

VALUE OF LANGUAGE AND COMMUNITY STRUCTURES IN DEVELOPING ENTREPRENEURSHIP CAPACITY: VOICES OF UNEMPLOYED YOUTH IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on the study that examined the voices of unemployed youth on entrepreneurial development and support by using language and community structures that builds up a sustained networks and relationships. This paper responds to two main research questions, namely 'what is the influence of language on understanding the entrepreneurial content during training and development? What is the value of community structures in promoting sustainable networks and relationships?' The study is informed by the Indigenous Social Capital Conceptual Model; and it premised within interpretivism paradigm that informed the use of interviews qualitative techniques. Data was collected among twelve (12) unemployed youth in Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality in Limpopo Province. It was found that the use of English language as a hindrance to entrepreneurial activities and training, whereas community structures were found to be the preferred communication channels and bedrocks for sustained networking and a required relationship for entrepreneurial support and development. As part of the conclusion, this study recommends that the support and development of unemployed youth should address the challenges associated with the use of English; instead use local languages. Furthermore, the study endorses the value of community structure. This study recommends that South African intervention programme that aimed at developing entrepreneurial skills of unemployed youth should be grounded on the Indigenous Social Capital Conceptual Model; that emphasises on the use of local indigenous languages and promotion of sustainable relationship and networks through community structures.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Capacity Building, Indigenous Social Capital Conceptual Model, Local Languages, Training and Development, Unemployed Youth.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

“South Africa has an acute problem of youth unemployment that requires a multi-prolonged strategy to raise employment and support inclusion and social cohesion. High unemployment means young people are not acquiring the skills or experience needed to drive the economy forward”.

The official insertion from one department in South Africa shows the high levels of youth unemployment in South Africa that is characterized by young with low levels of education and lacks strategic skills and experience required for economic growth. South African government acknowledges the primary cause of youth unemployment as a lack of skills that results in a slow economy that fails to create jobs. Unemployment is a problem affecting both

young and old South Africans. Together with poverty and inequality, they left the majority of citizens destitute, after their hopes were raised after 1994 when apartheid was phased out in favour of democracy. The persistence challenge of youth unemployment is perpetuated by low national skills and education levels, high crime rate, poor service delivery (UNAIDS, 2020); an AIDS epidemic that has cost 71 000 lives in 2018 alone with 7,700 000 people living with HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS, 2020). The situation was made worst by emergence of the corona virus in 2020; and up to date, the situation is not yet destabilised.

During corona virus period, South African government rolled-out a relief of R350; and as little as it was; some individuals were able to turn it into profitable business. But the problem is that a few, could that due to differing family circumstances and locality. On the other hand, the government is burdened by hand-outs given to the needy and unemployed youth to mitigates the effects of poverty, while it is also expected to come up with programs to create job opportunities. Safety nets are viewed as *“core instruments for reducing poverty; addressing inequality; and helping poor and vulnerable households to manage risk more effectively”*. However, the safety nets of destitute South Africans; come with increased government spending. Although South African government invested a lot in developing physical and human infrastructure, public and private labor markets still fail to assimilate youth. We strongly believe that a high level of youth unemployment perpetuates social ills and the civil upheavals that result from service delivery protest, xenophobic events, and criminal activities are the result of unoccupied and idling youth.

The researchers strongly believe that the creation of an entrepreneurial platform can mitigate and prevent civil upheavals through the provision of life with purpose. The creation of jobs has become one of the government priorities, with the aim of eradicating poverty that denies ordinary citizens chances of good standard life; creates space for citizens' active economic participation active; and contributes to economic growth.

South Africa like other African states, is experiencing high levels of unemployment (International Labour Organization (ILO) 2016), and youth unemployment in particular. Unemployment is not a current issue in democratic South Africa, it is recurring and inherited from apartheid, South Africa. The South African government under the leadership of the African National Congress (ANC) is not successful in addressing the scourge of unemployment, and youth unemployment in particular. Rocketing unemployment has become a global phenomenon and has left the global communities in a state of destitute. According to ILO *“Global workforce totalling 1.5 billion people secure poor job quality and vulnerable employment.”*

This paper reports on the study that examined the voices of unemployed youth on entrepreneurial development and support by using language and community structures that build networks and sustainable relationships as informed by the Indigenous Social Capital Conceptual Model. In advancing the objectives of the study, two primary research questions are answered, namely, *“what is the influence of language on understanding the entrepreneurial content during training and development? What is the value of community structures in promoting sustainable networks and relationships?”*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Indigenous Social Capital Model (ISCM) conceptual framework

Indigenous Social Capital Model (ISCM) offers a conceptual framework and informs the formulation of research questions that focused on how language and community structures, networking and relationship. The researchers strongly believe that Indigenous Social Capital

Conceptual Model Thaba et al. (2016) can promote entrepreneurial development and support in South Africa. This model puts emphasis on meta-perspectives of entrepreneurial development such as language; systems; society; and community that are crucial to any intervention that target youth unemployment. In this paper, language and community structures are singled out to understand challenges that youth in Lepelle-Nkumpi are exposed to. Furthermore, language and community structures offer strategic direction on how youth entrepreneurial development and support should unfold.

Background and Current Status of Youth Unemployment

The current status of youth unemployment in South Africa twenty-eight years in democracy has resulted in a “*declaration of a state of emergency*”. Unemployment rate of youth aged between 15-34 accounts for 63, 4% of total unemployment [at the rate of 27, 6%] in South Africa. Highlights that “*high youth unemployment has always been one of the most pressing socio-economic problems of South Africa*”. Youth unemployment results with devastating effects such as psychological stress De Witte et al. (2012), contributes to poverty and income inequality levels. Furthermore, youth unemployment frustrates the youth and increases crime, violence, and other negative socio-economic factors (Tshabalala, 2014). Youth unemployment was found to cause high levels of crime in South Africa. Youth unemployment has resulted in youth having little trust in the government of the day, instead, they join in protests foreigners that lead to xenophobic attacks and killings. They misdirect their anger through xenophobic attacks because they think foreigners from sister countries are reaping them of their job opportunities. They further misdirect their situation of distress, despair, and anger on local municipalities, by vandalizing public goods and putting them under fire. The primary cause of burning public goods results from their total dependence on hand-outs, and local government and local municipalities become targets of such acts.

There are multiple factors that contributed to youth unemployment in South Africa. The perpetual crisis in South African basic and higher education systems contribute to youth unemployment. Poor education system and Low-quality education lack of teachers in strategic school subjects, inadequacies in teacher supply, poor and dilapidated schools’ school buildings, lack of schools ‘connectivity and educational technologies (Lekgothoane & Thaba-Nkadimene, 2019). In support, Thaba-Nkadimene & Mmakola (2019) highlight “*lack of teaching competencies, lack of school resources and infrastructure and challenged home background*” as factors that affect the quality of teaching and learning in public schools. Research further reveals a lack of educational technologies in schools; teachers who still prefer to use traditional instead of digital pedagogies; and stringent schoolworking conditions (Lekgothoane & Thaba-Nkadimene, 2019).

Youth Unemployment is a Hindrance for Prospects of SA School-Going Age and Graduates

Youth Unemployment is a hindrance towards prospects of school-going age and higher education students (Graham & Mlatsheni, 2015). This current status of youth unemployment creates the situation of fear and despair to job seekers; and an equal rate puts school-going age and higher education students at the edge of hopelessness and anguish situations. This situation boils back to the value of education as described by the former president of South Africa, Nelson Mandela when he alludes that education can be used as a weapon to change one’s world for the

better. The value of education and good life is rendered nonsensical and leaves youth with no confidence for a better life.

Lack of job opportunities fails the majority of educated black South African, and both public and private labor markets are saturated. To perpetuate this situation, more jobs are lost through right-sizing, down-sizing, and retrenchment. The adoption of neo-liberal policies of capitalism can be blamed for job cuts and conditions of the high unemployment among the South Africans, and youth unemployment in particular. The government should have addressed the past disparities by improving the circumstances surrounding youth unemployment through fiscal policies, however, its efforts to mitigate unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, had resulted in little or insignificant effect.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The study was premised within interpretivist paradigm that informed the use of qualitative techniques. Interpretivism and qualitative paradigms are connected because both create space for the researchers to collect data that is relevant that can be used to provide practical solutions (Mohajan, 2018). In support, Thanh & Thanh (2015) highlight qualitative methods as the preferred trend of interpretivist researchers.

The study aimed at examining the voices of unemployed youth to unveil the truth about their lived experiences and reflections; and the research paradigm such as interpretivism and interviews qualitative methods are suited for revealing such truth and realities. In this study, interpretivism aids the researchers' understanding of the contemporary social world (Chowdhury, 2014). In this study, the experiences and reflections of unemployed youth are crucial in understanding their scourge and desperation; as well as their survival strategies that are not limited to but include, ways they reach out to their basic needs; and their dealings with emotional stress.

The rationale for such combination lies within the premises of interpretivism and qualitative methods that 'knowledge of reality is socially constructed' Pham (2018) and its inherent need to understand the phenomenon from subjective perspectives of the participants Mohajan (2018), and its context (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this study, the experiences and reflections of unemployed youth are crucial in understanding their scourge and desperation; as well as their survival strategies that are not limited to but include, ways they reach out to their basic needs; and their dealings with emotional stress. Qualitative research offers a "*detailed understanding of human behavior, emotions, attitudes, and experiences*" (Jong et al., 2012) as well as perceptions and reflections.

Data was gathered among twelve (12) unemployed youth in Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality in Limpopo Province using individual and exploratory interviews. A total of six participants belong to group 1 of drop outs of the school, which is further subdivided into primary, secondary, and higher education drop each sub-category with 2 participants per sub-group. Data were analyzed using content and narrative analysis.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The first research finding emanates from the research question, 'does the language used during entrepreneurial meetings and training influences the understanding of content discussed? Motivate. It revealed that language was found to be a hindrance to entrepreneurial activities and

training. The language was found to be a hindrance to entrepreneurial activities and training (Dlodlo 2009; Wang 2011; Du Toit et al., 2018). Two groups of unemployed youth are differently affected by English as the language of Business communication. Group 1 of the Drop-outs group is mostly affected than Graduates group.

Participant 1 indicates that: *“I attended three training sessions for youth development and support; and English was used as a communication medium. I found the exercise fruitless because it was difficult for me to understand many things discussed in the English language”*

Participant 4 further reveals that: *“The use of English in entrepreneurial training is a challenge to some of us. Sometimes I hear what is taught, but I fail to comprehend each word to make sense of what was taught. Though I wanted to hear and understand everything said, it was difficult because my benefits of the training session were compromised”*. As such, these results indicate that the English language is still a barrier to most people. I think the use of the English language should be avoided if all audiences or learners use a common indigenous language.

In the same breadth, Participant 3 stresses that: *“using English for me, it’s like back days in school. I want to hear every word, and understand what I must do to change my situation. However, the use of English is common, and I stand to benefit little from training exercises”*. In general research, participants were not happy about the use of English during their training session. Participant 3 was also blaming the use of the English language and has put it crystal clear that the use of English denies them space to reap fully from the intentions of the program. Similarly, Research indicates a lack of or poorer education and low skills as the cause for poor participation in entrepreneurial programs (Dlodlo, 2009; UNAIDS, 2020; Du Toit, 2013).

Furthermore, Wang (2011) indicated that the English language is an obstacle to business formation and integration. For citizens to succeed in business communication, Gonzalez (2017) proposed strives for proficiency in the English language. This study contradicts Gonzalez’s proposed solution; in favor of the use of local indigenous language. This is in line with the Indigenous Social Capital Model Thaba et al. (2016) that the priority of community support should consider communicating in the language spoken by trainees without compromise.

The Indigenous Social Capital model is clear on the use of local and indigenous language for entrepreneurial development programs and other community development initiatives. It indicates that *“a language of communication needs to be a language that is understood by all stakeholders. This facilitates understanding and compliance by new entrepreneurs”* (Thaba & Leshilo, 2016).

The use of local indigenous language is crucial in ensuring that learning material is understood and assimilated as expected. However, it is clear that programs rolled within the jurisdiction of Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality, use the English language instead of using common community languages, Sepedi or Isi-Ndebele. The use of the English language in training sessions was found to be a challenge because it obscured the understanding of the learning process and communication during training sessions. The level of education of target population needs to be considered, because English is learned in schools, and there are great chances that those who dropped out of school, might not have acquired proficiency skills to express themselves in English; or understand learning content delivered orally or in written form.

Finally, community structures were found to be the preferred communication channels and bedrocks for sustained networking and a required relationship for entrepreneurial support and development. This research finding emanates from the research question, *“do you think community structures promote sustainable networks and relationship? Motivate.”*.

In this structure, information is easily shared, using different networks and channels. Ndoro et al. (2018) findings which show that information is easily accessible through different channels of the communiqué by networking with various stakeholders.

Participant 6 from Category 1, indicates that *“the dissemination of information through community structure can easily reach many people within a day, without much effort or cost. I know of social media available such as WhatsApp and Facebook, but I spend days without data and connectivity becomes my challenge. But through a word of mouth, information moves swiftly from one individual to another and from one household to another”*

Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality is mainly rural; and people who live in the villages are in many cases, without connectivity and others don't have access to smartphones or personal computers. Thinking of communication using current social media becomes a challenge to those coming from poor households and living in destitute.

Participant 10 highlighted that: My community actively participates in many community structures, and disseminating information is very easy to reach all unemployed youth within a day. Majority of participants indicated that community structures are reliable means of communication and sustainable networking and relationship can be created. This study indicated the value of community structures in creating a platform for effective communication, and serve as a bedrock for sustainable networks and relationships.

If entrepreneurial development and support programs targeting Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipalities and the related context in South Africa are to be successful, entrepreneurial support and development suppliers should use the local and indigenous language used by targeted youth; and strategic information about training and related issues should be communicated using community structures; that Lepelle-Nkumpi's youth referred to as bedrocks for sustainable network and relationship.

CONCLUSION

This paper shared the results of this study that examined the voices of unemployed youth on entrepreneurial development and support by using language and community structures that has the capacity to serve as communication channel; and sustainable networks and relationships as informed by Indigenous Social Capital Conceptual Model. The research findings revealed that language was found to be a hindrance to entrepreneurial activities and training. Furthermore, community structures were found to be the preferred communication channels and bedrocks for sustained networking and relationship required for successful entrepreneurial support and development. This study recommends the use of local and indigenous language for communication and delivery of the entrepreneurial curriculum. Furthermore, community structures should be used as communication channels; and for the sustenance of created networks and relationships. Lastly, the study recommends that entrepreneurial capacity building in rural areas, should be informed by Indigenous Social Capital Conceptual Model.

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