

IS SOUTH AFRICA'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION PROGRAM SUCCESSFUL? A FRAMEWORK FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship education has been adjudged as a process of building 21st-century skills, knowledge and inventive traits that are necessary for improving people's socioeconomic well-being. The present COVID 19 pandemic, which has resulted in significant job losses makes it even more imperative for policymakers to prioritize entrepreneurial education and training in higher education. While there has been substantial progress in terms of stakeholder financial commitment towards developing entrepreneurship education in South African tertiary institutions, the same cannot be said for the quality of graduates produced. What can be done to address the challenge of low skill levels among South African university students? This conceptual paper examines the factors that restrict the success of entrepreneurship education programs in South African higher education using an in-depth assessment of relevant literature. It does so by examining the link between the existing policy framework and skill development strategies in the higher education sector. By using experiential learning theory, the article provides a framework that is designed to stimulate effective skill acquisition drive in the system. The paper further argues that, as part of their experiential approaches, tertiary institutions should provide entrepreneurship education that includes a wide range of life-changing experiences such as; speed date competition, industrial tours, grooming, mentorship programs, and seminars, among others, these are imperative to enable students to absorb core skills, which is the real benchmark of a truly successful entrepreneurship education program.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, Skills Development, Experiential Learning, Mentorship, Policy Framework

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is becoming increasingly paramount in national and international policy for long-term economic development and for solving basic socio-economic issues. Small and medium-sized businesses are the largest employers in both developed and developing countries. (International Labour Organisation, 2020). Countries around the world have been investing massive monetary resources in skills-based training, particularly in the higher education sector, in order to strengthen citizens' productive capacities. However, in South Africa, the huge investment in entrepreneurship education and training in tertiary institutions is yet to reflect in the quality of graduates produced (Tewari & Ilesanmi, 2020). Hence, graduates' innovative and problem-solving abilities fall short of expectations.

Notably, some nations are economically affluent while others remain severely destitute due to a wide range of differences in innovation and entrepreneurial performance. As a result, policymakers must stress the need of improving the quality of entrepreneurial education in their respective fields (Gallo, 2020). Recognizing the importance of entrepreneurial behaviour in the development of a country, tertiary institutions are now encouraging business and non-business students to learn essential abilities that employers demand from job candidates. Based on the above, skills-based training provides beneficiaries with a dual benefit: it assists in the development of new entrepreneurs while also increasing students' prospects of launching successful businesses.

According to the 2021 report of Statistics South, unemployment in South Africa has increased by 34.4% (Chodorow-Reich & Coglianesi, 2021). This figure suggests a more proactive approach to employment creation and a faster pace of new venture development. In South Africa, there are a plethora of youth development programs, but their impact has been insignificant. Certain aspects of the training of potential entrepreneurs through higher institutions must be enhanced to successfully address the problem of youth unemployment (Bux & Van Vuuren, 2019) concur that entrepreneurship education may play a critical role in transforming youth attitudes regarding self-employment and obtaining the essential skills to run firms. Hence, demonstrating the right attitude in the start-up process is what actually matters, and this is what is absent in most entrepreneurship programs in South Africa.

This grim picture in South Africa, evidently substantiated by statistics, reflects a scarcity of young entrepreneurs and a lack of entrepreneurial culture in the youth movement. According to the GEM report (2021), South Africa is severely weak in "*entrepreneurship culture*." This chasm must be bridged in order to produce more jobs and develop markets. Despite the fact that South Africa's financial sector is far superior to that of most African countries, it is clear that the country is not performing as well as it should. Furthermore, despite several measures in South Africa to promote entrepreneurship, the degree of young participation in entrepreneurial activities, particularly in rural regions, remains low.

Based on the foregoing, this study examines the factors that restrict the success of entrepreneurship education programs in South African higher education by addressing the following research questions:

- What are the constraining factors to entrepreneurial skills acquisition drive among South African university students?
- What conceptual model framework can be developed to address low skill levels among university students in South Africa?

A Theoretical Consideration for Effective Skills Acquisition Drive

The experiential learning theory was built upon the earlier work of the duo of John Dewey and Kurt Levin by David A. Kolb, an American educational theorist. Learning process brings about knowledge creation through gradual and systematic transformation of experience. Experiential learning theory is a four-stage cyclical theory that combines concrete experience, perception, cognition and behaviour. It emphasises translation of concepts into practical tasks. This is the initial stage where the learning experience is acquired through mentoring in a learning environment. Learners gain skills when they are participate in learning activities. At the core of experiential learning is action. It goes beyond abstract concepts, learning-by-doing involves a direct encounter

with the phenomenon being studied. It utilizes actual experience with the phenomenon to validate a theory or concept.

The learning process is deemed incomplete if the learning experience cannot be replicated by the students after the learning process. The level at which students will focus on what they have been taught or experienced during the learning process is the reflective stage. This principle suggests that the learning experience should encourage all learners to reflect on it. By cooperative learning and action-based learning, the skills learned can be transferred. In order to learn to think about an action, contemplation must take place. Reflection occurs during human activity. A quite noticeable area of weakness in experiential learning theory is that most of the studies validating it involved students in academic, not business environments. Furthermore, the theory's inadequacy could be perceived from the fact that it ignores institutional influences on the various stages of skills acquisition. This theoretical framework supports the systematic acquisition of entrepreneurial skills through experience and practice. Furthermore, the framework has the potentials to facilitate a systematic analysis of data.

LITERATURE REVIEW

State of Entrepreneurship Education in South Africa

Historical overview: Since 1990, stakeholders in South African education and curriculum experts have been engaged in various local and international discourses for entrepreneurship development. A fundamental question in this regard is to find out whether young students could understand entrepreneurship matters and if so, it is also needful to investigate the extent to which young people comprehend matters of entrepreneurship (Davies, 1991). In 1991, stakeholders in the South African education system have been examining the feasibility of including entrepreneurship as a subject in the education system in the near future, in order to answer these and many other questions. It is imperative to state that the stakeholders in the South African education system have over the years worked together to develop the entrepreneurial spirit of the young students Figure 1.

The Department of Higher Education established Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) to promote the development of the universities of entrepreneurship is to promote entrepreneurial initiatives among the university students. EDHE is a human-focused programme. The goal is to develop students, academics and managers' entrepreneurial capabilities (Paek et al., 2021). This means that EDHE has been created to encourage students to succeed more economically during their tertiary education and after it. During their study, entrepreneurship could enable students to generate additional income and to quickly track the economic activity process. Upon graduation, students could regard enterprise as either their first choice or an alternative career, especially if they have difficulties finding a job.

The EDHE program's staff-oriented nature extends to the building of the capacity of university students and support professionals in the provision of informed and relevant business education services. This would include the provision of confidentially provided entrepreneurial education and culture to students across disciplines, as well as subject-specific entrepreneurship training. The EDHE Program is designed for all students across disciplines to make enterprise education and training generally accessible (Paek et al., 2021). It is therefore obvious from the above that EDHE service is a much-needed intervention, in which students are better equipped to participate successfully in the economy upon graduation, whether they are employed or not.

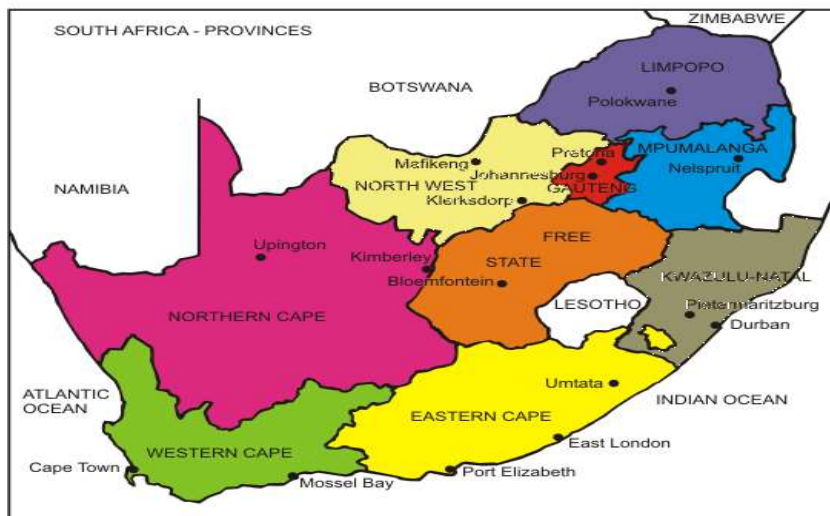


FIGURE 1
MAP OF SOUTH AFRICA

Universities have traditionally participated in the transfer of knowledge and should also focus on the use of that knowledge (Paek et al., 2021). These traditions include teaching students in a classroom with written evaluations to test the skills of learning objectives per curriculum. The work of universities is seldom translated by new ventures. However, improved interaction between universities and the industry is often based on the expectation that this would increase the rate of economic innovation. The notion that universities form part of the economic value chain promotes wider discussion on how universities design, influence and make use of the flow of knowledge (Paek et al., 2021). This means that universities should develop employees and students' entrepreneurial abilities; this would help them to develop innovative thinking and problem-solving skills. In turn, this can help translate ideas into new ventures.

Skills Development Strategy

The skills development strategy includes industry training, technical training which are being offered by the educational sector, training and quality assurance agencies. Except for Industry Training, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) is responsible for all other entities. Nevertheless, it can be said that the DHET entities work differently because the system lacks coordination (Wittmann et al., 2018).

Since the advent of democracy in 1994, South Africa has made significant progress in overcoming the heritage of skills development in its past. But, despite this development, low qualifications in most of the formerly disadvantaged population and the stubborn unemployment rate remains one of the most pressing concerns in the country, and one of the greatest impediments to a better future for all, especially among young people (15-30 years). The challenge of developing skills as a result of the restrictive educational and training policies of the past cannot be overcome easily. In addition to the overall pressures caused by globalisation, the nation faces some unique domestic challenges in the field of development of skills. The main reasons for these challenges have been the Apartheid era (Wittmann et al., 2018).

Furthermore while content is important, it is equally important how the concept is being taught. Methods of learning determine the level of participation of students. Therefore Universities

must use appropriate methods that allow the practical use of the learning material and the holistic development of the required skills. This concerns both theoretical and practical aspects of business in the context of entrepreneurial work. They allow students to develop free and creative thinking in the application of knowledge and theory in the real-world through efficient teaching techniques that go beyond formulas in textbooks.

Funding

The funding for youth entrepreneurship can be divided into two categories: the demand and supply of entrepreneurship. The impact is in relation to youth enterprises that have access to funding and meet the funding needs of different institutions or individuals, and the second is in relation to supply, which explains how major institutions that support young entrepreneurs and the impact of different funding programs can support their operations. (Greenwood, 2021). The growth of small, youth-owned companies is limited by the lack of finance, poor management skills, and liquidity limits of youth-owned firms, among other things, that can be overcome with such credit instruments. In addition, Turcan & Fraser (2018), states that a lack of access to information available on private external funding opportunities generally contributes to the constraints that youth entrepreneurs come across in search for start-up capital as it relates to the demand side argument. Key limitations that prevent young entrepreneurs from accessing their business ventures' funding opportunities are as follows:

- Lack of securities (for debt finance) and credibility
- Business and skills deficiency (debt financing)
- Strict methodologies and regulations for credit scoring
- Complex procedures for documentation
- Long periods of waiting

The author further argues that insufficient microfinance institutions worldwide make the cost of finance on an equal basis difficult for borrowers. This presents a monopoly challenge which makes it difficult for the credit providers to serve society on a large scale and limit customers' negotiating power to select the financial package that is most affordable. The author further reports that student's entrepreneurs are usually disadvantaged in terms of access to capital since they are considered too risky, their age and social status often constitute justification for excluding them from the microfinance system. This suggests that the provision of microcredit has made further advances in improving the standard of living for disadvantaged and poor communities worldwide, but in particular, the student sector has been prevented from having access to financing for their companies by restrictive policies.

Policy Framework

Over the years, South Africa has recognized the importance of entrepreneurial development and the support of an environment for developing small businesses in the country, in particular, ever since the birth of democracy. As a result, a number of support actions and initiatives have been initiated on the basis of the Department of Finance pronouncement in the South African National White Paper (1995) and the implementation of the strategy of Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR). (Greenwood, 2021). Thus, South African government institutions at all levels have come under pressure to inculcate entrepreneurial skills into the psyche of the youths.

Critically assessed, GEM standards reflect that South Africa ranks poorly in both opportunity entrepreneurship and new firm activity. This makes it critical for South African policymakers to pay serious attention to the development and monitoring of a policy environment that is enabling and one that enhances entrepreneurship and innovation. On the basis of the above, GEM standards show that South Africa is poorly positioned both in enterprise opportunities and in the establishment of new ventures. This makes it essential for policymakers in South Africa to pay serious attention to the development and monitoring of an enabling and innovative policy environment.

In South Africa, one of the main challenges is to offer a training program addressing an ever-increasing rate of unemployment. Politicians believe that more entrepreneurship is needed if economic growth and innovation are to reach greater levels. Empirical research also encourages positive connections between entrepreneurship and economic results (Greenwood, 2021). It is therefore noted that such education is promoted and implemented in many South African universities curricula.

In view of the studies above, the author's arguments are based on entrepreneurship studies revealed that the main purpose of the universities' curricula in entrepreneurship programs is to identify and stimulate the drives, talents and capabilities of entrepreneurship; to allow for the development of autonomous behaviours. These authors' findings indicate that existing entrepreneurial programs do not deal with social or economic issues. Entrepreneurship education studies have been carried out but in South Africa, no such studies exist.

Curriculum

In order to make entrepreneurship a major theme to be learned, the South African curriculum at the school level must be transformed as well as in the higher education system. The problem could be that access to other students could be restricted to achieve a measure of parity for students from underprivileged backgrounds. This requires further expansion in higher education. However, there is a problem that there are no acceptable paradigms or appropriate theories about curriculum content in entrepreneurship education (Ratten, & Usmanij, 2021).

For South African universities, the above-mentioned is a fundamental challenge to overcome through meaningful investigative initiatives. Vaal Technology University has recognized the importance of entrepreneurship and states on its website, among other institutions of higher education: The Vaal Technology University is engaged in the development of higher education, To create an environment conducive to the development of behaviour, attitudes and social skills through cultural, sporting and personal development activities, to produce innovative and relevant research which addresses industry and community problems Ratten, & Usmanij (2021). Therefore, to create a culture of lifelong learning to empower South African communities by sharing knowledge, skills and resources, all these functions will be enhanced by national and international partnerships in order to meet the needs of stakeholders of a democratic society.

According to Shambare & Donga (2019), entrepreneurs should have enough multifaceted skills and flexibility to compete worldwide and also be able to detect domestic and international trends. They should also isolate, identify and take advantage of entrepreneurial opportunities which have the potential for growth. Entrepreneurship courses should differentiate business and entrepreneurial qualifications carefully. Business courses are quite essential, however, such courses may not actually improve an individual's entrepreneurial skills. Shambare & Donga (2019), argues that entrepreneurial education should train students to gain knowledge and skills to bring an idea,

process or invention to the full business potential from conception. The author, therefore, opines that practical experience is an essential component of entrepreneurship education.

Curriculum for University Entrepreneurship must be reinvented. Entrepreneurship educators could not claim to know everything, but to co-establish knowledge especially working in close contact with the private sector and practitioners, with different scholars from different disciplines and institutes. For business lecturers, the challenge now is to identify current needs, how these needs can be quantified and what value can be added to current socio-economic development in South Africa (Shambare & Donga, 2019). This implies that yesterday's competitive business advantage may not be applicable today.

Factors Affecting Entrepreneurial Skill Acquisition among University Students in South Africa

Many authors have written on factors affecting entrepreneurial skills acquisition among undergraduates in South Africa. The primary challenge revolves around; inappropriate syllabi, lack of entrepreneurial supports, weak entrepreneurial culture, students' lack of exposure, lack of entrepreneurial networks, ineffective training, family background, mentoring and coaching, scarcity of incubators among others.

Overemphasis on Theory Delivery

In most South African universities, students lack practical orientation in entrepreneurship education. The students are only trained to pass examinations. According to Motaung (2021), inappropriate curriculum content in the area of entrepreneurial education is the basic reality in South Africa. University graduates are not being stimulated to think outside the box, create jobs for themselves or even become employers at a time when jobs are scarce and unemployment high. Therefore, there is a need for core skills training. In higher education curricula currently, the author, noted that institutions still lag behind in entrepreneurial engagement based on the fact that most institutions focus more on the theory to the detriment of practical aspects of entrepreneurship. The author further opines that education given to students appears to promote job seeking rather than the creation of jobs. The author further emphasized that it would be very useful for Nigerian society to emphasize job creation in all its ramifications. Turcan & Fraser (2018), also hope that the socio-economic well-being of the society will be enhanced by ensuring that entrepreneurial culture among students is refined.

The authors pointed out further that the education system should be able to instil the knowledge, skills and attitudes of an entrepreneur in students, acknowledge the provision of entrepreneurship training by several high schools in South Africa. However, the theoretical aspect of entrepreneurship is likely to be more central. Nevertheless, the authors suggest that it is necessary to establish business incubators in universities so that unemployment can be successfully addressed. Society believes that white-collar jobs are superior to entrepreneurship. The authors argue that incubators could assist students with practical exposure by connecting theoretical courses with practical training.

The author added that the incubators must be able to provide the young people and potential young entrepreneurs with technical support and guidance on management in all matters relating to the industry Mahadea & Kaseeram (2018), argue that in order to establish a vibrant South

African labour market, youths should consider starting their own jobs as a choice, instead of pursuing paid work, this will help to fight against this high unemployment rate.

Inappropriate Subject Content

The basic reality in South Africa is inappropriate learning content in the field of entrepreneurial education. Not only are university graduates ill-prepared for the workplace, but they are also often not even sufficiently qualified. According to Ratten & Usmanij (2021), it is imperative for entrepreneurship educators to embrace innovativeness in their instructional delivery; this will help to inculcate innovative thinking into students' psyches. This shows clearly that for a curriculum content to be purposeful, it should have a link to the socio-economic needs of the society. In South Africa for instance, the NDP envisages that higher education should contribute to entrepreneurship building and development. The curriculum must be sufficiently comprehensive to prepare students to acquire business skills and knowledge. Ideally, a student entrepreneur should be adequately qualified to draw up a decent business plan after graduating (Shambare & Donga, 2019). This implies a certain category of graduates from South African universities lacks the basic skills required to excel in the labour market.

In South Africa, undertaking education programmes often provide students with theoretical knowledge which does not necessarily expose students to the practical application of that knowledge; entrepreneurship is promoted using both formal and informal learning modes, which are extracurricular activities and teaching methods. Ratten & Usmanij (2021), therefore, points out that many researchers are identifying the obvious lack of a functional curricular guide for informing pedagogical education in the entrepreneurial methodology as a major disadvantage in South Africa's higher education system.

To ensure that knowledge is systematically upgraded over time a good curriculum must be phased out and integrated. To align African universities with international best practices in order to enable universities to engage students in practical entrepreneurship activities, Bawa (2020), feels that participants should work towards supporting institutions by developing special policies and strategies, which are aligned with international best practices. The implication of the foregoing discussion is that the curriculum content of entrepreneurship has not produced the desired results, this reflects in university graduates not only ill-prepared for business, but they are also often not employable. Therefore, for course content in any education setting to be useful, it should be in line with the economic realities of the country.

Weak University Support for Enterprising Students

University students in South Africa do not benefit from university support in exploring innovative ideas and businesses. In contrast to many universities' mantra of entrepreneurship, South African students appear to receive training just to become employees. However, Ogujiuba, & Boshoff (2020), EDHE, indicates that the University Community of Practice organ of EDHE supports entrepreneurial students who do business while also studying. Similarly, Tiemann et al (2018), also reveals that a growing number of universities are practically embracing the culture of providing an adequate support system for student entrepreneurs. While the development of small and medium-sized enterprises is widely recognized as a key objective of tertiary entrepreneurship development, universities seem to be proactively developing ventures driven by students. The genesis of Facebook is a classic example. Harvard University has almost ended what has now

become one of the world's most influential ICT ventures. This suggests that, despite claiming support and commitment for new venture creation, many universities fail to live up to this ideal.

Universities take the view that sustainable development should be integrated into the university's enterprise support system or that sustainability activity should be carried forward and promoted with an entrepreneurial spirit, to enhance their currently weak support systems. In addition, they believe that research should be strengthened on the entrepreneurial support system in order to gain empirical insight into the success factors in implementing effective university support systems for sustainable enterprise (Tiemann et al., 2018). Hence, training for entrepreneurship is as essential as supporting campus entrepreneurial activities. Thus, universities should have a clear mission towards entrepreneurship, which is focused on changing mindsets and clear expectations of what they want to achieve.

Family Background

The majority of South African university students emanate from homes where parents have no business acumen. Bawa (2020) stated that children who grow up in families where a family member owned a business are more likely to develop skills and aptitude to start up their own business or become involved in the family business. Previous studies also show that friends, family and neighbours who own businesses have a great impact on the formation of attitudes and intentions of a person to establish a business. According to Tiemann et al. (2018), the family may play an important role in developing confidence, creating new ideas and affecting their career path. Parents create the need in young people to become an entrepreneur with their attitudes, emotions and experience with self-employment, behaviours and actions. Parents also play an important role because they function as carriers of value. Thus, the greater percentage of South African youths belongs to parents who are not entrepreneurially inclined.

Access to Financial Institutions

Many South African student entrepreneurs have never pitched a group of funders with their business ideas, or have researched the market or produced a plan for businesses. Young people often have little capital to fund their efforts and are less likely to receive financing with sufficient credit ratings (Bux & Van-vuuren, 2019). The cycles of social injustice and income inequality in South Africa's history exacerbate these problems. Most young entrepreneurs from South Africa are founded by the poorest people in society and many of them have little or no information on available funding sources for establishing new enterprises. In addition, many banks in South Africa have a conservative culture. Banks and other lenders often resist lending money to student entrepreneurs, as they see it as risky investments to finance campus start-ups. Therefore, prospective student entrepreneurs need to have documentation so that the projected value can be shown by widely accepted methods (Bux & Van-vuuren, 2019).

Entrepreneurs generally perceive poor access to capital as a major barrier to new enterprises. (Greenwood, 2021), however, claim that in terms of capital access, South African students are no better off than other African nations. Even though South Africa has the most developed financial system on the continent, however, the funds are not easily made available for inexperienced and young entrepreneurs and the borrowing costs are quite costly. The consensus is that student entrepreneurs are often at a disadvantage when it comes to securing bank loans.

Young people who set up businesses have used personal savings or borrowed money from friends or families to start-up businesses because they have poor access to financial institutions. There is a current trend for young people in developing countries including South Africa to cultivate saving culture. The author further submits that culture of saving among young South Africans is indeed poor, since individuals prefer to spend their money on commodities rather than investing. This implies that the majority of young entrepreneurs in South Africa lack finance to start-up businesses, they lack financial literacy, there is also a scarcity of mentors required to encourage them to save or invest money to start-up businesses in future.

Lecturers' Capacity

Currently, there is a need for practical training in the South African university curriculum. Turcan & Fraser (2018) noted the drawbacks of learning institutions when it comes to entrepreneurship as most lecturers focus more on theoretical aspects of entrepreneurial training. The author also opines that entrepreneurship education is currently being provided in such a way that it propels students to become job seekers rather than job creators. A group of employers would be much more useful for societal development than employees. Likewise, Mahadea & Kaseeram (2018), believe that it is helpful for young people to discover their talent through the promotion of entrepreneurial culture among students. The authors also submit that the education system should be able to promote entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and attitudes. This implies that several higher learning institutions in South Africa provide entrepreneurship education. However, the lecturers often focus more on the theoretical aspect of entrepreneurship.

Lack of skills Acquisition Centres

Lack of skills acquisition centres is a notable challenge in South African universities. Van der Bawa (2020), cautions that although there is an extensive correlation between tertiary education and entrepreneurship, the acquisition of university education does not necessarily turn a person into an entrepreneur, particularly in the face of infrastructural challenges like lack of entrepreneurial skills acquisition centres. The most successful programmes are those that provide practical guidance to entrepreneurship education through functional skills acquisition centres, which are not present in most South African universities. Students should be stimulated to become entrepreneurial, only classroom entrepreneurship studies are not enough.

Although authors such as Bawa (2020), recognize that many barriers to student entrepreneurship, the literature does not clearly identify the strategies universities can use to mitigate those barriers, even though many authors have studied the link between students' perceptions and entrepreneurship intentions in order to understand the phenomenon of student entrepreneurship. The prevalence of business-planning skills and entrepreneurial promotion as factors that influence entrepreneurial activity. Clearly, this indicates that students are less likely to be motivated to choose entrepreneurship as a career path in situations where university entrepreneurship development centres are either not available or dysfunctional, this makes it impossible for students to be exposed to real business scenarios, therefore, they are less likely to be motivated to choose entrepreneurship as a career path.

Inappropriate Teaching Methods

It is notable that in South African universities, the teaching method of entrepreneurship is not practical enough. This applies to the teaching both theoretical and practical aspects of new firms in the context of entrepreneurship. According to Lackeus (2020), some learning platforms are more impactful on students than others, such as innovative interaction with the outside world and empirical value creation for others. Although contents are important, how they are taught is equally vital. Teaching methods determine the level of commitment of students. Therefore, universities should adopt methods of teaching that permit the practical application and holistic development of skills required by undergraduates. They allow students to develop free and creative thinking in the application of knowledge and theory in the real world through effective teaching of practical over recitations of formulas in textbooks (Shambare & Donga, 2019). This implies that experiential methods of teaching entrepreneurship are lacking in the system.

The combination of conventional and innovative teaching methods is effective. Traditional or passive methods have to do with classroom lectures, whereas innovative methods involve favourable interaction between the student entrepreneurs and the coach. Therefore, Shambare & Donga (2019), avers that in order to be career-driven, entrepreneurship will require the introduction of action-based methods or innovative ways to encourage questioning, review and practical discussions with experienced and successful entrepreneurs.

Maritz & Brown (2013), are also of the opinion that while traditional lecture methods may be effective, it is clearly notable that experiential methods reflect the unpredictable nature of entrepreneurship and offer student entrepreneurs' greater opportunities to deal with real problems. In addition to traditional teaching methods, Shambare & Donga (2019), also asserts that different alternative approaches can be used to promote entrepreneurship education and develop students' skills. In light of the foregoing discussion about how entrepreneurship should be taught, scholars generally believed that an optimal combination of both traditional and experiential approaches is imperative, whereas the practical orientation is conspicuously lacking in some South African universities.

Students' Lack of Exposure

There are two distinct ways of defining students' lack of exposure to entrepreneurial views and realities in the South African context. First, the majority of the students are often from poor backgrounds and are not generally exposed to real-world entrepreneurship as a result of widespread poverty. Furthermore, the entrepreneurial intentions of the Black Students are about 50% lower than those of other ethnic groups because of the apartheid legacy (Zambrano & Ordenana, 2020). Second, the universities now enroll ill-prepared students due to the apartheid Bantu education system. The foregoing is observed in combination with underfunded and under-resourced universities, many universities are unable to afford the proper training to raise the exposure of the student. The view presented above is about the socioeconomic inequality that exists within South African society, which leads to a lack of exposure to entrepreneurial realities.

Weak Entrepreneurial Culture

The entrepreneurial spirit required by an individual to start a new venture is clearly absent in the psyche of the majority of young South Africans (Turcan & Fraser, 2018), entrepreneurial culture is a mentality that covers an individual's motivation and ability to discover the opportunity and pursue it in order to create wealth or financial success independently or in the context of an

organization. The customs and societal values have little or no correlation with the development of personal enterprise. This obstacle is traceable to each entrepreneur's background and culture. The spirit of entrepreneurship is a feature of the collective personality, determined by social culture and values (Fatoki & Chindoga, 2012). Based on the foregoing, it is clear that some of the elements that promote this weak entrepreneurial culture include passive education, reluctance to take risks, self-sufficiency and complacency.

Many individuals in South Africa are risk-averse and society tends to be disappointed with those who have to end up as failures after failing in business endeavours (Forbes, 2015). Some of the most successful entrepreneurs in the world actually failed in their first attempt. If South Africa is able to successfully stimulate and support an enterprise culture, student entrepreneurs will be better equipped to start and grow businesses. Since the SMME industry has been identified as a key vehicle for addressing low levels of unemployment and economic growth, more needs to be done to promote a culture that fosters entrepreneurial output (Forbes, 2015). This implies that given the country's high unemployment rate, many people turned to entrepreneurship out of necessity. If a strong entrepreneurial culture is entrenched in South Africa, more individuals would turn to this career path out of opportunity instead.

A major obstacle that demotivates students and hinders the development of youth entrepreneurship is the attitude of South African society. Society's expectations of young people contribute to the low growth of youth entrepreneurship (Turcan & Fraser, 2018). Parents and elderly people have different expectations from young people and most encourage white-collar jobs because they believe it is the best way to get money. Thus, the youth are offered little encouragement to start up their business.

South African youth are under pressure from parents who think their children will have to go and find jobs to make money after graduation. The author also stated that the attitudes of the parent make it difficult for young people to start personal enterprises, parents tend to pressurise them to seek for salaried work to combat poverty (Nani, 2016). This implies that the majority of the older generation in South African society does not encourage the younger generation to become entrepreneurial. This societal norm makes it difficult for the youths to develop interest in acquiring skills required to start their businesses.

The Dearth of Entrepreneurial Networks

Young men and women in South Africa lack successful entrepreneurs as role models because seasoned entrepreneurs are not celebrated as creators of jobs (Lackeus, 2020). As a result, young people do place very little premiums on entrepreneurial matters, and this scenario has not helped to ameliorate the menace of unemployment in the country. In addition, young people have no role models to encourage them to become successful entrepreneurs. According to Vezi-Magigaba (2018); Tombini Wittmann et al. (2018) a fundamental challenge is the absence of mentoring and networking opportunities, in addition, there is a paucity of guidance on how to build networks that will yield positive results.

The governments of South Africa and the media have no role models for young entrepreneurs; the society concentrates on promoting leaders in politics. Most young people in the country do not see business as a career. Bawa (2020), states that the society that lacks youth network, this networks includes business owners required to encourage young people in their entrepreneurial journey, this necessitates a situation where graduates are tempted to choose job stability rather than seeking for opportunities to start their own businesses. This implies that the

majority of South African youths are not connected with entrepreneurial networks and successful entrepreneurs as role models.

According to Tiemann et al. (2018), emerging entrepreneurs in South African have more contacts in their networks, although most network members are friends or a family member, which differs from the international findings, in which the majority of the network members are experienced entrepreneurs. Tiemann et al. (2018), suggests that high compositional networks would lead to more desirable results and that entrepreneurs with more numerous networks would be better positioned to use knowledge systems accurately and efficiently as they develop their business. This implies that entrepreneurial networks increase the chances of business success. Entrepreneurs cannot operate in isolation. Frontline entrepreneurs still need to connect with others and rely on their help to make their ideas better and achieve the desired results.

Mentoring and Coaching

In South African universities, entrepreneurial mentors needed to influence the future generation are clearly not present. Such mentors are required to provide entrepreneurs with intensive coaching in real-time on how to build a successful company; share their long-standing experience and strong strategic thinking in order to refine their business model, attract skills, fund sources and build a strong, efficient organization (Shambare & Donga, 2019). The business mentor aims at developing an individual's executive and entrepreneurial abilities, according to Shambare & Donga (2019), to make an emerging entrepreneur a long-term sustainable business.

In addition, a range of managerial and business skills is important for starting, managing and growing a business during the business cycle phases. Based on the above, it is logical to argue that entrepreneurship mentors in South African universities are few to influence the future generation. These mentors have to provide entrepreneurs with intensive real-time coaching on how to build a successful business, share the expertise they have gained over many years, and participate in a strong strategy for revising the business model, attracting talent, funding resources and building a strong, efficient organization.

Paucity of Incubators

In some South African universities, the new wave of Student Entrepreneurship Programme has driven few entrepreneurial-minded undergraduates to start coming up with sound business ideas, but in order to generate start-ups, the absence of business incubators in the universities to help translate the idea into reality is the bane, it is necessary to establish business incubators within universities. Society believes that white-collar work is superior to entrepreneurship (Bawa, 2020). According to Bawa (2020), undergraduates' access to mentors is significantly limited by resource and time constraints.

Incubators can assist students with practical exposure by linking theoretical training to practical training. The author also stated that such incubators need to be able to provide youth and potential young entrepreneurs with technical support and management guidance in all business issues. After completing their university education, many young people will have to struggle to find jobs in the South African labour market Mahadea & Kaseeram (2018). Thus, in spite of the scarcity of incubators, the youths should still consider starting their own ventures as a choice, there are creative ways of overcoming the common obstacles limiting the progress of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions.

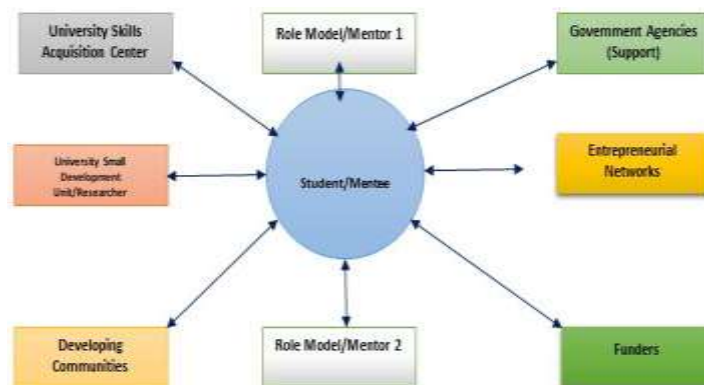
SUMMARY

The cynosure of this study has been the constraining factors affecting entrepreneurial skills acquisition in a South African university context. The paper reveals that in spite of the government's effort to remedy the low skills levels among university students – the majority of the undergraduates are still faced with skills acquisition challenges. The skills-gap cuts across the entire spectrum of South African universities. The skills acquisition barriers revolve around: overemphasis on theory delivery, inappropriate subject content, weak university support for enterprising students, family background, accessibility to funders, lecturers' capacity, lack of skills acquisition centres, inappropriate, students' lack of exposure, weak entrepreneurship culture, dearth of functional entrepreneurial networks, inadequate mentoring program and paucity of incubators on campus.

The inhibiting factors do not only undercut undergraduates' capacity to acquire foundational skills but also have the propensities to trigger socio-economic decadence in the entire society. Based on the above, the following framework is designed and recommended.

The Proposed Skills Acquisition Framework and Discussion

As emphasized by (Malatji, 2016; Maddock & Maroun, 2018), that rather than traditional rote learning, most undergraduates could build key abilities through hands-on projects, which is an experiential learning technique. As a result, the proposed skills acquisition approach is critical in assisting young people in two dimensions; it makes students more employable as well as provides succour for enterprising an student which is required to enable them to overcome their fear of failure and unforeseen difficulties when establishing a new business. The inclusion of the 'Entrepreneurial Role Model' is the framework's most essential concept. As a result, the proposed skills acquisition approach is critical in assisting young people in two dimensions; it makes students more employable as well as provides succour for enterprising an student which is required to enable them to overcome their fear of failure and unforeseen difficulties when establishing a new business. The inclusion of the '*Entrepreneurial Role Model*' is the new and the most essential concept in the framework Figure 2.



Source: Lead Author

FIGURE 2
THE PROPOSED SKILLS ACQUISITION MODEL

The author argues that successful entrepreneurs should serve as role models. This echoes the views of Akinlade (2019); Kitts & Mahacek (2017); Lackeus (2020) who submit that having multiple role models is essential for success. This submission emphasizes the idea of a synergistic effect when two or more role models are combined. The rapid changes in the digital dispensation might provoke new inquiries which may no longer be answerable by a single role model.

The following players must be continuously involved in the framework's operation, for it to be successful:

- Undergraduates
- Seasoned Entrepreneurs as Role Models
- Funders
- Government Agencies
- Researchers
- Entrepreneurial Networks

The author raises concerns about the existing rote learning approach in South African schools, which has failed to generate the anticipated results. This framework was created on the premise that seasoned entrepreneurs can convey their entrepreneurial talents to university students in the same manner which experienced surgeons can transfer their surgical skills to interns. The entrepreneur takes the lead and offers explanations based on the wealth of extensive experience. The mentee eventually acquires abilities through everyday practice. The mentee's everyday practice results in retrospective, adaptive, and proactive learning. The author goes on to say that the mentorship technique is the most practical way to obtain essential skills since it is an arrangement in which learning takes place in situations that are very similar to real life.

Critically assessed, the proposed framework has the potential to develop competent entrepreneurs while also enhancing student employability. The undergraduate is the framework's nucleus; hence it may be described as a student-centred framework. Despite the fact that the framework's conception is based on best practices from around the world in the field of entrepreneurship education and training, it is necessary to test and reassess the model to determine which components must be added to improve its effectiveness. Employers in South Africa seek workers who can reason and act like entrepreneurs; as a result, university students must embrace the skills necessary to compete favourably in the ever-changing market for labour. Based on the above, skills-based training provides beneficiaries with a dual benefit: it assists in the development of new entrepreneurs while also increasing students' prospects of launching successful businesses.

CONCLUSION

Globally, the hands-on approach to entrepreneurship education has been proven to be a vital form of skill learning. The author submits that proper implementation of the model will improve the quality of education and training in South Africa, and it may also be duplicated in other African countries that operate in similar circumstances. The paper further argues that, as part of their experiential approaches, tertiary institutions should provide entrepreneurship education that includes a wide range of life-changing experiences such as; speed date competition, industrial tours, grooming, mentorship programs, and seminars, among others, these are imperative to enable students to absorb core skills, which is the real benchmark of a truly successful entrepreneurship education program.

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