

Skills Shortage in South Africa: Perspectives from High School Educators

Antonio Domingos Mateus¹, Chux Gervase Iwu² and Charles Allen-Ile³

Faculty of Business, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa
E-mail: ¹<manuchot25@gmail.com>, ²<chuxiwu@gmail.com>, ³<allenilec@cput.ac.za>

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ABSTRACT This original research sought to obtain the perceptions of high school educators in South Africa with respect to the cause and effects of skills shortage in South Africa. The choice of the educators was justified because they taught subjects which are labelled critical subjects that result in learners possibly possessing specialist skills in Health Sciences, Engineering and Accounting. This research made use of both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection, while analysis was descriptive in nature. Findings in this research suggest that several reasons account for skills shortage. However, more importantly, the educators indicated that skills shortage manifested in ugly social behaviours. The authors proffer several recommendations. Chief among them was the call for a collaborative engagement of the scourge among business, government, and academic institutions. The authors also recommend that further research be taken up to provide evidence on the extent of entrepreneurial keenness of learners from disadvantaged townships in South Africa so as to find alternative ways of improving their standard of living. The research was set in a South African township.

INTRODUCTION

In South Africa, one of the most serious structural constraints with regard to economic growth and unemployment is skills shortage (The Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE) 2010: 9; Rasool and Botha 2011: 1). In fact in a 2008 survey, Grant Thornton reported that 48 percent of privately held businesses conceded that the availability of a skilled workforce was the greatest constraint to business growth in South Africa. Lewis, in 2002, even warned that without an adequate pool of skilled people, South Africa would not be able to overcome its most pressing problem, namely sustaining economic growth, and job creation. The argument here is that with adequate skills, economic growth will be sustained, jobs are then likely to be created; consequently poverty can be reduced and the living conditions of a majority of the country's population may improve.

The opposite will present a much negative consequence. For instance, the anger of township residents who live in unsanitary conditions owing to a lack of engineers from the municipality; the frustration of employers who cannot find qualified candidates to fill vacant positions;

young South Africans who would discover that their qualifications and skills are much more appreciated elsewhere than in their own country; and the disappointment of those who are qualified, but cannot find jobs. All of these, according to Johnston (2007), can be blamed on skills shortage.

Various factors are listed as reasons for skills shortage in South Africa. These include the country's apartheid history, the migration of skilled professionals to other parts of the world before and during 1994, and policies such as Affirmation Action that led to many skilled professionals leaving the country for fear that the policy would not be to their advantage. Alam and Hoque (2010: 535) as well as Fourier (2006) are in agreement with the above views. Sebusi (2007: 1) concurs by admitting that the loss of South African skilled professionals through migration has hugely contributed to skills shortage in the country. According to Bhorat (2001: 3), the unequal education system of the apartheid era is also another factor, since it was differentiated along racial and gender lines, thus adding to the poor quality of education. Furthermore, Levinsohn (2008) argues that the transitional government of 1994 inherited an economy that had systematically disadvantaged most of the population. According to Levinsohn, Blacks were deliberately subjected to a second-class education; labour laws were established to impede their advancement; business policies prohibited them from

Address for Correspondence:

Dr. Chux Gervase Iwu
Faculty of Business
Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa
E-mail: iwuc@cput.ac.za or chuxiwu@gmail.com

owning a firm; and certain laws kept them from occupying places and living in many of the metropolitan areas that were the centre of trade. Levinsohn went on to say that this situation created an unequal distribution of wealth and a high rate of unemployment and poverty across the country, leaving those that struggled throughout the apartheid era to excessively bear the price of unemployment and live below the poverty line.

The schooling structure is another factor to blame for skills shortage in South Africa. Breier and Erasmus (2009) found that as a result of the negligence and dysfunction of the education system, a small pool of high school graduates has the necessary grades and subjects to access programmes such as Engineering, Health Sciences, and Accounting. This small pool consisting of a few Black and Coloured students create a severe limitation at a time when programmes like these are required to achieve a more representative student population. Moreover, these professions – Engineering, Health Sciences, and Accounting – are required to meet the employment equity criteria.

Globalisation and the shift to a service economy have made the movement of skilled people from one country to another, easy. Therefore brain drain can be counted as one of the factors that have given rise to skills shortage in South Africa (Crush and McDonald 2002: 1). According to Crush and McDonald (2002: 20), many South African doctors attributed their emigration to many factors, including better working conditions and better salaries overseas, but also to a lack of safety and security, poor economic conditions, and poor social services. Brain drain leads to depletion or loss of intellectual and technical personnel, with a negative outcome that impacts the economic and social growth of the country. Breier and Erasmus (2009) seem to agree with Crush and McDonald. They state that skills shortage in South Africa can also be associated with poor working conditions, particularly in the health sector. Like in the education sector, the public health sector has been historically underfunded and neglected with rural facilities most affected, increasing the work load, but also placing at risk the health of health workers. Crush and McDonald (2002) further argue that crime, the economy and service could possibly be key grievances among all skilled South Africans.

Referring to a report, which was released in 2007 by Deloitte and Touché, Solidarity Research

Institute (SRI) confirmed that 81 percent of companies struggled to find appropriate staff, with 76 percent attributing the problem to difficulties in finding employment equity candidates. Fasset (2009), an education and training authority agrees. Fasset argued that the lack of qualified Black employees was a major problem, particularly in high ranking occupations and professional categories where employers found it difficult to meet their employment equity targets because of the unavailability of suitably qualified Black people. The South African Institute of Architects also argued that 80 percent of the country's architectural practices experienced shortages of up to 40 percent while the National Research Foundation (NRF) struggled with a lack of research capacity (SRI 2008). According to NRF, the country had to produce approximately 6 000 science and technology PhD graduates per year in order to ensure that the country remained competitive in the global knowledge economy. In addition, Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (Jip-SA) (2007: 13) argued that in spite of the fact that the economy produced approximately 5 000 artisans per year, South Africa still experienced a severe shortage of well-qualified, competent and experienced artisans; meaning that the country needed at least 12 500 artisans over a period of four years to meet demand.

Skills shortage affects both the private and public sector in different ways. In the public sector, skills shortage has hindered government's ability to fight crime, as well as its ability to provide services, which range from healthcare and emergency services to education and electricity (Johnston 2007). The private sector particularly gets labelled as going against the aspiration of government to have a diverse workforce; because they struggle to find people of colour with relevant skills (SRI 2008).

Objectives of the Research

This research set out to inquire about three key issues – causes of skills shortages, effects of skills shortages and expected interventions by government. Both the causes and effects queries targeted the socioeconomics of the concepts, which was principally to be achieved by eliciting the views of educators in high schools in Khayelitsha, Cape Town through a mixed research method. The sixty educators who participated in this research taught subjects such as

Maths and Science, Business Economics and Economics. The researchers decided to target these educators to get their perceptions of the skills situation because they were considered to be well informed regarding the problem under investigation, particularly when these subjects have not only been labelled essential subjects for the critical skills lacking in the country (Reddy 2005), but also seen as subjects which give the youth a better chance of finding a job (Business Day 2013).

Significance of the Research

This paper no doubt provides useful information regarding the socioeconomic impact of skills shortage in Khayelitsha in particular, but also in South Africa generally. Moreover, the findings of this research may also help government and other stakeholders such as the Departments of Labour, and Education, academic institutions, and different SETA's with possible solutions and recommendations to deal with the causes and effects of skills shortage in the country. Most significantly, essential subjects' educators in South Africa disclose, for the first time, their perceptions of the causes, effects and possible interventions of government in respect of the scourge.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A mixed methods strategy was adopted because the researchers believed it would best serve the objectives of the research. For a study that dealt with a social context such as this one, the alternative was the use of qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting data from the field by using a survey questionnaire that was both open and close ended. Also in order to gain more in-depth knowledge about perceptions of skills shortage in Khayelitsha, the research was further complemented with qualitative data collection by way of open-ended interviews. The interviews assisted in gathering and analysing information conveyed through language and behavioural exhibits in natural settings (Burns and Burns 2008), and also assisted the researchers to understand what was being studied (Maree 2007). The qualitative methodology thus enabled the researchers to explore, and identify evidence, opinions, perceptions and effects of skills short-

age in the township of Khayelitsha. Data was analysed with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v19). SPSS is a resourceful package that allows different types of analysis, data transformations, and forms of output (Chinedu and Wilson 2009: 17).

Research Population

The population for this research consisted of high school educators in the eighteen (18) high schools located in Khayelitsha. Purposive sampling was adopted because of the need to ensure that the population that best served the purpose of the research was represented (De Vos et al. 2009). Of the eighty (80) educators that were targeted, only sixty (60) valid responses were received from the educators who taught Maths and Science, Business Economics, Accounting and Economics. The choice of these educators was considered necessary because these subjects are regarded as subjects that lead to the attainment of professions such as Health Sciences, Engineering, and Accounting. These are some of the professions that have felt severe losses (through brain drain, migration) of practitioners.

Data Collection Instrument

The questionnaire was designed and developed by the researchers, with guidance from a statistician. After compiling the survey items, a pilot test was conducted in one high school, where twenty (20) copies of the questionnaire were administered. Pilot studies are conducted with either a sub-sample of the proposed sample or a small representative of the proposed sample. According to De Vos et al. (2009), a pilot study helps to find out if there are questions, which respondents might find difficult to understand; to rephrase such questions so as to make them easily understandable for the necessary response to be extracted, while at the same time establishing the acceptance of the questionnaire in use; and establishing the probability of favourable reception and return of it.

The questionnaire contained semi-structured, closed-ended and open-ended questions. Welman et al. (2005: 174) state that an open-ended question is one in which the researcher asks a question without any prompting with regard to the range of answers expected. The open-ended

questions were questions 6 (what is your perception of the skills shortage in the area?) and 18 (Is the use of African skilled foreigners an alternative to bridge the skills shortage in South Africa? If yes, how?). Participants were asked to comment freely on both questions. Before distributing the questionnaire to participants, permission was sought from the school principals of the targeted schools, and the subsequent administration of the questionnaires was done with the assistance of two research assistants at the different schools. This meant that the researchers had a session with the targeted educators so as to explain the procedure before they complete the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A intended to capture demographic details of the participants, while Section B was designed to capture the perceptions of educators with respect to skills shortage in a Likert, Rank Order and Forced Comparison formats.

Data Analysis Procedures

Descriptive statistics (for quantitative analysis) and content analyses (for qualitative analysis) were the two techniques, which were employed to analyse the data. These descriptive statistical and content analysis methods were used to systematize data into simpler ways and to emphasise features, which were most relevant to this research. The data was represented in different categories, numerically, as outlined in Table 1.

Under the gender and employment categories, data was coded as '1' for Male and '2' for Female and '1' representing permanent job (Full-time) and '2' for temporary job (Part-time). In the age category, data was coded in the manner in which the table indicates above. Under the race category, Black was coded as 1, White as 2, while Coloured and Indian/Asian were coded as 3 and 4 respectively. Under level of education, data was coded in the manner shown in the Table 1.

Table 2 presents the demographic properties of the participants. Sixty valid responses were received from participants. There were nineteen males, and forty one females. Majority of the respondents were between 31-40 years old, while only one respondent was Coloured. Also, majority of the respondents had a college degree and worked full-time.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings are presented under four different headings (subsections) namely causes of skills shortages, effects of skills shortages, and expected government interventions. Tables 3 to 7 represent findings for causes of skills shortage. Tables 8 to 16 represent findings for effects of skills shortages, while Tables 17 to 22 represent expected government interventions. The fourth subsection is the qualitative description of our findings. Here, the researchers present a descriptive interpretation of significant findings tied to the responses of the participants.

Table 1: Coding of items in Section A: Demographic properties

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Employment</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Ethnic group</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Code</i>
Male	1	Full-time (permanent)	1	Black	1	Under 21	1	Primary (grades 1-7)	1
Female	2	Part-time (temporary)	2	White	2	21-30	2	High school (grades 8-12)	2
				Coloured	3	31-40	3	Vocational profession	3
				Indian/Asian	4	41-50	4	Diploma	4
					5	51-60	5	Degree	5
				6	61-over	6	Master's	6	
							Degree	6	
			Doctoral	7					
			Degree	7					
			Others	8					

Table 2: Demographic properties of participants

<i>Gender</i>	<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Ethnic group</i>	<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Educa- tion</i>	<i>Frequ- ency</i>	<i>Employ- ment</i>	<i>Frequ- ency</i>
<i>Frequency</i>									
Male	19	21-30	12	Black	59	Primary	1	Full time	51
Female	41	31-40	24	Coloured red	1	(grades 1-7)	2	Part time	8
		41-50	12			High		1	Missing
		51-60	10			school	16	value	
		61- over	missing value			(grades 8-12)	38		
						Diploma			
						Degree			
						Master's			

Causes of Skills Shortages

Table 3 reveals that from a total of 60 respondents, majority of the respondents -79.3 percent - agreed that skills shortage in Khayelitsha was a result of a lack of education. This result is in consonance with Richardson (2007: 8) and Jip-SA's (2007: 2) arguments that a major reason for skills shortage is a lack of education in townships.

Table 4 indicates that 71.6 percent of the respondents were of the opinion that skills shortage was caused by a lack of resources in schools. This finding confirms Breier and Erasmus' (2009: 1) previous findings which blamed a lack of re-

sources in schools as a contributing factor to skills shortage in the area.

A majority of respondents agreed that HIV/Aids has an impact on skills shortage in the area (Table 5). This finding corresponds with van Schalkwyk (2008) and Nkomo (2010) who asserted that HIV/Aids contributed to a decline in productivity in all sectors owing to illness and absenteeism. Nkomo (2010) specifically hinted that the disease could weaken the educational system by preventing children of affected families from attending school.

Of the 60 respondents, 54.3 percent of the respondents support the argument that the migration of skilled South Africans to other parts

Table 3: Lack of education (n=60)

<i>Skills shortage in my area is a result of a lack of education</i>					
		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
Valid	Strongly agree	30	50.0	51.7	51.7
	Agree	16	26.7	27.6	79.3
	Unsure	5	8.3	8.6	87.9
	Disagree	6	10.0	10.3	98.3
	Strongly Disagree	1	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	58	96.7	100.0	
Missing	System	2	3.3		
	Total	60	100.0		

Table 4: Lack of resources in schools (n=60)

<i>Skills shortage can be ascribed to a lack of resources in schools as a result of unequal education prior to 1994</i>					
		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
Valid	Strongly agree	20	33.3	33.3	33.3
	Agree	23	38.3	38.3	71.7
	Unsure	11	18.3	18.3	90.0
	Disagree	5	8.3	8.3	98.3
	Strongly Disagree	1	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 5: HIV/Aids (n=60)

<i>Skills shortage in my neighbourhood is a result of the HIV/ Aids pandemic in the country</i>					
		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
Valid	Strongly agree	2	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Agree	25	41.7	41.7	45.0
	Unsure	13	21.7	21.7	66.7
	Disagree	14	23.3	23.3	90.0
	Strongly Disagree	6	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 6: Migration of South African skilled professionals (n=60)

Skills shortage in South Africa is as a result of migration of South African skilled professionals to other parts of the world

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
Valid	Strongly agree	6	10.0	10.2	10.2
	Agree	26	43.3	44.1	54.2
	Unsure	16	26.7	27.1	81.4
	Disagree	9	15.0	15.3	96.6
	Strongly Disagree	2	3.3	3.4	100.0
	Total	59	98.3	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.7		
	Total	60	100.0		

of the world contributes to skills shortage in the country (Alam and Hoque 2010; Crush and McDonald 2002; Fourier 2006) (see Table 6).

Of the 60 respondents, 77.9 percent agreed that skills shortage exists as a result of learning structures that should recover from decades of neglect and dysfunction under the apartheid regime (see Table 7). This finding supports Fiske and Ladd (2006) as well as Liebbrandt et al.'s (2010) findings. This perspective is somewhat also shared by Hoogeveen and Özler (2005) and Terreblanche (2005) who feel that given the skewed economic system under apartheid, education and the health systems available to the Blacks may not have offered so much.

Findings on Effects of Lack of Skills

Table 8 demonstrates that of the 60 respondents, 81.4 percent said yes and 3.4 percent said no, while the remaining 15.3 percent did not know whether the lack of skills affected the economic status of people in the area. The findings give us an indication that a majority of respondents (81.4%) perceive a lack of skills as an impediment to high economic status.

A total of 86.7 percent of the respondents affirmed that skills shortage contributes to poverty in the area, while 1.7 percent disagreed (Table 9). One can argue that without a skill, it is highly unlikely for one to access a well paid job.

Table 10 indicates that a majority of the respondents (88.1 %) perceive skills shortage as having major implications for service delivery and quality of service in the area. The finding supports Johnston (2007) in the argument that skills shortage in South Africa was felt in many different ways, including the anger of township residents who live in unsanitary conditions due to a lack of skilled professionals.

Table 11 shows that a majority of respondents perceive the absence of skills amongst the target population as having a major impact on crime. This finding supports Moser's (1999) claim that unemployment could lead to crime and many other social ills.

When asked whether skills shortage contributed to violence in the community, respondents' perception was in the affirmative. Out of 60 respondents, 90 percent of the respondents agreed that skills shortage was a contributor to violence in the area (Table 12). This finding is not surprising given previous responses – skills shortage reducing economic status; skills shortage relating to poverty; and skills shortage affecting service delivery.

The finding in Table 13 (86.7% positive response) affirms Rasool and Botha (2011: 1); CDE (2010: 9) and Richardson's (2007: 8) arguments that a lack of skills limits economic growth and contributes to high levels of unemployment.

Table 7: Skewed education system (n=60)

Skills shortage exists in my area as a result of the learning structure that should still overcome decades of neglect and dysfunction under Apartheid

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
Valid	Strongly agree	15	25.0	25.4	25.4
	Agree	31	51.7	52.5	78.0
	Unsure	9	15.0	15.3	93.2
	Disagree	4	6.7	6.8	100.0
	Total	59	98.3	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.7		
	Total	60	100.0		

Table 8: Economic status of people (n=60)

Does the lack of skills affect the economic status of people in your area?

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
Valid	Yes	48	80.0	81.4	81.4
	No	2	3.3	3.4	84.7
	I do not know	9	15.0	15.3	100.0
	Total	59	98.3	100.0	
	Missing	System	1	1.7	
	Total	60	100.0		

Table 9: Poverty (n=60)

Please indicate whether skills shortage contributes to poverty in your area

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
Valid	Yes	52	86.7	86.7	86.7
	No	1	1.7	1.7	88.3
	I do not Know	7	11.7	11.7	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 10: Service delivery (n=60)

Skills shortage worsens the quality of service in my community

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
Valid	Strongly Agree	30	50.0	50.8	50.8
	Agree	22	36.7	37.3	88.1
	Unsure	6	10.0	10.2	98.3
	Disagree	1	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	59	98.3	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.7		
	Total	60	100.0		

There was a majority affirmation that one of the effects of skills shortage was low economic growth. Again, this response does not surprise given previous findings in this research (see Table 14).

Skills shortage is often regarded as a phenomenon that limits the creation of jobs in South Africa (Table 15). The findings in the table clearly indicate that a majority of respondents per-

ceive skills shortage as a constraint of job creation. This finding affirms the conclusions of Akoojee and McGrath (2007), and Magruder (2010) that associated unemployment to poverty in South Africa.

When asked whether skills shortage contributed to unemployment in the area, the result illustrated in Table 16 indicates that a majority of respondents perceive skills shortage as a con-

Table 11: Crime (n=60)

<i>Skills shortage contributes to crime in my community</i>					
		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
Valid	Strongly Agree	38	63.3	64.4	64.4
	Agree	17	28.3	28.8	93.2
	Unsure	3	5.0	5.1	98.3
	Disagree	1	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	59	98.3	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.7		
	Total	60	100.0		

Table 12: Violence (n=60)

<i>Skills shortage contributes to violence in my community</i>					
		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
Valid	Strongly Agree	35	58.3	58.3	58.3
	Agree	19	31.7	31.7	90.0
	Unsure	5	8.3	8.3	98.3
	Disagree	1	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 13: Unemployment (n=60)

<i>Does the shortage of skills contribute to unemployment in your area?</i>					
		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
Valid	Yes	52	86.7	86.7	86.7
	I do not know	8	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 14: Economic growth (n=60)

<i>Skills shortage slows down economic growth</i>					
		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
Valid	Strongly Agree	34	56.7	57.6	57.6
	Agree	20	33.3	33.9	91.5
	Unsure	5	8.3	8.5	100.0
	Total	59	98.3	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.7		
	Total	60	100.0		

Table 15: Job creation (n=60)

<i>Skills shortage limits the creation of jobs</i>					
		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
Valid	Strongly Agree	36	60.0	60.0	60.0
	Agree	19	31.7	31.7	91.7
	Unsure	5	8.3	8.3	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

tributor to unemployment in the area. Without any useful skills, one is unlikely to find gainful employment (Akoojee and McGrath 2007; Kingdon and Knight 2004).

Expected Government Interventions

In relation to government having to build more training centres to address the critical skills shortage that exists in the country, the data in Table 17 indicates that all the respondents agreed that the building of more training centres was the best practical way to address the shortage of critical skills existing in the country.

When asked whether there should be a collaboration of all parties, namely private, public and academic institutions to look at ways of tackling skills shortage, Table 18 shows that 94.9 percent agreed. The findings in the table also give us an indication that respondents support the call for government to engage with different institutions to find solutions to skills shortage.

In order to best address skills shortages in the country, the respondents believed that upgrading the country's educational system was the starting point to a long term solution. This is seen in Table 19, where 98.3 percent of the respondents agreed that government should upgrade the education system. The finding illustrated in the table supports Breier and Erasmus (2009: 1) who blame skills shortage on the schooling structure, which was skewed under apartheid.

Concerning the training of Maths and Science teachers to teach critical skills, Table 20 indicates that 96.6 percent of the respondents perceive it as a prominent intervention, which should be seriously considered. From this result, one can see that the respondents regard it important to train more qualified Maths and Science teachers, especially if the country intends to invest more in programmes such as Engineering, Health Sciences, and Accounting.

Table 16: Unemployment (n=60)

<i>Does the shortage of skills contribute to unemployment in your area?</i>					
		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
Valid	Yes	52	86.7	86.7	86.7
	I do not know	8	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 17: More training centres (n=60)

<i>Government should build more training centres to address critical skills that exist in the country</i>					
		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
Valid	Strongly Agree	42	70.0	73.7	73.7
	Agree	15	25.0	26.3	100.0
	Total	57	95.0	100.0	
Missing	System	3	5.0	5.0	
	Total	60	100.0		

Table 18: Private, public and academic institutions partnerships (n=60)

<i>There should be an inter-link between private, public and academic institutions</i>					
		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
Valid	Strongly Agree	37	61.7	62.7	62.7
	Agree	19	31.7	32.2	94.9
	Unsure	3	5.0	5.1	100.0
	Total	59	98.3	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.7		
	Total	60	100.0		

Table 19: Education system upgrade (n=60)

<i>Government should upgrade the education system of the country</i>					
		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
Valid	Strongly Agree	37	61.7	62.7	62.7
	Agree	21	35.0	35.6	98.3
	Unsure	1	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	59	98.3	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.7		
	Total	60	100.0		

Table 20: Training for critical subjects (n=60)

<i>Government should train more Maths and Science teachers to teach critical subjects</i>					
		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
Valid	Strongly Agree	43	71.7	72.9	72.9
	Agree	14	23.3	23.7	96.6
	Unsure	1	1.7	1.7	98.3
	Strongly disagree	1	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	59	98.3	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.7		
	Total	60	100.0		

Table 21: Engagement of issue on television and radio (n=60)

<i>Government should talk about skills shortage more often on television channels and radio programmes</i>					
		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
Valid	Strongly Agree	36	60.0	61.0	61.0
	Agree	22	36.7	37.3	98.3
	Unsure	1	1.7	1.7	100.0
	Total	59	98.3	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.7		
	Total	60	100.0		

Table 22: Use of skilled foreign immigrants (n=60)

<i>Government should welcome the use of skilled foreign immigrants in the country who seek jobs in critical skills</i>					
		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid percent</i>	<i>Cumulative percent</i>
Valid	Strongly Agree	16	26.7	27.1	27.1
	Agree	19	31.7	32.2	59.3
	Unsure	15	25.0	25.4	84.7
	Disagree	6	10.0	10.2	94.9
	Strongly Disagree	3	5.0	5.1	100.0
	Total	59	98.3	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.7		
	Total	60	100.0		

Table 21 reveals that 98.3 percent of the respondents agreed that government should allow for citizen participation on the subject and the proffering of ideas through the engagement of the subject on radio and television channels. This way, it becomes a national preoccupation.

Mixed views were expressed amongst respondents when asked whether skilled foreigners should be used to occupy positions in critical skills, since South Africans lack these skills. Table 22 indicates that of the 60 respondents, 59.3 percent agreed. Conversely, 25.4 percent were

unsure and 15.3 percent disagreed, while 1.7 percent did not comment.

Qualitative Description of Responses

In Section B of the questionnaire, Questions 6 and 18 specifically requested the participants to comment freely on their perception of the skills shortage as well as on the use of African skilled immigrants as an alternative to bridging the skills gap in South Africa.

The responses to Question 6 do not differ significantly from the quantitative survey. However, what stood out was the extent of engagement of the subject matter by the educators. For instance, a majority of the respondents believe that a lack of skills or skills shortage has negative implications on the lives of people. It is clear therefore that skills shortage increases levels of poverty by preventing people from acquiring jobs or from being hired in companies to sustain themselves economically, whilst impeding them from having to perform activities that would allow them self sustenance such as entrepreneurial activities. Another interesting view emerged from the respondents. Many of them believed that companies also contribute to lack of skills to some extent, given the insistence of companies that prospective employees must have some work experience. This deflates the possibility of graduate employment because many have no work experience, and in order to get experience, they need to be employed. This renders individuals jobless.

Another subject of concern according to the respondents is that as a result of poverty and unemployment, which cannot be separated, issues such as high birth rate, child pregnancy, high levels of crime, robbery, violence, alcoholism and prostitution, are prevalent in a low-skilled community. One respondent in fact said that, socially, HIV/aids was an issue of concern because young girls are forced into prostitution to become bread winners of their homes; homes without family members who have no means of income; who depend on government grants and welfare.

Respondents' responses clearly indicated that poverty was widespread. They credited causes of poverty to a lack of skills and education. Support taken from Liebbrandt et al. (2010: 4) indicates that skills shortage builds social ills, particularly in townships and squatter camps,

and contributes to high levels of unemployment, poverty and disperses families. Moser (1999: 1) also asserts that poverty and inequality are the two main social problems brought about by skills shortage in the South Africa, along with an alarming increase in unemployment among the youth, crime and violence in society. Respondents believe that when people have no skills, chances are that they will not be employed. This will leave them with nothing to do and no source of income. They may then resort to other socially unwelcome activities in order to survive.

One respondent said the following: *"As I am filling this questionnaire, three of our learners will not be able to write their final exam because they are lying down in hospital stabbed by gangsters"*. This is a reflection of the high rate of crime and violence that emerges from low-skilled communities.

Another respondent believed that the absence of skills leads to unemployment, which leads to poverty, and subsequently crime and violence and other bad behaviour take over an unemployed person. This respondent stated: *"Lack of skills lead to high rate of unemployment, which leads to poverty and high rate of crime, drug abuse, house breaking, hijackings and violence that is out of psychological effects of poverty, some people may develop violent behaviour"*.

Results obtained from the 'utilization of African foreign skills in the absence of local ones' were mixed, although a majority of respondents believed that foreigners should be used in the absence of local ones. A majority of the respondents agreed that foreigners should be used as a temporary alternative, whilst government embarks on training programmes to equip South Africans with skills that are needed to boost the economy of the country. One respondent said: *"Skills shortage is not something that can be fixed over-night, therefore, foreigners can be used while government is mapping the way to equip our own people"*. However, others stated that since many African immigrants are more skilled, educated and experienced than their fellow South African citizens, they should be given a chance to use their skills for the benefit of the country, provided that there are no South Africans who have the same skills.

Some respondents also believed that government should not in any way use this approach because by so doing, the country will always

face the same problem. According to these respondents, the right approach should be to educate and train people without skills by using on-the-job methods. These respondents also believe that employing foreigners instead of locals will always lead to conflict and xenophobic attacks. Some of the respondents also felt that the use of African immigrants may be interpreted as government's lack of interest in their own citizens.

CONCLUSION

Results obtained from this research have indicated that skills shortage is perceived to be the result of a lack of education; high levels of illiteracy amongst South Africans; migration of skilled professionals to other parts of the world; a lack of resources in schools; and a scarcity of training institutions to equip citizens with necessary skills to contribute to the economic development of the country. However, amongst the perceived reasons for skills shortage in Khayelitsha, the findings suggest that a lack of investment in education ranks the highest at 84.7 percent while HIV/aids ranks the lowest at 45 percent. However, it is clear that the findings emanating from this research suggest that both government and all other stakeholders have a huge task ahead.

In terms of impact, the results suggest that in a social context, skills shortage impacts negatively contributing to high levels of unemployment, and poverty. As a result, crime, violence and other anti-social behaviours often prevail in the area. These findings also complement previous studies on the subject in a social context: skills shortage contributes to residents living in an impoverished condition, ranging from poor service delivery, poor sanitary conditions, as well as poor health facilities. Participants also strongly believed that a lack of skills contributes to high levels of poverty by decreasing residents' chances of getting jobs that would help them to sustain and maintain their households.

Again, from a social context, an interesting insight emerged from the finding which suggests that a lack of skills would contribute to practises such as prostitution, which is perceptible amongst young girls in the area; the increase in birth rate amongst young girls (early pregnancy); high levels of crime; drug and alcohol abuse; and other negative and social behaviour, which are prevalent in the area. Participants attributed

these to a lack of skills because they believed that when an individual does not have a job to acquire the necessary means to satisfy his needs, he ends up at home doing nothing and consequently, is likely to opt for alternative means to satisfy his needs. This perhaps calls for an engagement of this malaise by government with the help of the private sector including academic institutions to find ways of dealing with the problem.

Skills shortage does not only contribute to unemployment, but also hinders economic development. When the economy of the country is not growing, or creating jobs, it contributes to large volumes of unemployment and poverty, and prevents the country from being globally competitive. Further, a lack of skills discourages investors thereby slowing down socioeconomic development. Therefore, as the findings indicate, government and other stakeholders should adopt measures that can help reduce the negative effects of skills shortage. The researchers however view the recent separation of the Department of Education into two departments: basic education and higher/post secondary education as a way of providing the different departments with sufficient room to focus on basic education (properly equipping early education – primary to secondary) and higher education (colleges and universities). This, the researchers hope, will improve access to both basic education as well as higher education by the poor. The researchers however disagree with the lowering of pass marks in high schools by the Department of Basic Education as a way of improving access to higher education, especially because terribly weak students are then admitted to institutions of higher learning.

This research notes that the use of African skilled foreigners should not be neglected by government, because if well utilised, this resource can play a significant role in the South African economy and its human development. In many other countries, immigrants are looked up to for investment and entrepreneurial expertise unlike in South Africa where they are considered as a threat to social and economic interests of the citizens.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The availability of skills is central to South Africa's social and economic development plans. Having been daunted by severe skills shortage

in almost every sector of its economic activity, South Africa's government cannot combat the skills crisis that exists in the country in isolation. It also requires a strong and committed partnership with the private sector and academic institutions. Through engagement with these institutions, short and long term problems can be identified and addressed.

In the light of the above, the researchers prefer the following recommendations.

- a) Skills scarcity is a national problem and should be continuously engaged by all citizens through national debates and discussion fora on television, radio and newspapers.
- b) Government should create programmes which will disseminate information on skills shortages throughout the country as such programme would help to monitor the monthly job vacancies that are advertised in newspapers, Internet, job boards, and all other forms of media where employers advertise for selected skilled occupations where there are shortages. This has been successfully done in New Zealand.
- c) Stakeholders should ensure that curriculum planning and coordination become a priority in learnership programme management. In particular, registration of learnership programmes and coordination of programmes should be assessed and audited according to rules laid down by both the Departments of Labour and the two Departments of Education.
- d) It is important to ensure quality when teaching and learning imperatives are required. Offering qualifications for the sake of fulfilling quotas will not serve well. Qualifications must reflect in the tangible expression that learners will demonstrate in the actual workplace.
- e) Government should invest more in education by building more training centres and facilities across the country, especially in previously and more disadvantaged areas, to equip citizens with critical skills such as artisan and other programmes that will enable them to be self-reliant or even obtain a place in the labour market. This will help to eliminate high levels of unemployment, anti-social behaviours as well as high levels of poverty.
- f) The use of foreign nationals should be seen as supporting the economy in terms of reducing unemployment with their technical and entrepreneurial skills; and helping government fight poverty by creating more jobs and reducing many social problems that exist in South African townships.
- g) Whatever interventions are put in place must be monitored regularly and evaluated to obtain best results. Further, a monitoring team or system of constant revision and monitoring of the plan's progress should be part of the entire plan to effectively monitor progress made regarding skills shortage.
- h) Lastly, the locale of this study is limiting. Generalising the results should be done cautiously.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Considering that this research examined the perceptions of educators located in a township, it might serve well to conduct same study in an urban setting to compare the responses. It is also our view that to eliminate skills shortage, the development of entrepreneurial skills is critical to the economic growth of any nation. Therefore, the researchers recommend that further study be taken up to provide evidence on the extent of entrepreneurial keenness of learners from disadvantaged townships in South Africa.

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