

RESEARCH ARTICLE:

An Assessment of University in Entrepreneurship Training as a Means of Reducing Youth Unemployment in South Africa: A Case of Durban University of Technology

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Abstract

Youth entrepreneurship is considered an important factor in economic growth, job creation, and poverty alleviation. Although youth entrepreneurship is considered a key to addressing unemployment, the youth unemployment rate remains worrisome in developing countries. This paper assessed the entrepreneurship training in universities as a means of reducing youth unemployment. Youth unemployment is an impediment to inclusive economic development, limits the earning potential and future prospects of a new generation of South Africans, stymies business growth, threatens social cohesion, and puts pressure on government resources. Data was collected from the Durban University of Technology students in Durban. A qualitative approach was adopted in which semi structured interviews were used to obtain an understanding of the importance of universities in reducing the rate of unemployment in South Africa. In addition, nonprobability sampling, specifically purposive was used in the study to select the Durban University of Technology's benefiting students from the Durban Entrepreneurship Centre. The data collected was coded and analysed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that universities play a crucial role in supporting youth entrepreneurship in South Africa, which has led to a reduction in the rate of unemployment in South Africa. Findings were categorised into themes. Universities' effort to reduce unemployment has yielded positive results, however, both the students and the universities are faced with a number of challenges. It is recommended that universities work together with the government to design strategies that help to reduce unemployment in South Africa.

Keywords: entrepreneurship; youth unemployment; inclusive economic development; youth unemployment

Introduction

The younger generation is considered to be a crucial factor in shaping the future of South Africa and the broader African region. The African continent is characterised by a demographic group that is largely comprised of youths. It has been reported that approximately 60% of the African population comprises individuals who are under the age of 35. The prevalence of unemployment among youth in Africa is relatively high. As per the National Youth Policy of 2009, the population between the ages of 14 to 35 is designated as youth. A noteworthy phenomenon has been identified in South Africa, whereby a significant segment of the population is constituted by youth. The problem of unemployment in South Africa has become a major obstacle to economic growth and development, causing concern among policymakers. Mhlahlo (2017) reported that a significant proportion of the youth population in South Africa perceives employment in large corporations and government agencies as desirable, despite the challenges associated with securing employment in these entities. The rationale for conducting this research is rooted in the widespread increase in youth unemployment, which exerts a substantial influence on both young adults and those who have recently completed their academic studies. The statement mentioned above is supported by the latest results of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS). For the first quarter of 2022, the unemployment rate was 63,9% for those aged 15-24 and 42,1% for those aged 25-34 years, while the current official national rate stands at 34,5% (Stats SA, 2022). This paper emphasises that higher education institutions in South Africa have the necessary financial and training means to facilitate entrepreneurship awareness programmes aimed at youth, thereby serving as sustainable channels for economic development as part of their

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corporate social responsibility. This study aims to assess the university entrepreneurship training in reducing youth unemployment in South Africa.

South Africa has several universities that provide a diverse array of academic programmes. These academic institutions are acknowledged for their exceptional academic standards and dedication to conducting research. Mhlahlo (2017) posits that despite the challenges and limitations faced in entrepreneurial ventures in South Africa, the integration of high-quality and well-structured education in tertiary institutions serves as a crucial catalyst in fostering a knowledgeable and competent society, thereby augmenting the overall perception of entrepreneurial capabilities. Universities, unfortunately fail to provide young individuals with the essential skills required to attain formal employment or achieve entrepreneurial success. That is, entrepreneurship skills and education is more theoretical than practical, hence it lacks the cutting edge required to groom a generation of youths that will change the face of South Africa. Recently, South African institutions of higher education have been actively promoting entrepreneurship programmes to encourage young people to consider entrepreneurship as a viable career option, especially given the rising rates of unemployment. South African universities participate in community engagement programmes to aid small, medium, and micro enterprises within the region and the country (Dzomonda and Fatoki, 2019). Education endows individuals with the cognitive aptitude to recognise entrepreneurial opportunities that correspond with their competencies and proficiencies (Bodolica *et al.*, 2021). In 2015, the Durban University of Technology evinced its dedication towards fostering student entrepreneurship by instituting the Durban Entrepreneurship Centre exclusively for its students. The aim of the centre was to address a notable discrepancy exists between the competencies that graduates possess and those that are demanded by the labour market. Providing graduates with the capacity to convert their soft skills into feasible business ideas and subsequently establishing their own ventures has the potential to alleviate graduate unemployment and augment entrepreneurial ambitions. To provide a better understanding, this paper uses the structural transformation theory.

Structural transformation theoretical framework offers backing for the domains of human resources management and entrepreneurship by focusing on pivotal factors such as youth, skills, career management, entrepreneurship and unemployment. Structural transformation is one of the six primary characteristics of economic growth. According to Kanbur (2017), the traditional notion of structural transformation initiates from an economic anomaly, whereby there exists a considerable disparity in labour productivity among various sectors. McMullen *et al.* (2021) define structural transformation as the reconfiguration of economic activities across the primary sectors, namely, agriculture, manufacturing and services. The pertinence of this theory to the current research resides in its congruity with the research objective, which seeks to assess the entrepreneurship training offered by supporting youth entrepreneurship to reduce unemployment in South Africa. Shongwe (2020) used structural transformation theory as a conceptual framework for entrepreneurial start-ups operating in economies with limited entrepreneurial knowledge, costly business opportunity exploration, and insufficient competencies among both youth and adult populations. This study utilised a qualitative research methodology to assess universities' effort in entrepreneurial training as a means of encouraging entrepreneurship. According to Dzomonda and Fatoki (2019), the economic growth rates of middle-income countries located in Southern Africa, such as Swaziland, South Africa, and Namibia, are comparatively lower than those of other African nations. Consequently, there has been a noteworthy surge in unemployment rates among youth in these countries. The aim of this paper is to understand the contribution of universities to entrepreneurship in reducing youth unemployment in South Africa. Ahmed and Ahmed (2021) assert that entrepreneurship is a vital factor in augmenting socioeconomic progress. It is imperative to prioritise the provision of essential competencies to the younger generation, enabling them to tackle prevalent economic adversities and societal limitations.

Literature Review

According to Tengeh and Nkem (2017), it is crucial for business proprietors and skills development levies to stay updated with the latest labour law regulations. This is because they hold direct accountability for the progress and growth of their employees. The cultivation of skills and ideas is a pivotal facet of human capital administration that corporations establish protocols for with the aim of augmenting the efficacy of staff and bolstering the financial gains of the business. According to Mamabolo *et al.* (2017), the provision of support for skills development by employers and the establishment of organisations supporting entrepreneurship within universities and communities at large is of great significance for the future of businesses in South Africa.

This study is based on the premise that entrepreneurial skills and awareness can be transferred in various ways. Entrepreneurship education stands as one of the most important ways of improving the skills set among youth in

South Africa. Rashid (2019) concurred by asserting that an initiative towards entrepreneurship education and training goes a long way in imparting skills to youth. University learning can shape the mindset and attitude of youth towards considering entrepreneurship as a career option (Ozen *et al.*, 2023). This can be attained through the programmes offered by universities in their formal academic calendars and informally through outreach programmes. Youth in sub-Saharan Africa exhibit low levels of entrepreneurial intention and alertness, as most of them drop out of school (Agetue and Nnamdi, 2017). Institutions of higher learning are effective drivers to shape youth entrepreneurship through entrepreneurship education for individuals enrolled at universities and colleges. Entrepreneurship education, training and development should focus more on graduates and matriculants if the country is to create a legacy of employers (Mhlahlo, 2017). Entrepreneurship education and career guidance should be introduced as early as possible to prepare learners for an entrepreneurial career. On that note, universities help to brew an entrepreneurial culture among enrolled youths. In addition, universities should craft their entrepreneurship programmes in a way that equips youth to be opportunity seekers as opposed to necessity-driven entrepreneurs. Opportunity seekers tend to initiate ventures that are growth oriented, profitable and sustainable compared to necessity-driven ventures, which consist of ventures that may not grow at all. In South Africa, a number of universities have introduced entrepreneurship among the courses they offer (Ozen, 2023). However, current entrepreneurship education is more theoretical than practical; hence, it lacks the cutting edge required to groom a generation of youth that will change the face of South Africa in terms of employment creation.

Career guidance forms an important aspect in shaping one's career choice. Most youth end up pursuing unproductive careers because they lack guidance. Youth in South Africa have the potential to pursue entrepreneurship, but they lack guidance. Several youths have little to no knowledge of an entrepreneurship career, as there is limited guidance from their communities. In the context of South Africa, where youth are more inspired to be job seekers than job creators, universities have a great role to play in changing the mind-set of youth towards pursuing the entrepreneurship career. Universities and colleges attain this by organising career guidance days at their institutions as well as community outreach programmes (Shongwe, 2020). In most cases, institutions should invite role models who have made it through an entrepreneurship career so that the youth can view it as a reality rather than a mere myth (Bayuo *et al.*, 2020). These people might have acquired relevant information and experience in the entrepreneurship field, which in turn can help to answer random questions among youth (Bodolica *et al.*, 2021). This enables youth who intend to be entrepreneurs to eventually move a step towards creating a new venture.

Corporate social responsibility has become one of the most important aspects that organisations must consider. Universities should meet moral obligations just like any other organisation (Radebe, 2019). Corporate social responsibility explains how an organisation handles governance, human rights, labour practices, issues to deal with the environment, fair operating practices, consumer issues and community involvement and development (Majernik *et al.*, 2022). This study also investigates how universities improve community involvement and development by targeting youth through entrepreneurship programmes. Universities play an important role in transforming communities in which they operate through their different corporate social responsibility programmes that mainly target reducing unemployment (Agetue, and Nnamdi, 2017). Furthermore, universities can pave the way for youth in the communities they operate in through entrepreneurship mentorship programmes. Bayuo *et al.* (2020) indicate that mentorship gives direction to youth interested in starting their own businesses, especially at the start-up phase. Most small businesses are owned by matric holders, which raises the need for universities to extend their mentorship programmes and career exhibitions towards youths to equip them with an entrepreneurial mind-set at an early age (Shongwe, 2020). This study argues that universities can also set aside money that can be used as seed capital for start-up businesses run by youth.

Universities have the potential to enhance youth entrepreneurship by serving as business incubators. Primarily, this serves as a hub for the education and advancement of entrepreneurship (Filser *et al.*, 2019). The advanced computer and science laboratories available in universities can be utilised by young individuals who aspire to create novel innovations and discoveries. Higher education institutions play a vital role in cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset among youth in South Africa (Rashid, 2019). Mabasa (2018) advocates for higher education institutions as a means to equip young individuals with pertinent entrepreneurial skills and knowledge.

Methodology

This study assesses universities' entrepreneurship training in an effort to reduce youth unemployment in South Africa. It is critical to learn more about the goals and support systems of the universities that promote youth

entrepreneurship. This study uses a qualitative approach. This investigation will be exploratory in nature. According to Creswell (2013), choosing a research approach depends on the audience for the study that is being undertaken, the audience for the study's findings, the nature of the research problem, and the issue being addressed. This study was performed at the Durban University of Technology's Entrepreneurship Centre. Data was collected by means of semi structured interviews from the students who benefited from DUT Entrepreneurship Centre. For confidentiality and protection of participants, pseudonyms were used, and permission was granted to perform the study.

Nonprobability-purposive sampling was used to select four benefiting students from the Centre who had knowledge and experience of entrepreneurship programmes offered by the DUT Entrepreneurship Centre. An interview guide was used for the participants with the aim of gaining insight into the skills development programmes provided for youth. The data were collected during the week between 08h00 and 16h30. Data collected from interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. According to Rose and Johnson (2020), thematic analysis is a technique used to recognise, scrutinise, arrange, depict, and present themes that are present within a given set of data. According to Rose and Johnson (2020) and Nowell *et al.* (2017), the utilisation of thematic analysis offers a versatile method that can be adapted to suit various research requirements. This approach is capable of furnishing a comprehensive and intricate depiction of data. According to Nowell *et al.* (2017), the utilisation of thematic analysis in qualitative research presents an advantageous approach, as it provides a more comprehensible form of analysis and is also beneficial in condensing significant characteristics of an extensive dataset. Thematic analysis was deemed appropriate for this investigation, as it aimed to scrutinise diverse viewpoints of benefiting students and underscore the viewpoints of the staff in the development initiative.

Presentation of Data and Discussion

This study investigates the role of universities in supporting youth entrepreneurship in reducing youth unemployment in South Africa. The DUT Entrepreneurship Centre beneficiaries (students) were surveyed with regards to the attitudes of youth towards entrepreneurship and the support they are giving young people to promote entrepreneurship in an effort to create self-employment for the youths.

Theme 1: Youth attitude toward entrepreneurship in KwaZulu-Natal

In terms of the perception of youth towards entrepreneurship in Durban, participants expounded upon their observations, interactions, and encounters with the staff during each cycle. Participant 1 reported that DUT registers a diverse cohort of young individuals who arrive with preconceived notions and a desire for guidance, information, and resources to initiate their entrepreneurial endeavours. The participant also revealed that a majority of individuals who enrol in the entrepreneurship programme initially believe that obtaining aid from skills development institutions for entrepreneurship funding is a challenging feat. The aforementioned observation substantiates the inference that a significant proportion of young individuals lack comprehension regarding the operational mechanisms of entities and the requisite procedures for obtaining entrepreneurship assistance. Radebe (2019) observed that the lack of access to such understanding has been recognised as a hindrance to the progress and advancement of small, medium and micro enterprises. This is due to individuals' inadequate understanding of the means and methods of obtaining business finance and its effective utilisation.

Participant 1 further elaborated that the efficacy of training programmes is contingent upon the geographical location where they are conducted. Participant 3 revealed that some youths hold the belief that entrepreneurship is a simple and viable option if their intended career path or plans do not come to fruition. According to Rashid (2019), the South African population has historically depended on the government and corporate entities to furnish employment opportunities. The authors recognise that with the decline of conventional career trajectories, there is a growing need to prioritise youth entrepreneurship as a means of facilitating their entry into the workforce and ultimately reducing unemployment and poverty. On the same note, Participant 2 added that some youth hold the belief that in the event of unemployment, starting a business is a viable option. These youths approach the DUT entrepreneurship centre with the expectation of receiving financial assistance without adhering to the required procedures. The participant concluded that the youth is gradually realising that entrepreneurship is a laborious occupation. A growing number of young individuals residing in Durban are gravitating towards entrepreneurship, with an increasing openness to acquiring knowledge and participating in skills development programmes.

Theme 2: Youth challenges concerning entrepreneurship

Challenges exist that impede youth from participating in business activities or expanding established enterprises. Participant 1 disclosed that the youth who participate in the programme encounter various obstacles that impede their ability to initiate entrepreneurial ventures or that they encounter during their entrepreneurial journey. Participant 1 also revealed that a significant proportion of individuals lack sufficient knowledge regarding their respective industries. Consequently, numerous youths venture into industries while lacking any prior background, thereby encountering difficulties in exploring and demonstrating enthusiasm and diligence towards the business. Participants agreed that a lack of financial resources represents a significant obstacle to youth seeking to initiate or expand their business ventures. Bushe (2019) identified the absence of adequate financial backing as a significant hindrance that impedes the initiation of entrepreneurial ventures by youth. Mabasa (2018) confirmed that young entrepreneurs continue to face obstacles related to funding and procedural hurdles. Participant 2 also indicated that inadequate comprehension of marketing, financial management, and bookkeeping are significant challenges encountered by entrepreneurs during the initial stages of their business. Participant 3 added that advertising and acquiring clients is challenging, particularly for youth entrepreneurs targeting industries that are difficult to penetrate. With these challenges, entrepreneurship may not seem to be a viable career path for South African individuals. However, the education system has played a role in shaping the current circumstances faced by young people (Ozen, 2023). In light of this, participant 3 expressed concern that although entrepreneurship is now being taught in universities, the curriculum does not adequately prepare students for real-world scenarios pertaining to entrepreneurship.

Participants noted that a deficiency in entrepreneurial development has been a longstanding issue among young individuals seeking to pursue entrepreneurship. However, Participant 4 indicated that some youth prioritise expediency over the requisite patience and foresight necessary for successful entrepreneurship. It is important to recognise that a long-term vision and incremental progress are integral components of entrepreneurial success. Participant 4 further asserted that supplementary competencies exist that are fundamental to the operations of a business, including communication skills, time management, and human relations, which are fundamental for entrepreneurial endeavours. The participant also stated that certain individuals who have obtained a university degree sometimes encounter difficulty securing employment, and as a result, they are provided with assistance in developing entrepreneurial skills. It is advisable for graduates and matriculates to possess entrepreneurial skills to create employment (Agetue and Nnamdi, 2017). The DUT Entrepreneurship Centre also endeavours to engage in outreach initiatives aimed at promoting awareness of its services and helping underprivileged communities in remote areas of KwaZulu-Natal (Durban University of Technology, 2023). It can be concluded that the challenges young entrepreneurs face in their business ventures are attributable to various factors, including but not limited to the dearth of business acumen, inadequate financial backing, and insufficient expertise in managing human resources. There is a need for training programmes that focus on proficiency in business skills, financial backing, and expertise in human resource management, which are essential components for success in the corporate world.

Theme 3: Organisation challenges in supporting youth entrepreneurship

DUT Entrepreneurship Centre encounter various challenges in the course of their training, as well as in other operational aspects that are essential for the successful functioning of the programme. Participant 1 reported that the challenge of accessing training venues is significant. The participant explicated that the entrepreneurship centre facilitators extend their services to youth residing in the university residence and in local townships. Nonetheless, the facilitators encounter difficulties in securing suitable venues for the provision of their services. Participant 3 narrated that the challenge at hand is operational in nature owing to the limited resources available to the centre for implementing the programme. This has made it arduous to reach out to a larger number of youths, as there are certain protocols that need to be adhered to while arranging training sessions. Moreover, the training programme has a limited capacity to accommodate a maximum of thirty individuals per cohort. The ratio of the number of participants to the duration of the programme, as well as the proportion of unemployed youth, is a matter of apprehension. This programme exhibits a commitment to diversity by welcoming youth from various socioeconomic backgrounds. Such inclusivity provides equal opportunities for all youth to engage in training and pursue entrepreneurial endeavours. Participant 1 explained that the presence of varied educational backgrounds poses a challenge in the training process, as youth do not assimilate information uniformly. In addition, the participant elucidated that there is a need to review and ensure entrepreneurship programmes offered to ensure that all participants are comprehending the material presented. The training programme includes numerous

exercises that are completed in groups, allowing participants to gain insight into the expectations and requirements of the programme. This enables them to develop the necessary skills to work independently.

The DUT Entrepreneurship Centre falls under the Key Performance Area of Skills and Education, as outlined in the National Development Plan (Republic of South Africa, 2012). Within this framework, the DUT Entrepreneurship Centre places significant emphasis on skills training as a core component of its services. When youth aspire to initiate a business venture or seek employment opportunities, they undergo comprehensive training. Participant 2 revealed that possessing life skills training and having undergone training for entrepreneurship skills is essential when youth start businesses. In addition, Participant 1 elucidated that life skills encompass aspects of personal development, financial management, time management, and communication. The purpose of highlighting these skills is to raise awareness among individuals so that they may be better equipped to pursue entrepreneurship in the future. Upon initiating a business venture, it becomes imperative to possess a range of competencies, such as cost analysis, promotional tactics, bookkeeping, and other related proficiencies (Shongwe, 2020). In addition, the Centre offers training in other essential skills, such as professional image instruction, which pertains to skills-related attributes (Durban University of Technology, 2023). Additionally, there is a programme offered known as job preparedness, which aims to equip graduates with the necessary skills and knowledge for success in the workforce. According to Participant 2, it is not uncommon to encounter situations where an individual performs well academically but struggles during the interview process. As a result, they help departing students to ensure that they are adequately prepared. Accordingly, it is recommended that young individuals and university students who are currently pursuing their education participate in life skills training as a means of alleviating the stress and social anxieties that they may experience.

Participant 3 stated that due to the heterogeneous population of young individuals they are required to support, the training sessions are typically carried out over a duration of five days. Following the five-day training programme, participants are afforded a one-week period to synthesise the acquired knowledge and formulate comprehensive business plans. These plans may be subsequently presented before a panel for evaluation. The complete duration of the training programme spans a period of two to three weeks. Participant 1 stated that in order for youth to be eligible for the grant, attendance at an entrepreneurship skills training programme is mandatory. This prerequisite is intended to mitigate the potential risks associated with providing financial resources to individuals who lack the necessary skills to effectively manage them. According to the account provided by Participant 1, individuals interested in initiating new business ventures are first registered in the Start Your Business course, following which they progress to the Start-Up classes. The youth are provided with aid in the preparation of essential business documents required for the operation of their enterprise. Young entrepreneurs are provided with networking support once their businesses are operational, facilitating opportunities to connect with other entrepreneurs. The organisation offers grants as a form of monetary assistance, with the stipulation that the recipient must utilise the funds to purchase either stocks or equipment in accordance with their policy. The terms and conditions of each tier are contingent upon the business's stage of development.

Participant 4 expressed satisfaction with the centre's endeavours to engage with the youth and motivate them towards entrepreneurship as opposed to pursuing employment opportunities in Durban. Participant 1 revealed that the centre has staff that are outsourced for creating awareness, which comprises personnel tasked with promoting entrepreneurship programmes. The primary objective of this initiative is to encourage youth to participate in various business forums and seminars. The practice of raising awareness among youth about the identity and purpose of the DUT Entrepreneurship Centre is implemented across all campuses. Participant 1 also stated that the centre is currently in the process of establishing new offices on different campuses to enhance accessibility. Furthermore, there exists a website that encompasses comprehensive details and advertisements pertaining to the currently accessible opportunities. Participant 2 also noted that contemporary social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have been identified as effective channels for advertising and engagement. This is due to the observation that youth tend to eschew traditional forms of media such as newspapers and mail.

Demonstrating a correlation between human resource management operations and successful entrepreneurial practices was deemed significant in the context of this research. Participant 1 responded to the question regarding the comprehension of the significance of these two fields for efficacious business operations among the youth by stating that, initially, the participants lack a comprehensive understanding, except for the aspiration to initiate a business venture and generate revenue, upon their enrolment in the programme. During the training programme, young people are instructed and coached on comprehending the significance of human resources and

entrepreneurship. In the context of teaching the staffing and marketing module, a specific area of focus pertains to the individuals who are hired to work within a business. This training aspect emphasises the significance of recruitment skills in relation to the delivery of high-quality service and the expansion of the customer base. The participant further elaborated that upon receiving training, the youth understand the correlation between the aforementioned factors and their potential to either foster or impede business expansion. Following the training, youth are able to understand the interconnection between these two fields and subsequently apply this knowledge in practical settings. In addition, Participant 4 elaborated on the essential skills required for business success, which include business costing, basic marketing, and basic financial management in addition to communication skills and time management, which are crucial skills that are often overlooked by youth. It is important to note that time is a valuable commodity in the business world, and graduates of the programme come to appreciate the significance of time management. These elements are essential for ensuring that human resources are effectively aligned with the goals and objectives of the entrepreneurial venture.

The increasing rates of unemployment among youth and the significant frequency of business closures have prompted apprehension and stimulated attention towards the potential influence of skills development initiatives on young entrepreneurs. The assessment of skills development initiatives investigates the effects of entrepreneurial practices on young individuals with the aim of fostering an entrepreneurial mindset among their peers, enhancing employment rates, promoting job creation, and mitigating poverty. The objective of the study was to investigate the universities' entrepreneurial training as a strategy to reduce the rate of unemployment in South Africa. According to Rose and Johnson (2020), possessing an entrepreneurial mindset is a crucial factor in achieving success in the realm of business. Agetue and Nnamdi (2017) posit that a crucial initial step is to ensure that the entrepreneur possesses the necessary capacity and skills to effectively manage a thriving enterprise. The research revealed a discernible importance and desire for programmes aimed at enhancing entrepreneurial skills. Skills development programmes aim to facilitate the establishment of businesses among young people and mitigate obstacles that impede entrepreneurial activities among youth. Skills development programmes promote an entrepreneurial mindset among young people by encouraging them to start businesses, as many young people are struggling with unemployment in the labour market (Radebe, 2019).

In addition, universities offer entrepreneurial training to young people, including those who have completed higher education but are currently unemployed, with the aim of equipping them with the necessary business acumen to establish viable and scalable enterprises. Bushe (2019) highlights the significance of education and training opportunities in fostering the entrepreneurial skills of individuals, both in terms of cultivating future entrepreneurs and enhancing the capabilities of existing ones to expand their businesses and achieve higher levels of success. The acquisition of these competencies facilitates the comprehension of entrepreneurship among young entrepreneurs, thereby reducing the chances of business failures. Skills development programmes furnish youth with resources to initiate their entrepreneurial endeavours, including start-up grants or business enhancement opportunities for pre-existing enterprises. The promotion and cultivation of entrepreneurial activities among young individuals has been shown to mitigate the persistently high and increasing levels of youth unemployment, thereby serving as a significant factor in addressing this issue. Damoah (2020) highlighted that promoting youth entrepreneurship could serve as a crucial remedy in times of elevated unemployment rates in the nation. Several African nations have recognised entrepreneurship as a viable approach to tackle the issue of unemployment (Bodolica *et al.*, 2021). Entrepreneurs in both developed and developing nations play a crucial role in maintaining low levels of unemployment and poverty by establishing new businesses, which subsequently generate employment opportunities (Bayuo *et al.*, 2020).

Theme 4: Experiences of youth who completed the training programme

The results indicate that young individuals exhibit enhanced business acumen subsequent to their participation in the skills development programme. The present discourse pertains to Bushe's (2019) contention that youth are subjected to societal expectations of initiating entrepreneurial ventures, and the dearth of entrepreneurial acumen contributes to a high rate of business failures. The author concluded that entrepreneurs enhance their business operations by acquiring managerial expertise, obtaining financial support, and optimising business profitability. The skills development courses offered by the DUT Entrepreneurship Centre are crucial for entrepreneurs seeking to establish and manage their own businesses. The acquisition of skills such as bookkeeping, financial management, and marketing has the potential to alter the approach to business operations for young entrepreneurs in the Durban region. According to feedback from youth who have successfully undergone a skills development programme,

inadequate financial management skills have been identified as the primary obstacle to the success of youth-owned businesses in Durban. The training curriculum includes courses that aim to educate entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs on the significance of business growth through profits and investment. Inadequate financial management has been identified in numerous studies as the primary cause of business failure in South Africa (Ahmed and Ahmed, 2021). This is frequently attributed to a deficiency in fundamental bookkeeping abilities. The significance of marketing expertise and assistance in fostering business expansion was underscored.

A significant number of enterprises in Durban experience failure due to the inadequacy of entrepreneurial skills in marketing, which hinders the acquisition of customers and the expansion of their businesses (Shongwe, 2020). The function of marketing holds significant importance, particularly in a burgeoning entrepreneurship. Marketing serves to guarantee that a business effectively strategizes the development of a product that optimally satisfies the demands of its customers (Bodolica *et al.*, 2021). However, upon completion of the skills development programme, participants reported that the availability and provision of grants facilitated the growth of pre-existing businesses or the establishment of new ones. The acquisition of expansion capital is a significant concern for young entrepreneurs, as it plays a crucial role in obtaining business resources that can facilitate growth opportunities for a business venture (Zobnina *et al.*, 2019). Despite the observed advancements and developments among entrepreneurs who have completed the programme, they have identified persistent obstacles that impede business operations, including bureaucratic requirements such as those related to the Department of Labour. The provision of entrepreneurial development programmes has a positive impact on promoting business practices among youth in Durban. The statement also underscores the significance of the business's influence on the broader community, including its potential to stimulate job creation and promote growth. The post programme experiences of young entrepreneurs in Durban have been observed to enhance their business practices. Despite persistent obstacles, this sheds light on the errors committed by youth that contribute to the perpetuation of business failure, ultimately leading to business expansion. The impact of youth entrepreneurship in Durban is influenced by support structures such as the DUT Entrepreneurship Centre. According to Damoah (2020), organisations focused on skills development aim to promote the involvement of young and aspiring entrepreneurs in the economy of the country, allowing them to pursue their entrepreneurial goals and make a valuable contribution.

Conclusion

The challenge of unemployment in South Africa has been observed to disproportionately affect youth, with reports indicating an increase in youth unemployment rates. Higher education institutions have implemented initiatives aimed at facilitating the growth and development of youth. The results revealed that DUT plays an important role in supporting youth entrepreneurship; however, there are a number of challenges that exist in the process. This paper presented and analysed the findings in terms of youth perception on entrepreneurship, challenges faced by youth entrepreneurs, challenges faced by universities in supporting entrepreneurship, skills development structure of DUT, strategies used by DUT to encourage entrepreneurship, relationship between human resource management and entrepreneurship, effects of entrepreneurship programmes and youths and the experiences of youths after completing the entrepreneurship programme. Nevertheless, there exist various additional measures that the government can undertake to enhance the acquisition and honing of skills among youth. The establishment of entrepreneurship skills development organisations is imperative in facilitating the initiation and management of businesses by young individuals equipped with the necessary skills. This paper underscores the significance of businesses that exhibit stability and have the potential for future expansion in terms of generating employment opportunities. Despite the extant challenges associated with entrepreneurship practices, young individuals recognise the necessity of youth engagement in mitigating unemployment and its potential impact on unemployment rates. Promoting entrepreneurship as a viable career path is crucial, as it fosters an entrepreneurial mindset among graduates and motivates them to establish businesses rather than pursue traditional employment opportunities. Future research should focus on the strategies that the government can use to ensure universities contribute to reducing youth unemployment.

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