

EXTREME POVERTY AMONG THE RURAL BLACK SOUTH AFRICANS: TOWARDS ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Extreme poverty still prevails among many rural black South Africans due to low levels and a lack of skills, particularly technological skills required in the labor market. The situation is caused by structural and socioeconomic legacies inherited from decades of colonial and apartheid rule, wherein blacks were marginalized. The Critical Theory is used to unveil rural people's plight; and the principles of social transformation; human capacitation and emancipation, self-reflection; and social justice are used in this study to examine the lived experiences of rural people, and why they cannot fully participate in the country's economy. This study responded to two primary research questions were driving this study, namely, what can be used to change the extreme poverty that rural black people are faced with? How can full economic participation of rural black people be promoted? Ten participants were purposively sampled from rural Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality to participate in one-to-one unstructured interviews. Data emerged with four themes that summed-up the research findings, namely, education as economic development and social transformation tool; using technology to advance knowledge and skills of the rural black people; encouraging rural entrepreneurship; and full economic participation by rural people. Findings: The study emerged with the conceptual framework on rural economic development, that is focused on education, technology, and entrepreneurship as long-term sustainable strategies in promoting the economic participation of rural people. This study concludes that the scourge of poverty among black rural South Africans requires long-term strategies that blend technology to entrepreneurial education.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, Poverty, South Africa.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In the 25 years in democracy many rural black South Africans are still living in extreme poverty, despite efforts to reduce such poverty levels, it still persists. Statistics South Africa (2017) reports that more than 25,2% of the South African population is living in extreme poverty. However, Maila & Ross (2018) highlight that education is the route out of poverty for rural black people; and argues that opportunity and access to quality post-school education are still major problems.

Apart from poverty, many black people experience a lack of basic service; lack of knowledge; lack of information; and lack of technological know-how, as compared to their white people counterparts. The impact of the apartheid laws such as the Native Land Act of 1913 has caused socio-economic injustice that is still prevailing today (Modise & Mtshiselwa, 2013).

The situation rural black people find themselves in is caused by structural and socioeconomic legacies inherited from decades of colonial and apartheid rule that caused marginalisation of the black people in terms of access to financial resources, economic opportunity, quality education and political participation (Meiring et al., 2018). In South Africa “rurality has brought plight of poverty to townships, villages and farm areas’ residence” (Thaba-Nkadimene et al., 2019). In democratic South Africa, poverty is caused by lack of employment opportunities by majority of rural black South Africans. The unemployment rate among the South Africans is rocketing, reaching a figure of 27.7% (Trading Economics 2017). The circumstances of rural black people are caused by apartheid that forcefully took land from blacks and left black rural communities as peasants in their ancestral land. Despite the fact that the year 1994 pedastalled a democratic constitution, policies and legislations to address the imbalances caused by apartheid and brought hope to many underprivileged people of South Africa, these people still experience the harshness realities of living in extreme poverty.

Statistics South Africa (2015, 2017) confirms that the country reforms managed to address poverty, which dropped from 46.2% to 25,2% in 2015. This downward trend in poverty resulted from an increased government spending through fiscal policies such as social grants and free basic services. However, this is done through government safety nets that provided short-term relief. The provision of safety nets is helping South Africa in striving and reaching out to the United Nations Millennium Development Goal (UNMDG) number one on addressing poverty. The part played by the South African government is not good enough for maintaining such a trend if safety nets are not fully galvanized for permanent solutions to the challenges of poverty. South Africa is characterized by three challenges of human development, namely, unemployment, inequality (Nicolson 2015) and poverty that requires long-term measures that are aimed at total freedom of its people from these bondages. The government needs to afford rural black people the opportunity to free themselves from poverty, and this can be possible through rural economic development that is entrepreneurial focused. Thobejane & Thaba-Nkadimene (2019) highlights that “entrepreneurship education should be a core curriculum of basic education, and should be integrated in the teacher education curriculum”. Long-term strategies that address social injustices of the past through the capacitation and emancipation of rural black people in preparation for their full economic participation are required, to address the plight of rural black people. Otherwise, social justice will remain an elusive goal.

This study is aimed at examining poverty faced by rural black South Africans and explore strategies that can be used for their emancipation for attainment of social justice. In an attempt to achieve the aim stated above, the study answers the following two main research questions, namely, what can be used to change the extreme poverty that rural black people are faced with? How can full economic participation of rural black people be promoted? In order to understand the plight of the rural black people, and answer the two main research questions, the study was framed within Critical Theory. Furthermore, South African legislative framework is used to highlight the level of compliance and achievements and challenges to attainment of such legislative framework. Secondary data from empirical studies are studied together with data from the empirical study conducted in Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality to answer the two main research questions. The primary aim of using the Critical Theory, Legislative framework, secondary and primary data is to emerge with the Conceptual Framework on Rural Economic

Development as a strategy to address extreme poverty that is rife among the rural black South Africans.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The visibility of extreme poverties in the post-2015 era contradicts the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 200 of 1996, and United Nations Millennium Goal No. 1 that provides for the eradication of extreme hunger and poverty by 2015. People of South Africa have a constitutional right to institute a case against the government in the South African Constitutional Court if the government fails to comply with the prescripts of its Constitution (Albertyne, 2012). Due to a lack of knowledge, instead of citizens taking this legal route, they prefer to stage service delivery protests against local municipalities. Service delivery protests usually end up with acts of violence, burning, and looting from private people and businesses. In 2015 and 2016 Universities in South Africa experienced the #Fees Must Fall campaigns that also theatricalized characteristics of service delivery protests. The rural black people poverties were carried over to higher education institutions of learning and fueled university protests and instabilities. Black students felt that they were educationally excluded based on their parents' economic circumstances that led to failure to pay their university fees on time. The country experienced two large scale uprisings, in 2015 and 2016 emanating from service delivery and #FeesMustFall protests that were characterized by high levels of violence and social instabilities. The country resort to burning their strategic provisions such as schools, clinics, municipal property, and roads because the government dismally fails to address the people's dire poverty.

The South African Human Rights Commission, (2009) has put the right to food in perspective. It supports UNMG no 1, prescribes that countries should have eradicated hunger and poverty by 2015. This right was supported by international and local countries that signed that declaration. South Africa also supports this right as it is enshrined in its policies and legislation, that human dignity is a fundamental human right. UNMG no 1, on the eradication of poverty, is well spelt-out in the South African Constitutional Act of 200, 1996, Section 27(1)(b) that enshrines the right to feed oneself in dignity. Even though South Africa is one of 189 member states that signed the historic Millennium Goals at United Nations Millennium (UNMG) Summit declaration in 2000 [Millennium Development Goal International Fund, (2000), Millennium Project (2006), it has 12 million people living in extreme poverty (Statistics South Africa 2015). The population grew from 54, 96 million in mid-2015 (Statistics South Africa 2015) to 55,161 941 as of the 15th November 2016 (Worldometers, 2016). A growing population translates into growth in levels of poverty. The South African government agreed to address eight UNMG, wherein reduction of extreme hunger and poverty was set to be achieved by the deadline of 2015, and reports by statistics South Africa indicate a dismal failure on the part of the government.

Apart from poverty associated with hunger and lack of basic provisions, poor South Africans are still facing multiple poverties such as poverty of knowledge, information, and technological know-how. These are lacks that were designed and engineered by architects and proponents of apartheid and they are still felt today despite policies available towards their mitigation. The country that has a large international contribution of minerals resources, indigenous knowledge; and a collective approach to life, has not managed to eradicate poverties that black rural people experience. The situation in which the majority of black South Africans

found themselves, requires empowerment and emancipation that will unleash their capabilities and functionality (Sen, 2006). Full economic participation, equity, prosperity, and growth of these people depend on the nature and level of education received. Our former president Nelson Mandela highlights that 'education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world'. This requires a large investment that should reach out to rural schools that are faced with multiple contextual factors that compromise educational quality amongst black South Africans, particularly the rural black child. The hope that was espoused by former president Nelson Mandela still hopes to many South Africans, that quality education can change and better the circumstances of ordinary South Africans. The South African rural development and emancipation of black citizens can be achieved through education. The schooling systems need to be fully accommodative and use modern technology for teaching and learning to advance young people, particularly those from rural communities and villages. The high possibilities of full economic participation by rural black people are envisaged through their emancipation and capacitation as strategies to mitigate poverty and address social injustice.

Providing poor education to rural communities and villages is another impediment to rural development. The collapse in South African education as portrayed by Mncube & Harper (2013); Madiosale (2012); Spaul (2012) as a result of poor education delivery in South African public schools denies South Africans necessary economic and labor market tools such as knowledge and skills required to achieve rural black people's full economic participation, equity, prosperity, and growth. The majority of such underperforming schools are found in rural communities and villages. This indicates that rural black people are seriously affected, and their futures are bleak. Poverty tarnishes human dignity and inhibits efforts toward social justice. Poverty contravenes the human right to dignity and the democratic right to social justice. Despite the South African government's efforts to eradicate poverty, it persists, particularly in poor rural communities and villages where black rural people reside. South African black rural people are tremendously affected in this regard. And rural people are always hit hard by economic meltdowns. The South African Bill of rights stipulates that everyone has the right to have access to housing, health care services, sufficient food, water, and social security. This was further augmented by the legal right not to be poor (Ozoemana, 2010). However, a large South African population still lives in extreme poverty.

In this study, the Critical Theory is adopted to offer philosophical and theoretical grounding wherein the plight of rural black people is examined. Critical Theory informs the study on issues related to social transformation and justice; human liberation and emancipation; critiquing exploitation, power relations; participatory approach; and as a moral construct. The understanding of a need for social transformation and social justice of rural black South Africans in their mischievous situations requires a deep reflection of one's lived experience, and a theory that can offer such liberating and emancipatory powers is the Critical Theory. Fui, Khui, and Ying (2011: 129) put critical theory in perspective when they highlight that "Critical Theory is founded upon a social theory oriented toward critiquing and changing society...Critical Theory's works orientate towards investigating issues such as exploitation, asymmetrical power relations, distorted communication, and false consciousness".

From Fui, Khui, and Ying's perspective, the Critical Theory is a relevant theory to understand the plight of rural black South Africans. The choice of this theory is further informed

by Freeman & Vasconcelos (2010) who emphasize the notion of a participatory approach in critical theory. In this notion, reflective and critical reassessments put into perspective. In their own words they highlight that “Critical theory as a participatory approach engages constituents or stakeholders in a reflective and critical reassessment of the relationship between overarching social, economic, or political systems, such as capitalism or accountability, and everyday practices” (Freeman & Vasconcelos, 2010:3).

Furthermore, the Critical theory is believed to offer a moral construct (Steinberg & Kincheloe 2010) beyond its philosophical and theoretical tools in understanding phenomenon such as the plight of rural black people in South Africa. According to (Steinberg & Kincheloe (2010) the Critical theory is a moral construct formulated to reduce human suffering in different settings.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Critical discourse analysis that is premised within social constructivism was adopted in this study. Critical discourse analysis is used as ‘theory and method’ (Jorgensen and Phillips 2002: 4) in understanding the lives of rural black people, particularly those living in South Africa, and how they think they can become economically active as means to address and mitigate their current destitute status. This study uses conversations, speech acts and communicative events; and action and interaction (Wodak & Meyer 2008) as primary means of discourse analysis. In this study, critical discourse analysis was used because it provides a series of interdisciplinary approaches that can be used to explore many different social domains (Jorgensen & Phillips 2002) such as rural economic development and eradication of poverty amongst rural people strategies, such as human emancipation and capacitation. The adoption and use of critical discourse analysis informed data collection methods and data analysis procedures. Data was gathered from literature on the circumstances of South African rural people and people of Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality living in destitute households. Such data is supplemented by literature on the poverty of rural people across the globe. Data generated from the qualitative case study were analyzed using discourse analysis.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

South Africa has the potential for growth because of its good reputation among African and international states; its resources, its growing population, and good democracy. The constitution protects all people living in South Africa and protects its citizens from hunger and starvation. Statistics South Africa indicates that 12 million people are living in absolute poverty; and it is the government’s responsibility and mandate to change the circumstances of people living in poverty for the better.

Empirical and primary data were generated from one-to-one interviews with ten research participants, namely, 2 unemployed youth, 2 employed youth, 2 civic organization leaders, retired principal, tribal leader, child-grand recipient, and street vendor. Unstructured interviews were conducted to understand the circumstances of rural black people; their views on how their destitute situation can be alleviated, to emerge with the conceptual framework on rural economic development. Two questions were used in the unstructured interviews, namely:

1. What can be used to change the extreme poverty that rural black people are faced with?
2. How can full economic participation of rural black people be promoted.

Question 1 emerged with two themes, namely, education as an economic development and social transformation tool; and using technology to advance knowledge and skills of the rural black people. Similarly, question 2 emerged with two themes, namely, encouraging rural entrepreneurship; and full economic participation by rural people. Underneath follows a detailed discussion of the stated findings.

Education as Economic Development and Social Transformation Tool

The question of what change the extreme poverty faced by rural black people was answered by ten research participants. The participants agreed that education changes the social and economic status of global communities, including South African young and old rural people. For rural black South African, education changes the circle of poverty. One middle-aged male participant who serves as a civic organization leader indicates that:

“I had no opportunity to attend school because I grew up in a farmhouse with my parents as farmworkers. I cannot read and write and never worked in my life. In this period of high unemployment, my employment opportunities are very slim’ or zero. But I continue my employment search, to change my circumstances, as a person and future farther to some kids.”

The story of this man is shared by many rural black people who are illiterate and through their lived experiences they know that their chance of getting a job, and getting out of snares of poverty is very slim. The rural people are aware of the challenges they are confronted with, and resources need to be channeled towards the alleviation of extreme poverty they experience on daily basis. And that the country’s low economic rate makes the conditions them worst. The possibility is that their kids might experience the same challenges of living in absolute poverty, as their education prospects are lessening because of poor South African education. When rural people put their hopes on education to change their children’s circumstances, instead the reports on the South African education system tells a different story. Education in South Africa is reported to be in a state of collapse (Spaul, 2012; Mncube & Harber, 2013; Modisaole, 2013). This is caused by severe contextual problems that schools are confronted with, such as lack of physical resources; lack of library; inadequate water source; poor sanitation; lack of laboratories; lack of ICT centers; inadequate classrooms; limited funding for school improvement; inadequate teacher learning support materials (Thaba-Nkadimene, 2017).

The provision of basic education that forms part of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals’ declaration made in 2000 cannot be adequate if school conditions are not addressed. The UNMDG Goal 2 was aimed at eradicating illiteracies through the provision of universal primary education, which led to ‘No child left behind’ campaigns in the USA and free primary education in South Africa were all a matter of compliance to UNMG declaration. One participant who is a tribal leader, ‘nduna’ (which means a chief) in one of the villages in Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality highlights that:

“Our schools in this village experiences a lot of challenges emanating from poor school conditions, overcrowded classrooms, lack of teachers in Maths and Science, lack of crucial

school amenities such as library, Computer Centre and library. In our schools there is severe shortage of textbooks and learning and teaching resource materials. How do the Department of Education expect quality teaching and learning in such schools? This situation perpetuates a lacking behind of economic participation of rural black people primarily caused by a lacking behind of rural schools in terms of learners' academic achievements. Poor school conditions compromise the education of a rural black child."

The participant shares his sentiments about school infrastructure and resources with members of this and other rural communities. There is a serious lamentation from the community, because of a lack of school infrastructure, resources and other important classroom amenities. From this research participant Limpopo schools that are categorized as schools in townships, rural areas and informal settlements, continue to experience a range of contextual problems. In support, the study conducted in South Africa by Bush & Glover (2016) reveals inadequate infrastructure, under-trained and demotivated educators, low expectations and poor post-school employment prospects as factors confronting South African schools. Many schools in Limpopo Province are classified as dysfunctional due to contextual factors stated above. Literature further reveals that the dysfunctional schools are characterized by factors such as compromised management of curriculum implementation and teaching and learning (Thaba-Nkadimene, 2016). These factors include weak management accountability; incompetent school management; lack of culture of teaching, discipline and order; inadequate LTSM, weak teacher content knowledge; high teacher absenteeism; slow curriculum coverage with little homework and testing, high repetition and drop-out; and extremely weak learning (Spaull, 2012).

The extreme poverty experienced by rural black people is fueled by problems in schools, which should be providing education as a powerful weapon to change their circumstances and their destinies. Despite an endless list of contextual barriers experienced by public rural schools in South Africa, education has not changed to offer its people better future, citizens' participation in economy, and turning underprivileged circumstances faced by many rural people into better life. This study aims at exploring strategies that can emancipate and capacitate rural black people.

Using Technology to Advance Knowledge and Skills of the Rural Black People

Research indicates that technology impacts positively towards the advancement of teaching and learning (Jantjies & Joy, 2016). E-Education policy was introduced in South Africa in 2004 to spearhead the introduction of seamless and paperless education. Since literature reveals that technology impacts positively towards quality teaching, learning, and assessment, the integration of technology in education can benefit rural schools and people. Technology can be used as the delivery of teaching content, and for assessment (Shah 2013). This could be possible if DBE ensures that appropriate information and communication technology (ICT) is channeled to schools, appropriately trained ICT teachers are available and that appropriate ICT rooms are available in rural schools. However, schooling systems and development programs that are aimed at improving rural people, do not successfully integrate technology into their programs. The former teacher 2 highlights that:

“I am very annoyed by schools that deny children mobile education, whereas, in Gauteng, Vodacom offered schools with tablets for school teaching, learning, and assessment. Teachers and principals deny our kids to learn through hand-held technologies that will enhance their participation and learning. Something needs to be done about schools that still deny learners access to mobile learning in the 21st Century.”

Other research participants support this former teacher 2, on their experiences of denying learners access to the use of mobile technology for teaching and learning. The employed youth 1 indicates that technology has become part of our lives, and it has changed our social networking and workplaces. This must be the case in our schools. The school policies that deny learners from using their smartphones and tablets should not be accommodated if we are serious about changing the lives of school-going age and youth.

The integration of technology in teaching, learning, and assessment has become a topical issue, however, some schools still see technology as an obstruction and challenge to schools. South African schools have advanced technology for school administration and management systems but have not yet used this technology for teaching, learning, and assessment. This South African School Administration and Management Systems (SA-SAMS) was introduced in schools as computer applications specifically designed to meet the demands of management, administration, and governance in South African schools (Thobejane & Thaba-Nkadimene 2016). The stated authors outline five benefits of SA-SAMS as the facility in providing a platform to move towards paperless education as prescribed by e-Education policy-SA and to offer SMTs with administration support; time-tabling; school surveys, finance management, registration of learners. This study further indicates that SA-SAMS offers a platform to track and trace learners' movement in a system; manages teachers' and learners' profiles; and is useful for curriculum management: reports; schedules; assessment.

Based on many contextual factors experienced by public schooling systems, and lack of readiness status among rural public South African schools, our education system is far from reaping benefits of the use of technology in schools because of a lack of technology for teaching, learning, and assessment (Khumalo et al., 2015; Thaba-Nkadimene & Thobejane, 2016). Some schools indicate a dire need for integration of pedagogical technologies in teaching and learning, however, such schools have challenges in accessing such pedagogical technologies. Although initial strides were made in South Africa by DBE to bring technology for school administration and management systems. This could also be achieved in other South African public schools, particularly in rural schools. DBE should harness the use of technology by rural schools for school administration and management; for curriculum leadership and management and teaching, learning and assessment.

Encouraging Rural Entrepreneurship

Literature confirms that high inflation and unemployment coupled with poverty can aggravate rural people's circumstances and cause social instability. Unemployed youth 2 highlights that:

“I have seen people starting their businesses in our communities, and they suddenly collapsed. My uncle used his retrenchments pay-out to start brick making business and he

survived for six years, and then he was out of business. He used all his pay-out and invested in that business. Today the old man is poor, and he is only surviving on government pension funds. His major challenge was a lack of entrepreneurial and financial skills. Furthermore, our people start businesses that are not successful because they are not supported and developed into fully-fledged entrepreneurs. Furthermore, information communication technology (ICT) is still lacking, and makes it difficult for local entrepreneurs to use swapping machines and other technologies to support their businesses”.

Many rural black people enter into small and micro enterprises (SMEs), however, their businesses are not supported and developed, despite having Small Businesses Enterprises Ministry. A civic organization leader states that:

“I used to hear stories about government and NGO’s supporting and financing small businesses, however many people who started their own businesses continue to experience the same challenges that were experienced 25 years back before democracy. Their businesses collapse”.

Street trader echoes the same sentiments when alluding that:

“I was never employed, and I survive on street trading. My street trading business helped me a lot to address my family’s poverty because my parents are unemployed and are also poor. However, I am not ready to start any business in this remote rural area I am living in. I have seen many businesses run by very skilled retired principals and nurses collapsing, and I don’t want to take such risk. I opted to My street trading is done in Polokwane taxi rank where I am selling mealie cobs, peanuts, and vegetables. By chance, I can start a similar business as that of my uncle in townships where I am doing my street trading because the chances of survival and sustainability are high”.

Lack of adequate facilities is the reason that leads to business failure in rural areas. Some of rural black people dodge a cycle of poverty by resorting to street vendor businesses. The street vendor reveals a shocking situation that is eroding hopes of many South African, thus lack of jobs. Within rural poverty, there are youths who were never employed, and they are getting into their middle age without ever working, and this destroys their dignity and living a better life becomes a far-reached dream. This youth bulge phenomenon is escalating (Thobejane & Thaba-Nkadimene, 2017) both in rural areas and in townships, and the country is sited on a bomb that is about to explode. The youth without future hopes, triggers communal instabilities that were observed in the country through the basic service and fees must fall protests, that serves as evidence of such instabilities. Other youth members resort to crime, as means to alleviate poverty. Local Economic Development strategies need to integrate the prescripts of Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment, such as rural development, employment equity, skill development and promotion of rural entrepreneurship to address the destitute rural black people. There is dire need in promoting rural entrepreneurship, for job creation and alleviation of poverty. Many youths who were never employed can have a share in the economy through their economic participation, similar to the participants whose story was displayed above.

Local municipalities are expected to provide rural economic development and job opportunities to residents and citizens. And promotion of entrepreneurship in rural communities can boost economic growth, reduce unemployment and poverty (Thaba & Leshilo, 2016). Entrepreneurs are important to rural communities not only for the number of jobs they create, but

also for the impact they have on local economies (Simpkins 2006). Local communities with large number of destitute people should encourage and support rural entrepreneurship. Rural entrepreneurship can be considered as one of the solutions to reduce poverty, migration and develop employment in rural environments (Ansari et al., 2013)

CONCLUSION

South Africa has the potential for growth because of its reputation among African and international states, its growing population, and good democracy. The constitution protects all people living in South Africa and protects its citizens from hunger and starvation. Government has a great task to change the circumstances of 12 million people living in absolute poverty for the better. This study proposed the Conceptual Framework on Rural Economic Development that focuses on education, technology, and entrepreneurship as long-term strategies to improve the economic participation of rural people and rural economic development. The study recommends that the Conceptual Framework on Rural Economic Development be used to reach out to rural black South Africans, with empowerment and emancipation programs. South African government should improve the quality of education for rural communities and villages by the provision of adequate schools' physical and social infrastructure and other crucial resources. Furthermore, the government should ensure that rural schools and villages have adequate ICT Centers, appropriate technology and equipment, and internet accessibility to help develop entrepreneurship amongst rural people.

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