

Curbing Unemployment Challenges among University Graduates through Entrepreneurship Education and Training in South Africa

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ABSTRACT This paper investigated curbing unemployment challenges among university graduates in South Africa through entrepreneurship education and training. The paper adopted quantitative research design and data was collected using self-administered questionnaire. The population for this research comprised 13,331 thousand university students, and a sample of 374 participants were selected using simple random sampling technique. Descriptive statistics and Chi-Square tests were employed as data analysis method. The findings revealed that there is a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship among university graduates that entrepreneurship education helps to reduce the rate of unemployment among university graduates and as well equips university graduates with requisite skills upon graduation. The paper recommended effective measures to the government, policymakers and institutions of higher learning to design policies and strategies that will promote and improve entrepreneurship education and training in universities and in South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship education and training amongst university graduates and the promotion of entrepreneurship activities are increasingly becoming popular and important globally (Movahedi and Fathi 2011; Brijlal 2011). This is evidently true in emerging economies with high unemployment rate and where entrepreneurial activities are needed (ILO 2011).

According to Teshome (2014), university graduates encounter several challenges in order to secure employment in both public and private enterprises as a result of volatile and unstable economic environment. Oluwajodu et al. (2015) described unemployment as socio-economic problem with serious economic costs and other challenges that reduce economic welfare, output and erodes human capital. These costs make unemployment a high priority in a developing nation like South Africa.

Kgagara (2011) indicated that South Africa faces massive challenges with its regards to high rate of unemployment among its youth population, which also affects university graduates as a result of zero work experience, requisite skill base and poor education. Horwitz (2014) pointed out that graduate unemployment is another

serious challenge in South Africa, and is pushing up the high rate of social vices such as armed robbery, kidnapping, prostitution, and human trafficking amongst others.

Statistics South Africa (2017) indicated that the unemployment rate in South Africa increased from 26.5 recorded in 2016 to 27.7 in the first quarter of 2017. This represents the highest unemployment rate since the first quarter of 2004 as unemployment rose faster than employment as many people joined the labour force. Chutel (2016) reiterated that the picture becomes ambivalent when the statistics is broken down by age and gender. He posited that job opportunities for South African youths were way below average, with university graduates coming straight out of school the worst affected.

Jenvey (2015) points out that unemployment among university graduates in South Africa is exacerbated by the belief that entrepreneurship is not a decent profession, hence only about forty percent of South Africans believe that starting a business is a desirable goal. Anthea et al. (2016) indicated that "South Africa is characterized by high unemployment level, a low early stage entrepreneurship activity rate, and a high small business failure rate." Therefore, it is crucial that tertiary education is designed to pre-

pare students and equip them with requisite skills in order to turn out as job creators other than job seekers. This can be achieved through the incorporation of entrepreneurship education and training into the university curricular of all South African Universities irrespective of the discipline.

Maina (2014) described entrepreneurship education as a system that involves acquiring skills, business ideas and managerial abilities necessary for venturing into business. Entrepreneurship education and training help to prepare university graduates to become entrepreneurs by exposing them to real life experiences where they are required to think, take risks, manage circumstances and learn from the outcome (Olawolu and Kaegon 2012).

Ebele (2008) described entrepreneurship education and training as the impartation of knowledge and skills that individuals need to start and run a business. Ezeani (2012) added that “entrepreneurship training is teaching students and would-be business men and women the essential skills required in starting and running a business.” Kigotho (2014) posited that “entrepreneurship training act as catalysts that stimulate innovation and generate jobs for university graduates especially in Sub-Saharan Africa where there is a high rate of graduate unemployment.”

Furthermore, Matlay (2006) indicated that “entrepreneurship education represents an efficient and cost effective means of increasing the number and quality of enterprising graduates that make inroad into the economy.” Matlay (2011) identifies that “there is a shortage of research that focuses on graduate self-employment and related new venture creation.” Therefore, Universities and other tertiary institutions are saddled with responsibilities: to create (through research) and disseminate (through education) knowledge (Bourguignon et al. 2003).

However, universities have several priorities (which include skills development), cultures, norms, traditions, research interests and knowledge. Gibb (2012) and Salem (2014) describe entrepreneurial universities as entities that provide environments, cultures, practices, and opportunities that are conducive to encourage and promote student and graduate entrepreneurship, as well as creating synergy between existing activities in the institution. It is against this background that the paper sought to investigate whether entrepreneurship education and training

would curb the challenges of unemployment among university graduates in South Africa.

Objectives

The paper objectives are:

- ◆ To determine the university graduates attitudes towards entrepreneurship;
- ◆ To determine the impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial mindset, and
- ◆ To determine whether entrepreneurship education equips university graduates with requisite entrepreneurial skills upon graduation.

Review of Related Literature

Previous studies argue graduate unemployment has become an albatross around the neck of the society and school leavers in many emerging economies (Opoku-Antwi et al. 2012), hence the present clarion call to incorporate entrepreneurship education in higher institutions. Leko et al. (2012) argued that “the move towards self-employment globally is and will continue to remain an increasingly important element of economic growth and development.”

Other studies also argued that entrepreneurship education and training are crucial for socio-economic landscape, as they play pivotal roles in equipping and changing one’s attitude to become an entrepreneur (Peterman and Kennedy 2003; Volery and Mueller 2006).

Idogho and Ainabor (2011) argued that “entrepreneurship education and training exert a huge impact on the economy and society. Their study revealed that the introduction of entrepreneurship education in tertiary institutions would impart in the students, the management skills needed to set up SMMEs.” Adavbiele and Imeokparia (2006) argued that entrepreneurship training helps to check the imbalances in educational system that seems to be producing the wrong mix of manpower stock. Their study revealed that the production of graduates from various disciplines and universities without monitoring the manpower needs of that nation is identified as largely responsible for the high rate of unemployment.

Naong’s (2011) study on graduate unemployment and the reasons why university grad-

uates struggle to secure jobs in South Africa revealed that “most university graduates struggle to secure jobs because of wrong choice of field of study and the weaknesses in educational system of South Africa.” He further suggested the promotion of entrepreneurial culture in universities to solve the problem. Similarly, Shash (2006) conducted a study on graduate unemployment in Malaysia and found that “the reasons for high rate of unemployment were based on the perspective of both graduates and employers.” The findings further revealed that the graduates blamed employers for their being unemployed while employers perceived the entrepreneurial attitudes of computer science graduates to be negative.

In view of the previous empirical literature on the relationship between entrepreneurship education, training and graduate unemployment, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H0: There is no positive attitude towards entrepreneurship among university graduates in South Africa.

H0: Entrepreneurship education and training do not promote entrepreneurial mindset among university graduates.

H0: Entrepreneurship education and training do not impart requisite entrepreneurial skills on students upon graduation.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive approach was adopted in this paper using quantitative research design. However, the population consists of thirteen thousand three hundred and thirty one (13,331) registered students at the University of Fort Hare, in Alice Eastern Cape South Africa. To achieve an accurate result of the research, a margin error of five percent, confidence level of ninety percent and a response distribution of fifty percent was taken into consideration; a Roasoft sample size calculator was used to determine a sample size of 374 participants of this research. The paper adopted a simple random sampling due to the availability of the sample frame. A self-administered questionnaire was used in this research because of its tendency to yielding most satisfactory range of reliable data. Some of the statements in the structured questionnaire were culled from the General Measure for Enterprising Tendency Test (GET2 Test) developed by Sally Caird (Caird 2013). The questionnaire was

distributed to experts to test the validity before it was administered on the respondents. In testing the reliability of the instrument used in this paper, a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.7 was received.

Data Collection Method

The research data was collected through questionnaire administration on the participants that were selected from different faculties such as the faculty of Management and Commerce, Education, Social Science and Science and Agriculture, respectively. The questionnaires were duly distributed to the participants, and their names and phone numbers of some of them obtained to follow up on the completion of the questionnaires.

Data Capturing and Analysis

Data coding and capturing were done using Microsoft Excel, and the analysis was done using statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics, Chi-square test and independent t-test.

RESULTS

In this section, the key findings of this paper such as the demographic information of the sample are presented. Also, the main findings and results relating to the paper hypotheses are presented.

Demographic Information of the Sample

The demographic findings of this paper are presented here and “these include nationality, faculty, departments, study level, gender and marital status.”

Nationality

The result in Table 1 shows that large proportion of the participants were South Africans which comprised 87.7 percent, while 12.3 percent were Non-South Africans. This simply means that more students of South African origin participated in this research than their Non-South African counterparts. This helped to achieve the objectives of this paper, since the research was conducted in South Africa to curb

the challenges of graduate and youth unemployment in South Africa through entrepreneurship education and training.

Table 1: Nationality of the respondents

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
South Africans	328	87.7
Non-South Africans	46	12.3
Total	374	100.0

Faculty

The results in Table 2 clearly indicates that 39.8 percent of the overall participants belonged to the faculty of Management and Commerce, 24.9 percent came from the faculty of Social Science and Humanities; 7.5 percent of the participants were from the faculty of Education, while 27.8 percent of the participants were from the faculty of Science and Agriculture. The representation of four faculties in this result has “helped to put to rest the issue of most previous researchers concentrating mainly on management disciplines leaving other disciplines at bay.”

Table 2: Faculty of the respondents

<i>Faculty</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Management and Commerce	149	39.8
Social Science and Humanities	93	24.9
Education	28	7.5
Science and Agriculture	104	27.8
Total	374	100.0

Departments

The results in Table 3 depict that 5.3 percent of the participants belonged to the department of Development Studies, eleven percent belonged to Industrial Psychology, 7.2 percent was from Information System, eight percent belong to Economics, and 8.3 percent was from the department of Business Management while 4.5 percent of was from Psychology department. Another four percent of the participants were from the Department of Communication, 4.5 percent came from the Department of Social Work while 5.1 percent came from Political Science. Furthermore, 2.9 percent belong to Sociology Department, 3.7 percent belong to Criminology and 2.1 percent belong to Physics Education while 1.6 percent came from the Department of

Mathematics Education. 2.1 percent of the participants belong to Human Social Science, 1.6 percent belongs to Science Education, 2.4 percent of the participants belong to Geology Department, and 1.9 percent was from Crop Science. Another 2.4 percent belong to Geography while 11.8 percent came from the Department of Agricultural Economics. The Department of Microbiology recorded 2.7 percent of the participant, Soil Science has four percent of the participant and Agronomy Department has 2.7 percent of the participants that took part in the research. This Table 3 results confirms that almost all the departments were duly represented. With this, the researcher is suggesting that the teachings of entrepreneurship education should be taken beyond management sciences or disciplines in our Universities.

Table 3: Departments of the respondents

<i>Departments</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Development studies	20	5.3
Industrial psychology	41	11.0
Information technology	27	7.2
Economics	30	8.0
Business management	31	8.3
Psychology	17	4.5
Communication studies	15	4.0
Social work	17	4.5
Political sciences	19	5.1
Sociology	11	2.9
Criminology	14	3.7
Physics education	8	2.1
Mathematics education	6	1.6
Human social science	8	2.1
Science education	6	1.6
Geology	9	2.4
Crop science	7	1.9
Geography	9	2.4
Agricultural economics	44	11.8
Microbiology	10	2.7
Soil science	15	4.0
Agronomy	10	2.7
Total	374	100.0

Study Level

The results in Table 4 have shown that large proportion of the participants representing 82.4 percent were undergraduates while 17.6 percent were postgraduates. This shows that there were more undergraduate students that participated in this research than their postgraduate counterparts. This is important because it helps to determine where improvements are needed in the delivery of entrepreneurship education in our Universities.

Table 4: Study level of the respondents

<i>Level of study</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Undergraduate	308	82.4
Postgraduate	66	17.6
Total	374	100.0

Gender

The results in Table 5 showed that 52.4 percent of the participants were females while 47.6 percent were male respondents. This serves as a recommendation to the government agencies, policymakers and private businesses on the need of using entrepreneurship education to promote entrepreneurship among female university graduates from the universities whom are empowered with requisite skills and innovation.

Table 5: Gender of the respondents

<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Male	178	47.6
Female	196	52.4
Total	374	100.0

Marital Status

The results in Table 6 have shown that 96.8 percent of the participants were single, 2.4 percent married while 0.5 percent was divorced and 0.3 percent was widowed. Since the majority of the participants were single, it can be regarded

Table 6: Marital status of the respondents

<i>Marital status</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Single	362	96.8
Married	9	2.4
Divorce	2	.05
Widow	1	.03
Total	374	100.0

Table 7: Chi-square tests for hypothesis one

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std deviation</i>	<i>Std error mean</i>
Total attitude	374	10.74 <i>Value</i>	1.629 <i>Df</i>	.084 <i>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</i>
Pearson chi-square		37.144a	11	.000
Likelihood ratio		39.122	11	.000
Linear-by Linear association		15.251	1	.000
Number of valid cases	374			

as youth population and that is the group this paper is targeted at. This also helped to achieve the objectives of this paper and provide recommendations to the relevant bodies for onward implementation.

Results from the Tested Hypotheses One

The results in Table 7 illustrate the main findings of the first hypothesis which states that there is no positive attitude towards entrepreneurship among university graduates. Table 7 shows a Chi-square value of 37.144 with 11 degree of freedom and a probability of .000, which is less than alpha value. Since the P-value is less than 0.05 the null hypothesis is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis. This means that there is a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship among the university graduates in South Africa.

Results from the Tested Hypothesis Two

The results in Table 8 illustrate the main findings of the second hypothesis which states that entrepreneurship education and training promote entrepreneurial mindset among university graduates. This table shows a Chi-square value of 370.110 with 19 degree of freedom and P-value of .000 which is less than alpha value and since the p-value of .000 is less than 0.05; the null hypothesis is rejected in the favor of alternative hypothesis. This suggests that there is significant association between entrepreneurship education, training and entrepreneurial mindset. In other words, entrepreneurship education and training promote entrepreneurial mindset among university graduates.

Results from the Tested Hypothesis Three

The results in Table 9 depict the main findings of the third hypothesis which stated that

Table 8: Descriptive statistics and chi-square tests for hypothesis two

	<i>Have you ever received entrepreneurship education?</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std deviation</i>	<i>Std error</i>
<i>Total section E</i>	Yes	157	23.43	2.565	0.205
	No	217	9.42	1.473	0.1
			<i>Value</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</i>
Pearson chi-square			370.110a	19	0
Likelihood ratio			500.971	19	0
Linear-by-Linear association			344.226	1	0
Number of valid cases			374		

Table 9: Descriptive statistics and chi-square test for hypothesis three

	<i>Have you ever received entrepreneurship education?</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std deviation</i>	<i>Std error</i>
<i>Section D</i>	Yes				
	No				
			<i>Value</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</i>
Pearson chi-square			364.394a	21	0
Likelihood ratio			493.438	21	0
Linear-by-Linear association			322.519	1	0
Number of valid cases			374		

entrepreneurship education and training equip university graduates with requisite entrepreneurial skills upon graduation. The table shows a chi-square value of 364.394 with 21 degree of freedom and P-value of .000 which is less than alpha value, and since the p-value of .000 is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected in favor of alternative hypothesis. This simply means that entrepreneurship education and training equip university graduates with requisite entrepreneurial skills upon graduation.

DISCUSSION

Hypothesis One

Having tested the first hypothesis which states that there is no positive attitude towards entrepreneurship among university graduates in South Africa, the null hypothesis was rejected in favor of alternative hypothesis. This simply means that there is actually a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship among university graduates in South Africa. In view of this out-

come and in ensuring the continuous maintenance of positive entrepreneurial attitudes among university graduates in South Africa. Gibb (2012) and Salem (2014) indicated that entrepreneurship education should be included in a university's strategic plan, policy, and institutional arrangements of the education system, as a means to play a vital role in addressing problems of society, its commitment to knowledge transfer and exchange, and its focus on graduate employability.

Potter (2008) suggested that critical attention must be paid entrepreneurship education and training at the tertiary level of education. This is because entrepreneurship education and training make more university graduates conscious and interested in choosing entrepreneurship as a career option. Akpomi (2010) highlighted that entrepreneurship education and training are decisive in developing human abilities, skills, values and attitudes in order to accelerate the process of development. She further stated that this type of education helps to promote entrepreneurship as a useful and respectable career prospects for university graduates.

Hypothesis Two

The findings of the second hypothesis tested revealed that entrepreneurship education and training promote entrepreneurial mindset among university graduates, which means that the null hypothesis was rejected in favor of alternative hypothesis. This position is in consonance with the standpoint of Ngosiane (2010), who opined that “entrepreneurship education and training inculcate the spirit and culture of entrepreneurship through the formation of entrepreneurial clubs at the various universities.” Accordingly, Wong et al. (2007) advised that universities can assist in establishing a more entrepreneurial mindset among students and graduates, which will assist them to re-adjust their expectation of the job market.

Matlay (2011) added that formal (individual development process) and informal approaches (work-related context) which is considered to be collaborative process to entrepreneurship education contribute in several ways to the development of enterprising students, both within and outside university settings. Nordin (2010) study conducted in Malaysia suggests that the introduction of Entrepreneurship Development Initiative for universities will assist to produce graduates with entrepreneurial mindset and increase the number of graduate entrepreneurs besides nurturing entrepreneurial academics and researchers. Nordin (2010) further stated that this policy is highly imperative due to the increasing interest of many countries to foster entrepreneurship mindset through university education and training as it has been proven that entrepreneurial activities can be spurred through entrepreneurship education and training.

This assertion is supported by Mustapha and Selvaraju (2015) who opined that entrepreneurship is a cog in the socio-economic performance of countries due to its potential and capacity to create employment opportunities. The European Commission (2008) also threw its weight behind this assertion, noting that the primary purpose of entrepreneurship education at higher education level is to develop entrepreneurial capacities and mindsets and recommends integrating entrepreneurship education fully into university curriculum.

Hypothesis Three

The findings of the third hypothesis tested revealed that entrepreneurship education and

training equip university graduates with requisite entrepreneurial skills upon graduation, which left the null hypothesis to be rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis. This position is in consonance with Moberg et al. (2012) who revealed in their study that entrepreneurship education and training equip university graduates with latent business knowledge and entrepreneurial competencies including creativity, tenacity, teamwork, understanding of risk and a sense of responsibility and social resilience. This they argued “makes them more employable and more entrepreneurial in their work within existing organisations and in starting new business ventures.”

Djordjevic (2013) added that exposing the increasing number of university graduates to entrepreneurship education and training is an effective way of improving the level of soft skills among all types of graduates. This assertion is supported by Suleiman (2010) who posited that “entrepreneurship education and training equip university graduates and youths with requisite entrepreneurial skills, competencies and knowledge to be enterprising individual, who become entrepreneurs by immersing them in real life learning experience whereby they can take risks, manage result and learn from the outcomes.” Moreover, Morris et al. (2013) concurs that entrepreneurship education and training could be used to prepare individuals for their entrepreneurial career by making entrepreneurship attractive and equipping them with skills, knowledge and competencies required for starting, managing and growing their own business.

CONCLUSION

The paper investigated the curbing of unemployment challenges among university graduates in South Africa through entrepreneurship education and training. Having tested the three hypotheses generated in this paper, using descriptive statistics and Chi-square tests, the objectives of the paper were achieved as solution to problems identified in the paper. The paper concluded that there is a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship among university graduates, entrepreneurship education builds and promotes entrepreneurial mindsets among university graduates and that entrepreneurship education and training equip university graduates with requisite entrepreneurial skills upon graduation. In summary, entrepreneurship edu-

cation and training can be used as viable tools to tackle the challenges of unemployment among university graduates in South Africa. Moreover, “entrepreneurship education and training” are well structured to pave way for the building of good human and personal relationships thereby addressing personal and social challenges such as unemployment among university graduates and youths in any society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper recommends that universities particularly in South Africa should develop a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship that will permeate through all parts of society and transform South Africa into an entrepreneurial nation in the near future. The paper recommends the need for institutions of higher learning and the Department of Higher Education to structure the higher institution curriculum in such a way that entrepreneurship education is made compulsory in all disciplines of higher institutions. This will help to promote the culture of entrepreneurship in the South African universities thereby reducing unemployment challenges after graduation.

It recommends that universities should encourage outside classroom methods such as internships, small business consulting and community development that will expose the university graduates to actual problems and experiences of entrepreneurs. The paper also recommends that policymakers should adopt successful strategies to encourage entrepreneurship and small businesses such as changes in tax policies, regulatory policies, access to capital and legal protection of property right in order to promote the growth of entrepreneurship in South Africa. Finally, the paper recommends the need for partnerships or linkages between the universities and private businesses in order to open up avenues for internships and on-site training as well as provide consulting opportunities for university graduates as part of their corporate social responsibility.

LIMITATIONS

The major limitation of this study was unavailability of funds for transportation and other logistics. Due to this problem of finance, the study was limited to the University of Fort Hare only.

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