5.10 shows that primary school students were more convinced than secondary school students that practical subjects were very useful for preparing them for employment. Conversely, fewer primary school students felt that practical subjects were very useful in helping to develop positive attitudes towards manual work or self-employment.

**Table 5.10: Comparison of Primary and Secondary School Students' Views on Usefulness of Practical Subjects**

<b>How usefully do you think practical subjects fulfil the following goals?</b>			
<b>Primary School</b>			
<b>What is the extent to which you think practical subjects fulfil the goals below?</b>	<b>Not useful (%)</b>	<b>Somewhat useful (%)</b>	<b>Very useful (%)</b>
(a) Preparing students for employment	2%	17%	80%
(b) Preparing students for apprenticeship	0%	77%	23%
(c) Developing a positive attitude towards manual work	25%	40%	35%
(d) Preparing students for self-employment	10%	51%	38%
(e) Applying theoretical knowledge practically	5%	21%	74%
<b>Secondary School</b>			
<b>What is the extent to which you think practical subjects fulfil the goals below?</b>	<b>Not useful (%)</b>	<b>Somewhat useful (%)</b>	<b>Very useful (%)</b>
(a) Preparing students for employment	6%	41%	53%
(b) Preparing students for apprenticeship	6%	59%	36%
(c) Developing a positive attitude towards manual work	9%	19%	72%
(d) Preparing students for self-employment	9%	25%	67%
(e) Applying theoretical knowledge practically	4%	26%	70%

It was interesting to note that a low percentage of both primary and secondary school students thought that practical subjects were not useful in relation to preparing students for work and achieving the goals listed in table 5.10. The question that immediately springs up to mind is why the same students who had little or no interest in practical subjects still felt strongly that practical subjects were useful. This apparent anomaly was followed up in focus group discussions with interesting outcomes outlined in section 5.5

As students make the transition from primary to secondary school there is evidence to suggest that their attitudes towards VET change considerably. Contrary to previous studies that have shown that students despise practical subjects, this study has presented a different dimension. Noteworthy is the fact that students stated it was not about the subject *per se*, but about how the subject was portrayed, packaged and sold to them. Further discussion on this development will be undertaken in the forthcoming discussion chapter.

#### **5.3.6 Students' Personal Opinions of Practical/Academic Subjects and Work**

Participants were asked to express views about education and work with which they either agreed or disagreed. A thought-provoking scenario emerged as primary and secondary school students generally agreed about 9 out of the 14 questions, while some differences were apparent with regard to the rest (see table 5.11).

**Table 5.11: Students' Personal Opinions of Practical/Academic Subjects and Work**

SA	A	U	D	SD
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Q.	Primary School						Statement	Secondary School					
	SA	A	U	D	SD			SA	A	U	D	SD	
1	Both able and less-able students should do practical subjects.	18	14	1	0	1	Both able and less-able students should do practical subjects.	30	28	3	10	8	
2	Students doing the practical subjects in this school are those who got low grades in Form 2.	1	1	1	8	12	Students doing the practical subjects in this school are those who got low grades in Form 2.	1	3	1	20	58	
3	Students who have done practical subjects find jobs more easily than those who did academic subjects only.	12	7	6	10	4	Students who have done practical subjects find jobs more easily than those who did academic subjects only.	10	19	12	21	23	
4	People who have done the practical subjects get lower-paying jobs than those who did academic subjects only.	7	12	4	9	8	People who have done the practical subjects get lower-paying jobs than those who did academic subjects only.	8	11	12	28	25	
5	Students at this school are free to choose whether or not they want to do the practical subjects.	12	15	9	3	4	Students at this school are free to choose whether or not they want to do the practical subjects.	18	29	6	18	20	
6	There should be more practical subjects to choose from in this school.	14	15	5	4	3	There should be more practical subjects to choose from in this school.	46	31	4	4	5	
7	The practical subjects are easier to pass than the academic subjects.	14	14	8	2	3	The practical subjects are easier to pass than the academic subjects.	31	29	16	6	5	
8	The time to do the practical subjects should be increased on the timetable.	8	15	2	14	3	The time to do the practical subjects should be increased on the timetable.	22	18	12	13	11	
9	There are enough facilities (e.g. workshops & tools) at this school for the practical subjects.	3	14	8	11	5	There are enough facilities (e.g. workshops & tools) at this school for the practical subjects.	7	10	4	28	29	
10	I like jobs in which I wear overalls, boots, helmets, etc.	3	3	4	10	20	I like jobs in which I wear overalls, boots, helmets, etc.	8	9	4	20	43	
11	Practical subjects are less interesting than academic subjects.	6	10	6	8	8	Practical subjects are less interesting than academic subjects.	8	7	18	23	26	
12	Practical subjects demand as much thinking as academic subjects.	7	7	7	7	13	Practical subjects demand as much thinking as academic subjects.	9	18	8	24	23	
13	Employers prefer people who have done both academic and practical subjects at school.	13	13	6	7	4	Employers prefer people who have done both academic and practical subjects at school.	37	25	8	12	4	
14	I don't like doing the practical subjects.	9	1	2	11	18	I don't like doing the practical subjects.	7	4	6	17	48	

The majority of both primary and secondary school students strongly agreed that both able and less-able students should do practical subjects. There was also consensus that there should be more practical subjects to choose from and that the time allocated



to such subjects should be increased. It was interesting to note that both groups widely held the view that practical subjects were easier and did not demand as much thinking as academic subjects.

Paradoxically, the popular support for practical subjects did not match interest in the related jobs. Both primary and secondary school students disliked jobs in which overalls, boots and helmets were worn. However, students widely believed that employers preferred people who had done both academic and practical subjects at school.

There were differences of opinion over the statements that people who have done practical subjects find jobs more easily and get paid less than those who studied academic subjects only. The majority of secondary school students did not agree with these statements, while primary school students had mixed feelings about them.

A major point emerging from these questions was confirmation that the majority of both primary and secondary school students liked doing practical subjects.

#### ***5.4 Students' Preference for Work Location***

A key question underpinning this study was to establish what students perceived as the contemporary significance and purpose of VET in rural Zimbabwe. Students were asked to indicate their preferred work location. As shown in table 5.12, 89 per cent of primary school students and 66 per cent of secondary school students would prefer to work in big cities. Remarkably, 21 per cent of secondary school students wished to work abroad, compared to 4 per cent of primary school students.

##### **5.4.1 Students' Preferred Work Locations *vis-à-vis* Rural, Urban or International**

One of the major challenges currently facing African countries, Zimbabwe in particular, is rural-to-urban migration in addition to the huge exodus of skilled workers to other countries. This study sought to find out the role that VET could play in rural Zimbabwe amid mass migration. Students were asked to state where they would prefer to work to determine the extent to which the new generation was likely to contribute to the rural economy. The results in table 5.12 revealed that the desire to move to urban areas was not only likely to continue, but students also had their sights on the international job market. Students expressed in focus group discussions that their reasons for not choosing the rural areas was because there was nothing for them in the rural areas in

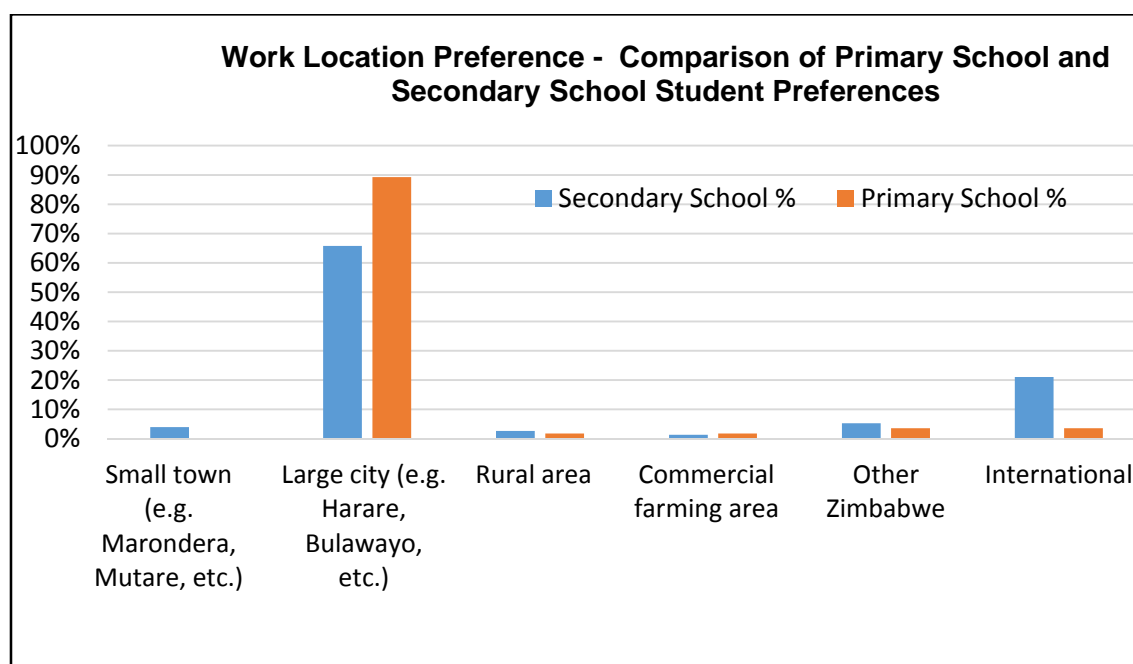
terms of jobs and better living standards. Students preferred high paying non-agricultural employment in urban areas or abroad.

**Table 5.12: Work Location - Primary and Secondary School Student Preferences**

In what area would you want to work?		
Preference	Secondary School %	Primary School %
Small town (e.g. Marondera, Mutare, etc.)	4%	0%
Large city (e.g. Harare, Bulawayo, etc.)	66%	89%
Rural area	3%	2%
Commercial farming area	1%	2%
Other (in Zimbabwe)	5%	4%
International	21%	4%

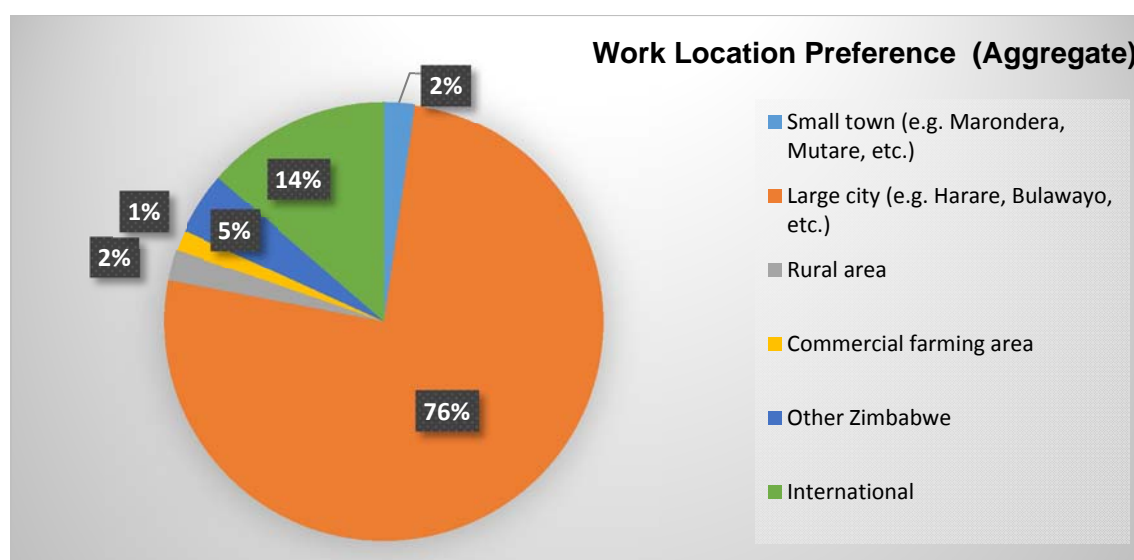
A large proportion (21%) of secondary students had a preference for internationally based employment, while only 3 per cent would prefer rural employment. Only 2 per cent of primary school students would consider rural employment. Despite the fact that Murewa has a largely agricultural economy, there was very little interest (1% secondary and 2% primary school) in taking up occupations within the farming sector.

**Figure 5.7: Comparison of Primary and Secondary School Students' Work Location Preferences**



Work location preference for both primary and secondary school students reflected students' aspirations for urban-based, university education and employment in big cities and other countries. There was a clear lack of interest in rural employment from both primary and secondary school students.

**Figure 5.8: Aggregate of Primary and Secondary School Students' Work Location Preferences**



The combined picture shows that the students of Murewa District had little intention of staying and working at home. While the rural-to-urban trend is not a new phenomenon, the fact that 97 per cent of both primary and secondary students would prefer not to work in rural or farming areas is food for thought for rural development policy-makers. Additionally, the desire of 14 per cent of the students to move to other countries for employment is an even bigger concern for the government, which is potentially supplying an educated workforce to other countries.

#### **5.4.2 Case Studies on Parents' Level of Education *vis-à-vis* Students' Educational and Career Aspirations**

Entwisle, Alexander, and Olson (2005) argue that parental expectations for their children's educational achievement are closely linked to the children's aspirations. In the same vein, Davis-Kean (2005) concurs that parents' educational level has a strong bearing on their children's attitudes towards education. Ten emblematic case studies have been drawn from the data to add depth to the quantitative data in order to establish the impact of parents' level of education on their children's educational and career aspirations.

**Case Study 1 (Case ID 1)**

Female aged 16. Father educated to O-Level, employed as a supervisor. Mother educated to O-Level employed as a school teacher. Favourite subjects were English and accounting because they were required for the job she wished to do. Had no interest in metalwork and textile design and disliked the subjects. She wished to be educated to degree level and be a lawyer because she enjoyed helping people. She felt that she needed bible knowledge for that job. She felt that her parents wanted her to be a pilot so that she could earn more money. She preferred to work in the city for more job opportunities. She had not received any careers guidance or work experience.

In this case study, while the child had high educational and occupational aspirations, the parents had made a different choice of job for her, which they felt would earn their daughter more money. The parents' expectations in terms of a high income and prestigious job were reflected in the child's aspiration for higher education.

**Case Study 2 (Case ID 15)**

Female aged 16. Father educated to O-Level and self-employed. Mother educated to O-Level and self-employed. Favourite subjects were fashion and fabrics and geography because she was good at these subjects but she disliked accounting and building studies. She wished to pursue a vocational and technical course and become an apprentice or run her own business. She felt that she needed fashion and fabrics to acquire knowledge about that job. Her parents would like her to be an accountant so as to get a good job. She wished to work in the city for better transport. She had not received any careers guidance but felt she could get work experience.

With both parents self-employed, the child wished to pursue a business career of her own, a similar path to that taken by her parents, but the parents wanted her to seek a 'good job' as an accountant.

**Case Study 3 (Case ID 29)**

Male aged 16. Father educated to ZJC Level and employed as a tailor. Mother educated to ZJC Level, a school teacher. Favourite subjects were English and geography because he was good at these subjects but disliked bible knowledge and mathematics because he was not good at them. Wished to be educated to degree level and become a mechanic because he had the skills. He felt that he needed Shona to be

a mechanic. His parents would like him to be a teacher. He wished to work in the city for more job opportunities. He had not received any careers guidance or work experience at the school.

The parents in this case had a low level of education (ZJC), which is a lower secondary school qualification, but had high aspirations for their child. While the child had high aspirations, his dislike of mathematics was incompatible with the desire to pursue a mechanics career. The child felt instead that he needed Shona (the vernacular language of Zimbabwe) to pursue mechanics, which is a rather misplaced notion. The child did not show knowledge of the pathway he needed to take to become a mechanic.

#### **Case Study 4 (Case ID 44)**

Male aged 15. Father educated to degree level and employed as a manager. Mother educated to degree level, a school teacher. Favourite subjects were physics and mathematics because he was good at these subjects but disliked Shona and history due to lack of ability. He wished to be educated to degree level and become an engineer because he liked helping people. He felt that he needed physics for that job. His parents would like him to go into commerce because they felt he had the ability. He wished to seek work abroad for more job opportunities. He had not received any careers guidance or work experience at the school.

These were highly qualified parents with high expectations for their child, who felt that he had the potential to become successful in commerce. However, the child wished to pursue a different course but was equally inspired by high ambition. He understood the subjects he needed for engineering, despite lack of careers guidance.

#### **Case Study 5 (Case ID 59)**

Female aged 16. Father educated to degree level and running a business. Mother educated to degree level and a police officer. Favourite subjects were physics and technical drawing because she had an interest in the subjects but disliked chemistry and Shona. She wished to be educated to degree level and pursue her dream job as an engineer. She felt that she needed physics to be an engineer. Her parents would like her to be a medical doctor and help people. She wished to work abroad to earn more money. She had not received any careers guidance but felt she could get work experience.

The parents in this case had a high level of education and high aspirations for their child. The child had equally high aspirations but a different career choice. The child was aware of the educational requirements of her desired career despite not receiving careers guidance in school.

#### **Case Study 6 (Case ID 68)**

Male aged 16. Father educated to degree level and employed as a pastor. Mother also a pastor educated to O-Level. Favourite subjects were geography and history because he was good at them but disliked literature and Shona because he lacked the ability and had no interest in them. Wished to go to university and become a lawyer because he liked helping people. He felt that he needed history to be a lawyer. His parents would like him to be an accountant so he could earn more. He wished to work abroad because there were more job opportunities. He had received careers guidance and felt there would be opportunities for work experience.

This case reflected the parents' high aspirations for their child and the child's awareness of the academic requirements of his chosen career, though it was different from the parents' choice. While the child's job choice was based on the desire to help people, the parents' choice was based on the potential for higher earnings.

#### **Case Study 7 (Case ID 86)**

Female aged 16. Father educated to degree level, employed as a supervisor. Mother educated to degree level, a school teacher. Favourite subjects were chemistry and accounting because she was good at them. She disliked mathematics and physics due to lack of ability in these subjects. She wished to be educated to degree level and become a pharmacist. She felt that she needed chemistry for that job. She felt that her parents wanted her to be a medical doctor so as to earn more money. She had not received any careers guidance or work experience at the school.

Both parents in this case had received a university education and wished their child to pursue medicine, whereas the child was interested in pharmacy. The child had an understanding of the subjects she needed in order to become a pharmacist despite having received no careers guidance. The parents' job choice was motivated by the expectation of higher earnings in medicine. The child's aspirations could be attributed to parental guidance.

**Case Study 8 (Case ID 100)**

Male aged 15. Father a farmer educated to degree level. Mother also a farmer, also educated to degree level. Favourite subjects were mathematics and the general paper because he was good at them but disliked Shona and English because he lacked ability in these subjects. He wished to be educated to degree level and become an apprentice or pilot because these paid more money. He felt that he needed mathematics to pursue that career path. His parents would like him to be a pilot. He wished to work in the city because there were more job opportunities. He had received careers guidance but felt there were no opportunities for work experience.

With both parents educated to degree level, this child's aspirations largely reflected those of his parents.

**Case Study 9 (Case ID 114)**

Female aged 12. Father educated to primary school level, employed as a builder. Mother educated to O-Level and self-employed. Favourite subjects were Shona and English because she had the ability. She disliked mathematics and the general paper because she was not good at them. She wished to be educated to degree level and become a pastor because she enjoyed helping people. She felt that she needed bible knowledge for that job. She felt that her parents wanted her to be a pastor. She was prepared to work anywhere. She had not received any careers guidance or work experience at the school.

In this case both parents had a lower level of education and had blue-collar jobs. Both parents and their child had similar career wishes.

**Case Study 10 (Case ID 128)**

Female aged 13. Father educated to A-Level, employed as a driver. Mother educated to O-Level and self-employed. Favourite subjects were Shona and the general paper because she had the ability. She disliked mathematics and English because she was not good at them. She wished to be educated to degree level and become an accountant. She felt that she needed accounting for that job. She felt that her parents wanted her to become a pilot for prestigious reasons. She wished to work in the city because of the better facilities. She had received careers guidance but no work experience.

In this case the parents' wishes for their child did not seem to be compatible with the child's interest and aptitude in subjects like mathematics which would be a requirement for training as a pilot. The child's dislike of mathematics would also impact on her wish to become an accountant.

#### **5.4.3 Observations from the Case Studies**

Though parents and children did not always agree on career choices, there was evidence to indicate that parents had high expectations for their children and that the children had correspondingly high ambitions, which confirmed Entwisle, et al.'s (2005) and Davis-Kean's(2005) assertions cited in section 5.4.2.

It is also notable that while the responses to question 7 (which asked participants to indicate their interest in subjects) showed lack of interest in practical subjects, only building studies and metalwork were mentioned as subjects that were disliked. Participants' reasons for disliking subjects were mainly because they were not good at them. Students' interest or lack of interest in a subject, therefore, tended to be based on whether they thought they were good at the subject or not.

Among the occupations the profession of pilot was most popular with students and parents. This suggests some cultural influence as this has for a long time been one of the most prestigious professions in Zimbabwe. It could be an indication of the limited knowledge of other prestigious professions that have developed over the years. In addition, students indicated that they wished to be engineer or a lawyer in order to help people, which could also be another indication of lack of understanding of what these jobs entail.

Despite limited opportunities to receive careers guidance and undertake work experience, it was apparent that participants had some understanding of the careers they wished to pursue and, with the exception of one, most cases were aware of the skills and qualifications they needed for those jobs. However, there was generally a limited spread of career choices apart from pilot, lawyer, engineer and accountant. There was no evidence of a wider spectrum of career choices that students intended to venture into. By the same token, parents' career choices or expectations were also markedly limited in scope. The lack of interest in vocational careers, agriculture, social and natural sciences denoted limited knowledge of career options and opportunities. This raises the question of the source and the quality of careers guidance that the students were receiving. Further, in-depth discussion on careers' guidance will be



undertaken in the next chapter. It was also apparent that there was no interest in working in rural areas. The city and working abroad were seen to offer more opportunities for employment and better facilities for day-to-day living.

### **5.5 Overview of Focus Group Discussions**

This study used multiple data collection methods to achieve what Greene (2007, p.20) refers to as the “multiple ways of seeing and hearing”. In order to see through the eyes of students and gain a deeper understanding of the responses to the questionnaires, focus group discussions were conducted. Focus groups provide a fuller insight into individual and group feelings, perceptions and attitudes. They played a complementary role to that of the quantitative part of the study (Rabiee, 2004). Focus groups enabled me to look beyond the statistical evidence derived from the questionnaires and provided “confirmation of the meaning behind the facts” (Leung, 2009, p.218). The group dynamics created by focus groups stimulated discussion and generated new ideas. Consequently, the contemporary views captured through focus groups expanded existing knowledge, which, it is hoped, will inform the development of future intervention programmes (Halcomb et al., 2007).

#### **5.5.1 Primary School Focus Group Responses**

Students were given the opportunity to air their views and feelings on practical subjects. The majority of primary school students expressed high regard for practical subjects and their desire to study them. They felt that practical subjects were crucial for developing self-reliance and life skills and could lead to better living standards. Most primary school students believed that the practical nature of the subjects made them more interesting and easier than academic subjects. Some had the perception that practical subjects were very useful for securing employment.

A few students indicated that, while they generally agreed with those in support of practical subjects, they personally did not like them. One student remarked that, ‘*They are good only for those who are interested in them*’, while another expressed the view that they would rather do computer subjects which are more relevant in today’s world. There was also evidence that some primary school students felt that practical skills were more useful as a back-up in retirement or when faced with unemployment.

### 5.5.2 Secondary School Focus Group Responses

There were mixed views on VET among secondary schools students. Some were very optimistic about the prospects offered by practical subjects, while others were less enthusiastic about them.

At secondary school A, which offered building studies, agriculture and fashion and fabrics, students felt that practical subjects were useful if one was not good at academic subjects. One student said, *'We are all gifted differently, we have different talents. They are good if you are not good in academic subjects. Some of us are good with our hands.'*

Another student remarked that, *'The practical subjects are very important subjects because they reduce unemployment. At this school there should be other subjects, like woodwork and food and nutrition.'*

Students had recommendations and proposals for policy-makers, school administrators and employers. Below are some of the responses from students when asked to say what they thought about practical subjects in general.

*Employers should employ students who have done practical subjects.*

*Practical subjects should be compulsory in schools.*

*Vocational education needs skilled teachers or lecturers.*

*Practical subjects are very useful but at this school there must be a wide range of them and adequate equipment.*

*Children should do both vocational and academic subjects.*

*Practical subjects are good for employment.*

*Practical subjects are interesting; they do not need much thinking.*

*They help to be self-employed.*

*People must consider every subject and should not despise other practical subjects.*

*Children must do practical subjects from primary school level.*

Students plainly had strong views about schools and employers' treatment of practical subjects. The students wanted schools to treat practical subjects seriously by offering courses with better equipment and introducing them at primary school level. They stressed the need for skilled teachers and expressed displeasure at the denigration of practical subjects that happens in schools.

Secondary school B offered the highest number of practical subjects, namely, woodwork, fashion and fabrics, food and nutrition, agriculture, technical drawing, and building studies. There was a practical subject in every class, including the science and commercially oriented classes. The students here had more issues with how teachers

treated practical subjects in relation to academic subjects. A teacher at the school also expressed the view that he had won the 'battle' with staff over prejudice against his practical subject, but he was quick to point out that the war was still very far from being won as attitudes among students remained largely negative.

Students acknowledged that they had low regard for practical subjects but argued that this stemmed from the low status that was accorded to these subjects in the school. Students felt that the importance bestowed upon academic subjects was far higher than that attached to practical subjects. Students said that the lower status of practicals was reflected in the way the subjects were allocated to students, which was based on their performance in academic subjects; the limited time allocated to practicals; and the poor motivation that the practical subject teachers displayed.

The questionnaire responses discussed earlier showed that practical subjects were less popular among secondary school students. However, more positive views emerged from the qualitative data derived from the focus groups, for example, despite low regard for practical subjects, secondary school students did not necessarily despise them. In fact, students contributed recommendations for what they thought needed to be done. They lamented what they perceived as unjust institutional and systemic denigration of practical subjects. Students expressed the opinion that:

*Every individual must do what satisfies his or her own need in relation to practical subjects.*

*Students, parents and teachers should not discourage students who wish to continue doing their practical subject in school or university.*

*Every student must be guaranteed to do the practical subjects that they think are useful to them because practical subjects are useful when choosing jobs.*

Clearly, issues of choice, relevance and teacher/parent attitudes were highlighted as significant in determining the value and interest students placed on a practical subject.

The students further recommend that:

*Most teachers should teach seriously knowing that students are also serious.*

*Teachers must not make a fuss about practical subjects.*

*Practical subjects should be taken seriously in all schools and all resources should be available at every school.*

*Practical subjects must be introduced in schools, as many as possible, so that when one fails in the academic field he/she can find something to do.*

*They should be done by everyone so that those who may fail to get employment will have something to do to earn them a living.*

*Practical subjects should be taught to everyone because somewhere, somehow they are useful in our everyday life.*

Students argued that VET must be taken seriously and seen as a viable alternative rather than a second-best option. Other students called for the democratisation of VET. Students lamented the fact that the power to choose a practical subject either lay solely in the hands of teachers or was a matter of fate. At this school practical subjects were assigned to classes rather than individual students. Students felt strongly that:

*Practical subjects should be free to those who are willing or interested in vocational education.*

*Students should choose if they want to do the practical subjects.*

*Practical subjects must be available to everyone.*

*There should be a variety of practical subjects.*

Secondary school C offered agriculture, fashion and fabrics and building studies. Students at school C echoed the sentiments raised at the other schools. They felt that practical subjects were useful in life and therefore should not be looked down upon. While some students recommended that they should be done by everyone, others felt strongly that practical subjects should be optional. The need for a wider variety of practical subjects was reiterated.

More students expressed the opinion that practical subjects were difficult and tiresome, especially building studies. This confirmed the questionnaire results that showed that building studies was among the least-liked subjects.

Thus, at secondary school, teacher attitudes, accessibility, and issues of choice, unequal treatment, relevance and lack of equipment were at the core of students' disaffection with practical subjects.

It became clear from focus group discussions with the secondary school students that the differences between their attitudes and those of the primary school students emanated from several issues including:

- Teacher / parent attitudes;
- The status of practical subjects - being treated as second-best, regarded as less prestigious subjects in schools;
- Limited access – some practical subjects were not available at some schools;
- Lack of choice. Teachers determining practical subject combinations;
- The issue of relevance;
- Lack of resources and equipment.

Evidently, primary school perceptions of practical subjects were mostly positive, while at secondary school there was clear dissatisfaction with the status and value placed on them. The majority of secondary school students stated that they did not necessarily dislike practical subjects, but they disliked the way schools treated them. They explained this as the reasons for their 'somewhat interested' or 'not interested' responses to the questionnaire (as shown in table 5.7). A large proportion of students indicated that they were not entirely against practical subjects but they had mixed feelings stemming from the status and general attitudes in schools regarding practical subjects. These qualitative data confirmed the statistics collated in table 5.10, showing that the majority of students felt that practical subjects were very useful or just right for preparing students for employment, apprenticeship and self-employment. The qualitative data thus offered a critical backdrop for reflection on the statistical results (Bowker, 2001). It was consequently imperative to undertake in-depth investigation into the said factors to gain better understanding of the attitudinal changes.

As Bowker (2001) affirms, the use of qualitative procedures raised new and unexpected findings which will lead to reformulation of old theories. Contrary to

previous studies which showed that students dislike practical subjects, this study has shown different perspectives. These results also represent evidence of a convergence in the results, which, according to Bowker (2001), are a means of confirming the validity of a single reality.

### **5.6 The Status of Practical Subjects and Attitudes toward Vocational Qualifications**

Most secondary school students felt that vocational qualifications were of lower status compared to academic qualifications. They pointed out that vocational courses were looked down upon and were not perceived as leading to highly paid jobs. Some students felt that their peers either looked down upon their practical subject or thought it was too difficult. In a focus group discussion a student commented that, *'My friends think my practical is too much to handle. They think it's too hard.'*

A secondary school student studying woodwork also expressed the low status he and his parents accorded to the subject: *'My parents took it as a simple thing that is useless and also myself. It was my choice to do it because it is easy and also it was the only practical that was outstanding,'*

A fashion and fabrics student concurred with the statement, *'I did not choose it but I did not qualify for the other practical I wanted so I ended up doing fashion and fabrics. I don't like this subject and I'm not even interested in it. Out of all my subjects, fashion and fabrics is the worst. Some of my friends are doing computers and technical drawing, so they laugh at me all the time and it hurts.'*

Peer influence featured prominently. Students showed that what their friends thought about their practical subject mattered. Students compared subjects and ranked them in terms of status and how much work they entailed. Students also indicated that their parents' views about their subjects largely determined how much effort they would put into the subject. This finding was congruent with Ming-Te Wang and Jacquelynne Eccles's study in 2012 which found that student motivation was significantly influenced by parents, teachers and peers (Usher and Kober, 2012).

A student studying agriculture remarked that,

*My parents were not involved and we did not even discuss it at home. I chose it myself. I feel proud of this subject because it is one of the subjects I perform*

*well. People, especially my classmates tend to look down upon my subject but I don't even listen to them. More so, even my best friends always say agriculture is very laborious, why didn't you join the computers. But I just wish to continue with agriculture.*

At school B a student commented that:

*Practical subjects are a sheer waste of time although parents think they are useful if you fail other subjects.*

Parents' attitudes were highlighted as playing a significant role in the value students placed on practical subjects. Some students felt that their vocational subject was a waste of time for them because they had ambitions of becoming lawyers, doctors or engineers who were paid more. Evidently, for some students, their career aspirations were at variance with the practical subjects they had been allocated. Parents' treatment of a subject either as a second-best option or as irrelevant affected students' attitudes towards that subject.

#### **5.6.1 Practical Subjects as Second Best Options**

Among secondary school students it was evident that practical subjects were generally seen as substitutes or filler subjects to make up the numbers or as safety nets if everything else failed. A technical drawing student pronounced that, *'It was my choice to choose the subject because there was no other better subject I could choose to back me up if I failed other subjects/courses.'*

Another student added that,

*'Practical subjects are seen as less prestigious than academic subjects because it is believed that they are usually done by those who have failed academically. They are less prestigious than mathematics, English and science.'*

One building studies student proclaimed:

*For me and my parents it's just a subject I do to add to the number of subjects. Even if they look in my report, they do not comment anything about it; they*



*know that to me it's just nothing. I selected it for O-Level because I did it at Junior Certificate but I wanted computers.*

It should, however, be pointed out that being considered a second choice was not an outright condemnation of VET. It represented VET as a robust qualification that would stand the test of time and could be depended on in times of crisis. However, students might not see it that way. Students showed a propensity to think that VET was a choice of failure which confirmed findings from the literature reviewed.

### **5.6.2 Allocation of Practical Subjects**

The majority of students indicated that they had very little or no choice when choosing practical subjects. There were clearly no uniform selection or subject allocation criteria. At School A selection was on the basis of first come, first served. Once subject numbers were full the students had to be content with what was left. At School B there was no methodical process of selection. Students were asked to go into any class and then told afterwards the practical subject they would be doing. At School C teachers selected the students for commercial subjects and science classes based on academic achievement. Those who remained would then automatically be allocated practical subjects. A technical drawing student commented that:

*The selection process is sometimes unfair because sometimes one is deprived a course one really wants.*

Another fashion and fabrics student asserted:

*It was not my choice, it was my teacher's choice, but now I am feeling good about the selection because it is so interesting.*

Evidently, there was very little room for students to exercise choice of subjects. Due to the difficulties caused by limited resources and popularity of some subjects over others, teachers tended to use their discretion and in some cases resorted to the most convenient methods of selection. Students also expressed dissatisfaction over the limited range of practical subjects from which to choose.

### **5.6.3 Frequency of Practical Subject Periods**

Students who liked practical subjects were unhappy about the shorter time that was allocated to such subjects in comparison to that available for academic subjects. The most common response was that academic subjects were done on a daily basis, while

practical subjects were done once a week. Students felt that this was a reflection on the importance schools placed on the practical subjects. Some students pointed out that there were more theory lessons than practical lessons, which meant that they did not get adequate time to improve their practical skills.

Tables 5.13 and 5.14 summarise views gathered from focus group discussions with primary and secondary school students respectively.

**Table 5.13: Summary of Primary School Focus Group Views**

Summary of Primary School Focus Group Views	
Positive views	Other views
<i>They are important. I would like to study them.</i>	<i>I wish to do computer subjects.</i>
<i>Good for students to get better living or be skilled workers.</i>	<i>They are good only for those who are interested in them.</i>
<i>Practical subjects are more interesting than academic subject.</i>	
<i>Practical subjects are easy.</i>	
<i>Important for us children to get employment.</i>	
<i>They help in future when you retire.</i>	
<i>They help you when you are out of work or on leave.</i>	
<i>You will be self-reliant.</i>	

**Table 5.14: Summary of Secondary School Focus Group Views**

Summary of secondary school focus group views	
Positive views	Other views
<i>Should be done at every school. Should be compulsory.</i>	<i>They are the best but we have a problem of weak teachers.</i>
<i>All students should do practical subjects at ZJC and choose at O-Level.</i>	<i>Both the teacher and student must be interested.</i>
<i>They can help us in daily life, at home.</i>	<i>Provide teachers who really want to help.</i>
<i>They are good if you do not get your dream job.</i>	<i>Must be helped by people who have the skills.</i>
<i>Helpful for employment and self-employment.</i>	<i>Teachers and parents should encourage and support students who do practical subjects</i>
<i>Good if one fails academically.</i>	<i>They should do more trips to get to know more about practical subjects.</i>
<i>Good for practical skills in future life.</i>	<i>Must be developed for self-employment or employment.</i>
<i>Prepare children for manual work.</i>	<i>Practical subjects are difficult to get grade A.</i>
<i>Good for specialised knowledge.</i>	<i>Only those who wish to do them not for students to be made to do practical subjects that are assigned to a class.</i>
	<i>Need for work experience.</i>
	<i>Better conditions; more equipment not wait for each other, its time-consuming.</i>
	<i>Must be developed for self-employment or employment.</i>
	<i>Students must be given good time to work on the practical subjects.</i>
	<i>The government and companies must consider every practical subject.</i>

Evidently, there were varying levels of interest in, and mixed feelings about, practical subjects among students. Students had high occupational aspirations. Some cultural

and historical views of vocational education tended to be perpetuated by the way schools treated practical subjects in relation to academic subjects. It was clear that while some students understood the value of VET, they either aspired to what they considered to be noble professions or they did not like VET at all. Those in favour of VET showed more inclination towards self-employment. They did not display any confidence that VET would increase their chances in the job market.

The majority of students knew what they wanted to do after school. At School C only one out of 8 students in the focus group was unsure about what their ideal job was. Students displayed knowledge of global trends and saw themselves in a global race to succeed.

### ***5.7 Views from Those at the Helm: VET through the Eyes of Teachers***

Interviews were conducted with six secondary school practical subject teachers (see appendix 5 for the interview schedule). The teachers interviewed had a wealth of teaching experience ranging between 5 and 25 years. These teachers taught building studies, food and nutrition, woodwork, agriculture and technical drawing.

Teachers were provided with an opportunity to discuss:

- Why they had taken up the teaching of a practical subject as a career;
- Opinions on modern-day vocational education and training in relation to general education;
- Views on the mid-1990s education policy and its impact on vocational education;
- Perception of the place of VET in Zimbabwe's educational system and the role of vocational education in rural development;
- Views on the status of vocational courses;
- How students were selected for practical subjects;
- How they would describe the attitudes of students, parents and the general public towards vocational qualifications;
- Who constructed the practical subject syllabus they were using and whether they gave any feedback to the curriculum developers;
- Views on the relationship between practical subject syllabuses and the requirements of the employment sector;
- Whether they arranged work experience and career guidance for practical subject students.

In order to enhance the transparency and robustness of the research outcomes NVivo software for qualitative data analysis was used to organise, analyse and explore patterns in the interview data. A matrix coding query was run to determine the number of participants who talked about a theme and how often a theme was raised. NVivo was also used to identify specific quotes from all participants. Several themes emerged from this process of identifying quotes and these are presented in the subsections below.

### **5.7.1 Teachers' Reasons for Choosing Practical Subject Teaching**

As Needham and Papier (2011) state, teacher motivation for vocational education impacts significantly on students' motivation and attitudes. The teachers' emotional interest and psychological closeness to a subject is crucial. Teachers were asked why they took up the teaching of practical subjects as a career. The study showed that teachers were attracted to practical subject teaching for different reasons and had different motivations for choosing their particular subject area.

One teacher succinctly stated:

*I had a passion for the subject.*

This passion was endorsed by two other teachers, albeit for different reasons:

*Interest in the subject. There is less marking of the books since the subject is allocated to a few students in a class, therefore, there is less written work.*

A building studies teacher was driven more by the desire for tangible results:

*I wanted something different, something challenging for a lady, something quickly visual in terms of results.*

An agriculture teacher shared a similar motivation:

*I chose a practical subject because of its practical nature, it is quick to realise the teaching's effectiveness.*

On a different note, a woodwork teacher faced with rejection in all other fields of study found a lifeline in woodwork:

*After applying for different types of areas, woodwork was the only one to offer me a place.*

### **5.7.2 The Vocational and Academic Divide and the ‘Gifted and Talented’ Debate**

The debate over vocational and general education has given rise to a diversity of opinions in Zimbabwe and indeed the world over. In the UK the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF, 2007, p.8) defines ‘gifted’ and ‘talented’ as follows:

***Gifted*** describes students who have the ability to excel academically in one or more subjects such as English, Drama, Technology;

***Talented*** describes students who have the ability to excel in practical skills such as sport, leadership, artistic performance. These students may well follow a vocational training pathway to accreditation and employment.

Teachers were asked to give their opinions of VET in relation to general education. Three out of the six teachers were convinced that vocational education was undervalued and destined for the less gifted, noting that:

*There is a notion among some teachers and the public that VET is for the less gifted.*

*General education is now superior to VET since most of the students are heading for A-Levels. They concentrate on academic subjects which they may take at A-Level. Only a few practical subjects are being offered at A-Level.*

*Vocational education and training should aim to connect people with the manufacturing industry. VET subjects are being underrated.*

One teacher felt that little had changed in VET but was enthused by the introduction of new dimensions encouraging learners to be more creative and resourceful. The teacher observed that:

*The modern-day VET is not much different from the past except that today the design concepts are being strongly incorporated into the syllabi, thus*

*encouraging talented learners to be resourceful with materials and learn to apply ingenuity in bringing new products onto markets. In Zimbabwe in particular, entrepreneurship is fused with VET courses as a means to encourage growth of business and the economy.*

Not all teachers agreed with the notion that VET was underrated. One put it succinctly:

*They are equal and important. I am not aware of any controversy.*

Further, teachers were asked to reflect on the mid-1990s when there was an unprecedented rise in the establishment of universities. Teachers were asked what, in their view, was the impact of that development on VET. All the six teachers felt that the rise of universities had had an adverse effect on the value of VET in the 1990s and added that:

*The policy underrated vocational education.*

*Greater priority is accorded to academic education. The impact is on the negative side, meaning that VET will not be taken by many students.*

*VET is less regarded. The policy has had a negative impact on vocational education.*

*Yes, it had a negative impact to the growth of vocational/technical education. Out of 15 or so universities in the country, only 2 offer programmes aligned to vocational/technical education.*

This was strongly expressed by the teachers, evidencing how the educational policy had negatively affected vocational education and how the effects were continuing to impact their work.

### **5.7.3 The Status of Practical Subjects**

After exploring the impact of the 1990s' educational policy, teachers' opinions were sought with regard to the place and status of VET in Zimbabwe's educational system. This question stimulated a lot of discussion. It was interesting to note that on this occasion there was consensus that VET had a lower status in both secondary and higher education. Teachers lamented the lack of interest and investment in VET on the part of universities and employers. They commented that:

*In Zimbabwe VET is considered inferior and less important. In most schools these subjects are offered to those students who are not intellectually gifted.*

*VET in Zimbabwe is given lip service. Some colleges are moving away from training VET mentors/teachers. Few colleges and universities are offering VET courses.*

*VET is taken as the last area of specialisation. Most of our universities do not have VET programmes. They are only limited to polytechnic colleges. They are not offered at A-Level. Some VET trained personnel do not fit into the industry and end up being self-employed.*

As regards the status of VET, the teachers were disheartened by students' lack of interest and what they perceived as the government's lukewarm commitment to VET. They were discontented that:

*Practical subjects are of lower status since most of the people prefer white-collar jobs than blue-collar jobs.*

*VET has less impact. Students mostly in rural secondary schools shun practical subjects because of how they are taught and the high demands for time doing design projects.*

*The practical subjects are considered as second string or auxiliary subjects. Whilst the government has somehow adopted the Nziramasanga Commission's recommendations, not much is being done on the ground. Very few schools are offering Higher Education Examining Council (HEXCO) examinations.*

*Unqualified teachers are still teaching technical subjects.*

Noteworthy is the concern that some unqualified teachers were teaching practical subjects; this was a bone of contention expressed by students and education inspectors too.



One teacher also agreed with students who believed that practical subjects were easier than academic subjects and thus suitable for the less academically gifted students. The teacher remarked:

*This is important because it creates employment. VET is less challenging than academic education, even less gifted students can benefit.*

Further inquiry was conducted into what teachers saw as the stumbling blocks to VET gaining prominence. The immediate reaction was that, as long as practical subjects were not part of the five O-Levels required for progression into further and higher education or entry into work-based training or employment, they would remain less important. The government and universities were lambasted for not giving these courses *'their worth and the sponsorship they deserved.'* Teachers questioned how they were expected to motivate students and perform effectively without adequate equipment and skilled teaching staff. Due to lack of serious commitment on the part of government and industry, the teachers argued that their students preferred white-collar jobs.

Teachers echoed their students' complaints about the lack of choice. One teacher remarked that:

*Students simply take the subject without option and their question is always, 'What am I going to do with woodwork since I want to go to A-Level to take sciences, commercials or arts?'*

While at one school students were allowed to take a practical subject of their choice at O-Level, there was no choice at ZJC or on entry into secondary school (Form 1).

*At ZJC classes are just allocated. At O-Level, since last year, students are allowed to choose an area of their best interest.*

*Students select one subject of her/his choice from all subjects that are being offered.*

*Students must take practical subjects done in their class at form 1 and form 2 then choose on their own at form 3.*

*Students choose practical subjects of their choice at form 3. At form 1 the curriculum committee places students in classes.*

*In many cases students are given a chance to choose the subject of their choice, but at lower levels, like form 1, students have no choice.*

Students felt that the choice at O-Level was not a real choice as the tendency was to continue with the subject in which they had some foundation and with which they were familiar rather than starting a new subject at O-Level.

Another sticking point was students' attitude towards practical subjects. The teachers observed that most students viewed practical subjects as '...that other subject.' One of the reasons given for the negative attitudes was that there was a high failure rate in practical subjects. A teacher expressed that:

*Attitudes are shaped by first impressions at entry level. If a student starts by failing, then that child detests it, but if they pass it, they will like it more and pass it always.*

A teacher suggested that practical subjects should be introduced at A-Level to raise their profile and status. This was passionately supported by another teacher who stated that there was evidence at their school to suggest that after the introduction of food science at A-Level, the attitude of students as well as that of fellow teachers towards practical subjects improved remarkably.

#### **5.7.4 Teachers' Views on the Strengths and Weaknesses of Practical Subjects**

Teachers applauded the hands-on approach and nature of practical subjects. The teachers shared views which were similar to those of the students and felt that there was potential for making students more employable or helping them to become self-employed through the practical skills.

A complex relationship between cognitive and motor skills has been found to characterise the learning process as children grow and develop. Children are believed to go through constant cognitive problem-solving and adaptation to complex and changing environments (Adolph, 2008; Adolph and Berger, 2006). One teacher argued that practical subjects develop a motor-cognition connection and emphatically stated that:

*They fuse motor skills with cognitive ones to produce tangible results. A graduate of practical subjects applies the skills to earn a living.*

Emphasising the practical nature of practical subjects, one teacher was in agreement with students who perceived practical subjects as 'easier' than academic subjects. The teacher considered practical subjects to be a good means of widening opportunities for students who were not academically oriented:

*They are presumed easy to understand. Of course they are easy; students learn more through practical subjects.*

*VET programmes absorb those practically-oriented school leavers who can't go to university. They can go into areas, such as building studies, carpentry, plumbing and electrics.*

Another teacher subscribed to the same view and saw the strength of practical subjects as their ability to equip students with life skills, irrespective of their academic ability:

*The major strength is that they create self-help skills to those who may not have done well at school ending up employing themselves by joining home industries.*

When asked about the major weaknesses of practical subjects, teachers were visibly very passionate about the lack of resources, the lack of choice and the limited pathways and opportunities for progression into further and higher education.

One teacher lamented the lack of advanced-level practical subjects that would pave the way for progression into further and higher level vocational courses.

*Some have courses only up to O-Level, therefore not favourable for high performers who aspire for A-Level.*

All the teachers interviewed expressed deep concern over the lack of adequate and up-to-date equipment. There was a general consensus that VET was under-funded and that there was a lack of desire to invest and commit adequate resources to the delivery of the modern and industry-compatible education and training needed by employers. The teachers expressed the following views:

*Schools offering practical subjects should have well-equipped rooms with modern equipment or industrial standard equipment.*

*Students do not learn up to standard due to lack of materials and equipment which are expensive.*

*Let's have adequate resources and have courses up to A-Level.*

*Let there be adequate materials and equipment for proper learning, and most of our universities must offer degrees in specific areas. Industry should attract technical people by offering attractive salaries to encourage more people to train in such areas.*

Teachers also had views about the syllabuses followed in practical subjects:

*The syllabus requires students to work manually, but the industrial sector uses modern machines which school leavers are not familiar with.*

*The syllabi tally well with the requirements of the employment sector. However, at times the syllabi are much wider than and lack the depth required by industry. There is no room to go outside the syllabus.*

*The current syllabi must incorporate computer-aided design and simulation.*

*ZIMSEC, is the examination board and we don't have a chance to give feedback to curriculum developers.*

*Vocational qualifications are considered inferior compared to university degrees.*

Another major weakness that teachers identified related to the relationship between the syllabuses followed in practical subjects and the requirements of the employment sector. Teachers indicated that *'industrial attachments are not part of syllabus requirements at school level.'*

Linked to this was the lack of careers guidance. Only one secondary school out of the three had invited representatives from industry to give talks to students.

*They only arrange for trips. Industrial attachments are not part of syllabus requirements at school level.*

*Careers guidance is provided but it is not for all students since it is not done at our school. But we, the teachers, do arrange educational tours where we expose our students to the industry and training colleges.*

*Career guidance is offered mainly through inviting industry representatives to schools.*

In a nutshell, there was a general consensus among the teachers that practical subjects offered practical skills to enhance students' employability or their ability to become self-employed. However, lack of funding and outdated syllabuses meant that the skills that students were acquiring were obsolete in modern industrial settings. Thus the strengths of practical subjects were being watered down by the absence of work experience for students and a curriculum incompatible with developments in industry.

#### **5.7.5 Teachers' Views on the Place of Vocational Education in Rural Development**

The long history of rural deprivation born out of the colonial legacy of unequal development was top of the majority government's agenda of equitable growth and development across the country. Rural growth points have been developed since independence as a vehicle for economic growth and empowerment of rural communities. Teachers were given the opportunity to express their views on whether VET programmes had a role to play in this endeavour. Their responses included:

*Yes, the programmes are important since they can create employment in rural areas. They can also create industrialism through the growth of home industries. The VET programmes are very important to the socio-economic development of rural areas and growth points but often they are not used as people fear to take risks in case they fail.*

*They contribute immensely to the industrial development at growth points. Graduates have opportunities to start home industries and gradually grow to be*

*renowned factories manufacturing wood and metal products. Today, home industries have absorbed most 'retrenchees' from the now defunct white-owned industries.*

*VET programmes are important in growth points, there are food industries e.g. bakery, popcorn, and various food take-away.*

*With food industry no one can go wrong because everyone needs food. Growth points fail because there are only a few people trained in practical subjects at tertiary education. Most of them can only use skills acquired in secondary school, which are substandard. Lack of funding also leads to the failure. Growth points have become business and entertainment areas.*

The teachers were sceptical about the progress that had been made towards transforming growth points into potential economic nuclei.

*There is not enough financial backing. There isn't good town planning.*

*Lack of money to kick start the projects in bulk.*

*Lack of machinery to produce in bulk.*

*I have not seen that success. I think this is because our industry is not growing.*

*The attempts have been successful as we see many people seek and are employed in growth points. They also use these as marketing areas. The concept is a noble one as it aims at reducing rural-to-urban migration as well as encouraging industrial growth, but of late this has not been the case due to the economic downturn in the country as a result of economic sanctions.*

*Each growth point should have a VET training institute to absorb practically equipped school leavers.*

#### **5.7.6 Teachers' Views on Parents' Attitudes**

Teachers felt strongly that parental attitudes had a substantial impact on their children's attitudes towards VET. This view is supported by Gorard, Huat See and Davies (2012) who cite several studies by Carroll, 2000, Senler and Sungur, 2009 and Goodman and Gregg, 2010, which suggest links between parental expectations and children's

educational outcomes. These include a study by Mistry et al. (2009) which found that children tend to perform better at school if their parents expect them to do so, and Hong and Ho (2005) who found strong relationships between parental expectations and student achievement.

Teachers noted the correlation between students' attitude towards VET and that of parents, arguing that:

*Most parents are not enlightened themselves so they prefer their children to going for academic A-Levels rather than to an industrial college.*

*Parents' attitudes are centred towards academic areas where they wish their children to be either managers, accountants etc. They do not see a future in their children being carpenters.*

The teachers felt that the emphasis that employers and further/higher education institutions placed on English, science and mathematics had blinded parents to the potential of practical subjects. Teachers felt that parents' attitudes were largely shaped by whether their son/daughter would get employment, irrespective of the child's interests or ability. As a result of this, the teachers argued that students were being pushed down the academic route, in many cases against their will and potential.

The teachers were also not convinced that the skills students were getting were adequate for further education and training or employment. Thus, as Jon Lauglo (in Lauglo and Maclean, 2005) established, the attractiveness of vocational subjects may not lie in lack of interest but in their ability to help school leavers get a job and become economically productive.

## **5.8 VET through the Eyes of Education Inspectors**

### **5.8.1 Interviews with Education Inspectors**

In-depth interviews were carried out with two education inspectors, both with over 15 years' experience as inspectors. Education inspectors in Zimbabwe have a crucial role as custodians of the curriculum. They are responsible for implementing the curriculum and reviewing policy circulars and procedures. They are therefore represented on subject panels of the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU). The inspectors also conduct school inspections and assess teachers' performance. As experts in their area they

provide advice and develop partnerships with other government ministries, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local communities. In view of the pivotal role played by the inspectors in the formulation and supervision of the curriculum, their views were fundamental to this study.

The first inspector had a strong belief in what they termed the ‘techvoc’ (technical and vocational) curriculum and expressed the Ministry of Education’s desire to widen the school curriculum to include techvoc subjects in order to develop viable pathways for the majority of school leavers who do not proceed to university. The inspector remarked that:

*This is one area of the curriculum that we would really like to be implemented throughout the country. Most of our kids don’t go beyond university education and we believe that those who will have done vocational courses would get some basic skills which would assist them when they finish school.*

The highly experienced education inspectors had good background knowledge of the history of vocational education in the country. They were asked to give their views on policy developments over the few decades following attainment of independence, particularly the 1990s.

One of the inspectors held the conviction that, despite the rapid expansion of universities and marked emphasis on tertiary education, vocational education remained important. They remarked:

*In the 1990s we had quite a number of colleges where people had been vying for training that would lead them to jobs like teacher training, but I wouldn’t say that VET was completely overshadowed by that. We had quite a number of schools which still offered VET despite of course a shift towards tertiary education.*

The other inspector felt that the expansion of universities was not paralleled with that of vocational training colleges, yet the majority of school leavers in Zimbabwe did not progress to university. They felt that the impact was negative, which prompted the government to set up the Nziramasanga Commission to review the place of VET. The inspector observed that:



*Actually the impact was very negative because not every child is academically gifted. There are some who are technically inclined and therefore, I think it took the government some time, especially after the Nziramasanga Commission, to go back and advocate for vocational training...*

*...the government is actually encouraging that students, especially at Form 1 or 2 (ZJC level), take up a vocational subject rather than wait until form 3 or 4 (O-Level).*

The inspector advocated early introduction to practical subjects in order to give learners the opportunity to experience the subject and make informed decisions as to whether they wished to pursue a vocational or academic path. The inspector further supported the idea of specialist schools with a specific emphasis on particular subject areas. They referred to these as schools of excellence and gave the example:

*We have got some schools of excellence... for example Marondera High is a sporting school. We have got other schools that are techvoc schools, like Rakodzi.*

The idea of schools of excellence was to channel students with specific interest in vocational training into specialising in a vocation of their choice. The inspector added that:

*The colonial F2 system had its advantages, although people disliked it because it was done for the colonialists' benefit. However, after independence those people who had been educated in the F2s were absorbed into road construction, agriculture, building and so on.*

The notion of a two-tier education system will be the subject of further discussion in the next chapter.

### **5.8.2 Inspectors' Views on Parents' Attitudes**

Unlike the teachers who felt that parents' attitudes were negative, one inspector felt that attitudes towards VET were changing. The inspector believed that those who had vocational qualifications had greater opportunities to earn more money. He commented:

*I think people's attitudes have changed now; to begin with people didn't appreciate, maybe they were not aware of the importance of VET. Initially vocational qualifications were given low status but as of now people are realising that people who really make money are those people who use their hands.*

The inspector held the conviction that developments in agriculture and industry were leading to cultural and attitudinal changes as vocational skills were increasingly becoming sort after. They reiterated that:

*Generally the majority of our parents at the beginning didn't feel comfortable with their children doing VET. They thought that perhaps they were meant just for menial jobs, whereas their aspirations may have been to get a kid to a level where they would get a white-collar job. That kind of culture and belief is, however, fading away because of what the parents are realising is happening in the country, in industry and also in agriculture.*

The inspector was convinced that the changes in attitudes were a significant development which would see more students attracted into vocational training with the prospects of getting lucrative employment. The inspector was of the opinion that the traditional thinking that white-collar jobs were the measure of success was fast diminishing.

The second inspector had a different view. In their view, parents were more interested in subjects that their children could pass in order for them to progress to higher education. The inspector felt that as long as the pass rate for practical subjects remained low, parents and students alike would despise them. They commented that:

*Parents in most cases are actually influenced by the results the schools are getting. You find that where subjects are doing well a bigger number of candidates will register for that subject, but where they are not doing well, then parents said, 'I will register for history or something because if you register for building studies you are going to fail all the same.'*

The inspector expressed the view that the status and subsequently attitudes towards a subject were determined by three main factors, namely:

- Teacher motivation and competency;

- Pass rate;
- Employment prospects.

In their view, pass rates and employment prospects were the key influences on parental attitudes towards any subject.

### **5.8.3 Inspectors' Views on Teacher Proficiency**

In the view of one inspector the teacher's interest in the subject had a huge impact on how well they could motivate their students. Linked to this would be the teacher's own ability to demonstrate the practical skills required. Their observations as they inspected schools were that a significant number of teachers lacked the practical skills themselves, which made it difficult for them to teach and impart the skills to their learners. The end result was poor motivation, poor student performance, low pass rates and, subsequently, negative attitudes and low status accorded to the subject. The inspector observed that:

*We still have a negative attitude. I think it has been brought about by the calibre of teachers that we have in the field because some of them are not competent. We have teachers that are not competent, for example, if you are a teacher you are taking kids year after year and you have 0 per cent pass rate, definitely students are not going to come to your subject. But in schools where teachers are producing good results you find quite a number of students registering for those practical subjects.*

The inspector had a personal conviction that the teacher had a crucial role in motivating students. They drew on their personal experience as a school teacher, for example, their last home economics class consisted of 10 boys and three girls. They managed to motivate boys to take up a subject that was traditionally considered a girls' subject. They commented that, *'the way the teacher sells the subject can actually attract the students to sign up for the subject and achieve good results.'*

Teacher training was considered to have a direct link to teacher proficiency in the subject. The inspector was aware of some teacher training colleges that did not place enough emphasis on practical skills training meaning that graduates from such colleges were likely to have limited practical skills. The inspector was taken aback by the fact that the teachers had to learn or improve their practical skills on the job. The inspector expressed bewilderment:

*So at the moment you find there are some teachers especially those who trained at Xxx College, who had no technical background and then opted to take an academic subject and a technical subject, and when they came into the field they were actually learning together with the kids. This had a huge impact because the kids actually soon realised that the teacher himself or herself was not good at the subjects. As a result, student ended up dropping the subject.*

The inspector argued that a practical subject teacher should be an expert in the subject and the learners should have no doubts about their instructor's skills. The knock-on effect of teachers' lack of skills on students was found to be considerable on several fronts. Students were becoming discouraged when they discovered that their teachers were struggling with the subject. Both student and teacher confidence and the quality of teaching were thus being compromised. As a result, attitudes and results were plummeting.

The inspector argued that if practical subjects were taught properly, most students would pass them, but, in their view, most teachers were either incompetent or teaching to finish the syllabus, and they were not taking into consideration the students' level of attainment or understanding. They expressed their desire to see every child taking up at least one practical subject under capable instruction. The inspector concluded that:

*... for any success in vocational training you must have a flair for it, you must love it.*

*Besides the results, the teacher himself or herself must sell the subject.*

*The weaknesses are actually emanating maybe from the teachers who are not imparting the skills well because they are producing students who are half-baked. If somebody is really properly educated or schooled, I am sure there will be no weaknesses in techvoc subjects.*

The inspector also recommended that teacher training colleges should enrol trainees who have studied the practical subject in secondary school to ensure that they have the basic skills and interest in the subject.

#### **5.8.4 Inspectors' Views on the Place of Vocational Education in Rural Development**

The role of vocational education in rural development is central to this study. The inspectors' views on the link between VET and rural development were sought. The rural growth points were intended to be and are largely seen as the hub for rural development. The inspectors' views on the link between VET and rural development differed. One inspector felt that the rural growth points had a lot of economic potential, despite the negative connotations sometimes associated with them. They were convinced that the notion that employment and success only existed in the large cities should be dispelled. This inspector commented that:

*Initially people didn't appreciate working in a growth point when the idea was mooted out. The majority of people thought the best kind of life is found in big cities, like Harare, and hence there was a lot of migration into larger cities, ignoring these growth points. However, I think people have now realised that it is not only in these cities where you can make life better.*

The inspector believed that there were great prospects for home industries and small-scale businesses, which had the potential to create employment and self-employment, and remarked that:

*In these growth points we find a lot of small industries springing up, especially trades like welding, woodworking, cabinet making. People are appreciating that they can make life out there. And even housing itself, there is a lot of housing being built around those centres.*

Within the development of the growth point economy, the inspector saw a role for students with vocational skills and felt strongly that vocational skills had a place in the construction, metalwork, woodwork, tailoring and food industries. The inspector expressed the opinion that:

*I think given that we would have trained children and equipped them with these basic skills, I think they would find room to establish enterprises that they would have been trained in, e.g. woodworkers and metalworkers could get themselves established in growth points. There is cheap land there as compared to perhaps the larger towns. And we believe that those centres can play a vital role in accommodating those people with just their minimum basic skills.*

On the contrary, the other inspector was more sceptical about the role of growth points. This inspector was not convinced that the growth point would create meaningful employment for the huge numbers of unemployed young people and school leavers. They felt that the government needed to do more to bring growth points to a level where they could make a meaningful contribution to rural economies. They remarked that *'growth points are the responsibility of the government itself to see that they have grown.'*

The inspector, however, acknowledged the potential for vocational training to enhance entrepreneurship in the wake of increased unemployment. They added:

*... there are no jobs in Zimbabwe and those kids or students that we have taught are having their own enterprises. Some are cooking, baking, sewing and others are into building and therefore they do not have to look for jobs.*

*I know somebody who has been employed and she is doing very well in South Africa. The drink that she is making has even actually come number 1 in their company.*

This inspector shared the same view with their counterpart on the potential for VET to promote entrepreneurship. They applauded the government's efforts to support the development of small and medium enterprises but lamented the lack of support for school leavers:

*Our government is trying to establish small to medium enterprises. If students are given basic capital, they can get started with that financial support. This has been happening but it has been happening mostly to adults not school leavers. School leavers do not get the money because they do not have collateral.*

The inspector felt that financial constraints greatly inhibited students from making progress in business. They reiterated that, *'we don't need abundant resources but the basic resources just to get people started.'*

In addition to employability skills the inspectors concurred about the role of vocational education in developing life skills. The first inspector voiced a strong conviction:

*I think basically if one has acquired the skills, skills are lifelong. Even if one is establishing his own home, he can make use of those skills to develop the area where they live, in addition to employment of course.*

The other inspector was very passionate about the importance of vocational education and referred to practical subjects as ‘*subjects for life*’ and VET as ‘*education for life*.’ They spoke from personal experience:

*For example myself, I can make my own clothes, I can bake wedding cakes and at the same time earn extra cash and therefore that is a subject for life, especially home economics. Home economics will teach you what to eat, what to wear, how to furnish your own home and how to look after your own family. For me, there is nothing better than that.*

### **5.8.5 The Inspectors’ Views on the Role of Industry in VET Curriculum Development**

The inspectors also highlighted the need for close cooperation and collaboration between educational providers and industry. They felt that industrialists should be involved in curriculum development to ensure that education and training was relevant and compatible with the skills needed in industry.

*Industrialists would like to be involved in curriculum formulation so that they have input into what children are taught so that when they leave school, they may have the basis from which they can start training those children, but right now what may be obtaining is that industrialists have no input. The government is the one that decides the curriculum and this curriculum may not be at par with what the industrialists normally would need. The kind of training that is given to the school leavers may not fit very well into the job market.*

Furthermore, the inspectors emphasised the need for work placements and on-the-job training. One inspector commented that the Ministry of Education was advocating the creation of schools on the shop floor whereby students would be attached to the workplace for at least a month.

The inspectors also envisaged a situation in which the notion of schools on the shop floor could be linked to robust careers guidance. The inspectors, however, regretted

that there was no consistency in careers guidance programmes. One of the inspectors mentioned that they had not seen careers guidance events since 2005 or 2006.

## **5.9 An Eagle's Eye View from the Standards Development and Research**

### **Standpoint**

An interview was conducted with the head of SDERU who gave their views on the country's vision for vocational education and training and the efforts to grow and develop a close relationship between training and industry. SDERU is responsible for developing profiles and standards of performance by industry as well as curriculum for manpower training in the technical and vocational education sector.

The head referred to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and the change in perceptions from colonial times to the period after independence. The head noted that pre-independence TVET was characterised by the designation of trades based on 'race'. Vocational trades such as boiler makers, riggers, diesel plant fitters, sawing machinery and mechanics were a preserve for whites, 'mixed race' people and Indians.

*Real TVET was preserved for apprentices and not available for blacks. Blacks were allowed to access pre-vocational subjects starting at primary school and the F2 system which offered agriculture, home economics and carpentry.*

TVET was placed at a higher level and paid higher wages than university graduates. A DPF engineer with a national craft certificate Level 4 was paid higher than a university graduate. The head pointed out that there was a shift in perception of TVET in the 1980s when the racial barriers were removed. The F2 was replaced by secondary school National Foundation Certificate (NFC) programmes, which turned out to be unpopular with many people. There was a clear decline in the perception of TVET as SADCC placed emphasis on O-Levels. From 2001 the head noted a reversal in the trend of negative perceptions and a deliberate effort by the Ministry to ensure that industry recognised the value of TVET qualifications.

### **5.9.1 Changing Perceptions**

The head of SDERU felt strongly that perceptions of VET in Zimbabwe have been reversed from a negative to a more positive view. The head observed that between 2005 and 2010 there was marked increase in the demand for NFCs as students started passing them. Three-quarters of secondary school NFC students were getting higher pass rates and most of them were successfully becoming self-employed. Other NFC



graduates progressed onto polytechnic colleges or industrial training centres, like Masasa and Westgate. The head called for specific training for students who failed to achieve five O-Levels but had talent in specific psychomotor skills.

### **5.9.2 Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET)**

The head of SDERU argued that Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) should not be the ceiling but learners should be given the opportunities to top up such qualifications to degrees. The head called for 'CBET-ised' and 'TVET-ised' curricula to cater for the needs of the trainee, the labour market and the country. The head indicated that they were advocating close collaboration between higher and tertiary education providers, the government and industry to provide opportunities for on-the-job education and training. The head added that from 2005 polytechnic colleges had introduced attachments which were working very well. About five polytechnic colleges had introduced Bachelor of Technology degrees and most universities were also introducing one year attachments. The head was pleased that polytechnics and universities were on board with 'CBET-isation' and 'TVET-isation' of the curricula.

The head highlighted the move to develop private and public partnerships (PPDPs), such as current partnerships between the Toyota motor industry and polytechnics. These partnerships involved lecturers being attached to industries so as to be abreast with developments in industry and technology.

There was close partnership between SDERU and industry whereby industry set the standards for SDERU by:

- Profiling occupations in industry;
- Formulating curriculum and stating expectations;
- Setting qualification standards;
- Setting training standards ensuring that the three domains - affective (emotion/feeling), cognitive (thinking) and psychomotor (physical/kinesthetic) skills are being effectively incorporated in training;
- Continuously assessing quality;
- Providing external assessment of the core competencies and awarding grades.

According to the head SDERU had played a significant role in influencing the southern African region to raise the profile of VET. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) was formed in 1980 with the main aim of coordinating

development projects among member states which include Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. SDERU had been driving forward the motion to get SDCC countries to recognise VET and fund it as a separate education route parallel to general education. Ministers of education and training had signed up to SDCC to allocate equal resources to both TVET and general education.

The effort to remove negative perceptions of VET graduates on the part of industrialists, according to the head of SDERU, had led to the development of close partnerships.

*The Permanent Secretary for Education set up the National Manpower Advisory Council (NAMACO) to reverse perceptions.*

The head highlighted the work SDERU was doing with NAMACO. NAMACO is a public- and private-sector partnership set up to look into national manpower development and the training needs of the country and make recommendations to the Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education. Senior research officers had been assigned to identify all gaps highlighted by industry so as to be proactive. NAMACO had a responsibility to find ways of bridging the gap between industry's labour needs and what the curricula in education and training were offering. NAMACO in conjunction with SDERU had the task to ensure that education and training institutions were delivering a demand-driven curriculum relevant to, and compatible with, the labour market demands.

*The Secretary set up 21 economic sectorial committees with representatives from industry with 18 sectorial members at each of the 21. They review and meet quarterly. Apprenticeship training has been demystified and open to all. Same standards as in industry are used with apprenticeships.*

The head also emphasised the significance of collaboration with other countries in the region. There was ongoing exchange of ideas and good practice regarding the status and role of VET. The Permanent Secretary for Education had been involved in the educational reform in Namibia and Botswana where 61 Zimbabwean staff members were sent to Botswana polytechnic colleges to share ideas and best practice in relation to curriculum review.

### **5.9.3 Getting Parents and Students On Board**

According to the head of SDERU, the research unit would like parents to be educated in how to identify their children's inclination for particular occupations and school subjects. The head felt that parents had a role to play in identifying their children's potential and flair. The head lamented, however, that parents were not always well-informed about the value of vocational qualifications. The head called for more parental engagement and information dissemination through celebrating successes in the strides that were being made to ensure vocational qualifications were on a par with academic qualifications.

### **5.9.4 Decentralisation of Careers Guidance**

The head of SDERU felt that any promotion of VET had to be accompanied by sound careers advice, hence provinces held a compulsory careers guidance day every year. In addition to this, every polytechnic hosted a careers day and these were well-attended. Primary and secondary schools were encouraged to develop relationships with colleges, which gave students opportunities to ask questions about career choices.

All regional polytechnics participated in research and intellectual expos in Harare, where schools were invited to give students the opportunity to see local technologies developed by local students. The head was proud to note that polytechnics actually produced the technology they were exhibiting, unlike universities.

The head added that provincial exhibitions, international trade fairs and agricultural shows at both regional and national levels were held every year to promote innovation and enthuse students about modern technologies and developments in different industries. Heads of schools were encouraged to arrange visits for students. The officer believed that three-quarters of schools in Harare and some rural schools attended these Expos.

### **5.10 Conclusion**

This study was undertaken with a deliberate focus on students who, according to youth population records, make up nearly half of the world's unemployed. As discussed in chapter 2, empirical evidence on VET in Africa and students' attitudes and aspirations with regard to training and careers is very limited. The review of related literature backed that assertion and raised several issues emanating from Zimbabwe's colonial past, which have impacted on the development of VET in Zimbabwe. The literature

review furthermore reaffirmed the existence of the never-ending vocational education versus general education debate. That debate has inevitably led to the issues of the status accorded to practical subjects *vis-à-vis* that of academic subjects and the subsequent impact on people's attitudes. The issues of gender stereotyping and gender inequality as well as the role of teachers, the family and employers also came to the fore. These and other issues made it imperative to place the Zimbabwean situation within an international context by drawing on experiences of, and developments in, vocational education in Europe.

This chapter has brought together the different observations, students' perceptions, professionals' views and the main arguments emanating from the study. This research study delved into the inner feelings of the people directly experiencing vocational education in Zimbabwe. The inquiry examined the perceptions of primary school children and secondary school students who were doing practical subjects, and comparisons were drawn between their respective views. The teachers who taught practical subjects were key participants in this research. The investigation was then extended to education inspectors who are involved in designing the curriculum and supervising the teachers, and, finally, the insights of the head of the research unit who has insight and empirical input into the vocational curriculum were sought. Though parents were not directly involved, students gave their own interpretations of their parents' views, and these were analysed in conjunction with the parents' educational and occupational backgrounds.

Golafshani (2003), citing Eisner (1991, p. 58), affirms that a good qualitative study can help us "understand a situation that would otherwise be enigmatic or confusing" (Golafshani, 2003, citing Eisner, 1991, p. 58). The fieldwork findings differed from those of previous studies that suggested that students disliked VET. Teachers aired strong views on the challenges they face in the field. The education inspectors were highly optimistic about the potential of VET; nonetheless, they expressed their frustration with the quality of VET delivery in schools. The head of research described elaborate national and regional visions which regrettably were not being implemented at grass-roots level. Despite divergent views on how VET is managed and delivered, there was a general consensus among participants in this study that VET has a place in education and that its role in the country's and students' futures should not be underestimated.

The main deductions of this study will be discussed in the following chapter as a basis

for policy implications and recommendations, including potential areas for further studies.

## CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION AND MAIN CONCLUSIONS

### **6.0 Introduction**

This study was undertaken at a time when important questions were being asked about the whole Zimbabwean education system and its suitability in a fast-changing world. When I sought permission to undertake this research in Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwean government acknowledged that the findings would be of great interest to the Ministry of Education and requested for a copy of this thesis. The findings and recommendations from this study will therefore contribute to policy formulation. The government could gain insights into and understanding of, the feelings of students and teachers as it develops new policies with regard to VET. There is a realisation among educators and politicians in Zimbabwe that the education system is not meeting the country's and young people's needs. As discussed in chapter 2, UNESCO-IBE (2010) found that Zimbabwe's present curriculum was urban-based and not fit for purpose. The sentiments of those directly involved in VET, captured in chapter 5, have not only affirmed the failings identified by UNESCO, but have also revealed ingrained inconsistencies and inequalities within the Zimbabwean education system. The main conclusions drawn from this study point towards the potential of VET to transform the education system as well as the existing opportunities for the transformation of people's perceptions of vocational education. VET success in some European countries presents a reference point for revisiting the merits of two-tier education systems and their compatibility with global trends and the contemporary needs of countries.

Chapter 5 presented findings from the fieldwork which form the basis of the main arguments presented in this chapter. The arguments will seek to answer the research questions posed in chapter 1, which include the views and attitudes of students and teachers towards VET; whether students' attitudes towards VET change during the transition from primary to secondary school; the status of VET; and whether history and culture influence students' aspirations. An analysis of the contemporary meaning of VET in rural Zimbabwe will be undertaken leading to the implications of the findings for educational policy and curriculum development. The answers to the said research questions discussed in this chapter will provide a significant contribution to the limited knowledge on the place of VET in rural Zimbabwe and the sentiments of teachers and students. A statement on the contribution to knowledge will sum up this thesis' original and significant contribution to vocational education research.

## **6.1 Discussion**

While the debate about whether or not to vocationalise education has raged for decades, support for VET among scholars, educationists, politicians, economists and global development agencies, such as UNESCO and the World Bank, has continued to dominate economic forums. The review of literature revealed that the last decade has seen a rapid expansion of university education in Zimbabwe. That unprecedented development has given rise to the view that tertiary education is the main vehicle for social mobility. While universities are a vital source of skills, technology transfer and creation of new knowledge, it can be argued that they are not for everyone. Despite the increase in numbers of tertiary institutions, they still do not have the capacity to absorb all school leavers. Consequently, options for students who do not make it to university are limited.

Some schools of thought in Zimbabwe, as in other developing and developed countries, have pointed towards the need to broaden the skills base through widening participation in vocational training in order to develop new industries and furnish existing ones with a skilled work force. Rojewski's (1997) study found that students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds would benefit more from an integrated education system that incorporates both academic and vocational aspects. Rojewski's (1997) work envisaged that an integrated academic-vocational curriculum would be instrumental in raising educational attainment and professional aspirations. The literature reviewed established that students' aspirations are shaped by multiple factors, including parental attitudes, beliefs and expectations. Family background was therefore a strategic starting point.

### **6.1.1 Family Background**

The majority of participants' parents had received an academic education with 43 per cent holding O-Level certificates, 16 per cent educated to A-Level and 36 per cent holding degrees, hence the A-Level to university pathway was what most parents were familiar with. Parental influence on students' educational aspirations was therefore noticeable as only 3 per cent of both primary and secondary students showed interest in training at vocational/technical colleges compared to 92 per cent who wished to progress to university.

There was a clear inclination towards academic education particularly among secondary school students. The results showed that 91 per cent of secondary school

students aspired to taking A-Levels and 0 per cent considered technical college, while 1 per cent would consider self-employment. At primary school 54 per cent wished to proceed to studying at A-Level, while 10 per cent would consider training at a technical college and 8 per cent were interested in self-employment. Two crucial points are discernible from this outcome. Firstly, there is evidence that primary school students were more positive about vocational education and self-employment than secondary school students. Secondly, there was a link between parents' educational levels and their children's educational aspirations. The majority of parents had followed the academic route themselves and, correspondingly, the majority of both primary and secondary school students were inclined to pursue an academic route.

In chapter 5 sections 5.10 and 5.10.1 reported the experience of a woodwork secondary school student whose parents and they themselves viewed woodwork as 'useless'. Evidently, there are issues emanating from parental influence which result in limiting or misdirecting students towards parents' career choices rather than that of the child. The likely outcome of this scenario is students who end up doing courses with which they are not happy or students who find themselves struggling to cope with the demands of courses they did not choose. Some students indicated that the course was not their choice but that of their parents. For some students it was the only practical subject available, while others had failed to achieve the grade for their preferred subject, as described in chapter 5. It was also very clear that parents had high career expectations and that these expectations were motivated by perceived high earnings or the potential to secure a 'good job' more than anything else.

There did not seem to be much consideration of global trends in terms of occupation or the child's interest. Thus students' horizons in a highly competitive job market are being limited. Restricting career options to the traditional ones of doctor, pilot, pharmacist is incongruent with the findings that 21 per cent of secondary school and 4 per cent of primary school students wished to work in other countries. Students whose sights were set on working internationally should have a broader knowledge and more awareness of the diverse career options available on the international front.

Despite being rurally based, parents and students alike showed little interest in agrarian or rural occupations or self-employment. Only 2 per cent of both primary and secondary school participants combined were interested in working in rural areas and 1 per cent in commercial farming compared to 75 per cent wishing to work in large cities and 14 per cent who were considering employment in other countries. In addition to



parental influence, the students' choice is very limited as teachers are responsible for subject allocation. The subjects allocated to students largely predetermine the career pathway they are likely to take.

### **6.1.2 The Views and Attitudes of Students and Teachers towards VET**

Pierre Bourdieu expounded the concept of 'habitus' as enshrined in history and human memory, so much so that particular beliefs or behaviours become part of a culture into which individuals are socialised (Byrom and Lightfoot, 2012). According to Bourdieu 'habitus' or socialised norms guide behaviour and thinking. Bourdieu explains that habitus results from the interplay between free will and social structures over a period of time (Byrom and Lightfoot, 2012). Students spend more time with teachers than with their parents. Teachers are therefore a strong agent of socialisation and the transmission of the institutional habitus. The students' habitus is reinforced by both their teachers and their parents through the way in which the place of VET is communicated to the students. In this study, evidence of VET being considered in a positive way was limited.

The teachers' attitudes were thus an important part of this investigation as they are key facilitators of learning. The verbal and non-verbal messages, including the intentional and unintentional messages that teachers communicate to students, contribute significantly to the shaping and reshaping of students' attitudes. The common saying that 'feelings leak' is true when it comes to the impact of teachers' feelings on the attitudes of students. Teachers are not only role models that students look up to and emulate, but they also represent authority as the custodians of knowledge. Their views and opinions therefore matter to students who look to them for guidance. In this vein, teachers' views were sought to establish the links between students' attitudes and those of their teachers.

The functionalist theory contends that education serves to socialise the young generation into the norms and values of society through both the formal and the hidden curricula (Barkan, 2013). The formal curriculum includes reading, writing, arithmetic and the knowledge and skills that teachers intentionally teach students (Barkan, 2013; Glossary of Education Reform, 2014). The hidden curriculum is the cultural values of the society in which the schools exist (Barkan, 2013). It is the unwritten, informal, and often unintentional lessons, values, and perspectives that students learn in school (Glossary of Education Reform, 2014). The messages and cultures that prevail in schools have a profound effect on shaping the thoughts and attitudes of students. As

discussed in chapter 3, Émile Durkheim dubs this 'a systematic socialization of the young generation' (Thompson, 2003 p.132, citing Émile Durkheim, 1956, pp.123-124). Other functionalists, including Talcott Parsons and Kingsley Davis, see the function of schools as that of converting students into productive members of the contemporary society (Lacey, 2012). In this light, school cultures can intentionally or unintentionally influence students' views and attitudes towards education. In the school environment teachers take the lead in shaping the school culture and values. The values and lessons learnt through the hidden curriculum usually become the accepted *status quo*, giving students the impression that the 'hidden' practices and messages do not need to change even if they have an undesirable effect (Glossary of Education Reform, 2014). This study showed that the values espoused in the school regarding vocational education influence the students' attitudes to VET and that these attitudes become acceptable behaviours.

George Herbert Mead whose symbolic interactionism theory was developed by John Dewey, Charles Cooley, Herbert Blumer and others believed that people deduce the meaning of others' actions rather than simply reacting to those actions (Calhoun et al., 2012, citing Blumer, 1962). Students are continually interpreting classroom and school activities including the formal and hidden curriculum and ascribing meanings to them. Thus in their interaction with teachers, students are constantly interpreting teachers' actions, which ultimately shape their experiences and attitudes. In Dewey's philosophy, some experiences are educative while others are mis-educative. "Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience" (Dewey, 1998, p.13). Interactions that are mis-educative, according to Dewey, can produce callous habits or careless attitudes that can impact negatively on future experiences. In this study, I have presented examples which illustrate the ways students interpret classroom and school activities in relation to VET, with a predominantly negative view of VET being transmitted to the students.

Teacher motivation and competency is critical. An instructor needs to be proficient at the job to be able to instruct the learner effectively. It was found in this study that some teachers not only lacked the practical skills to teach practical subjects, but in some cases they were not actually qualified to teach them. Consequently, motivation, quality, standards and safety were compromised. In addition, there was evidence to suggest that some teachers might have landed in the practical subject teaching job by chance or due to lack of other opportunities. One teacher remarked that they had ended up training to teach a practical subject because they had failed to secure a place to study

their first choice of subject. To be effective in a job, one needs to have a passion for it. A job for a job's sake is bound to lead to poor motivation and poor performance. The students highlighted their concerns over teachers who did not seem to like the subject, and as a result they displayed 'hostile' behaviour making the students feel uncomfortable and subsequently developing a dislike for the subject. Poor teacher motivation and the negative effects of poor teacher-student relationships were revealed. Apart from the negative academic impact, students could be put at risk of emotional distress caused by poor relationships with their teachers.

### **6.1.3 Teacher Motivation and Competence**

The literature reviewed in section 3.6.4 revealed that teachers' personality and motivation affected their performance and influenced students' attitudes towards subjects. Teacher motivation and competence came under scrutiny from students and education inspectors who expressed dissatisfaction over teachers' lack of passion and practical skills. The inspectors held the teachers accountable for poor student performance, while the students contended that teachers were responsible for negative student attitudes. Section 5.11.1 in chapter 5 recorded teachers' reasons for choosing practical subject teaching. The reasons given ranged from passion for, and interest in, the subject to the need for less marking and smaller classes as well as the practical subject being the only option available.

A dichotomy of views emerged with the teachers viewing the apathy towards VET as emanating from poor student attitudes, while the students and the education inspectors, on the other hand, concurred that the teachers lacked interest and skills. The dissonance clearly manifested itself in several areas where teachers and inspectors differed in their opinions. The teachers felt that students' attitudes had remained negative, while the inspectors argued that they were changing. The inspectors deemed teachers incompetent, whereas the teachers complained about lack of adequate and up-to-date equipment. The inspectors were unhappy with the teachers' failure to sell the subject, while teachers argued that it was difficult to sell subjects that were considered inferior to academic ones.

Despite the concerns raised by students and the education inspectors and the fact that some teachers might have joined the field hoping for less work or as a last resort, it should be noted that some teachers were clearly motivated and had a passion for their subject. Studies by Chireshe and shumba (2011) and Shizha and Kariwo (2011) cited in the literature review also showed that Zimbabwean teachers were poorly paid and

worked under very difficult conditions. The poor working conditions inevitably impacted heavily on teacher motivation and performance. The teachers were convinced that the problems experienced by VET were ingrained in the whole education system, which was characterised by inequitable allocation of material and financial resources between academic subjects and practical subjects. According to the teachers, lack of resources, lack of choice and limited opportunities for progression via the VET pathway were chiefly responsible for VET's poor image. In addition, parental attitudes made it very difficult for them to motivate students. According to the teachers, the situation was exacerbated by the lukewarm attitude towards work experience and careers guidance on the part of school heads and the Ministry of Education. Thus a disconnection was discernible between the teachers' experiences and the education inspectors' optimism that attitudes towards VET were changing. This is a noteworthy contribution to understanding the underlying factors shaping the image of VET in schools. These findings also indicate that the teachers and the education inspectors do not share the same views on the causes of VET's poor image.

#### **6.1.4 Changes in Students' Attitudes towards VET during the Transition from Primary to Secondary School**

While the literature revealed that negative attitudes towards VET were not specific to Zimbabwe, but rather a global phenomenon, this study found that attitudes tended to differ according to age group and school environment. The literature reviewed in this study did not include that concerning primary school students nor that drawing comparisons between primary and secondary school students. This study therefore contributes to knowledge and understanding of the views of primary school students and the potential changes in opinions that occur during the transition to secondary school. Primary and secondary school students' perceptions of VET showed marked differences.

The evidence suggests that the number of practical subjects on offer in a school influenced the general attitude towards, and status of, practical subjects. The school that offered more practical subjects had more positive responses, while the other two schools where there was a more limited number of practical subjects on offer revealed less favourable responses. It can be argued that the more students become acquainted with practical subjects and the more practical subject teachers there are in a school, the higher the status. It can also be argued that the presence of more practical subject teachers would present more role models for students thereby fostering a more positive

outlook. Thus the wider the choice of practical subjects that students could choose from, the more positive the students became.

Focus group discussions and questionnaire responses from primary school students yielded more positive attitudes regarding practical subjects, while secondary school responses were less positive. As evidenced in tables 5.5 and 5.6 in chapter 5, the level of interest in practical subjects such as fashion and fabrics, woodwork, food and nutrition, technical drawing, textile and design was clearly higher in primary schools than secondary schools. This fact is further reinforced by the responses to question 11 which showed that 0 per cent of secondary school students would choose to attend a technical college, while 10 per cent of primary school students wished to study at a technical college. It can be deduced that changes in attitudes occur during that transition from primary to secondary school. These attitudinal changes can be attributed to differences in school culture and the learning environments.

There were notable differences between primary and secondary school students' interest in subjects. As depicted in table 6.1 below, fashion and fabrics, woodwork, food and nutrition and technical drawing were considerably more popular with primary school students than with secondary school students. This outcome signifies that primary school students were more positive about practical subjects than secondary school students. The only practical subject that fared well in secondary school was agriculture. It can therefore be argued that there are differences in attitudes towards practical subjects between primary and secondary school students.

**Table 6.1: Primary and Secondary School Students' Level of Interest in Subjects**

Primary school level of interest in subjects		Secondary school level of interest in subjects	
SUBJECT	3. Very interested	SUBJECT	3. Very interested
English Language	83%	English Language	90%
Mathematics	93%	Computers	88%
General Science	82%	Mathematics	85%
Shona Language	78%	Geography	80%
Bible Knowledge	75%	History	76%
History	71%	Accounting	75%
Fashion and Fabrics	71%	General Science	74%
Woodwork	71%	Chemistry	73%
Food and Nutrition	69%	Physics	72%
Geography	67%	Shona Language	65%
Technical Drawing	58%	Bible Knowledge	64%
Textile and Design	48%	Agriculture	50%
English Literature	36%	Fashion and Fabrics	45%
Building	35%	Textile & Design	40%
Chemistry	27%	Technical Drawing	39%
Physics	25%	English Literature	35%
Metalwork	25%	Building	34%
Accounting	0%	Food and Nutrition	29%
Agriculture	0%	Woodwork	11%
		Metalwork	6%

 Practical subjects

It was also interesting to note that there was very little interest in academic subjects such as chemistry, physics, and accounting among primary school students. There was also 0 per cent interest in agriculture in primary school, while 50 per cent of students at secondary school showed interest in the subject. There was 0 per cent interest in accounting in primary school as compared to 75 per cent of secondary school students reporting interest. The primary school students explained in focus groups that they were not familiar with those subjects. The lack of awareness of such subjects shown by students who were in their last grade at primary school indicates limited exposure and lack of adequate information, advice and guidance. Evidently, students were leaving primary school without sufficient preparation for secondary education resulting in a huge impact on the choices they can make. Many students find themselves overwhelmed by the sheer number of new subjects which they have to take at secondary school. Students have to make a huge leap from concentrating on

mathematics, English, Shona and the general paper in primary school to doing six or more new subjects, including practical subjects.

It was apparent that lack of knowledge or exposure to particular subjects contributed to poor attitudes or lack of interest in those subjects. Students indicated in focus groups that they could not say whether they liked subjects like metalwork because they were not available at their school and they did not know how useful the subject would be in future. The fact that most practical subjects, except home economics and agriculture, are not taught or talked about in primary school as compared to academic subjects means that students only have the opportunity to find out about these subjects when they get to secondary school. As a result, what might be perceived as negative attitudes towards VET may in fact be unfamiliarity rather than active dislike. These findings denote that students are not necessarily averse to practical subjects but they lack information about them and resent their second-class status.

While quantitative data showed high percentages of secondary students who were not interested in practical subjects, qualitative data showed that the students' responses about practical subjects were not necessarily negative. The qualitative data revealed a different dimension to that presented in the literature reviewed which stated that students disliked VET. In this study students' comments were more in the nature of requests and recommendations for the improvements they felt would make VET more accessible and enjoyable for students. They wanted improvements in teacher attitudes, pointing out that some teachers were weak, uninterested and unskilled. The students called for choice, adequate time and material resources, together with courses that could lead to employment or self-employment. They needed to be convinced about the relevance of VET and its prospects for future careers. The students were keen to be provided with work experience and school industrial trips to widen their horizons. The use of multiple data collection methods revealed the complex nature of the students' views. The focus groups gave students the opportunity to explain their views and the circumstances that influenced their attitudes, which they were not able to do through the questionnaire.

Evidently, lack of exposure stifles students' imagination and the desire to venture into science and vocational fields. Students' motivation and attitudes towards subjects is influenced by their familiarity with the subjects. The responsibility for the apathy that surrounds VET is complex and cannot be attributed to a single cause. Certainly, there is disharmony in the vocational education camp. The differences of opinion revealed a

disconnection between education inspectors and the teachers, which is discussed in sections 6.1.3 above and 6.4.8 below. The teachers' plight has brought to the fore issues relating to vocational students' performance and the suitability of the curriculum along with issues relating to teacher training and teacher supervision. The second-class status accorded to VET struck a chord with both teachers and students who were bewildered by the low value that was ascribed to VET in comparison to academic education. This study has therefore given students and teachers the opportunity to communicate their views to policy-makers and school managers.

#### **6.1.5 Making Vocational Education a Respectable and Viable Option**

It is crucial to generate interest in VET and allow students, their parents and teachers to be able to identify students' interests and areas of strength. Evidence from this study affirms that the Zimbabwean education system is skewed towards academic education. By the same token, parents and students are also inclined to pursue the academic route leading to university. The research has highlighted the difficulties that teachers face when placing students in classes. Due to limited resources teachers expressed that devising a fair and effective subject allocation method or criterion was very difficult. Teachers are under so much pressure to produce high pass rates which has led to a tendency to focus on academic subjects and teaching for the examinations. Examinations have largely become the main selection criteria for students' educational progression. VET is therefore left with a much-diminished reputation in comparison to academic education and consequently students with a vocational inclination become alienated. Thus the much-despised bottleneck, a legacy of the colonial system has largely continued to exist as the majority of students do not proceed to A-Levels or university. They are left out of education and training and ultimately become unemployed.

For VET to gain a respectable reputation, it must become a subject of choice. When students have a choice, they can decide what they find interesting and enjoy doing. Students are likely to succeed when doing subjects they choose and enjoy. The best way to give students choice is by giving them accurate information in order for them to make informed decisions. Information is the currency of choice. Thus careers advice and guidance is vital in order to give students insights into options and choices for the future.



### **6.1.6 Informed Choices and the Role of Careers' Guidance**

The findings of this study brought to light the impact of lack of careers' guidance on students' career choices. Students, teachers, education inspectors and the head of SDERU alluded to careers guidance events, which happened in some schools but not in others. The curriculum is too narrow for some schools, hence students' career horizons are subsequently limited. Similarly, parents' aspirations for their children are limited by the lack of information and expert advice and guidance which, as shown in this study, is on an *ad hoc* basis in some cases and inconsistently delivered from one school to the next. Parents who are the key agents of child socialisation and whom students rely on for advice and motivation showed little or no interest in practical subjects. Parents tended to focus on academic education in the hope that their children would progress to university and white-collar jobs.

Students seem to have inflated expectations with respect to their future academic qualifications and less interest in starting their own businesses. The case studies showed some students' lack of understanding of what subjects they needed for certain occupations, for example, a student who disliked mathematics wished to become an accountant. Some students also stated that they would like to pursue occupations such as that of engineer in order to 'help people'. This could evidence lack of careers' guidance. In the previous chapter, 54 per cent of primary school students and 48 per cent of secondary students had attended a careers' day whereas 52 per cent of secondary school and 46 per cent of primary school students had not received careers' advice. Careers' guidance should not be an event but a developmental process that students experience throughout their education. Careers guidance should be embedded into the curriculum. Students' visions and interests change as they develop into adulthood and it is important to provide continuous careers information throughout their journey from primary to secondary school.

The results from this study have differed from education professionals' expectations and Rojewski's (1997) findings that disadvantaged youth had a tendency to have lower aspirations. The students in this study were articulate and had career ambitions that evidently surpassed educators' expectations. Students questioned the apparent lack of a relationship between the technical subject being studied and the rest of the subjects or their desired career. Some students had specific 'high-paying jobs' in mind and did not see how the technical subject they were studying would help them achieve that goal. This was brought about by the lack of opportunity to choose a practical subject

that interest them. Students therefore felt that they were forced to study subjects which were not relevant to their desired occupations.

#### **6.1.7 The Impact of Historical and Cultural Influences on Students' Aspirations and the Status of VET Qualifications**

Historical events and structures influence present-day beliefs and structures and generally condition our views and opinions (Bourdieu, 1984, p.170). Zimbabwe's colonial two-tier educational history has influenced the way people think about vocational education in contemporary Zimbabwean society. In the same vein, students' attitudes towards practical subjects are influenced by the culture, norms and values prevailing in schools. Studies such as those by the European Commission (2011), Ferry (2006), Creamer and Laughlin (2005), Agbenyo and Collett (2014), Blenkinsop et al. (2006) and Bennell and Akyeampong (2007) highlighted in section 3.6.4, concur that parents' and teachers' influence affect the perceptions and attitudes of students towards VET. The fieldwork found that students were affected by parents' and teachers' views and even more so by the status accorded to the subjects in the school. Parents and teachers are likely to have memory or have heard stories of colonial division in education between black and white students. Their beliefs about VET appear to be deep-seated. This demonstrates that for a change in attitude to occur, significant education for parents and teachers about the value of VET will be required.

The colonial education system gave advantages to white children with only the very talented black children having access to the system (Johnstone, 2011). After abolishing the colonial F2s, the Zimbabwean education system has to some extent achieved some integration. However, while the racial divide has diminished, the education system has remained polarised. This study has shown that within the integration that has taken place there is unequal subject status as well as an element of institutional bias against practical subjects. The study revealed that in some cases less academically able students were assigned practical subjects with no alternatives to choose from. One teacher lamented that at his school students of lower academic ability were registered for practical subjects, while the more able students were enrolled for commercial and science subjects. Thus some students questioned the relevance of their practical subject to their desired career. Rojewski's (1997) work was concerned with the impact of such systematic bias and practices on students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Students in this study were unhappy with the lack of subject choice and the fact that their practical subject was looked down upon and considered to be of lower status in comparison with academic subjects.

## **6.2 The Contemporary Meaning and Purpose of VET in Rural Zimbabwe**

In economic terms, the value of a product, service or line of business depends on its usefulness, relevance and the cultural value people bestow upon it (Ranney, 1999; Wenben Lai, 1995). If something is deemed useless, its prominence is inevitably diminished.

### **6.2.1 Gender and the Relevance of VET**

*'Make VET relevant'*, was one secondary school participant's stark comment. The literature reviewed in chapter 3 (section 3.6.3) reaffirmed that VET has endured negative perceptions internationally and for many years. For people's perceptions towards VET to change, they need to see how it applies and relates to their settings and needs. Teachers and students alike felt that the practical subjects on offer were neither relevant to their needs nor were they appropriate for the country or the rural economy. The remark by one teacher that students would ask what they would use a practical subject for in life is pertinent. As evident from table 5.10 in chapter 5, both primary and secondary students did not feel that practical subjects were useful for preparing students for apprenticeships or for developing a positive attitude towards manual work. The students, however, believed that employers preferred people with both academic and practical skills but felt that jobs requiring practical skills paid less than those needing academic qualifications. Thus the value that employers placed on practical skills was questionable. It is therefore not surprising that 97 per cent of participants in this study would rather seek white-collar jobs in cities and 14 per cent in other countries as they did not see VET as a relevant and viable option.

This study adds to knowledge of gender issues in VET. Notable was the difference in interest in practical subjects when comparing boys and girls. The t-test analysis revealed statistically significant difference in interest in fashion and fabrics, textile and design, and food and nutrition. These findings corroborate the DfES (2007) study in the UK discussed in chapter 3 (section 3.6.2), which found that girls were likely to study subjects such as textile technology, food technology and home economics. These subjects have remained stereotypically girls' subjects, signifying that boys find them culturally irrelevant. Conversely, one of the education inspectors shared their experience as a teacher when they had 10 boys and three girls in a food and nutrition class. The boys performed very well and she argued that it all depends on the manner in which the subject is sold to the students. It is also interesting to note that the majority of chefs in Zimbabwe, and indeed most countries, are male, but when it comes to cookery at school, boys tend to shy away from the subject. It can be argued that the

culture prevailing in schools perpetuates the socially constructed gender stereotypes associated with practical subjects. Over the past decade Zimbabwe has made huge efforts to reduce the gender gap in access to education which has seen more girls accessing school and higher education (Mawere, 2013). The same strides, however, have not been made in reducing gender stereotypes and the rigid gender roles in VET. The ILO (2011), as discussed in section 3.6.2, advocated informal apprenticeships to promote women's participation in traditionally male dominated trades. Informal apprenticeships, in which students are attached to small businesses to learn technical skills, is a cost effective way of enabling rural-based students to access skills training and promote entrepreneurship in fields that traditionally have been considered to be female or male domains. Informal apprenticeships can help to demonstrate the value and relevance of vocational qualifications at a local level, while at the same time promoting gender equity. In addition to informal apprenticeships, project-based learning along the same lines as education with production can also demonstrate the potential of vocational qualifications as an avenue for employment and self-employment.

### **6.2.2 Education with Production (EWP)**

As discussed in the literature review, education with production (EWP) was not well received by schools or Ministry of Education staff, who did not subscribe to the radical Marxist ideology from which EWP was derived. By the same token, the colonial F2 system was unacceptable due to its racial and separate development connotations. In order to make VET relevant, applicable ideas from EWP and the F2 system could be adapted to meet Zimbabwe's needs. This study does not suggest going back to the colonial system or the post-independence Marxism-inspired EWP. A fresh, apolitical and non-aligned approach needs to be adopted to marry the appropriate aspects of the two opposing programmes. The strengths of both systems constitute a germane mix that can revitalise VET in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe has reached a point where it needs ingenuity to overcome historical and cultural barriers to youth progression and economic development. Barak Obama, speaking at the Entrepreneurship Summit in Nairobi Kenya on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2015, stated that *'there are no limits to the human imagination...ingenuity can overcome what is and create what needs to be'* (Obama, 2015). Zimbabwe ought to look beyond the political and ideological differences of the past and adopt what works for the future.

EWP has relevance in rural Zimbabwe and its merits should be revisited. This researcher worked at Murewa High School in Murewa District where there is physical evidence of successful education with production in the form of classrooms, hostels

and pigpens that were built by building studies and woodwork students under the supervision of trained staff. At the same school, agriculture students were involved in cultivating vegetables, maize, rearing pigs and chickens/eggs as part of their practical projects. A former Murewa High School student who studied technical drawing at the school set up a successful business producing building plans. Some teachers at the school built their own houses using the former student's plans. Another student who studied building studies at Murewa High School and holds a PhD built an approved extension to his house in the UK by himself. Evidently, project-based education can be fertile ground for developing students' practical and entrepreneurship skills. Care should be taken to ensure that project-based learning is not misconstrued by students as a ploy for cheap labour by schools. Primary school students' responses discussed in chapter 5 (section 5.3.1) showed that students disliked agriculture because they associated it more with providing manual labour than learning.

### **6.2.3 Project Based Learning and Entrepreneurship**

Project-based learning addresses real-world problems and issues so it can be an effective way of addressing issues of relevance and negative attitudes to VET. This approach can help students to develop critical thinking and problem solving skills, resourcefulness and self-motivation (Glossary of Education Reform, 2014). The Glossary of Education Reform (2014) referred to project-based-learning as inquiry-based and, as recommended by John Dewey, students learn by doing. Project-based learning allows students to choose a topic that is relevant to their personal interests and career aspirations. For this reason, project-based-learning can help students to develop positive attitudes towards their learning. This approach can help to stimulate students' creativity and entrepreneurial ideas.

Addressing the Entrepreneurship Summit, Barak Obama summed up the merits of entrepreneurship:

*Entrepreneurship creates new jobs and new businesses, new ways to deliver basic services, new ways of seeing the world -- it's the spark of prosperity. It helps citizens stand up for their rights and push back against corruption. Entrepreneurship offers a positive alternative to the ideologies of violence and division that can all too often fill the void when students don't see a future for themselves.*

*Entrepreneurship means ownership and self-determination, as opposed to simply being dependent on somebody else for your livelihood and your future. Entrepreneurship brings down barriers between communities and cultures and builds bridges that help us take on common challenges together.*

(Obama, 2015)

According to the Glossary of Education Reform (2014) project-based learning can be embedded in school curriculum to develop students' entrepreneurship skills. Agriculture students rearing chickens, pigs or carrying out dairy projects, for instance, can embark on projects in which they will not only learn the practical skills of agriculture, but they will also develop business skills. Technical drawing students can link up with building studies students to work on projects starting with the drawing-board and culminating in finished products. Accounting students can bring in accounting, budgeting and financial management skills to any of the projects. Certainly, students need to experience learning in order to grasp the concepts; as the age-old Chinese adage suggests, *'I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand'* (Chinese proverb).

#### **6.2.4 Relevant Subject Combinations**

Students raised issues of poor subject combinations. Students who were placed in commercials and science classes studied subject combinations that were related such as mathematics, physics and chemistry. The same should happen for practical subjects. Students criticised a system that forced them to take subjects that had no links with their desired career pathways. Vocational education should connect such subjects as technical drawing, building studies and woodwork or food and nutrition, catering and hospitality.

If VET is to earn its place and improve its relevance in preparing people for current and future jobs, it must respond appropriately to changes taking place in the country and in the global arena. Catts, Falk and Wallace (2011) assert that VET must develop in accordance with technological advancement, employment patterns and social and demographic developments of the communities they serve. Thus, as Zimbabwe goes through a dynamic social and economic phase characterised by general unemployment, and fluidity in the movement of unskilled, semi-skilled and highly-skilled labour force, there is a need to take renewed interest in the contemporary role of VET.

The two-tier education systems which have been successful in countries like Austria and Germany should be considered. While the colonial two-tier system was flawed and

designed for unequal development and to meet colonial ends, aspects of a two-tier system based on the value of both tiers are worth exploring. People's negative attitudes towards VET which, it should be noted, do not only exist in Zimbabwe, but the world over, need to change. Perception transformation, starting with the individual, and moving on to professional, community and national levels, should be undertaken to invoke cultural transfiguration.

#### **6.2.5 Perspective Transformation**

This study has focused on people's perspectives of vocational education. The findings indicate that there are different views and that these views have been shaped by the different experiences of stakeholders, either as recipients, policy-makers or as facilitators of vocational learning. These findings raise the need to reframe notions of VET in light of student experience and attitudes.

Cavanagh, Shaw and Wang (2013) distinguish rural transformation from rural development. They contend that rural development refers to rural communities' efforts to improve the quality of their physical existence, including infrastructure and economic activity. This also involves urbanising and modernising systems and processes within rural settings (Cavanagh, Shaw and Wang, 2013). Rural transformation, does not merely focus on the physical environment, but seeks to transform the individuals' view of their circumstances. Rural transformation therefore involves changing rural societies' views, a process that the authors refer to as 'perspective transformation.' They argue (2013, p.325) that perspective transformation occurs when "individuals take on a whole new way of viewing their community, society, environment and the world." They added that:

*Perspective transformation as a consequence of education and training is a radical change in an individual's world view. To proactively achieve perspective transformation, education and training provide scaffolding for learning that results in the transformation of individuals and their communities.*

(Cavanagh, Shaw and Wang, 2013, p.325)

Rural growth points in Zimbabwe were designed to promote rural development, thus efforts were directed at developing infrastructure and promoting local industries. A more dynamic focus on perspective transformation is needed in rural Zimbabwe for people to develop a whole new understanding of VET and its potential for rural development. Schools and educational practitioners are crucial agents of that

transformation process. The Minister of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture, David Coltart, in 2011 called for education and training that is adaptive and responsive to the needs of the country and young people's aspirations. The minister made a good call but that transformation cannot occur if the whole education system is geared towards an academic curriculum. This study has revealed that Zimbabwe's education system and people's perceptions are very academically oriented. With 21 per cent of secondary students and 4 per cent of primary school students aspiring to work in other countries, the Minister of Education's realisation that Zimbabwe's education system has benefited the rest of the world far more than it has benefited Zimbabwe, is confirmed. As long as the education system remains focused on an academic curriculum, students' perspectives and prospects for employment in Zimbabwe will remain negative and the current brain drain and skills haemorrhage will continue unabated. Evidence from this study has shown that students have very limited career choices. Zimbabwe's education system apparently has a limiting effect on students' career aspirations. Trotter (2009) calls for the transformation of culture to suit the new generation of students. The country needs to explore alternative approaches to education that deepen and widen students' career opportunities.

#### **6.2.6 Branding, Rebranding and Repackaging VET**

Educationists and industrialists concur that VET has great social and economic benefits for both the developed and the developing world. However, many students, teachers and parents, according to this research, have not been converted to believing in VET. There is still a lot of scepticism and negative attitudes, thus it is futile to advance vocationalisation before a change in perceptions takes place together with transformation of the product in question. A business approach is required to gain people's attention and show them the rewards of VET. VET as a product needs rebranding to make it relevant and more appealing. This can be achieved through new marketing and delivery strategies. The students in this study said that they did not necessarily dislike practical subjects but they were averse to the way practical subjects were sold to them.

The Business Dictionary (2015) defines branding as,

*The process involved in creating a unique name and image for a product in the consumers' mind, mainly through advertising campaigns with a consistent theme. Branding aims to establish a significant and differentiated presence in the market that attracts and retains loyal customers.*



Educational practitioners must create a unique image of VET in students' minds through consistent publicity. One participant commented that there was not enough publicity, hence little was known about some subjects. This was confirmed in the focus group discussion when participants indicated that they could not determine their level of interest in certain subjects because they did not know much about the subjects. The rewards of VET qualifications must be publicised, including the potential earnings and employment/self-employment opportunities, in order to bolster its true image.

Rebranding is another dimension that should be employed where VET's influence or standing as a brand shows signs of waning.

*Rebranding corresponds to the creation of a new name, term, symbol, design or a combination of them for an established brand with the intention of developing a differentiated position in the mind of stakeholders and competitors.*

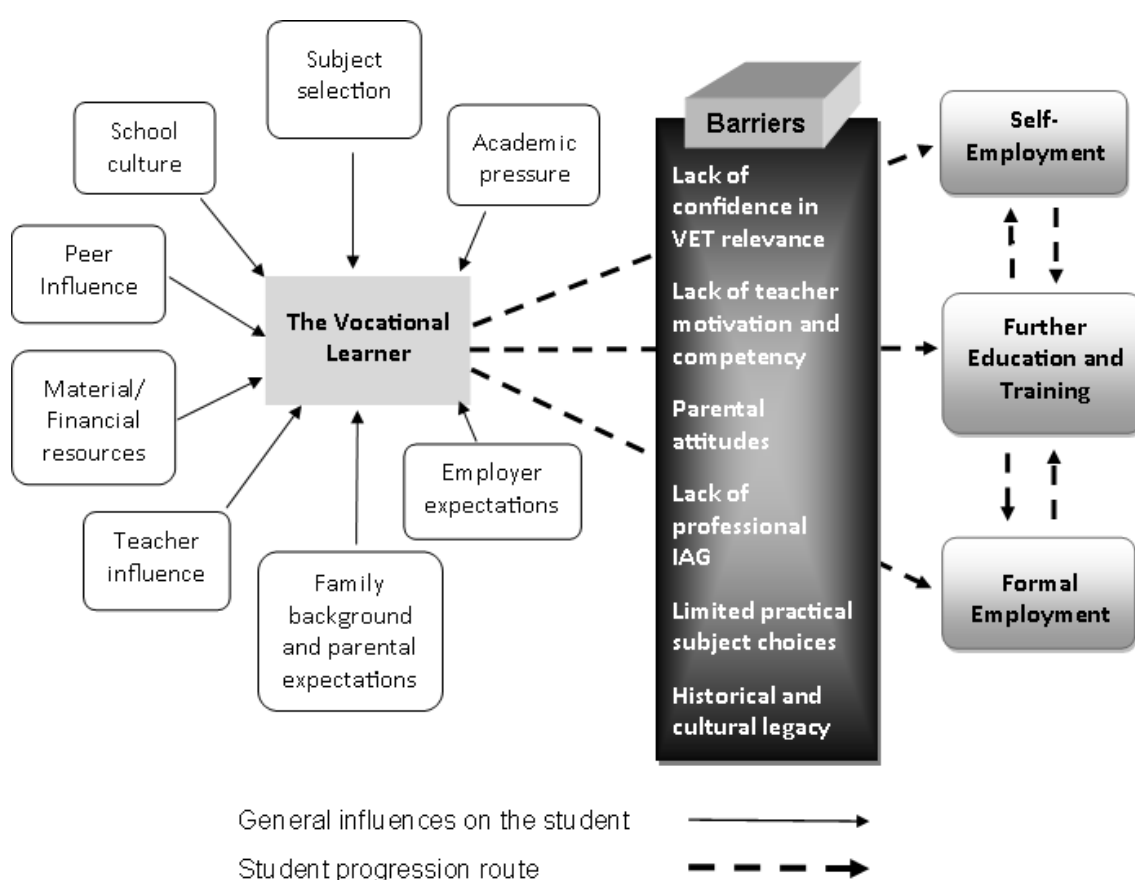
(Branca, and Borges, 2011p.175)

According to WhatIs, TechTarget, 2015, "rebranding is the creation of a new look and feel for an established product in order to differentiate the product from its competitors." This, however, is not a suggestion that VET should compete for supremacy with academic education. In fact, VET and academic education should be viewed as two sides of the same coin that gives students the skills currency for success in a competitive job market. One young person's remark, cited in section 4.9.2, appealed for equal treatment of all subjects and that practical subjects should not be despised. The low status accorded to practical subjects in the school curriculum and subsequent poor student attitudes means that practical subjects are viewed as poor substitutes for academic subjects. While VET provides alternatives for students who would otherwise fail to participate in education and training, the fact that VET is associated with low achievers and not given equal status with academic education creates a stigma. Thus many students expressed little or no interest in vocational occupations or self-employment. VET must claim its name and status as an equal player in education. Kapferer (2012, p.9) asserts that, "...what really makes a name become a brand is the fact that this name commands trust, respect, passion and even engagement." VET as a brand, according to the findings of this study, is not recognised as possessing these characteristics. Students, parents and professionals do not trust its career prospects; it does not command much respect as it is looked down upon and considered second class; some teachers lack passion for the subjects; and many students and their parents are largely disengaged from it.

### 6.3 Factors Affecting the Vocational Learner's Journey

This study has generated research findings designed to inform educators about the factors affecting the vocational learner's journey to further education, employment or self-employment. This study makes a theoretical contribution to enhancing understanding of the array of factors that combine, on one hand, to support the vocational learner and, on the other, to present barriers to desired goals, as illustrated below in figure 6.1.

**Figure 6.1: Factors Affecting the Vocational Learner's Journey**



It is evident from research findings that parents, peers and teachers have substantial influence on students' attitudes. The school culture and the value placed on practical subjects largely determine their status. Pressure to achieve academically in order to satisfy employers' demands for five O-Levels including mathematics and English diminish the relevance of practical subjects. Thus the vocational learner is under pressure to overcome the said challenges and the stigma attached to practical subjects.

In addition, deficiencies in professional careers advice and the limited subject choices deprive students of the independence to choose. In order to pull the barriers down, there ought to be a shared vision among professionals, and VET must claim its equal position on the education platform.

#### ***6.4 Main Conclusions and Implications for Policy, Practice and Research***

The majority of vocational education studies in Zimbabwe have largely covered the historical developments in VET and policy issues and little attention has been paid to the feelings and experiences of students and teachers in rural settings. This study contributes to the limited knowledge surrounding the perspectives and attitudes of students and educational professionals as regards the place of VET in rural Zimbabwe.

This study has provided an opportunity for students to express their views and contribute to the ongoing deliberations about VET in Zimbabwe. Students were very clear about what they felt should be done to improve and promote VET. The main areas of concern raised included the need for:

- Equitable time allocation;
- Friendly instructors and teachers;
- Positive teacher attitudes and higher levels of expertise;
- Permanent teachers;
- More careers guidance. Schools must provide careers guidance;
- Practical subjects being made fun and enjoyable; creation of clubs in schools;
- Raising the profile of practical subjects by advertising frequently;
- Making practical subjects important for careers;
- Providing scholarships;
- Better results;
- Adequate resources;
- The government should create more industries;
- Schools should have more computers;
- There is more theory than practical work. Learning conditions must improve practical work;
- Children must be allowed to pick a practical subject they are familiar with.

The findings from this study suggest that there are mismatches between students' aspirations and vocational and technical education provision. Some important conclusions can be drawn from this study with considerable implications for policy and practice. The evidence given by students pointed to several barriers leading to poor attitudes towards VET. Students highlighted parents', teachers' and employers' attitudes plus lack of support for vocational qualifications as barriers to engagement with VET. There are implications for research into teachers' frustration with the lack of resources and equipment which creates challenges regarding how subjects are allocated to students and also teaching. Due to scarcity of resources schools had different placement methods ranging from predetermined placement based on academic ability to random allocation. Both methods were unsatisfactory for students. Selection based on ability resulted in stigmatisation, while random selection caused uncertainty, lack of choice and negative attitudes on the part of students who 'hated' practical subjects they were 'forced' to do. Both students and teachers felt that the selection methods contributed to poor practical subject results. This set in motion a vicious cycle where poor results reinforced the perception of students' low ability, which in turn, has led to the subjects being degraded. The end result is wastage of resources.

Lauglo and Maclean (2005) suggest that limited resources should be focused on lower-cost subjects like agriculture, business studies and home science. Agriculture, for example, can be taught in large classes and at low cost where land is readily available. Schools, therefore, can specialise and capitalise on the resources at their disposal (Lauglo and Maclean, 2005). Farmland is readily available for rural schools in Zimbabwe. Agriculture, which is the mainstay of Zimbabwe's economy, can thrive in all schools as it requires very little capital injection. Worryingly, agriculture proved to be unpopular with primary school students and only half of secondary school participants were very interested in it. Zimbabwe's land redistribution programme needs skilled people to take over the role that commercial farmers played in the economy.

A better understanding of students' aspirations has been offered. There was clear disparity between education inspectors' views and students' aspirations. Students were clearly looking beyond their villages for career development as they saw no opportunities in their local area. Students' ambitions were set on universities and high-profile jobs in cities or in other countries. There are implications for careers guidance. Apparently, students heavily rely on their teachers and parents for careers guidance, which gives rise to issues of impartiality and the quality of IAG that students will

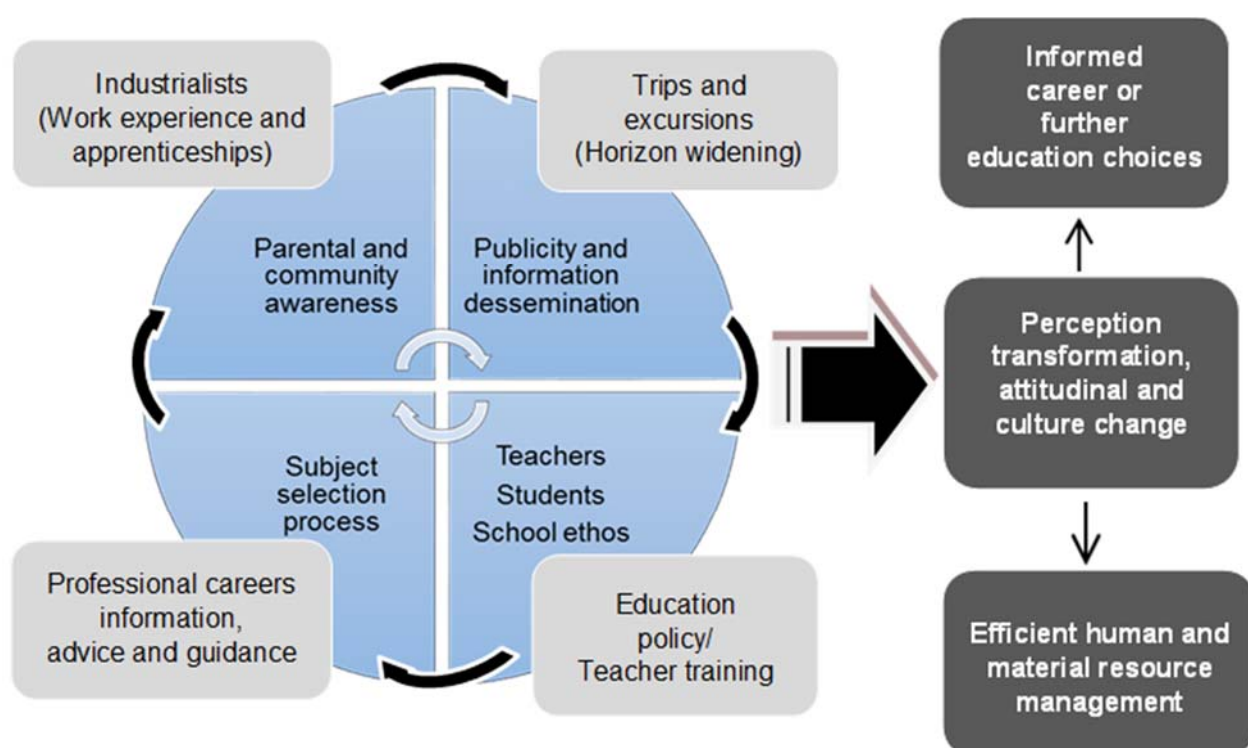
receive. While students' high occupational aspirations are admirable, there are implications with regard to how realistic those aspirations are and whether they are based on good information. It is therefore crucial that parents are well-informed and have a good understanding of vocational subjects and routes. Some students did not know where to go to pursue further study. Others had no hope of success in their practical subject and disliked it. Educationists need to engage with and involve students more in decisions that determine their future to avoid misplacement of scarce resources. Schools will need to look more critically into professional careers guidance. Rojewski (1997) recommends engaging economically disadvantaged students in transition planning to help them to explore realistic occupational and educational options. Nacro, a UK national social justice charity that works with vulnerable people to reduce social exclusion, inequality of opportunity and deprivation, argues that quality VET provision that provides choice, realistic job opportunities and career development promotes local economic growth and individuals' advancement (UK Parliament, 2016). Professional careers guidance is vital for students' progression into training and employment. Most developed countries offer national careers services which are delivered by trained IAG professionals. In Switzerland, for instance, careers guidance begins in the early years of secondary education (UK Parliament, 2016).

VET is capital-intensive which makes it imperative that limited resources are allocated and used efficiently. This study has shown that institutional practices and negative student attitudes may create a culture in which vocational education is not valued. Based on the research findings, the framework in Figure 6.2 below suggests how to promote innovation, perception transformation and culture change as well as develop inter-sectorial cooperation. It was important to develop a model that encompasses the totality of the interaction between different stakeholders. The model recommends collaborative work between the students, teachers, parents, policy-makers and industrialists. Bunnell (1997) has noted that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can effectively provide relevant vocational training at low cost. NGOs can also be co-opted into the mix to help offset the huge cost of VET provision.

Oxenbridge and Evesson (2012) found that many students in the UK had very little knowledge about the jobs that they aspired to. Rojewski (1997) pointed out that knowledge of the world of work coupled with school-based guidance, exploration and support was essential. In the same vein, the Department for Education (2012) has established that in order to raise aspirations and increase social mobility for students, they should have access to information and guidance about options and progression routes. In view of these observations, this study makes a theoretical contribution by

proposing a framework to promote perception transformation, attitudinal change and cultural change. The perception transformation model (figure 6.2) puts forward the notion of inter-sectorial collaboration to enhance student exposure to VET and support a positive learning culture within schools. The education inspectors in this study indicated that industrialists had little input into the Zimbabwean school curriculum. The model proposes hand in glove efforts between schools, parents, industrialists, the government and students to allow informed choices to be made and the efficient management of resources.

**Figure 6.2: Framework for Perception Transformation, Attitudinal Change and Cultural Change**



The perception transformation model advocates collaboration between all stakeholders and integration of AIG into the school curriculum. Students' attitudes and the value they place on any subject can largely be determined by the information they pick up through interactions with, and influences from, their environment. This model suggests positive interactions between students and their school environment or culture, the teachers, parents, careers advisers and industrialists. That interaction shapes and nurtures students' aspirations. The model further recommends that policy-makers in the Ministry of Education should work closely with schools to reinforce the relevance of practical subjects and the promotion of subject equity. In addition, parents are encouraged to

engage in information, advice and careers guidance events as part of raising community awareness. Maclean and Lai (2011) advocate that renewed efforts should be made to raise the public's awareness of vocational education and the promotion of vocational employment.

The model depicts the role of industrialists as that of investing in work experience and apprenticeship programmes to raise the profile of vocational careers and give students a taste of the real-world experience. Such programmes can be directly linked to trips and excursions that extend students' horizons beyond those of their school and community. Outcomes from these excursions can be instrumental in enriching the school ethos and transform attitudes. It should be pointed out that transformation of attitudes nationally and, in particular, schools, has to be driven by policy. There are therefore important implications for policy and practice outlined in the next section.

#### **6.4.1 Policy Implications**

There are far reaching policy implications to be drawn from the relationships observed between:

- Students and their peers;
- Teachers and students;
- Teachers and the education inspectors;
- Education inspectors and curriculum developers;
- Education providers and employers/industry/government.

Policy-makers have a responsibility to address the inconsistencies and short-comings that characterise the relationship between the said stakeholders which impact heavily on attitudes and perceptions.

#### **6.4.2 Implications for School Managers**

There are several implications for school managers that arise from the findings of this research. Firstly, it is paramount for school managers to recognise the significance of interactions that coalesce to shape students' attitudes, opinions and career aspirations. School managers should have the capability, competence and capacity to lead innovation, creativity and change. The perception transformation model recognises the importance of a multi-lateral approach to perception and attitudinal change. It also acknowledges that informed decisions lead to happier and more successful career choices resulting in the efficient use of scarce resources.

Secondly, the study has shown that there is lack of professional IAG for students. It has also revealed a lack of input from employers in shaping students' aspirations. School managers should provide opportunities for students to engage with employers and the real world of work. School managers wishing to promote vocational education would be well advised to invest in trips and excursions, including student shop-floor experience programmes. It is vital for careers guidance to be embedded in the school curriculum.

De-stigmatisation of practical subjects is critical. School managers should proactively promote a positive school ethos with regard to practical subjects. It is unfortunate that schools tend to reinforce the stigma attached to practical subjects, so much so that some students feel embarrassed to admit they are studying practical subjects. John W. Gardner has a warning for educationists:

*I am entirely certain that 20 years from now we will look back at education as it is practiced in most schools today and wonder that we could have tolerated anything so primitive.*

(Public Broadcasting Service, 2015)

The relevance of practical subjects should be reflected in the selection criteria, and equitable timetabling should meet the needs of the students and teachers. It is folly to concentrate solely on academic education in a fast-changing world. The country must have a diverse and multi-skilled work force in order to be able to adapt to contemporary demands. John W. Gardner sums up the need for diverse skills:

*We don't even know what skills may be needed in the years ahead. That is why we must train our students in the fundamental fields of knowledge, and equip them to understand and cope with change. That is why we must give them the critical qualities of mind and durable qualities of character that will serve them in circumstances we cannot now even predict.*

(Public Broadcasting Service, 2015)

Students ought to be trained to be adaptable, and in Zimbabwe a fresh perspective on VET is urgently needed. Aspects and concepts that develop 'critical qualities of mind' should be embedded in the vocational education curriculum.



The perception transformation model highlights the benefits of a collaborative student-orientated approach, with active community and industrial involvement where possible. In these circumstances, a shared vision that produces realistic and informed career goals for students will develop. It should also be pointed out that being considered a second choice is not completely damning for VET. It represents VET as a dependable and robust qualification that withstands the test of time. Educationists should therefore reinforce the potential for VET to provide choice and options to help increase students' confidence and opportunities. The study revealed a propensity for students to think that VET was a choice representing failure. Catts, Falk and Wallace (2011) found that the success of VET as a catalyst for economic development is not universal, but varies from one country to another. This means that programmes have to be tailored to students' aspirations and the needs of the country. Zimbabwe should derive some inspiration from John W. Gardner's assertion that:

*The society which scorns excellence in plumbing as a humble activity and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy because it is an exalted activity will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophy ...neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water.*

(Public Broadcasting Service, 2015)

Diversity should be celebrated in schools and in the workplace to reflect students' diverse talents. Schools are best placed to address issues of inequality by promoting the interests of all our students. Equality of professions should be embedded in the school curriculum to promote social cohesion. Emile Durkheim, as discussed in chapter 2, believed strongly that education had an important role to play in social cohesion, stating that:

*Society can only exist if there exists among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity. Education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child, from the beginning, the essential similarities that collective life demands.*

(Duru-Bellat, 2010, p.227, citing Emile Durkheim, 1922).

School managers should ensure that the school ethos challenges gender stereotypes in VET, embraces diversity and respects difference. They should adopt gender sensitive and gender responsive pedagogy and discourage gender differential treatment of any subject.

School managers should also ensure that students are safeguarded from emotional harm that may result from frustrated teachers who were described by some students as 'hostile'.

#### **6.4.3 Implications for Policy-Makers**

The rural-to-urban migration and the attractions of more prosperous countries are bound to continue if students do not feel there is a future in the rural areas, and Zimbabwe will continue to educate students for the benefit of other countries. Concerted measures are needed to combat the brain drain by equipping students with the viable skills necessary for decent livelihoods in rural areas. Academic education alone cannot achieve this. Policy-makers need to exploit the potential for VET. Serious curriculum reviews need to be undertaken to explore the most suitable approaches to meet that country's needs and at the same time to make VET relevant.

In chapter 3 (section 3.3) four approaches were identified which policy-makers could adopt individually or as an amalgamation. These included a whole-school curriculum, the parallel system, the core-curriculum approach and the non-formal system. After abandoning the colonial dual F1 and F2 system, Zimbabwe adopted a core-curriculum approach in which practical subjects are integrated into the school curriculum. As this study has found, the core-curriculum approach has not only failed to address the needs of society, but has also devalued practical subjects as they have not received equal treatment. A combination of all four approaches or the adoption of a different system is worthy of policy-makers' consideration.

#### **6.4.4 Curriculum for Excellence and the Issue of Relevance**

Policy-makers need to engage with all stakeholders in a national quest for a review of the national curriculum. UNESCO considered Zimbabwe's educational curriculum to be overly urban-based and not fit for purpose. The formulation of a relevant curriculum for excellence, similar to the one initiated by Education Scotland, is worth considering. Education Scotland is a national body in Scotland responsible for promoting quality and improvement in learning and teaching. The body aims to contribute towards building a curriculum for excellence that will prepare children for work from the ages of 3 to 18 (Education Scotland, 2015). Education Scotland (2015) recognises that all students should have access to an educational experience that is relevant to employment. Scotland has therefore adopted a Youth Employment Strategy which emphasises work experience, careers information, advice and guidance and greater access to vocational learning. The strategy focuses on:

- Expanding and linking routes from school to employment, or further education with employment;
- Engaging with students, parents, teachers, partners and employers;
- Supporting teachers and practitioners in their efforts to develop children's and students' learning about the world of work;
- Providing earlier relevant, labour-market focused career advice when students need it, leading to better outcomes;
- Embedding meaningful employer involvement;
- Consolidating partnership working with colleges and other training providers.

(Education Scotland, 2015)

Policy-makers ought to devise a curriculum that is interconnected from primary to secondary school and subsequently linked to training and employment. Primary school students in this study showed little or no understanding of many practical and science subjects despite the fact that they were in the last grade of primary school. A curriculum that promotes continuity throughout the learner's journey is paramount.

In addition to curriculum linkages, collaboration between secondary and primary staff and students is paramount to enhance the student experience. Secondary and primary school students should be encouraged to interact educationally through appropriate programmes to allow primary school students to understand what goes on in secondary school and what to expect when they get there. Well-organised mentoring programmes can be set up to promote peer support among students. In the same vein, extracurricular activities need to be organised to allow primary and secondary school students to learn from each other when taking part in practical projects. Such collaborative learning can help deepen students' learning and build collaborative skills. By so doing, primary school students who feel overwhelmed on entering secondary school, can make effective transitions and take more informed decisions.

The issue of relevance resonated with participants in this study. A woodwork teacher reported that students often asked him the difficult question, '*What am I going to do with woodwork?*' (chapter 5, section 5.7.3). The issue of VET relevance is affecting the developed and developing worlds alike. In the UK Riddell (2014) found that students are being educated for jobs that will soon disappear (Riddell, 2014). The Foundation for Young Australians reported that 60 per cent of Australian students are training for jobs that will either not exist or will be transformed by technological advancement in the future (Brown, 2015; Morton, 2015). Future jobs will be based on technologies that

have not yet been invented to solve problems that are not yet known (Peal, 2015). Due to automation and globalisation, it is predicted that 44 per cent of jobs will be automated within the next decade, and that young people will have an average of 17 different jobs (Brown, 2015). Morton (2015) found that 58 per cent of general education students and 71 per cent of vocational education students are pursuing dying careers. The former UK Secretary of Education Richard Riley observes that the top 10 most sought-after jobs in 2010 did not exist in 2004 (Peal, 2015). It is hard to imagine what future careers will look like in a world of self-driving cars and self-driving tractors. If students are ill-prepared for the highly automated, competitive and pressured future world of work, there are huge implications for governments. According to the World Health Organisation, governments face a public health time bomb of young people who are prone to depression, suicide and chronic disease (Riddell, 2014). Zimbabwe is faced with a situation in which there are thousands of educated students who cannot find employment, which creates serious health and other social problems. Morton (2015) thus stresses that serious assessment of the vocational education sector is of paramount importance.

#### **6.4.5 Applied General Qualifications, Technical Level (Tech-Level) Qualifications and Traineeships**

One of the education inspectors raised the need to explore seriously the idea of schools of excellence and schools on the shop floor. The same idea has been put into practice in some developed countries where technical schools have been successfully established to run two-year vocational courses that focus on employment-preparation skills informed by industry. In 2010 the UK Department for Education embarked on a national skills strategy for the UK aimed at improving the quality of apprenticeships, expanding the teaching of relevant vocational qualifications and extending the provision of work experience (Department for Education, 2015).

In the UK starting from 2014, applied general qualifications equivalent to A-Levels were introduced for 16-year-old students who wished to pursue a vocational area, such as applied science, business or sport, without limiting themselves to a single occupation (Department for Education, 2015). These qualifications are backed by universities and offer a broader vocational area of study not restricted to specific occupations. Students can therefore have more options to choose from and will be better prepared for the competitive and constantly changing world of work. Alongside general qualifications, level 3 Technical Levels (Tech-Levels) equivalent to A-Levels were introduced in 2014 for 16-year-old students who wished to pursue specific vocational occupations in

engineering, computing, accounting or hospitality (Department for Education, 2015). Students therefore have the opportunity to pursue a general and broader vocational pathway or a specific and specialised course backed by professional bodies and employers.

In addition, students have the opportunity to achieve a Technical Baccalaureate (TechBacc) standard if they take at least one Tech-Level, a level 3 mathematics qualification (equivalent to AS/A-Level) and an extended research project relevant to their vocational course (Department for Education, 2015). The TechBacc is an opportunity for ambitious and talented students to excel in a technical career thus dispelling the myth that vocational causes are for less talented students while at the same time producing the technical ability employers are clamouring for. The TechBacc standard enables students to combine theory and technical knowledge in the areas of IT, Engineering, Construction, Hospitality, Personal Services, Accountancy, Business, Law, Media, Creative Industries, Craft and Design (Department for Education, 2015).

The advent of Tech-Levels is a positive development which curriculum developers in Zimbabwe ought to consider in order to address issues of inequality between academic and vocational education. Selection procedures for practical subject courses based on low achievement have led to practical subjects being wrongly associated with low academic ability. As a result students studying practical subjects are stigmatised and robbed of their social confidence which is vital for success in the work place and life in general. Applied general qualifications and Tech-Levels can simultaneously address issues of image, status and relevance which have been found to bedevil VET.

#### **6.4.6 Traineeships**

Zimbabwe's curriculum does not cater fully for students with learning difficulties. Many are labelled as having low ability and they are alienated. In the UK traineeship courses were introduced in August 2013 for 16 to 23-year-olds (and for students with learning difficulties up to 25) to provide courses with work experience lasting up to six months that prepare students for work or apprenticeships. Students receive support to develop employment skills and also get help with English and mathematics.

#### **6.4.7 Implications for Teacher Training**

Teacher motivation and relevant skills were cited as key. Among several reasons for poor teacher motivation, teachers' lack of interest and skills in a subject was found to be a major cause of poor motivation. This study found that some young people found themselves in jobs in which they had no interest in due to lack of options. VET should

not be seen as the easy option for those who are not sure of what they want to do or those who have run out of options. This boils down yet again to the need for timely and professional careers guidance. One of the inspectors was dissatisfied with some practical teachers' level of practical skills. Teachers who lack the practical skills find it difficult to demonstrate and teach students. In this light, teacher's practical skills ought to be assessed at the point of enrolment onto the training course. Practical experts and technicians who have practical skills should be empowered through training to become teachers. Recruitment into teacher training must be rigorous in order to recruit the right people for VET in terms of attitude, skill and interest. Technical teacher training colleges also need to review the training offered to teachers and ensure that those who qualify have achieved a high standard of skills. Teaching is generally seen as an academic career, but there should be a deliberate emphasis on the practical aspect in technical teacher training.

#### **6.4.8 A Shared Vision among Professionals**

Based on the available evidence, there seems to be a disconnection between the SDERU's vision and the experiences of the teachers. The researchers at SDERU have progressive views about the future of VET and they are imbued with an optimistic and progressive outlook with regard to VET not only in Zimbabwe, but also in the whole of the SADCC region. That vision, however, is not being cascaded down to the grass roots and is not shared by the students and the teachers in the schools, nor with the inspectors. Teachers and education inspectors did not agree on several issues. The teachers made reference to *ad hoc* careers guidance, while education inspectors acknowledged that there used to be careers guidance programmes in the past but did not think they existed any more. On the other hand, the head of SDERU mentioned careers days and fairs in schools (mainly urban schools). A shared vision among professionals is needed in order to have consistent access to all students. The fact that urban-based students have better access to careers advice puts rurally based students at a huge disadvantage when it comes to careers information, options and general awareness.

#### **6.5 Areas for Further Studies into the Future of VET in Zimbabwe**

This study has identified areas for further research. The following recommendations are offered for further studies into the future of VET in Zimbabwe.

1. Studies into marrying the primary school curriculum with the secondary school curriculum to widen horizons and enable students to make a smooth transition and progress easily from primary to secondary school.

2. A series of longitudinal studies to track participants from primary to secondary school to establish the true impact of their transition and any changes in attitudes or views.
3. The German education system has been applauded in the current study and others. I am cognisant of the fact that Germany's social and economic system is very different from that of Zimbabwe. I therefore recommend studies into a bespoke Zimbabwean dual system of education modelled on the German system.
4. Concerns over the quality of teaching were raised by students, the teachers and education inspectors. Research is needed into accessible and innovative approaches to teaching practical subjects in poorly equipped rural primary and secondary schools. Teacher training providers should explore contemporary methods of teaching that are accessible to the younger generation.
5. The current study focused on students studying practical subjects. Further investigation of attitudes and perceptions of students taking academic subjects towards practical subjects is recommended to draw comparisons between the two groups of students and find out the influence that non-practical-subject students have on those studying practical subjects.

### ***6.6 Statement on Contribution to Knowledge***

This thesis contributes research-based knowledge concerning the perceptions and opinions of students and teachers towards VET in rural Zimbabwe and addresses gaps in knowledge raised by leading researchers and policy-makers in vocational education. The research provides new contextual and in-depth qualitative data that will enhance educators' knowledge and understanding of the factors that influence rurally based students' and teachers' attitudes towards VET. This study has empowered students and teachers to voice their concerns to policy-makers and contribute to educational policy reform. The study also responded to calls made by skills development agencies and VET scholars for qualitative research into young people's attitudes and experiences of vocational learning and the organisational factors that impact on participation in VET. Such recommendations as those made by the former Zimbabwe Education Minister, David Coltart (2011), Edward, Weedon and Riddell (2008), Rojewski (1997), UNESCO-IBE (2010) and the OECD (2010) formed an important part of this investigation. The

Zimbabwe Ministry of Education, which is currently reviewing the education system with the view of making it relevant to the country's needs and young people's aspirations, will be furnished with the findings of this study.

The Education Minister, David Coltart, raised concerns that the Zimbabwe education system was failing to prepare students for the transition into further education and training or employment. This study has produced evidence that the hidden curriculum in Zimbabwean schools plays a key role in shaping students' attitudes towards subjects. Poor motivation, lack of practical skills and lack of commitment on the part of teachers was found to have the effect of 'mis-educating' students thus heavily impacting on their learning experience. Student placement in classes was found to be inconsistent and, in some cases, schools were selecting students who were presumed to be less academically oriented for practical subjects. Thus the school culture and the way that subjects are treated and rated affected students' attitudes. In addition, lack of knowledge about subjects, which was potentially due to lack of IAG, had the effect of limiting students' career aspirations. Incidentally, the lack of knowledge about subjects was not limited to practical subjects alone, but affected academic subjects as well. Primary school students showed limited awareness of the range of subjects on offer at secondary school meaning that they were making the transition to secondary school without adequate preparation. This study found evidence that rurally based students are not receiving adequate and consistent IAG. The evidence showed that 46 per cent of primary school and 52 per cent of secondary school participants had not received careers advice, a fact that was confirmed by the education inspectors. The lack of IAG was further evidenced by students' naive and uninformed occupational ambitions.

While most studies on students' opinions of VET have focused on secondary and post-secondary school students, this study included both primary and secondary school students. The result depicted in chapter 5, table 5.7, shows that primary school students were more interested in practical subjects than secondary school students. Primary school students were also more positive about practical subjects in focus group discussions than secondary school students suggesting that there are attitudinal changes that occur during the transition to secondary school. These findings have instigated the need for future longitudinal studies to ascertain the changes and the factors affecting students during the transition from primary to secondary school.

This study has also initiated the need for further studies to establish whether students' attitudes towards practical subjects are changing. Evidence from the questionnaires



which suggested students' lack of interest in practical subjects, somewhat contradicted evidence from focus groups which indicated that students valued practical subjects, but they were against the treatment and status accorded to these subjects. The qualitative focus group data were effectively used to corroborate the quantitative information given on questionnaires. This study therefore makes methodological contributions by demonstrating that the case study method is an effective method for complex and multifaceted investigations involving attitudes and feelings. Using the questionnaire alone would have missed the point that students were not totally against practical subjects, but that they disliked how practical subjects were looked down upon.

Chapter 6, sections 6.1.3 and 6.4.8 outlined differences in opinion and lack of shared vision between policy-makers, teachers and education inspectors regarding the state of vocational education. While there was general consensus that changes were needed in VET, none of the parties accepted responsibility for the state of affairs. The education inspectors held the teachers responsible for poor delivery, while teachers attributed the low status of VET to negative student attitudes, and the students on their part felt that the teachers were liable for lacking skills and enthusiasm. The study therefore draws educators' attention to the blame game that has the potential of distracting the key players from assessing their individual roles in order to make constructive amends. The evidence provided by students, teachers and education inspectors thus inspired me to propose frameworks for perception, attitudinal and cultural transformation in order to improve VET delivery. I further outlined the implications of this study's findings on vocational learning and teaching. In the backdrop of the findings I also made some recommendations, which contribute possible solutions to the issues that have beleaguered VET in Zimbabwe.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

The findings of this research have enabled a number of conclusions to be drawn about the place of VET in rural Zimbabwe from the perspective of students, teachers and education inspectors, including the contemporary factors that influence attitudes to VET. This study was undertaken at a time when Zimbabwe's education system was under scrutiny nationally and internationally, leading to a call for a review of the whole education system. This study makes a contribution to the VET agenda amid the renewed interest in VET. Educationists and politicians alike were concerned about rising youth unemployment, and international organisations were questioning the relevance of the country's education system to the current socio-economic situation in Zimbabwe. UNESCO deemed the education system not fit for purpose. The Education

Minister David Coltart felt it was too academic and set up a national consultation programme which invited input from key stakeholders, but not from students and teachers. This study focused on the vocational element of the Zimbabwean education system to establish its role in rural development from the perspective of those excluded from the crucial consultation. The research was carried out against the backdrop of increased rural-to-urban migration, emigration and global economic hardship, all of which have left rural students in dire straits. This study has generated significant new knowledge for consideration in the consultation and review of the Zimbabwean education system and the quest for solutions to economic deprivation and youth unemployment. It has been established that despite the government initiative to vocationalise Zimbabwe's education system, the value ascribed to VET remains very low.

This thesis makes significant theoretical contributions to understanding contemporary views of students regarding VET. This study has raised the voices of students and teachers, which are absent in many VET studies, curriculum development forums and educational policy-making. Contrary to previous studies that have shown that students generally despise vocational education, evidence from this study has revealed a different dimension. A salient result emerged indicating that many students, in fact, valued VET, but they were put off by the way it was taught and its lack of relevance to their contemporary rural settings. Noteworthy is the perspective of students who said it was not about the subject *per se*, but rather how the subject was portrayed. This study provides a basis for concluding that students do not necessarily dislike vocational education, but it is the manner in which it is sold, packaged, delivered and received that is problematic.

One of the key findings of this study was the fact that the majority of both primary and secondary school students saw value in vocational education but their attitudes towards it were negatively affected by a series of shortfalls. These shortfalls included, lack of access to professional careers' advice, and the lack of convincing evidence that VET is a relevant, respectable and viable career option. The situation was exacerbated by poor teacher motivation and competency which made practical subjects unappealing as a route to a future career. The unequal status given to practical subjects in comparison to that of academic subjects evidenced by inequitable allocation of time and material resources further alienated vocational learners. On the whole students felt that there was a place for VET in their career aspirations but its status and delivery was discouraging. As a result, many students did not see any career prospects

in the rural areas but considered them to be in cities or other countries. Furthermore, students revealed limited knowledge of careers apart from those traditionally recognised as white-collar occupations. These and other issues thus impacted on the status of VET and subsequently generated negative attitudes.

The findings from this study have provided some answers to the research questions. It has been established that there are marked differences in VET opinions between primary and secondary school students. While it is acknowledged that this study is a limited case study, the findings offer a different perspective from that presented in previous studies, which suggested that students generally disliked VET. Students in this study, apparently, valued VET but, detested the manner in which VET was sold, packaged and delivered. Primary school students were less critical of practical subjects, while secondary school students were critical of the way practical subjects were delivered. The differences in opinion could be attributed to the fact that most practical subjects are introduced at secondary school; hence primary school students had little or no experience of these subjects. The evidence also showed that many primary school students had limited knowledge of other academic science subjects, which were found to be unpopular with primary school students due to lack of exposure. Apparently, there is no link between the secondary school curriculum and the primary school curriculum hence there is no smooth transition from primary to secondary school. Rote learning in mathematics, English and science in primary school does not prepare students for independent learning in a wider secondary school curriculum, which includes practical subjects. Evidence from this case study points to the fact that lack of exposure and acquaintance with subjects could account for the differences in opinion between primary and secondary school students, but further longitudinal studies will be needed to demonstrate conclusively that this is the case.

Teachers had strong views on the status given to practical subjects while education inspectors expressed frustration over the quality of VET delivery in schools. Despite the divergent views, there was a general consensus that VET has a place in education and a role in economic development. It has been established that the meaning and purpose of VET in the eyes of students, teachers and education inspectors depends on its relevance and status *vis-à-vis* academic education.

This study has identified a difference in views between students, teachers and education inspectors. The teachers voiced the difficulties they faced in delivering subjects that were deemed second-best choices by parents and subsequently disliked

by students. The emphasis on academic subjects has been found to generate school cultures and attitudes that portray VET as a pathway for the less able. The education inspectors were found to have strong beliefs in favour of VET but little confidence in teachers' commitment and capabilities. These are important facts which curriculum developers, teacher trainers, school managers and careers advisers need to consider when developing programmes in their respective areas.

This study reaffirmed the influential role of family background and the fact that parents and students alike lacked adequate careers information. Thus the combined effect of parental influence; an academically oriented curriculum; lack of subject choice coupled with lack of professional careers advice; negative school culture; and poor teacher motivation weighs heavily against VET as a viable option for students. Fundamental policy and societal changes need to take place to overturn the adversities VET faces in Zimbabwe.

The study established the views and attitudes of students and teachers towards VET and the changes that occur during the transition from primary to secondary school. It has also been revealed that historical, cultural and family background influences do not affect students' aspirations as much as the relevance and status of VET qualifications. It has been established that the contemporary meaning and purpose of VET in rural Zimbabwe depends on meeting the expectations of students and the elevation of VET to respectable levels. That process will call for perspective transformation. To change perceptions, branding, rebranding and repackaging of VET is a necessity. In addition, effective communication between the grass roots, the 'think tanks' and policy champions is required for professionals to develop a common vision. A curriculum revolution is needed to inject new schools of thought, such as collaborative learning and project-based learning, and revolutionary qualifications, such as applied general qualifications, Tech-Levels and traineeships.

This research has addressed gaps in knowledge identified by leading researchers and policy-makers in the field. The study has confirmed the Education Minister, David Coltart's concerns over the lack of appropriate careers advice in schools. About half of the students who participated in this study had not received careers guidance. This study also addressed Edward, Weedon and Riddell's (2008) recommendations regarding qualitative research and the use of interviews to investigate students' learning experiences and their attitudes to vocational learning. Methodological triangulation, in which quantitative data collection was followed by qualitative focus

group discussions enhanced the interpretation of data and provided a better understanding of the students' experiences and the factors that shaped their attitudes. As evidenced from the findings of this study, the factors affecting students' attitudes towards VET are complex. This study has demonstrated that methodological triangulation can enhance confidence in the interpretation of complex human experiences.

The findings above highlight significant challenges for school managers and policy-makers who need to recognise the significance of interactions that coalesce to shape students' attitudes and career aspirations. The findings from this study point to the need for school managers to modernise VET to attract students into it. Serious investment needs to go into professional careers guidance for students. The value of practical subjects must be reflected in equitable selection criteria and resource allocation so as to elevate their status. A diverse curriculum should take account of students' diverse talents in order to promote equality of professions and positive school ethos with regards to practical subjects.

In addition to drawing the attention of policy-makers' to the challenges facing VET, this study has raised the need for further research into developing curriculum that promotes continuity from primary school to secondary school. Longitudinal studies to establish the changes in attitudes that may take place during the transition to secondary school are recommended. Studies into a bespoke Zimbabwean dual system of education and the exploration of teaching methods that appeal to the younger generation have also been proposed.

Based on the findings summed up in this section, this research study proposes a list of recommendations for the full potential of VET to be realised in Zimbabwe and beyond. The recommendations outlined in the following chapter offer a range of options available to developing and developed countries that are looking to revitalise vocational education's role in enhancing opportunities for students and furnishing their economies with a much-needed adaptable and skilled work force. In response to the Zimbabwe government's interest and request for this thesis, an executive summary of the thesis detailing the key findings and recommendations will be produced for dissemination to relevant ministries and educational departments.

## CHAPTER 7: RECOMMENDATIONS

This study has revealed diverse views of the role of VET and its significance in rural development. The evidence provides very good clues about to whom or what policy-makers should pay the most attention to when formulating educational policy and delivering VET. At the school level, the evidence is quite strong on the impact of teacher attitudes and school culture. Students expressed dissatisfaction with the way VET was packaged, sold and delivered, while teachers had misgivings over student attitudes. At management level, the education inspectors had reservations about the quality of teacher training as well as the calibre of teachers, while the head of SDERU had a regional vision which was not shared by those at the rural and grass roots levels. In response to the foregoing findings of the study and conclusions drawn in chapter 6, this chapter proposes the following recommendations. The recommendations are presented in two parts. Part A outlines recommendations arising directly from the research findings of the case study while part B proposes recommendations emerging from the wider consideration of the topic as developed in the Literature Review and my experience of immersion in the project and the local, cultural and political contextual considerations.

### **Part A: Recommendations Derived Directly from this Study**

#### ***Recommendation 1: Rural Transformation and Perspective Transformation***

This study recommends the promotion of ‘rural transformation’ and ‘perspective transformation’ to enhance rural development. The curriculum and the teaching need to be transformed together with individual transformation. The combination of environmental and cultural transformation in schools and society as a whole, can move VET out of the doldrums and its condition of dormancy. Bourdieu acknowledges that habitus is not fixed, but can change in unexpected situations or over a period of time (Navarro, 2006, p.16). Deliberate efforts to take schools through perspective transformation can help to turn around the current situation in Zimbabwean schools. Trotter (2009) proposes that institutional culture must change to suit the new generation of students rather than expecting the students to change. Positive peer relationships and good teacher/student rapport are vital in nurturing students’

confidence and enhancing their learning experience. In order to expedite a successful reformation of the education system, cultural change needs to take place and this should be embedded in teacher training and the school curriculum. The school curriculum should be designed in a manner that reflects the complementary role of vocational and academic learning rather than presenting them as two separate entities. The curriculum, as recommended by the head of SDERU (section 5.9.1), should also be designed to cater for students who may not achieve five O-Levels but have a flair for specific psychomotor skills.

### ***Recommendation 2: Catch Them Young: Engaging the Digital Generation***

Perspective transformation can most effectively be achieved through nurturing. There is a need to revolutionise the way children are nurtured and this should not be left to educationalists alone. Instead, concerted efforts from parents, writers, publishers, the media and industrialists should be harnessed to produce stimulating play and educational materials. This study has established that parents play an important role in influencing their children's attitudes to schooling and occupations. The study has confirmed Usher and Kober's (2012) belief that, despite limited knowledge in a subject area, parents exert significant influence over their children's feelings and attitudes towards education. If parents buy toys for their children, encouragement should be given to buy gender-neutral toys like Lego, that stimulate creativity to aid the development of children's cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills. Children's story books, nursery rhymes, toys and television cartoons should carry themes and portray roles that are gender-neutral to stimulate children's imagination and creativity in both academic and vocational fields.

Gender imbalances still exist in VET and in professions. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 in chapter 3 point to low participation of women in traditionally male-dominated fields. Many jobs have remained defined or dominated by particular sexes. The t-test analysis presented in table 5.9 revealed that in this study there were statistically significant differences in interest in fashion and fabrics, textile and design, and food and nutrition between boys and girls. VET in Zimbabwe to a large extent still reflects the gender biases of the colonial period. There is a need to raise aspirations in schools and encourage girls to do subjects that lead them into male-dominated careers and *vice versa*.

It is recommended that parents are supported to raise their children from birth with a gender-neutral perspective of occupations. Scotland has embarked on a 3-18 Work

Relevant Learning programme designed to provide a wide range of work-related learning from the age of 3. This study recommends that the age range should be 0-25 to include parents whose awareness needs to be heightened even before the child is born, as well as students who, after finishing university at 21, may realise that they still need vocational skills for the field they desire. In the UK many university graduates are returning to vocational training colleges to retrain or pursue a new occupation or apprenticeship. Such graduates who possess both academic and vocational skills can easily adapt to changing job markets and employers' needs. Students' career wishes and options can change over time as does the job market, hence it is crucial for students to have access to support and advice up to the age of 25.

It is crucial that support and advice is communicated effectively using the best possible medium of communication. The new generation of students is becoming more and more tech-savvy and digitally connected quite early in their lives. Young people in the Information Age are using different social networking platforms to access and share information. The potential of digital technology to increase access, availability and demand for vocational learning should be exploited fully. Students called for reforms to make practical subjects fun and enjoyable. They asked for the creation of clubs in schools and for widespread publicity to raise the profile of practical subjects. National campaigns ought to be explored using different forums, including technology and social media. Publicity of VET programmes and potential employment opportunities using electronic and social media is therefore strongly recommended.

### ***Recommendation 3: Role Models and the Role of Students***

It was evident in chapter 5 that students did not lack ambition, but they lacked role models whom they could emulate, role models who could boost their confidence and encourage them to believe in themselves. It is recommended that successful former students should go back to their schools and engage with students as role models. Successful community members with specific skills should be encouraged to become patrons of schools to promote their skills and mentor students interested in their trade.

In addition, students need to be nurtured to take responsibility to identify and take up the opportunities available to them. Students must be supported to build confidence and be able to participate in decisions that affect them. It was clear from the focus group discussions presented in chapter 5 (section 5.5) that the secondary school students in particular wished to speak up for themselves but they felt that they were,



either not given the chance to do so, or were silenced by the expectation to conform to the school culture. As evidenced from students' focus group discussions, the hidden curriculum in schools perpetuated expectations of conformity and sent messages that stifled the growth of questioning minds. Students complained about 'hostile' teachers who were clearly frustrated and demotivated. Efforts should be made to democratise education and give students and their teachers a voice. Schools should allow freedom of expression in order to create an environment where they can engage in critical and creative thinking at crucial stages of their learning journey.

#### ***Recommendation 4: Make VET Relevant***

A major conclusion reached in chapter 6 (section 6.2.1) is that the contemporary role of VET in rural Zimbabwe depends on its relevance and the ability to meet students' expectations. The hidden curriculum was found to have a huge impact on student attitudes towards VET. In addition, lack of subject choice and lack of professional careers advice contributed to poor student motivation. While the education inspectors were very optimistic about VET, the teachers and students had little confidence in it. Students felt that they were forced to do subjects in which they had no interest and which were not compatible with their career ambitions. Students argued that VET should be relevant but they felt that practical subjects which are the route to vocational training did not lead to viable careers. It was evident that students had limited knowledge of subjects and their choice of career also denoted limited knowledge of occupations available in the ever-changing job market. Policy-makers ought to look seriously at making syllabuses relevant to the jobs of the future. Several models of VET have been considered in this thesis, which can be tailored to suit Zimbabwe's future skills needs. It is recommended that national and regional visions should be cascaded down to the grass roots. All stakeholders, including students, teachers and parents, should be consulted. Inspectors and policy-makers must connect with the schools and students to ensure that policy meets individual students' needs and the needs of rural communities. Teachers and students should be given a platform that allows them to contribute to the national strategies, challenge inequality and influence policy in their own right.

### ***Recommendation 5: Careers Advice that Stretches and Widens Students' Horizons***

Careers advice should be anticipatory and responsive to the challenges, uncertainties and changes in the job market. This research has found that teachers are the main source of careers guidance for students. Most teachers have taken A-Levels and gone to university or teacher training college, hence they are familiar with that career path. Students need information on both academic/university and vocational/apprenticeship pathways. Previous studies discussed in the literature review also show that parents are a major source of information and guidance for their children. In this vein, parents ought to be better informed and more involved as partners in their children's education. Previous studies have shown that parental attitudes and engagement lead to better outcomes for children. It is essential that parents are involved in careers advice programmes through parents' careers days and careers evenings to ensure they are well informed about trends in the job market.

The case studies outlined in chapter 5, section 5.4.2, reveal that students' career ambitions were limited to traditional careers, such as those of teacher, pilot, and engineer. The relevance of VET and the knowledge of modern careers in VET should be disseminated through professional careers advice to limit parental influence on career choices, which tends to limit students to traditional career options. The widening of students' horizons should be a deliberate and consistent effort. To do so and raise their aspirations, this study recommends a multifaceted approach to careers guidance to ensure expert, cost-effective, outward-facing careers advice that will appeal to students. Careers advice in schools needs to be modernised and should provide impartial advice about both academic and vocational pathways. This study has revealed that careers advice in schools was non-existent, *ad hoc* or a one-off event in many cases. About half of the student participants had not received any careers advice at school. The head of SDERU made reference to careers days, international trade fairs and agricultural shows, and major careers events. It can be argued that these are annual events and they do not focus on individual students' needs. Careers advice should be compulsory at all schools as part of the curriculum rather than an annual event. There is a need for specialist information and advice for students as they make crucial career decisions that will significantly affect their lives.

The perception transformation model found in chapter 6 (figure 6.2) proposes inter-sectorial collaboration to widen students' horizons. The model recommends that schools, parents, industrialists, the government and students work closely together to

make careers information available to students. Nicky Morgan, the UK Secretary of State for Education, has taken the issue of careers advice to a new level by pushing for legislation to ensure that technical colleges and companies that offer apprenticeships provide careers advice to students in schools (McTague, 2016). The new law would aim to change the perception that non-academic routes are second best as compared with academic routes (McTague, 2016). As seen in chapter 3 (section 3.3), Germany's 1969 law (the *Berufsausbildungsgesetz*) and the agreement between the government and industrial unions has ensured that big companies promote apprenticeships. Similar legislation should be considered in Zimbabwe to compel vocational training providers, industry, the government and schools to work collaboratively and provide much-needed careers advice for students. Careers advice should be an entitlement for every school child, irrespective of type of school or whether one is rural or urban-based.

This study recommends the introduction of post-graduate careers advice qualifications, such as Qualification in Careers Guidance (QCG), and work-based qualifications, such as Career Information and Advice Level 4 Diploma and the Career Guidance and Development Level 6 Diploma. Careers' advice in primary and secondary schools can then be delivered by fully trained personnel. Ongoing and consistent careers programmes should be provided through career centres or career development agencies. These agencies should also engage with parents to facilitate perspective transformation and equip parents with the necessary information and skills to guide their children.

This study acknowledges that in these days of austerity it is a fact that resources are limited and it may not be feasible to have full-time careers advisers or careers centres. One alternative would be to build careers advice into teacher training. This study has shown that teachers are the main career advisers but they may be limited to their own experience and may not provide accurate and impartial careers advice. Careers guidance training for teachers is therefore recommended.

Another cost-effective option is online careers advice, which would be more accessible to the younger digital generation as it cuts travel and operational costs and can be accessed anywhere, any time. In the same vein, online resources for teachers can be convenient to helping them to guide their students through the use of training materials produced by experts in the field. Virtual careers programmes can also be developed to reach out to students in remote parts of the country or areas where there is no access to trained advisers.

### ***Recommendation 6: Planning for the Transition from Primary to Secondary School***

The findings of the current study are indicative of the limited access to information about, and exposure to, the wide range of subjects offered by the Zimbabwean curriculum. There is a need for primary school students to familiarise themselves with the secondary school curriculum, particularly towards the end of their primary education (between grades 5 and 7). Closer links between primary and secondary schools are recommended. Programmes ought to be set up for primary school students to find out about the secondary school curriculum and how it links in with their educational and occupational interests. Bello, Danjuma and Adamu (2007), as discussed in chapter 3 (section 3.4), recommend broader pre-vocational skills provision. In rural areas, primary schools and secondary schools have little in common and the teachers and students do not have much interaction. The current study showed that many students were not familiar with some of the subjects that are offered in secondary school signifying limited exposure and information. In order to enhance a smooth transition from primary to secondary school, this study recommends that schools:

- Provide enrichment activities to take place in both primary and secondary schools to acquaint primary school students' with secondary school subjects;
- Engage students in competitions and collaborative projects in order to stimulate their interest and curiosity;
- Encourage participation in regional and national creativity and originality competitions, making learning fun and challenging. One participant argued that VET must be fun;
- Encourage peer learning and enable primary and secondary school students to learn about different subjects through joint projects at their own level and based on their individual interests. It is recommended that primary and secondary school students should be part of learning communities and partnerships to promote informal learning.

Secondary school should be a continuation of a child's education rather than a totally new step, as the current state of affairs appears to be. There should be a smooth transition from primary to secondary education. It is recommended that a transitional curriculum is developed to replace the Grade 7 curriculum which largely focuses on

mathematics, English, Shona and the general paper. Primary school teachers are under a lot of pressure to produce good Grade 7 results so that their students can secure places in high-ranking secondary schools. Consequently, teachers resort to teaching for the examinations with the result that time is spent drilling students to regurgitate information in the examinations.

By offering students age-appropriate careers information as early as primary or even nursery school age, students will be equipped with the skills and knowledge to make informed choices during their school life and beyond. It is recommended that schools promote subject self-selection based on students' own interest and motivation, as opposed to subject allocation based on performance in academic subjects, which is currently widely used in Zimbabwean schools.

## **Part B: Wider Recommendations Derived from the Literature Review and Contextual Factors**

### ***Recommendation 7: Teacher Motivation, Recruitment and Teacher Training***

Poor teacher motivation and lack of interest were raised as major causes of poor student motivation. The government ought to address the issue of low teacher morale which is creating negative classroom environments. Some students in this study referred to teachers who were 'hostile' or uninterested in their job. The issues raised by teachers in this study, which included lack of up-to-date equipment and poor working conditions, ought to be addressed. Teachers' wishes ought to be heard through regular consultation. Curriculum reviews should involve students and teachers. It is essential for school managers and inspectors to ensure that environments conducive to learning prevail in classrooms by obtaining feedback from students on school inspection visits or lesson observations. Students, teachers and education inspectors in this study cast doubt on the calibre of some practical subject teachers. The teachers and education inspectors were not happy with the skills level of some teachers and the fact that some unqualified teachers were teaching skill-based practical subjects. The indifference and lack of professionalism could be the result of shortcomings in teacher training or lack of training. The lack of qualified practical subject teachers needs government attention.

The recruitment and training of teachers should be reviewed. Teacher training providers should find ways of attracting and incentivising motivated and talented people

into the field, who will bring creative and innovative approaches to practical subject teaching. Experts and technicians who possess industrial experience and practical skills should be encouraged to train as teachers. One way of attracting such expertise would be to offer competitive remuneration for their skills. More rigorous recruitment of trainee teachers is recommended to ensure that those with a passion to teach and the right attitudes for vocational education are recruited.

VET teacher training courses should focus on training teachers for the role of facilitators of learning rather than transmitters of knowledge (NCVER, 2005). Darwin (2005) emphasises the need to ensure that the quality and relevance of teaching remains compatible with the rapidly changing vocational environment. It is recommended that trainee teachers undertake work experience in industry that is related to their subject area. Practical subject teachers should acquire relevant practical and industrial experience, as well as undertaking in-service training, to combat the lack of practical skills highlighted by the education inspectors and the students.

### ***Recommendation 8: Contemporary Methods of Teaching and Learning***

Teacher training providers should explore contemporary methods of teaching and learning that are accessible to the young digital generation. Students should be given the chance to enjoy the acquisition of knowledge and skills rather than learning purely to pass examinations. Interactive teaching methods that stimulate creativity, develop self-directed learning and students' problem-solving skills in the post-modern era are recommended. Mitchell et al. (2003) advocate a demand-driven and learner-centred approach to education. Mitchell et al. (2003) call for innovation in the teaching and learning of VET in the wake of advances in digital telecommunications, the advent of the knowledge economy, vicissitudes in the job market and the need to respond to customer desire for personalised services. In Zimbabwe, as elsewhere in the world, traditional jobs are fast diminishing. This study found that most students had set their sights on becoming employees in traditional occupations. Innovative teaching in VET is recommended to develop students' ability to adjust to the changes in the world of work where there is an increase in the demand for flexible casual workers, self-employment, freelance and 'portfolio' workers who hold several part-time occupations (Mitchell et al., 2003; Darwin, 2005). There has been a dramatic decline in entry-level jobs and standard employment with fixed working hours, and employers are increasingly being drawn to 'zero-hours contracts'. Chappell (2004) thus recommends new understandings of pedagogy in VET associated with constructive learning theories as

opposed to transmission of theories of learning. It is recommended that teacher trainers develop teaching and learning practices that are learner-centred, work-centred and attribute-focused to respond to the rapid changes in the contemporary workplace (Chappell, 2004; Darwin, 2005).

Teacher training in the post-modern era should focus on what Chappell (2004) refers to as 'generic', 'soft' or 'behavioural' skills rather than on 'technical' skills that once informed much of VET pedagogy. In Zimbabwe the focus is still on the passive transmission of knowledge and skills to students in order that they pass examinations. The 'chalk and talk' approach widely used in Zimbabwean schools should give way to new teaching methods. This study endorses the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) recommendations for a shift in emphasis to promote learner-centred and learner-driven delivery of VET. There should be a shift from:

- Focusing on technical skills to focusing on the whole person;
- Concentrating on formal learning to an integration of informal and formal learning;
- Individualised learning to learning partnerships/communities;
- Abstract learning contexts to 'real' workplace contexts;
- Assessment that measures learning to assessment that aids learning;
- Assessment that controls and limits what learners can do to assessment that enables and empowers learners.

(NCVER, 2005 p.1)

John Dewey advocates education that develops autonomous learners with the ability to adapt to different social and economic situations. The fast-changing job market in this digital era requires rounded learners. Students in this study clamoured for VET that was relevant to their future careers. It is a sobering thought that more than half of young Australians are pursuing careers that will not exist in the future (Brown, 2015). Teaching and learning methods that promote digital literacy should be developed to make training relevant to future careers and enable students to compete in what Peal (2015) describes as a complicated, pacey and brutally competitive world.

### ***Recommendation 9: Project-Based Learning and Work-Based Learning***

John Dewey found that children learn best by doing, through direct personal experience as opposed to being drilled (Warde, 2005). Students are being drilled for examinations in primary and secondary schools in Zimbabwe. Teaching for the examinations can be combated by using project-based assessment. Project-based learning is a dynamic approach to teaching in which students explore real-world problems and challenges. With this type of active and engaged learning, students can be inspired to obtain a deeper knowledge of the subjects they are studying.

This study recommends project work which focuses on developing work-related skills and opening students' minds to a range of careers. Project-based assessment has a hands-on approach which encourages innovation, creativity and originality. It also accommodates students with different learning styles who are being alienated by the academically oriented curriculum. School visits to local farms and industries need to be a requirement and part of the curriculum so that students, irrespective of whether they come from rural or urban backgrounds, have equal exposure to the real world of work. In addition, work-based learning programmes are recommended to give students a taste of the world of work and help them to make informed and experience-based career choices.

UNESCO-UNEVOC (2013) endorses Dewey's support for experiential learning and applauds work-based learning as a powerful pedagogy that motivates students to become participants in the learning process rather than passive recipients of teachers' knowledge. It is recommended that policy-makers, industrialists and social partners embrace work-based learning to make VET programmes more interesting and to connect young with the world of work (Sweet, 2014). Work-based learning not only widens horizons, but also increases opportunities and social inclusion of marginalised groups in the labour market (Sweet, 2014). Work-based learning can also be a solution to the problem of the dearth of skilled and qualified teachers and lack of equipment, about which both students and teachers in this study complained. VET is capital-intensive and most schools cannot afford expensive equipment. Work-based learning can:

- Support the development of up-to-date and relevant skills in a more engaging way;
- Make huge savings resulting from shared equipment and running costs between employers and the government;



- Be an effective avenue for career guidance;
- Improve chances for students to get employment as they will possess the skills and work ethics that employers' need.

(Sweet, 2014)

### ***Recommendation 10: The German Way***

As seen in chapter 2, the German dual system of education is highly regarded and being emulated by many countries. Zimbabwe can borrow from the tried and tested German system which has created one of the world's most productive labour forces. Several countries, particularly those in southern Europe, are exploring the suitability of German-style structured apprenticeships leading to initial vocational qualifications (Deissinger, 2015). For Zimbabwe to become a successful industrial nation, there is a need to celebrate vocational education as much as academic education is celebrated. Zimbabwe should explore the merits and suitability of a two-tier educational system modelled on the Germany one which identifies students' talents and interests. This study confirmed that Zimbabwe's education system is academically oriented and, as such, the curriculum is narrow thus limiting students' options. The German apprenticeship and vocational education systems have been applauded as the mainstay of Germany's industrial success.

It is recommended that Zimbabwe invests more into technical colleges, which, like the German technical schools, attract students to go into vocational education and apprenticeships. Other developed countries such as the UK, are adopting aspects of the German system and setting up university technical colleges. The government should encourage industrialists to invest in manufacturing and education and training by setting up technical schools.

Local and international industry need to be harnessed as active partners with schools and colleges, as in the German system. The government should promote partnerships between colleges and industry. Companies should be given incentives to invest in VET by setting up training centres where students are trained in order to satisfy the needs of industry. Businesses need to develop closer relationships with schools and engage directly with students at an early stage as they decide what to do in future. The introduction of Tech-Levels backed by industry is worth exploring.

### **Recommendation 11: Funding**

All the recommendations made in this chapter have one thing in common - funding. VET is capital-intensive hence there are huge financial implications for exploring the options discussed. Boateng (2012), as cited in the literature review, stresses that governments should invest in VET in order to increase the relevance of schooling by equipping students with productive skills and the knowledge needed by society. The issue of relevance was a major bone of contention for students involved in this study. Boateng (2012) also feels that it is imperative to invest in VET to reduce unemployment and create opportunities for those who are not academically inclined while at the same time transforming attitudes to VET. This study has established that teachers and students feel disillusioned by the meagre resources allocated to practical subjects in schools. Successful innovation and implementation of curriculum change will require adequate funding. Public and private-sector resources need to be mobilised to deliver the major reforms needed.

It is recommended that Zimbabwe adopts initiatives being undertaken in the UK. In an interim report published in 2013, the UK independent Skills Taskforce has examined the role of a skills policy in providing appropriate education, skills and occupational prospects. The taskforce has resolved that, for this to be achieved, there was a need for “a sea of change in the way we think about skills...” (Skills Taskforce, 2013 p.1). The taskforce highlighted the importance of raising the status of vocational education and giving employers and industry incentives to invest in skills development:

*We need to raise the status and quality of vocational learning, not just focus on the academic route through education. And we also need to raise demand for skills, providing support and encouragement to enable employers to better use and develop skills in the workplace. This will require a something-for-something deal, giving employers more control over skills funding and standards, and asking in return that they work to increase the levels of high quality training and apprenticeships in their industries.*

(Skills Taskforce, 2013 p.1)

There is a growing recognition of the important role of apprenticeships in skills development in the UK and other developed countries. Australia pays incentives to employers of apprentices and trainees and offers employers payroll tax exemptions in addition to other incentives (Knight, 2012). In the UK, legislation has been designed to increase investment in vocational skills training and apprenticeships. A new law will be

introduced in April 2017 requiring employers in all sectors with an annual paybill in excess of £3 million to pay an apprenticeship levy to fund new apprenticeships. The levy will be charged at a rate of 0.5 per cent of employers' paybills and each employer will receive a £15,000 rebate to offset their levy payment (HMRC, 2016). The quantity and quality of skills training and apprenticeships can be increased by securing the commitment of employers and putting them at the centre of skills development. The UK government envisages that employers will be able to gain an adequate supply of suitably trained apprentices thereby boosting productivity and recouping their investment (HMRC, 2016). Zimbabwe ought to invest in human capital given the lack of resources and the massive loss of human capital over the years to emigration. It is recommended that Zimbabwe explores the introduction of levies, such as the apprenticeship levy, to raise capital and secure employer engagement and commitment to skills development.

## ***Conclusion***

In response to students' and teachers' perspectives on VET and the research findings discussed in chapter 5, this chapter has made several recommendations for making VET relevant to the younger digital generation. It is envisioned that consideration of these recommendations in the ongoing review of Zimbabwe's education system will make a significant contribution towards a relevant vocational education policy inspired by both students and teachers. Perspective transformation and widening students' horizons are paramount. Students need appropriate guidance to make important choices for their future. That guidance should begin at primary school and be enhanced through learning partnerships with secondary school students and employers. The research results showed that students were critical of the status of VET along with the way practical subjects were viewed and taught. Students also revealed that they did not have any input nor were they given a chance to make choices about their learning. Contemporary education and training in many parts of the world has moved from being teacher-centred and provider-controlled approaches to learner-centred, self-directed learning in which learners are actively involved in planning their own learning (NCVER, 2005). Hands-on and interactive approaches to learning activities have thus been recommended. Teaching and learning models whereby learners are co-producers of new knowledge and skills are recommended for Zimbabwean schools. NCVER (2005) recommends that learning should be a negotiated and collaborative activity allowing learners to have an input into their own learning processes, contexts and outcomes.

The fast-paced changes in the workplace, fuelled by technological innovation and the dwindling of traditional occupations, call for teaching and learning models and assessment methods that produce flexible and work-ready students. Recommendations have been made for effective teacher training and contemporary methods of teaching and learning. Tailored VET models, such as the German model, which have been tried and tested, have been recommended as the basis for the development of a modern VET system suitable for rural Zimbabwe. It has been recommended that government commitment to national visions for the future of VET should be reflected through legislation and adequate funding.

It should be noted that the recommendations suggested in this chapter are not limited to vocational education alone. Implementing some of these strategies is not only likely to benefit vocational learners, but could also enhance all learners' learning experience and help them to discover their interests, abilities and flairs in both academic and vocational fields.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1

An enquiry into the contemporary role of Vocational Education and Training in social and economic development of rural Zimbabwe with particular reference to attitudes and opinions of students, teachers and education inspectors: The Case of Murewa District

#### Students' Questionnaire

My name is Tapiwa Katsande. I am a Ph.D. student at Anglia Ruskin University researching the role of vocational education in rural development. Your name is not required and all the information that you provide will be kept confidential at all times.

Please answer all questions as honestly as possible and feel free to ask if you do not understand any question. I need your personal views, so there are no right or wrong answers.

Please tick and comment as appropriate in the spaces provided.

#### Section 1

##### Your details

1. Your gender

Male		[1]
Female		[2]

2. How old are you?

11 years old or less		[1]
12 years		[2]
13 years		[3]
14 years		[4]
15 years old		[5]
16 years		[6]
Over 17		[7]



### Family educational background

3. What is your father's highest educational qualification?

Primary education		[1]
Zimbabwe Junior Certificate (ZJC)		[2]
O-Level Certificate		[3]
A-Level Certificate		[4]
University Degree		[5]
Other (please state level reached)		[6]

4. What is your mother's highest educational qualification?

Primary education		[1]
Zimbabwe Junior Certificate (ZJC)		[2]
O-Level Certificate		[3]
A-Level Certificate		[4]
University Degree		[5]
Other (please state level reached)		[6]

5. What does your father do for a living? (If he is self-employed, please state what he does. Also, state if he is a communal farmer)

.....

6. What does your mother do for a living? (If she is self-employed, please state what she does. Also, state if she is a communal farmer)

.....

## Section II:

### Information about your career hopes and personal views about vocational education

Please write down your answers in the spaces provided and tick in the boxes where appropriate.

7. From the following list, show your level of interest in each of the subjects.

SUBJECT	1. Not interested	2. Somewhat interested	3. Very interested	
English Language				[1]
English Literature				[2]
Shona				[3]
General Science				[4]
Physics				[5]
Chemistry				[6]
Geography				[7]
Mathematics				[8]
History				[9]
Bible Knowledge				[10]
Metalwork				[11]
Fashion and Fabrics				[12]
Textile and Design				[13]
Food and Nutrition				[14]
Woodwork				[15]
Technical Drawing				[16]
Building Studies				[17]
Others				[18]
				[19]
				[20]

--	--	--	--

8. What two subjects do you like most?

1 ..... [1]

2 ..... [2]

Please say why you like the subjects

.....

.....

9. What two subjects do you like least or dislike?

1 ..... [1]

2 ..... [2]

Please say why you dislike the subjects

.....

.....

10. Up to what level do you want to continue with your education?

O-Level		[1]
A-Level		[2]
Vocational/Technical College		[3]
University		[4]

Please say why

.....

.....

11. What do you want to do after your O-Level?

Work		[1]
Apprenticeship (e.g. at a Vocational/Technical College)		[2]
Teacher training (Technical subjects)		[3]
Teacher training (Academic subjects)		[4]
Train at a technical college		[5]
Self-employment		[6]
A-Levels		[7]
Other (please state		[8]

12. What job would you like to get after completing your education?

.....  
.....

13. Why do you want to do this job?

.....  
.....

14. In your opinion, what are your chances of getting this job?

Very high		[1]
High		[2]
Low		[3]
Very low		[4]

Please say why

.....  
.....  
.....

15. Name the subject that you think is most useful in preparing you for the job?

.....  
.....

Please say why

.....  
.....

16. What minimum educational qualifications do you think are required to get the job?

Primary School Certificate		[1]
ZJC		[2]
O-Level Certificate		[3]
A-Level Certificate		[4]
University Degree		[5]
Others (please state)		[6]

17. If you don't get the job you want, what other job would you consider getting?

.....

Please say why

.....

.....

18. What job would your parents / guardians wish for you?

.....

Please say why they would like you to do this job?

.....

.....

.....

19. In what area would you want to work? Tick one box

Small town (e.g. Marondera, Mutare, etc.)		[1]
Large city (e.g. Harare, Bulawayo, etc.)		[2]
Rural area		[3]
Commercial farming area		[4]
Anywhere		[5]
Other (please state)		[6]

Please say why

.....

.....

.....

20. Have you attended any careers advice sessions at your school?

Yes		[1]
No		[2]

21. What do you think was considered in deciding which students should do practical subjects?

Please tick one box.

Those with the best mid-year ZJC results		[1]
Those with moderate mid-year/ZJC results		[2]
Those with the lowest mid-year/ZJC results		[3]
Only those who are interested in practical subjects		[4]

Others (please specify)		[5]
-------------------------	--	-----

22. Tick in the box to show how usefully you think practical subjects fulfil the following goals?

The extent to which you think practical subjects fulfil the goals below?	Not useful	Just right	Very useful	
(a) Preparing students for employment				[1]
(b) Preparing students for apprenticeship				[2]
(c) Developing a positive attitude towards manual work				[3]
(d) Preparing students for self-employment				[4]
(e) Applying theoretical knowledge practically				[5]
Others (please specify below)				[6]

23. Does the school arrange for students to get some work experience, e.g. through industrial or farm attachments?

Yes		[1]
No		[2]

24. Please write down any further comments you have about practical subjects

.....

.....

.....

### Section III:

The statements below express views about education and work which you may agree or disagree with. There are no right or wrong answers.

Please show your personal opinion by ticking

SA	A	SD	U	D
Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided	Disagree

	Statement	SA	A	U	D	SD	
25	Both able and less-able students should do the practical subjects.						[1]
26	Students doing the practical subjects in this school are those who got low grades in Form II.						[2]
27	Students who have done practical subjects find jobs more easily than those who did academic subjects only.						[3]
29	People who have done the practical subjects get lower-paying jobs than those who did academic subjects only.						[4]
30	Students at this school are free to choose whether or not they want to do the practical subjects.						[5]
31	There should be more practical subjects to choose from in this school.						[6]
32	The practical subjects are easier to pass than the academic subjects.						[7]
33	The time to do the practical subjects should be increased in the timetable.						[8]
34	There are enough facilities (e.g. workshops & tools) at this school for the practical subjects.						[9]
35	I like jobs in which I wear overalls, boots, helmets, etc.						[10]
36	Practical subjects are less interesting than academic subjects.						[11]
37	Practical subjects demand as much thinking as academic subjects.						[12]
38	Employers prefer people who have done both academic and practical subjects at school.						[13]
49	I don't like doing the practical subjects.						[14]

Please add any other comments you might wish to make regarding vocational education or practical subjects

.....  
 .....

***Thank you for completing the questionnaire***

## APPENDIX 2

### Permission to Use Professor Nherera's 1994 PhD Research Instruments

**From:** Charles Nherera [ ]  
**Sent:** 27 June 2013 15:29  
**To:** Katsande, Tapiwa  
**Subject:** Re: Permission to use research instruments

Dear Mr Katsande,

RE: Permission to use my PhD research instruments

Thank you for your e-mail. Sorry I could not respond earlier since I was still settling in after arriving in Scotland last Friday for my son's graduation which took place yesterday at the University of Glasgow.

As I indicated over the phone, I confirm that you have my permission to use some of the research questions that I employed in my September 1994 Ph.D. research project entitled: *Vocationalisation of Secondary Education in Zimbabwe: a theoretical and empirical investigation*, University of London. I don't know whether you need further clearance from the University of London, but you have got my approval. I can also confirm that I carried out a pilot study to test the validity and reliability of my research instruments. I will provide any further information that you may require.

Prof Charles Muchemwa Nherera

On 20 June 2013 13:12, Katsande, Tapiwa < > wrote:

Dear Professor Nherera

RE: Permission to use research instruments

My name is Tapiwa Katsande a Ph.D. student at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge, United Kingdom. I am carrying out an enquiry into the contemporary role of Vocational Education and Training in social and economic development of rural Zimbabwe. During my review of literature I came across your research work and found some of the research questions you used relevant to my study.

Following our telephone conversation on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2013, I would like to formally request for permission to use some of the research questions that you employed in your September 1994 Ph.D. research project entitled: *Vocationalisation of Secondary Education in Zimbabwe: a theoretical and empirical investigation*, University of London. Thank you for your support in this endeavour.

Yours sincerely, Tapiwa Katsande



## APPENDIX 3

### Text Readability Consensus Calculator

**Purpose:** Our Text Readability Consensus Calculator uses 7 popular readability formulas to calculate the average grade level, reading age, and text difficulty of your sample text.

#### Your Results:

**Flesch Reading Ease score:** 78.9 (text scale)

Flesch Reading Ease scored your text: fairly easy to read.

[f] | [a] | [r]

**Gunning Fog:** 7 (text scale)

Gunning Fog scored your text: fairly easy to read.

[f] | [a] | [r]

**Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level:** 4.1

Grade level: Fourth Grade.

[f] | [a] | [r]

**The Coleman-Liau Index:** 7

Grade level: Seventh Grade

[f] | [a] | [r]

**The SMOG Index:** 5.5

Grade level: Sixth Grade

[f] | [a] | [r]

**Automated Readability Index:** 2.3

Grade level: 6-8 yrs. old (First and Second graders)

[f] | [a] | [r]

**Linsear Write Formula :** 3.5

Grade level: Fourth Grade.

[f] | [a] | [r]

#### Readability Consensus

Based on 8 readability formulas, we have scored your text:

Grade Level: 5

Reading Level: fairly easy to read.

Reader's Age: 8-9 yrs. old (Fourth and Fifth graders)

Source: Readability Formulas (2012)

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **Focus Group Discussion Guide**

(Maximum: 8 discussants)

#### **Project Title**

An enquiry into the contemporary role of Vocational Education and Training in social and economic development of rural Zimbabwe with particular reference to attitudes and opinions of students, teachers and education inspectors:  
The Case of Murewa District

#### **Facilitator: T.E. Katsande**

Introduced myself and explained the purpose of the discussion and what was expected of participants. Explained confidentiality, anonymity and the voluntary participation. Topics for discussion given to participants as a hand-out.

#### **Agenda for Focus Group Discussion**

Please note that Vocational Education and Training has been abbreviated to VET

- 1. How would you describe VET courses as an avenue to work and self-employment?**

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- 2. How can vocational education and training support social and economic growth in Murewa?**

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- 3. How accessible is vocational education in comparison to other types of education? How could it be made more accessible?**

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- 4. What are the barriers to vocational education and training for marginalised groups?**

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- 5. In what way do you think vocational education and training can improve the social and economic mobility of marginalised individuals in Murewa?**

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- 6. What do you think needs to change about the way vocational education and training is delivered?**

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- 7. Do you consider vocational qualifications of equal status to academic qualifications?**

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- 8. How does the status of vocational qualifications affect young people's chances of getting a job?**

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**9. In what way do you think vocational education and training can address the local community needs?**

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**10. Finally, is there anything else you would like to add?**

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## **APPENDIX 5**

### **Interview Schedule for Teachers**

**Interviewer: T.E. Katsande**

#### **Title of Project:**

An enquiry into the contemporary role of Vocational Education and Training in social and economic development of rural Zimbabwe with particular reference to attitudes and opinions of students, teachers and education inspectors:  
The Case of Murewa District

**Preamble:** Self-introduction and research project description  
Participant information

I wish to ask you some questions about your experiences and views on the contemporary role of vocational education and training (VET) as part of my Ph.D. research. The interview will take no longer than one hour. Your name is not required and all the information that you provide will be kept confidential at all times.

#### **Section 1 - Introduction:**

1. Which practical subject(s) are you currently teaching?
2. How long have you been teaching the subject?
3. Why did you take up the teaching of technical subjects as a career?
4. How many periods per week are allocated for the practical subject?
5. What other subjects are you currently teaching?

#### **Section 2 - Background and Context of Study**

6. The debate over VET and General Education has given rise to a variety of opinion in Zimbabwe and the world over.

What is your opinion of modern-day vocational education and training in relation to general education? Are you aware of any controversy? Please explain.

7. In the mid-1990s, greater priority was accorded to university education (or academic education) at the expense of vocational education.
  - Can you tell me whether you think this policy had any impact?
8. Could you give me your views about the place of VET in Zimbabwe's education system?

Interviewer to explore:

- Comparisons to Europe - e.g. Germany has a two-tier system; with vocational and academic route options;
- The link between current VET education and employability, self-employment and entrepreneurship.

9. I would like you to tell me your views on the current situation regarding vocational education

Interviewer to explore:

- The participants' views of any review that has occurred, or recommendations they are aware of, or any proposals for change;
- Whether the participant is aware of any assessment of the need for vocational education related to the job market and developing industries;
- Whether the participant is aware of any educational policy addressing social exclusion or marginalisation of rural young people.

### **Section 3 – The Role of Vocational Education in:**

10. Can you give me your views about the status of vocational courses here?

11. Do you think there is something which makes vocational courses more or less prominent?

12. How are students selected for practical subjects?

13. How would you describe young people's attitudes towards the subject?

14. What do you regard as the major strengths of practical subjects?

15. What do you regard as the major weaknesses of practical subjects?

16. What improvements would you suggest for practical subjects?

17. Who constructed the practical subject syllabus that you are using, and do you give any feedback to the curriculum developers?

18. Do you adhere strictly to the subject syllabus?

19. Can you please tell me the extent to which you think practical subjects fulfil:

- (a) Preparing students for employment;
- (b) Preparing students for higher/further education;
- (c) Preparing students for vocational training and apprenticeship;
- (d) Preparing students for Developing a positive attitude towards manual work;
- (e) Preparing students for self-employment;
- (f) Applying theoretical knowledge practically.

**20.** From your experience, what can you say about the relationship between the syllabuses followed in the practical subjects and the requirements of the employment sector or world of work?

Interviewer to explore whether:

- There is a very strong relationship;
- There is slight relationship;
- There is no relationship;
- Interviewee not sure.

**21.** Do schools arrange for practical subject students to get some working experience, e.g. through industrial or farm attachments?

**22.** Do schools provide careers guidance FOR practical subject students?

**23.** Do schools assist the practical subject students in finding employment at the end of their school life?

#### **Section 4 - The Place of Vocational Education in Rural Development:**

**24.** Tell me your views about whether VET programmes are important to the socio-economic development of rural areas in general and growth points in particular.

**25.** In your view how successful has the policy been to transform Growth Points into economic nuclei?

Interviewer to explore:

- The factors leading to success or failure of this policy?
- What do you think is the contribution of vocational skills?

**26.** How would you describe people's general attitude to vocational qualifications?

**27.** Finally, is there anything you would like to add or any other general opinion you have about the role of vocational education in rural development

***Thank you for your kind cooperation***

## **APPENDIX 6**

### **Interview Schedule for Education Inspectors**

**Interviewer: T.E. Katsande**

#### **Title of Project:**

An enquiry into the contemporary role of Vocational Education and Training in social and economic development of rural Zimbabwe with particular reference to attitudes and opinions of students, teachers and education inspectors:  
The Case of Murewa District

**Preamble:** Self-introduction and research project description  
Participant Information

I wish to ask you some questions about your experiences and views on the contemporary role of vocational education and training (VET) as part of my Ph.D. research. The interview will take no longer than one hour. Your name is not required and all the information that you provide will be kept confidential at all times.

#### **Section 1 - Introduction:**

**28.** Could you please tell me what position you hold within your organisation?

**29.** What are your main responsibilities?

**30.** How long have you been in post?

#### **Section 2 – Background and Context of Study**

**31.** The debate over VET and General Education has given rise to different opinions in Zimbabwe and the world over.

What is your opinion of modern-day vocational education and training in relation to general education? Are you aware of any controversy? Please explain.

**32.** In the mid-1990s, greater priority was accorded to university education (or academic education).

- Can you tell me whether you think this policy had any impact on vocational education?

**33.** Could you give me your views about the place of VET in Zimbabwe's education system?

Interviewer to explore:



- Comparisons to Europe - e.g. Germany has a two-tier system with vocational and academic route options;
- The link between current VET education and employability, self-employment and entrepreneurship.

**34.** I would like you to tell me your views on the current situation regarding vocational education

Interviewer to explore:

- The participants' views of any review that has occurred, or recommendations they are aware of, or any proposals for change;
- Whether the participant is aware of any assessment of the need for vocational education related to the job market and developing industries;
- Whether the participant is aware of any educational policy addressing social exclusion or marginalisation of rural young people.

### **Section 3 - The Role of Vocational Education:**

**35.** Can you give me your views about the status of vocational courses here?

- Do you think there is something which makes vocational courses more or less prominent?

**36.** From your experience, what can you say about the relationship between the syllabuses followed in vocational courses and the requirements of the employment sector?

Interviewer to explore whether:

- There is a very strong relationship;
- There is slight relationship;
- There is no relationship.

**37.** Who drew up the syllabuses currently being used in the country? What input do industrialists have?

**38.** What do you regard as the major strengths of vocational courses?

**39.** What do you regard as the major weaknesses of the vocational courses?

**40.** What improvements would you suggest for vocational courses?

**41.** Can you please tell me the extent to which you think current vocational courses fulfil.

**42.** What are your views on:

- (a) Work experience, e.g. through industrial or farm attachments?
- (b) School-based careers guidance for students?
- (c) Careers' guidance provided by employers

**Section 4 - The Place of Vocational Education in Rural Development:**

**43.** Tell me your views about whether VET programmes are important to the socio-economic development of rural areas in general and growth points in particular.

**44.** In your view how successful have the attempts been to transform growth points into economic nuclei?

Interviewer to explore:

- The factors leading to success or failure of this policy?
- What do you think is the contribution of vocational skills?

**45.** How would you describe people's general attitude to vocational qualifications?

**46.** Finally, is there anything you would like to add or any other general opinion you have about the role of vocational education in rural development

***Thank you for your kind cooperation***

## **APPENDIX 7**

### **Information and Consent Forms**



### **FACULTY OF HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE & EDUCATION**

### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

#### **Section A: The Research Project**

##### **Title of Project:**

An enquiry into the contemporary role of Vocational Education and Training in social and economic development of rural Zimbabwe with particular reference to attitudes and opinions of students, teachers and education inspectors:  
The Case of Murewa District

##### **Purpose and value of study**

This research examines the role of practical skills in rural Zimbabwe focusing on Murewa District. Vocational qualifications are work-related meaning that you study and gain practical skills and knowledge in areas such as woodwork, fashion and fabrics, metalwork and agriculture.

This study reviews vocational courses to help inform teachers, headmasters and education officers.

##### **Invitation to participate**

I am formally inviting you to participate in a research study conducted by me, Tapiwa Katsande. The results of this study will contribute to a PhD thesis. You have been selected for this study because you are a primary school student in rural Murewa District.

## **Section B: Your Participation in the Research Project**

### **Participation and withdrawal**

Your participation in this research is voluntary; you can choose whether or not to take part. You can refuse to take part without any consequence. You can withdraw at any time without penalty by filling in the withdrawal slip on the consent form. However, the data collected from you remains part of the research study.

### **Procedures**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we will ask you to:

- Answer questions about your educational experiences on questionnaires. Questionnaires will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.
- Take part in face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions; these will take no longer than 1 hour and will be recorded by a digital voice recorder.

The results of this research can be sent to you if you wish to see them. They will also be published in educational publications and online publications.

### **Potential risks and discomforts**

While there are no physical risks associated with this research, taking part may result in:

- Taking time out of class to attend interviews and focus groups;
- Worrying about your personal information or being identified.

In order to reduce the effects of any negative consequences I shall ensure that:

- The interviews will be outside of your class time;
- All your opinions are welcomed, there is no wrong answer;
- It will not be possible to trace back the information I collect codes will be used instead of your name;
- Your personal information, such as address, email address or telephone numbers will not be recorded.

If there are any disclosures relating to child protection, crime or risk of harm to any person, the researcher has a legal obligation to refer these issues to the relevant authorities.

### **Rights of research participants**

You will have the right under the Data Protection Act to see the notes that the researcher makes about you, but not those about others.

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty.

Agreement to participate in this research should not compromise your legal rights should something go wrong.

### **Potential benefits to participants and/or to society**

This research is expected to help policy-and decision-makers to improve secondary school learning and skills training. It is also hoped that rural communities will find solutions to rural poverty and unemployment.

### **Payment for participation**

You will not be paid for participating in this study.

### **Confidentiality**

You will not be required to give your name, and your completed questionnaires will not be seen by anyone else except the researcher. Codes will be used instead of real names.

The information gathered may be used in reports, online articles and presentations by the researcher. You have the right to review and edit audio recordings.

This research is not an experimental study hence there are no special precautions you must take before, during or after taking part in this study.

All information collected will be locked away and any discarded materials will be securely destroyed.

This research has been approved by Anglia Ruskin University Ethics Committee. If you have any queries about the research or regarding your rights as a participant, please contact:

Tapiwa Katsande (Researcher)  
Anglia Ruskin University  
Bishop Hall Lane  
Chelmsford, CM1 1SQ  
Telephone: +44 (0) 1245 493131

Dr. Geraldine Davis and Dr. Jaki Lilly  
(Faculty Supervisors)  
Anglia Ruskin University  
Bishop Hall Lane  
Chelmsford, CM1 1SQ

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS TO KEEP,  
TOGETHER WITH A COPY OF YOUR CONSENT FORM

## APPENDIX 8



### FACULTY OF HEALTH, SOCIAL CARE & EDUCATION

#### Research Participant Consent Form

##### Title of Project:

An enquiry into the contemporary role of Vocational Education and Training in social and economic development of rural Zimbabwe with particular reference to attitudes and opinions of students, teachers and education inspectors:  
The Case of Murewa District

**Anglia Ruskin University**, Department of Education, Bishop Hall Lane, Chelmsford, CM1 1SQ

**Researcher:** Tapiwa Katsande

**Faculty Supervisors:** Dr. Geraldine Davis and Dr. Jaki Lilly

The purpose of the above research has been fully explained to me. I agree to take part in the research. I have read the Participant Information Sheet. I understand what my role will be in this research, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

1. I understand that my name will not be used in any reports, articles or presentations.
2. I understand that my information may be used in reports, articles or presentations by the researcher.
3. I agree to completing questionnaires, face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions which will be recorded by a digital voice recorder.
4. I am free to ask any questions at any time before and during the study
5. I understand that I can withdraw from the research at any time without giving any reason and without penalty; however, the data collected from me will remain part of the research study.

Data Protection: I agree to the University<sup>1</sup> processing personal data which I have supplied. I agree to the processing of such data for any purposes connected with the Research Project as outlined to me

Name of participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/  
Guardian (if under 18): \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed by the researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researchers e-mail address: [tapiwa.katsande@student.anglia.ac.uk](mailto:tapiwa.katsande@student.anglia.ac.uk)

YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP

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***If you wish to withdraw from the research, please complete the form below and return to the main investigator named above.***

Title of Project: *The missing link in Zimbabwe's rural development: An enquiry into the role of vocational training in Zimbabwe's social and economic development*

**I wish to withdraw from this study**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>1</sup> "The University" includes Anglia Ruskin University and its partner colleges

## APPENDIX 9

### SPSS Data

#### RELIABILITY

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/STATISTICS=DESCRIPTIVE SCALE CORR

/SUMMARY=TOTAL CORR.

#### Reliability

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	Cases Used	Statistics are based on all cases with valid data for all variables in the procedure.



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Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
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	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	40	29.9
	Total	134	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardised Items	N of Items
.434	.413	14

Item Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
pp1	2.02	1.218	94
pp2	4.50	.877	94
pp3	3.09	1.365	94
pp4	3.69	1.218	94
pp5	2.70	1.405	94
pp6	1.67	.909	94
pp7	2.26	1.163	94
pp8	2.51	1.310	94
pp9	3.38	1.353	94
pp10	3.82	1.414	94
pp11	2.44	1.356	94
pp12	3.17	1.434	94
pp13	2.09	1.233	94
pp14	1.82	1.278	94

Inter-Item Correlation Matrix								
	pp1	pp2	pp3	pp4	pp5	pp6	pp7	pp8
pp1	1.000	.181	.083	.033	.098	-.003	.057	-.081
pp2	.181	1.000	.126	.126	.096	-.088	.011	-.122
pp3	.083	.126	1.000	.048	.243	-.038	.088	.132
pp4	.033	.126	.048	1.000	.096	-.239	-.065	-.150
pp5	.098	.096	.243	.096	1.000	-.036	-.190	.124
pp6	-.003	-.088	-.038	-.239	-.036	1.000	.152	.215
pp7	.057	.011	.088	-.065	-.190	.152	1.000	.019
pp8	-.081	-.122	.132	-.150	.124	.215	.019	1.000
pp9	-.077	.054	.227	.099	.276	-.097	-.131	.137
pp10	.040	.212	.025	.042	.102	-.106	-.227	.050
pp11	.027	-.167	-.043	-.250	.091	.336	.113	.285
pp12	.029	.137	.168	-.074	.137	-.163	-.065	-.121
pp13	.135	-.060	.226	.096	-.053	.064	.030	.259
pp14	.134	-.187	-.139	-.009	.042	.152	.075	.236

Inter-Item Correlation Matrix						
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pp1	-.077	.040	.027	.029	.135	.134
pp2	.054	.212	-.167	.137	-.060	-.187
pp3	.227	.025	-.043	.168	.226	-.139
pp4	.099	.042	-.250	-.074	.096	-.009
pp5	.276	.102	.091	.137	-.053	.042
pp6	-.097	-.106	.336	-.163	.064	.152
pp7	-.131	-.227	.113	-.065	.030	.075
pp8	.137	.050	.285	-.121	.259	.236
pp9	1.000	.273	-.004	.210	-.065	-.022
pp10	.273	1.000	-.026	.270	.114	-.018
pp11	-.004	-.026	1.000	-.016	-.003	.201
pp12	.210	.270	-.016	1.000	.119	.064
pp13	-.065	.114	-.003	.119	1.000	.276
pp14	-.022	-.018	.201	.064	.276	1.000

Summary Item Statistics						
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Summary Item Statistics	
	N of Items
Inter-Item Correlations	14

Item-Total Statistics					
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pp2	34.65	35.843	.081	.174	.431
pp3	36.06	31.566	.263	.255	.380
pp4	35.46	36.659	-.046	.176	.467
pp5	36.45	31.583	.247	.211	.384
pp6	37.48	36.274	.033	.200	.441
pp7	36.89	36.784	-.048	.142	.465
pp8	36.64	32.405	.224	.287	.394
pp9	35.77	32.160	.226	.233	.392
pp10	35.33	32.611	.177	.216	.407
pp11	36.71	33.863	.111	.234	.427
pp12	35.98	32.602	.171	.224	.409
pp13	37.06	32.275	.262	.282	.384
pp14	37.33	33.170	.181	.239	.407

Scale Statistics			
Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
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/STATISTICS=DESCRIPTIVE SCALE CORR

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## Reliability

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## T-Test

Group Statistics					
	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
English Language	m	63	2.81	.396	.050
	f	85	2.92	.317	.034

Independent Samples Test					
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
		F	Sig.	t	df
General Science	Equal variances assumed	12.549	.001	-1.845	146
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.786	115.577

Independent Samples Test				
		t-test for Equality of Means		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
English Language	Equal variances assumed	.067	-.108	.059
	Equal variances not assumed	.077	-.108	.061

Independent Samples Test			
		t-test for Equality of Means	
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper
English Language	Equal variances assumed	-.224	.008
	Equal variances not assumed	-.228	.012

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	Cases Used	Statistics for each analysis are based on the cases with no missing or out-of-range data for any variable in the analysis.
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Group Statistics					
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Literature	m	24	1.79	.779	.159
	f	36	2.28	.741	.124



Independent Samples Test					
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
		F	Sig.	t	df
Literature	Equal variances assumed	.033	.856	-2.439	58
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.414	47.712

Independent Samples Test				
		t-test for Equality of Means		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Literature	Equal variances assumed	.018	-.486	.199
	Equal variances not assumed	.020	-.486	.201

Independent Samples Test			
		t-test for Equality of Means	
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper
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	Equal variances not assumed	-.891	-.081

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	Cases Used	Statistics for each analysis are based on the cases with no missing or out-of-range data for any variable in the analysis.
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Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00.00
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00.00

[DataSet1] H:\My Documents\My Desktop\QUANT DATA FEB 2015\Primary and Sec T-Test database.sav

Group Statistics					
	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Shona	m	60	2.55	.622	.080
	f	83	2.70	.557	.061

Independent Samples Test					
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
		F	Sig.	t	df
Shona	Equal variances assumed	4.155	.043	-1.500	141
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.474	118.568

Independent Samples Test					
		t-test for Equality of Means			
		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
					Lower
Shona	Equal variances assumed	.136	-.149	.099	-.345
	Equal variances not assumed	.143	-.149	.101	-.349

Independent Samples Test		
		t-test for Equality of Means
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference
		Upper
Shona	Equal variances assumed	.047
	Equal variances not assumed	.051

T-TEST GROUPS=gender(1 2)

/MISSING=ANALYSIS

/VARIABLES=General Science

/CRITERIA=CI(.95).

## T-Test

Notes		
Output Created		16-JUN-2015 10:04:07
Comments		
Input	Data	H:\My Documents\My Desktop\QUANT DATA FEB 2015\Primary and Sec T-Test database.sav
	Active Dataset	DataSet1
	Filter	<none>
	Weight	<none>
	Split File	<none>
	N of Rows in Working Data File	149
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	Statistics for each analysis are based on the cases with no missing or out-of-range data for any variable in the analysis.
Syntax		T-TEST GROUPS=gender(1 2)  /MISSING=ANALYSIS  /VARIABLES=General Science  /CRITERIA=CI(.95).
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00.00
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00.00

[DataSet1] H:\My Documents\My Desktop\QUANT DATA FEB 2015\Primary and Sec T-Test database.sav

Group Statistics					
	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
General Science	m	48	2.73	.610	.088
	f	69	2.70	.551	.066

Independent Samples Test					
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
		F	Sig.	t	df
General Science	Equal variances assumed	.021	.885	.310	115
	Equal variances not assumed			.304	94.420

Independent Samples Test				
		t-test for Equality of Means		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
General Science	Equal variances assumed	.757	.034	.108
	Equal variances not assumed	.762	.034	.110

Independent Samples Test			
		t-test for Equality of Means	
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper
General Science	Equal variances assumed	-.181	.248
	Equal variances not assumed	-.185	.252

T-TEST GROUPS=gender(1 2)

/MISSING=ANALYSIS

/VARIABLES=Physics

/CRITERIA=CI(.95).

## T-Test

Notes		
Output Created		16-JUN-2015 10:17:22
Comments		
Input	Data	H:\My Documents\My Desktop\QUANT DATA FEB 2015\Primary and Sec T-Test database.sav
	Active Dataset	DataSet1
	Filter	<none>
	Weight	<none>
	Split File	<none>
	N of Rows in Working Data File	149
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.
	Cases Used	Statistics for each analysis are based on the cases with no missing or out-of-range data for any variable in the analysis.
Syntax	T-TEST GROUPS=gender(1 2)  /MISSING=ANALYSIS  /VARIABLES=Physics  /CRITERIA=CI(.95).	
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00.00
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00.02

[DataSet1] H:\My Documents\My Desktop\QUANT DATA FEB 2015\Primary and Sec T-Test database.sav

Group Statistics					
	gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Physics	m	32	2.53	.803	.142
	f	42	2.43	.801	.124

Independent Samples Test					
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
		F	Sig.	t	df
Physics	Equal variances assumed	.138	.711	.546	72
	Equal variances not assumed			.546	66.799

Independent Samples Test				
		t-test for Equality of Means		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Physics	Equal variances assumed	.587	.103	.188
	Equal variances not assumed	.587	.103	.188

Independent Samples Test			
		t-test for Equality of Means	
		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Lower	Upper
Physics	Equal variances assumed	-.272	.478
	Equal variances not assumed	-.273	.478

T-TEST GROUPS=gender(1 2)

/MISSING=ANALYSIS

/VARIABLES=Chemistry

/CRITERIA=CI(.95).

## **APPENDIX 10**

### **Letter Seeking Permission to Conduct Study**

The Permanent Secretary  
Ministry of Education Sports and Culture  
Harare  
Zimbabwe

20<sup>th</sup> February 2013

Dear sir/Madam

#### **RE: Application for permission to carry out research in Zimbabwe Secondary Schools**

My name is Tapiwa Katsande, a PhD research student at Anglia Ruskin University. I would like to request for permission to conduct research in secondary schools for a PhD study entitled:

*An enquiry into the contemporary role of vocational education and training in social and economic development of rural Zimbabwe with particular reference to attitudes and opinions of young people and educational professionals: A Case Study of Murewa District*

I intend to contact a convenient sample of students, teachers and heads of departments at their work places. Participants will be interviewed and questionnaires will be administered and returned by postal service (via self-addressed, stamped envelopes). All participants will be fully informed of their role and will give voluntary consent. Students below 18 years will participate with parental consent.

I will abide by the university's ethics requirements and will provide a copy of Anglia Ruskin University's Ethics approval and stamped consent documents before recruiting participants.

Please find attached a copy of the Research Proposal Approval which is subject to the permission I am requesting being granted. If there are any questions regarding this research, please contact:

Tapiwa Katsande  
Anglia Ruskin University  
Cambridge  
CB1 1PT, UK

Dr. Geraldine Davis  
Anglia Ruskin University  
Cambridge  
CB1 1PT, UK



Letter Granting Permission to Conduct Study

all communications should be addressed to  
"The Secretary for Education Sport and Culture"  
Telephone: 734051/59 and 734071  
Telegraphic address: "EDUCATION"  
Fax: 794505



ZIMBABWE

Ministry of Education, Sport,  
Arts and Culture  
P.O Box CY 121  
Causeway  
Zimbabwe

13 | 01 | 2012

MR KATSANBE TAPIWA

**RE: PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH IN THE MINISTRY OF  
EDUCATION, SPORT, ARTS AND CULTURE.**

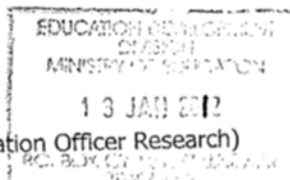
Reference is made to your application to carry out research in the Ministry of  
Education, Sport, Arts and Culture institutions on the title:

"THE MISSING LINK IN ZIMBABWE'S RURAL DEVELOPMENT:  
AN ENQUIRY INTO THE ROLE OF VOCATIONAL  
TRAINING IN ZIMBABWE'S SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT"

Permission is hereby granted. However, you are required to liaise with the  
Provincial Education Director responsible for the schools which you want to  
involve in your research.

You are also required to provide a copy of your final report to the Ministry since  
your study is instrumental in the development of education in Zimbabwe.

Mashanyare I (Education Officer Research)



For: **SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION, SPORT, ARTS AND CULTURE**

## **APPENDIX 12**

### **Request for Permanent Secretary for Education's participation in research project**

The Permanent Secretary for Education  
Harare  
Zimbabwe

20<sup>th</sup> February 2013

Dear Sir

#### **RE: Request for your participation in a PhD research project**

My name is Tapiwa Katsande, a PhD research student at Anglia Ruskin University in Cambridge, United Kingdom. I would like to request for your participation in my PhD research study entitled:

*An enquiry into the contemporary role of vocational education and training in social and economic development of rural Zimbabwe with particular reference to attitudes and opinions of young people and educational professionals: A Case Study of Murewa District*

I was granted permission to carry out this research by the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture (letter included). I shall be contacting a convenient sample of students, teachers and educational professionals at their work places.

Your participation will involve an interview of up to 30 minutes. The main themes for the interview will be sent to you in advance.

Please find attached copies of the Research Proposal Approval and permission to carry out the research from the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture.

If there are any questions regarding this research, please contact:

Tapiwa Katsande  
Anglia Ruskin University  
Cambridge  
CB1 1PT, UK

Dr. Geraldine Davis  
Anglia Ruskin University  
Cambridge  
CB1 1PT, UK

## APPENDIX 13

### Zimbabwe Police Record Check


Z.R.P.

Official Communications  
should not be addressed  
to individuals

Telegrams: "CAVE"

FORM 143.

Ref.: 001979



Criminal Investigation Department Headquarters  
Zimbabwe Republic Police  
P.O. Box CY 683, Causeway  
ZIMBABWE

FOR PRODUCTION TO THE BRITISH VISA AUTHORITIES  
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that \*there are no convictions for any crime/  
the convictions detailed overleaf are recorded in Zimbabwe, against:

Tapiwa Emmanuel KATSANDE NR

born in

day of

For:

\* Delete inapplicable.

CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT  
CRIME INTELLIGENCE & ANALYSIS  
C.I.D. HEADQUARTERS  
13 JAN 2012  
P.O. BOX CY 683, CAUSEWAY  
ZIMBABWE  
Officer Commanding,  
Criminal Investigation Department.

## APPENDIX 14

### Risk Assessment

#### Anglia Ruskin University Risk Assessment form (RA1)

<b>Subject of assessment (May be an activity, hazard or relate to an individual)</b> PhD Research Project in Murewa District of Zimbabwe	<b>RA conducted by.</b> Tapiwa Katsande	<b>Date.</b> 29 <sup>th</sup> February 2012	<b>RA ref. no.</b>
<b>List the risk/s involved or describe the hazard</b> Working in a politically unstable environment (hazardous event). The researcher might be viewed as an outsider and the purpose of the research purpose may be misunderstood (hazardous event). Political aggression and violence (consequence).			
<b>List the current control measures in place. Please check the RM website for help and advice available at; <a href="http://rmd.anglia.ac.uk">http://rmd.anglia.ac.uk</a></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zimbabwe Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Criminal Records Check clearance;</li> <li>• The researcher lived in the district for 11 year so he is familiar with the community and its cultural and political dispensation;</li> <li>• The researcher still has contacts who still live in the district namely, school heads; village elders; community leaders;</li> <li>• Introductions with local political commissars and the local Senator.</li> </ul>			
<b>Current risk level. (See risk matrix) / Medium (Delete as appropriate)</b>			
<b>List the actions required to reduce the risk. Please check the RM website for help and advice available at; <a href="http://rmd.anglia.ac.uk">http://rmd.anglia.ac.uk</a></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research will be carried out outside the elections period. The chosen year for field research is non-election year when the country is politically stable.</li> <li>• Clearance to carry out the research has been approved by the Zimbabwe Criminal Investigation department (CID) and the Ministry of Education and Culture. The researcher will carry appropriate documentation and identity.</li> <li>• The researcher will be working with school heads who have recognised authority in the local villages.</li> <li>• The local Political Commissars will be furnished with the Zimbabwe Criminal Investigation Department (CID) Criminal Records Check and permission letter from the Ministry of Education and Culture.</li> </ul>		<b>Date actioned</b>  November 2012  13 January 2012  November 2012	<b>Actioned by</b>  TK  TK  TK
<b>Revised risk level. (See risk matrix) / Low (Delete as appropriate)</b>			
<b>RA verified by (Usually Dean/Head of support unit/Line manager)</b>		<b>Date: 29/02/12</b>	
<b>Risk assessment issued to the following;</b>		<b>Date.</b>	
<b>Risk assessment review date. (Usually annually)</b>		<b>January 2013</b>	

## APPENDIX 15

### Permission to use the Political Map of Zimbabwe

---

**From:** Harneet <[harneet@mapsofworld.com](mailto:harneet@mapsofworld.com)>

**Sent:** 14 July 2016 08:43

**To:** KATSANDE, TAPIWA (Postgraduate Research)

**Cc:** 'Kartik'; 'Bill Spicer'

**Subject:** RE: Copyright Enquiry

Hi Tapiwa,

Thank you for contacting us with your mapping requirements.

In regard to your mail below we grant you the permission for using the Political Map of Zimbabwe on the link given below for specified educational purpose, with a credit note in the thesis that the map is being used with due permission of MapsofWorld.com. :

<http://www.mapsofworld.com/zimbabwe/zimbabwe-political-map.html#>

[Political Map of Zimbabwe | Zimbabwe Provinces Map](http://www.mapsofworld.com)

[www.mapsofworld.com](http://www.mapsofworld.com)

Political map of Zimbabwe illustrates the surrounding countries with international borders, 8 provinces and 2 cities boundaries with their capitals and the national ...

---

Please note that the **\*copyright line mentioned at the bottom of the map cannot be removed in any scenario at the time of the use\*** (that the map belongs to MapsofWorld.com).

Also, provide us with the source where the map is used once your thesis will be there on the Anglia Ruskin University repository.

Thanks.

Regards,

Harneet Kaur

Business Development

Compare Infobase Limited.

C-62, Community Centre, Janakpuri, New Delhi-110058, India.

Tel: +91 11 25553533 ; Mobile #: +91 9871399004

E-mail: [harneet@infobase.in](mailto:harneet@infobase.in), [harneet@mapsofworld.com](mailto:harneet@mapsofworld.com) ; Skype ID: harneet.infobase  
[www.mapsofindia.com](http://www.mapsofindia.com), [www.mapsofworld.com](http://www.mapsofworld.com)

**From:** KATSANDE, TAPIWA (Postgraduate Research)

[<mailto:tapiwa.katsande@pgr.anglia.ac.uk>]

**Sent:** Thursday, July 14, 2016 4:15 AM

**To:** [contactus@mapsofworld.com](mailto:contactus@mapsofworld.com)

**Subject:** Copyright Enquiry

Hello,

I wish to seek written permission to use the Political Map of Zimbabwe showing the provinces and cities available at:

<http://www.mapsofworld.com/zimbabwe/zimbabwe-political-map.html#>

I need to use it in my Ph.D. thesis which will be available to the public through the Anglia Ruskin University repository.

Kind regards

Tapiwa Katsande  
(Ph.D Student, Anglia Ruskin University)

## **APPENDIX 16**

### **Permission to use the Colonial Map of Africa**

Case Number PIC18754 : Other - Copyright permissions

World Bank Public Information Center <accesstopic@worldbank.org>

Reply all|

Mon 18:51

KATSANDE, TAPIWA (Postgraduate Research)

\*\*\*Please don't remove the case number from the subject line when you respond\*\*\*

Dear Mr. Katsande,

The World Bank administers its own website. All materials on this site are subject to the Terms and Conditions.

The World Bank welcomes requests for permissions to excerpt or photocopy World Bank materials and publications, as well as proposals for translation and other subsidiary rights for both its print and electronic publications.

Thank you for contacting the World Bank Group.

External and Corporate Relations

The World Bank Group

[www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

----- tapiwa.katsande@student.anglia.ac.uk wrote -----

Hello,

I wish to seek written permission to use the Colonial Map of Africa used in the report entitled, "World Development Report 2009 – Part II: Reshaping Economic Geography."

ISBN 978-0-8213-7607-2    SKU 17607

Available at:

<http://www->

[wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSPContentServer/WDSP/IB/2008/12/03/00033330](http://wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSPContentServer/WDSP/IB/2008/12/03/00033330)

I need to use it in my Ph.D. thesis which will be available to the public through the Anglia Ruskin University repository.

Yours sincerely,

Tapiwa Katsande (PhD Student: Anglia Ruskin University)




## APPENDIX 17

### Publications

#### JOURNAL OF EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL RESEARCH

##### SUBMISSION METADATA

###### AUTHORS

Name Tapiwa Emmanuel Katsande   
Affiliation Anglia Ruskin University  
Country United Kingdom  
Bio Statement Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education  
Principal contact for editorial correspondence.

##### TITLE AND ABSTRACT

Title Vocational Education and Training in rural Zimbabwe: attitudes and opinions of students, teachers and education inspectors: the case of Murewa District

###### Abstract

###### Abstract

The 2008 global economic crisis has seen young people's career and employment prospects dwindle, particularly for those based in rural areas. Governments in both industrialised and developing countries are considering vocational education reform to meet nations' employment and economic needs. Despite renewed interest in VET, the sentiments of students and teachers remain largely unexplored. This study investigated the views and attitudes of students, teachers and education inspectors towards VET in rural Zimbabwe. The findings revealed divergent views. It emerged that most students did not necessarily have negative views of VET, but they were put off by the low status, lack of choice and the lacklustre delivery of VET. Teachers and students alike were sceptical about the role of VET in securing employment. This study will contribute to the on-going review of Zimbabwe's education system and will inform school managers and policy-makers on curriculum development and culture change in rural communities and schools.

**Keywords:** attitudes; perceptions; students' educational aspirations; vocational education and training

##### INDEXING

Academic discipline and sub-disciplines vocational education; vocational training