

Assuring Rural Youths Better Future through Partnerships: The Case of Tiger Kloof Educational Institution, Vryburg, South Africa

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ABSTRACT Tiger Kloof Educational Institution has been in existence for over hundred years and has contributed to the provision of education to people from all walks of life. The objective of this paper was to find out how the youth of South Africa can be helped to acquire the skills and experiences they need to be able to participate in the economy through public-private partnerships. A qualitative research approach was used where through the purposive sampling technique, partners from the private sector organizations, past and present students from Tiger Kloof were interviewed on the programmes that are being used to give school leavers the skills and experiences they need to participate in the economy. The findings of the exploratory study indicated that through partnerships the rural youth could be trained in knowledge and skills for employment.

INTRODUCTION

Education is regarded by many as the best way to level the playing field for all citizens in a modern democratic country. The Commonwealth Secretariat (2011) notes that “*education is a liberating force... as well as a contributor to social and economic development. Education should produce thinkers rather than mere implementers*”. It is a common knowledge that education is able to facilitate people who are born into poverty and other disadvantaged situations for them to reach the highest levels of modern societies. President Barak Obama is one of such people. Tiger Kloof Educational Institution has been in existence for over hundred years and has contributed to the provision of education to people from all walks of life. The school was referred to in the past as “a trainer of carpenters and presidents” because of its comprehensive programmes which equipped its learners with vocational, technical and academic skills. A number of prominent Africans from this country and beyond were educated at this prestigious college. Some of these prominent people include Sir Seretse Khama, Sir Quett Masire and the current Mayor of Vryburg, Dr Ruth Segomotso Mompati. The founders of the school had the vision of providing quality education for the children in the then Bachelanaland Protectorate where teachers, pastors, artisans and children received their education until the early sixties when the

school was closed as a result of the introduction of Bantu Education. The diverse nature of the curriculum of the institution enabled it to gain recognition and praise from various quarters. Mgadla (1994) notes that Kgosi Sechele pledged support for Tiger Kloof at its opening ceremony for providing sound education as its curriculum stressed academic and industrial education rather than scripture. This view of curriculum has been maintained to a large extent when the school was reopened in 1995. After the new political dispensation, some well-meaning individuals and some old boys and girls mooted the idea to restart the institution which had been appropriated to some white farmers. A section 21 Company was formed which partnered with some private sector organizations and the North West Department of Education to rekindle the vision of the original founders. This partnership has made access to a comprehensive education possible for many rural children throughout the country. These rural children now excel in the academic, sports and cultural fields and leadership. This paper argues that public, and private partnerships can contribute to a win-win situation for all the stakeholders. There have been some acrimonious debates and exchanges between the different political parties in the country on how the high youth unemployment crisis can be addressed. The proposition of a youth wage subsidy has met resistance from the labour union COSATU on the issue. For example The Congress of South African

Trade Union (COASTU) (2012) described the proposed youth wage subsidy as irrelevant and waste of resources quoting the ILO (2011) which reported that “research in various countries has shown that wage subsidies lead to combined deadweight and substitution effects of the order of 70-90% of the number of jobs created. Quoting the UN and the African Development Bank, Donnelly (2012) alludes that the two institutions back a youth wage subsidy as the subsidies where they have been applied allows companies to recruit young people into the labour market which would not happen without it. A qualitative research approach was used where through the purposive sampling technique some board members and the partners from the private sector organizations were interviewed on the programmes and achievements of the institution. The findings of the exploratory study indicated that through partnerships the rural youth could be trained in knowledge and skills for employment. The practice is recommended to other private sector businesses, NGOs as a model through which the youth of South Africa, most especially from the rural areas can be helped to acquire the needed skills as well as guidance in their career choice. It is further recommended that the private sector organisations that are involved in these laudable initiatives should be supported by government for them to do more.

Theoretical Framework

This paper uses the Community Coalition Action Theory (CCAT) as a theoretical base. The theory was developed by Butterfross and Kegler (2002) on the basis of literature and personal experiences. The proponents of the theory saw community coalitions as “a group of individuals representing different organizations, factions, interest groups or constituencies within a community who agree to work together to pursue a common goal”. They point out that the CCAT is made up of fourteen major constructs and twenty-three propositions which relate to the constructs. According to Butterfross and Kegler (2002), the CCAT provides a basis for understanding the processes, structures, and outcomes experienced by any effective community coalitions. Dotterweich (2006) uses the Assets Coming Together (ACT) concept as the basis for building effective community partnerships for youth development. According to Dutterweich (2006), the

most effective partnerships are differentiated by their ability to accomplish the following four tasks namely (1) clearly define the purpose and vision of the initiative, (2) establish a community development partnership organizational structure and membership (3) develop collaborative work processes, and (4) create sustained momentum. A lot of the issues in Dotterweich’s propositions are similar to Butterfross and Kegler’s fourteen constructs and 23 propositions. This theory is applicable to this study as the need to achieve youth development in this rural area is being achieved through coalitions and partnerships between different stakeholders (Tiger Kloof and the 3 private sector businesses) who are putting resources together to better the lives of the youth through skills development initiatives. Tiger Kloof identifies Grade 12 learners who want to have one year work experience after school to enable them to acquire the skills to join the labour market. Those who are identified through what they call “My First CV” are taken to one of the companies in Johannesburg for interview. About five of them who are found suitable are taken and placed in the three companies for one year. The three companies have formed partnership and are collaborating with TK in addressing real societal problem such as youth unemployment.

Research Questions

- ♦ What are the motives for the “My First CV” initiative?
- ♦ What form of skills and training do the participating companies offer the learners?
- ♦ How do the beneficiaries rate their one year experiences?
- ♦ Where are the past trainees currently?

METHODOLOGY

In this exploratory study the researcher employed the phenomenological approach to gather data from *the companies that are part of the “My First CV Initiative and the past and current trainees*. The phenomenological approach was used because it allows the respondents to describe and interpret experiences of the phenomenon as being lived. The phenomological study is a study that attempts to understand people’s perceptions, perspectives, and understanding of a particular situation (Leedy and Ormrod 2005).

Population

Population is defined as the aggregate of cases with a common assigned criterion and features as subjects for a study. The target population for this study is all the three companies involved in the My First CV programme and the past and present beneficiaries from the programme.

Sampling

The limited number of the companies involved in the programme and past and present trainees make the use of the non-probability sampling approach ideal for such a study. In non-probability sampling the researcher has no way of ensuring that each of the elements of the population will be represented in the sample. In this study the convenience sampling technique is used because it is easy to identify all the companies and the trainees involved in the programme. In addition to that money and time constraints made the researcher to use his contacts with Tiger Kloof to get access to some of the companies and the present and past beneficiaries of the programme.

Criteria for Inclusion in the Study

The companies that are were considered for the study had to meet the following criteria:

- ♦ should have participated in the “My First CV” Programme for the past two years
- ♦ a beneficiary from the programme (past or currently in internship).

Data Collection

The researcher solicited the help of one of the board members of Tiger Kloof Educational Institution who is one of the organisers of the group of companies who call themselves “Friends of Tiger Kloof”. He linked me up with the managers of the three companies. The three companies then mandated one of the managers of one of the companies to speak on their behalf as they operate the same programme based on their memorandum of understanding. The convenient sampling technique in which particular settings, persons or events are selected deliberately in order to provide information that cannot be obtained from other choices (Wilson 2010). In

this study the participants were the manager of one of the companies that represented the three companies and two past and two current beneficiaries of the internship programme. The interviews conducted telephonically as this was the preferred method the manager and the beneficiaries agreed on. The interviews were tape recorded in addition to a journal that was used to record issues which frequently occurred in all the four different interviews that were conducted. The interviews with the manager lasted for 30 minutes. The interviews with the former interns and current ones lasted for around 15 minutes each. The interview questions for both the manager and the beneficiaries were based on the research questions in this research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following were the themes from the managers of the participating organisations form part of the finding which answer some of the research questions:

The manager indicated that they are in partnership with Tiger Kloof which is located in a rural area where the learners find it very difficult to get the needed experience job employers look for in the labour market. The “My CV” programme is an attempt by the companies to provide the experience for the beneficiaries so that they can join the labour market or get the guidance they need in their tertiary education and career choices. The programme he indicated is meant for those who actually want to work for one reason or the other. The findings indicate that the programme is in the second year since its inception with 8 beneficiaries (3 young men and five girls).

Work Experiences Provided the Companies

The manager indicated that the interns are exposed to all the functional areas of the businesses the three companies operate as well as the soft skills they need in any working environment. The functional areas include the switchboard, operations, finance, and logistics, just to name a few. On the soft skills the interns are exposed to how to interact with people, dress code for the office, interacting with superiors and manage which the interns who were interviewed confirmed. The companies do not retain the trainees as they intend providing the skills they need for the labour market so that when they leave another cohort can be taken for the following year.

It was found that the support the company offers include a stipend of R5000.00 per month, subsidised accommodation which was confirmed by the trainees.

The Interns

The interns interviewed confirmed the exposures the manager mentioned in all the functional areas and the soft skills they are offered. All the three indicated that they are very happy with the training the companies offer as one person is fully employed now and another having a part-time job. Two of the former trainees are in tertiary institutions where one of them is logistics and another accounting which they never were exposed to at school.

It is through collaboration and partnership that this noble initiative is being realised that is between Tiger Kloof and the companies that call themselves "Friends of Tiger Kloof" which is helping in bringing socio-economic changes to the lives of the youth in the rural areas. This is in line with the statement of the Commonwealth Secretariat (2011:12) which notes that "*education is a liberating force... as well as a contributor to social and economic development. Education should produce thinkers rather than mere implementers*". The initiative is in a way a youth wage subsidy which Donnelly (2012) quoting the World Bank if well applied allows companies to recruit young people to join the labour market. The application of the CCAT as suggested by Butterfross and Kegler (2002) can be applied by researchers, government and development practitioners in training the youth of South Africa for them to be able to take part in the economy of the country and reduce the unacceptably high rate among them the country. One of the current interns had this to say "I have been exposed to a lot of things at through this programme and this is going to help me with my career choice and future study".

CONCLUSION

The "My first CV" programme is bringing changes in the lives of the South African youth as they are being given the chance to acquire the skills and the experiences employers look for when recruiting. Both the companies and the interns are happy with the programme so far as the companies think they are contributing to social investment where the interns are able to learn

while getting economic support from the companies. For the interns who go to tertiary institution, the companies are making it possible for the choice of careers and courses they have to study at tertiary institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the literature and the case study, the following recommendations are made as to how the "My First CV" initiative can be improved and expanded to benefit the country in general and the youth in particular:

- ♦ The government should channel some of the funds such as the proposed youth wage subsidies to companies that are already involved in the programme and those that are interested in being part of it.
- ♦ Institutions of higher learning should use their influence and networks with government, the business sector and NGOs to give graduates the chance to get the needed skills employers look for so that they can be offered.
- ♦ The companies involved can create a database for the graduates and link this to employers who may require their services.
- ♦ The private sector businesses should be encouraged to emulate the examples of such companies and be given incentives to continue their good work.

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