

RESEARCH ARTICLE:

ThriveZA-Nurturing Sustainable Entrepreneurship for South African Youth: A Review

Sasi Gangiah¹

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Abstract

Recently, addressing entrepreneurship among South African youth has gained importance due to high unemployment rates and limited job prospects. Sustainable entrepreneurship offers a solution by generating employment, driving economic growth, and reducing poverty. This article outlines the current situation for South African youth, highlighting challenges and prospects related to entrepreneurship. It explores factors, strategies, and interventions that can foster a sustainable entrepreneurial spirit, emphasising the importance of an enabling environment through supportive policies and infrastructure. The article reviews recent literature on policies promoting sustainable entrepreneurship for South African youth, employing a semi-systematic content analysis approach. It focuses on improving the well-being of unemployed youth and the hurdles in educational institutions in fostering entrepreneurship. Preliminary findings emphasise the significance of funding access, business skills development, mentorship, and networking opportunities in nurturing sustainable entrepreneurship. The outcomes stress the need for comprehensive support mechanisms and policy actions to promote and sustain youth entrepreneurship. By cultivating an ecosystem conducive to entrepreneurial endeavours, South Africa can unlock the untapped entrepreneurial potential of its youth, fostering a more inclusive and prosperous future. Empowering young individuals to create job opportunities and contribute to the economy can yield significant benefits for individuals, communities, and society.

Keywords: entrepreneurial orientation; sustainable entrepreneurship; education and training; policy development; youth empowerment

Introduction

The global challenge of youth unemployment is a pressing concern due to its adverse social and economic impacts. Young individuals, essential to driving economic growth, often face difficulties securing employment opportunities, primarily attributed to insufficient education and skills (Diraditsile and Maphula, 2018). This situation leads to low productivity and diminished competitiveness in the job market (Kuada, 2022). Slow economic growth further exacerbates the issue by failing to generate adequate job opportunities for the increasing youth population, resulting in elevated levels of youth unemployment (Ijoy, 2021). In South Africa, the youth unemployment rate stands at a staggering 46.3%, contributing to heightened poverty and inequality levels (Youth Solutions Report-YSR, 2018). The severity of the issue is emphasised by an expanded definition of youth unemployment, currently registering at a staggering 74.7% (Van der Westhuizen, 2023). Addressing the global challenge of youth unemployment requires sustainable development solutions that encompass economic shifts, societal challenges, and environmental pressures (YSR, 2018). Youth entrepreneurship emerges as a crucial factor in fostering economic growth, job creation, and poverty alleviation (Zwane *et al.*, 2021). The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development emphasises the importance of reducing global inequalities (Zu, 2020) and promoting sustainable entrepreneurship to achieve equitable and sustainable future goals (Dalibozhko and Krakovetskaya, 2018).

Entrepreneurship is increasingly recognised as a potent tool for tackling youth unemployment (Mayombe, 2023). Beyond job creation, it provides opportunities for skill development, practical experience, and personal growth.

¹Durban University of Technology, sasig@dut.ac.za | <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5485-1861>

Engaging in entrepreneurship enables youth to cultivate competencies such as financial acumen, marketing prowess, and leadership qualities, enhancing their competitiveness in the job market (Shkabatur *et al.*, 2022). Successful entrepreneurship not only generates financial gains but also contributes to the overall well-being of individuals, their families, and the economy (Ervin-Brown, 2022: 15). The enthusiasm and self-reliance aspirations of educated youth are crucial resources for fostering sustainable entrepreneurship (Tunio *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, entrepreneurship acts as a pathway for social mobility, allowing youth from disadvantaged backgrounds to create success, gain financial independence, and create opportunities for others in their communities (Hill *et al.*, 2022). Empowering young individuals to create their ventures reduces reliance on government programs, alleviating the burden on government resources and fostering a more sustainable economic system. Additionally, the diversification of the economy by young adults can enhance resilience and stability, reducing susceptibility to economic shocks and downturns as per the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) (Hill *et al.*, 2022).

The existing literature concerning sustainable entrepreneurship among South African youth underscores gaps in knowledge about distinct challenges, regulatory environments, resource accessibility, and the necessity for longitudinal studies (Kanayo *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, there is a dearth of comparative analyses with developed regions. Addressing these gaps is crucial for a comprehensive understanding and the formulation of effective policy interventions. The purpose of this research is to examine and analyse the various factors, strategies, and interventions designed to promote sustainable entrepreneurship among the youth in South Africa. There is an emphasis on fostering the growth and long-term viability of entrepreneurial initiatives, specifically focusing on the youth demographic within South Africa. The overarching purpose of the article is to provide valuable insights and recommendations that contribute to the advancement and strengthening of sustainable entrepreneurial activities. This article supports SDG 8 and 9. To effectively attain the SDGs (Zu, 2020), inspired students must become future change-makers for societal transformation. Those possessing sustainable entrepreneurial skills—merely identify, analyse, and comprehend societal issues but will also possess the capacity to formulate solutions to address them and generate favourable social, environmental, and economic outcomes (De Bronstein *et al.*, 2023). The following questions arise in this study:

1. What are the main barriers and challenges faced by young entrepreneurs in South Africa?
2. What are the specific policy measures that have been implemented in South Africa to address youth unemployment?
3. How effective have these policy interventions been in terms of reducing youth unemployment rates?
4. How can policy initiatives in South Africa foster collaboration and partnerships between stakeholders to support youth entrepreneurship?

To properly address the focus of this research, the study draws upon the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, as highlighted by Damoah (2023). In the context of RBV, entrepreneurs possessing distinctive and valuable resources and abilities can attain a lasting competitive edge. These resources encompass tangible assets such as physical properties, financial reserves and infrastructure, along with intangible assets like reputation, goodwill, networks, and mentorship. Evaluating resources against criteria such as value, rarity, difficulty of replication, and irreplaceability is crucial under RBV standards. RBV offers insights for fostering sustainable entrepreneurship among South African youth by emphasising the identification of key resources essential for venture success (Campbell and Kubickova, 2020). This includes financial support, mentorship programs, and networking opportunities. Additionally, RBV underscores the importance of resource heterogeneity and immobility for sustained competitive advantage. The model of eco-RBV VREINO aligns specific resource attributes with genuine sustainability, considering ecological, societal, and economic impacts (Bhandari *et al.*, 2020) in addition to attributes of being *Valuable, Rare, ESG (ecology, society, and governance) Inimitable, Non-sustainable, and Organised (VREINO)*. Furthermore, RBV posits that competitive advantage stems not only from resources but also from the firm's capabilities in utilising and combining these resources (Barney *et al.*, 2021). The literature review can further enrich its findings by delving into the entrepreneurial skills, innovation capabilities, and regulatory navigation abilities of South African youth engaged in sustainable entrepreneurship. In the context of sustainable entrepreneurship, RBV prompts an analysis of dynamic capabilities, essential for adapting to the ever-changing business environment (Quansah *et al.*, 2022). This framework provides a comprehensive basis for policy recommendations, and guiding interventions to enhance the resource base and capabilities of South African youth in the realm of sustainable entrepreneurship (Barney *et al.*, 2021).

Literature Review

Youth entrepreneurship is recognised as a crucial tool for fostering employment growth, economic participation, and socialisation among young people (Zhartay *et al.*, 2020). Entrepreneurship involves initiating new business ventures, encompassing the risks and responsibilities associated with creating and sustaining a venture. It plays a vital role in shaping the mindset of young individuals, equipping them with essential skills, knowledge, and attitudes for fostering an entrepreneurial culture that embraces creativity, environmental consciousness, cooperation, and the communication of ideas for sustainable development. Acknowledging the potential of entrepreneurs to generate employment and sustainable growth, the European Union prioritises promoting youth entrepreneurship and creating an entrepreneur-friendly environment. However, factors such as age, social environment, attitudes, and awareness of incentives can influence youth entrepreneurship, with some countries exhibiting lower aspirations for entrepreneurial endeavours (Bakator *et al.*, 2022). The development of necessary skills, attitudes, and values for social entrepreneurship is crucial, considering the complex social and economic issues faced by young individuals (Tunio *et al.*, 2021). Factors influencing youth entrepreneurship also extend to personal experiences, family support, and belonging to entrepreneurial families (Damoah, 2023). While a minority of youth in Spain exhibit a strong interest in entrepreneurship, those with a tradition of entrepreneurship in their families show positive perceptions of health and quality of life, viewing entrepreneurship as an avenue for professional development, idea realisation, and financial independence (Luis-Rico *et al.*, 2020).

Abdelwahed *et al.* (2022) find that factors such as surroundings, business, behavioural, and human relations can predict entrepreneurial sustainability in Pakistan. The business factors may be only the starting point for behavioural aspects, and mutual leadership can strengthen them along with competitive intelligence, ethics, and job satisfaction. Entrepreneurs in sustainable businesses tend to overlook environmental aspects considering economic factors and creating a favourable marketplace climate. However, challenges persist, as risks in agribusiness and financing constraints negatively impact entrepreneurial intentions, particularly among youth and women in agricultural cooperatives (Bouichou *et al.*, 2021). The influence of gender on entrepreneurial intentions is mediated by personal attitudes and perceived behavioural control, with young males more likely to express precise intentions to start a business compared to their female counterparts. Older employees tend to have lower entrepreneurial intention although they have better access to factors of production such as human, social, and financial capital, while younger individuals may lack experience and knowledge in various areas of business. In low-income BRICS economies like Brazil and South Africa, the GEM Report (2022) highlights lower entrepreneurial participation due to economic limitations, funding constraints, regulatory hurdles, education gaps, cultural beliefs, market limitations, technological obstacles, and insufficient state backing. Addressing these challenges is essential for promoting entrepreneurship and sustainable economic growth. In developing economies, the success of microbusinesses, particularly in agritourism, may hinge not only on individual business acumen but also on external support aligned with the RBV framework (Campbell and Kubickova, 2020).

On the other hand, social entrepreneurship, as highlighted by Fhiri *et al.* (2021), involves innovative solutions to address social problems, contributing to positive youth development by fostering a sense of community and purpose (Ong *et al.*, 2020). Engaging in social entrepreneurship activities helps build skills and promotes social participation among the youth. Tien *et al.* (2020) advocate for a synergy between social and green entrepreneurship, emphasising that green entrepreneurship, aligned with sustainable development, can bring benefits to individuals, society, and the environment. The study emphasises the increasing importance of adopting green values and a sustainable lifestyle in line with global trends. Sustainable entrepreneurship, according to Haldar (2019), addresses environmental and social challenges with innovative solutions, prioritising long-term benefits over immediate profits. Dismantling unsustainable business models is crucial, and the author suggests that financial support from venture capital and the public sector can bolster sustainable businesses. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has evolved into a proactive approach, enhancing competitiveness while creating value for society and the environment (Rosário *et al.*, 2022). The “triple bottom line” (TBL) framework assesses business performance based on environmental, economic, and social pillars. Exposure to diverse contexts, as reported by Lindvert (2023) in the context of Norwegian students visiting India, can enhance empathy and foster an increased interest in entrepreneurship for positive social and economic impact. Educational reforms to promote entrepreneurial competence at various education stages are recommended (Luis-Rico *et al.*, 2020). Dzomonda and Fatoki (2019) suggest that universities play a crucial role in supporting youth through guidance, education, and financial assistance. However, practical entrepreneurship education in South African universities needs improvement. Offering entrepreneurial advice, and financial support, and acting as training centres and innovation

hubs can boost confidence among South African youth to start businesses, contributing to economic and social inclusion (Dzomonda and Fatoki, 2019).

Methodology

Snyder (2019) advocates for the utility of semi-systematic analysis in identifying themes and theoretical concepts within a research discipline. This approach offers value in mapping out a research field, synthesising existing knowledge, and paving the way for future investigations. In the context of exploring youth entrepreneurship in Africa, a content analysis using a two-step procedure was employed. The primary objectives were to recognise the challenges of youth unemployment and examine entrepreneurship policies designed for them, resulting in a segmented framework for a better Africa. The initial step involved a Boolean search method to identify relevant articles. Using key terms related to youth entrepreneurship, searches were conducted in University Summons and Google Scholar. Two databases with distinct functionalities were chosen to ensure a comprehensive overview. Schmidt and Santamaria-Alvarez (2022) highlight the importance of meticulous query formulation to yield relevant results. Google Scholar, a widely recognised search engine for scholarly articles, initially produced 38,700 articles. However, a closer examination revealed that only a few were directly related to the theme. A detailed account of the search methodology clarified the selection process, taking into consideration relevance and publication recency. The retrieval process started in April 2023, resulting in 557 articles from Google Scholar as given below in Table 1.

Table 1: Articles from Google Scholar

Keywords for search (2023-2018)	Google Scholar	Comments
Entrepreneurship among youth South Africa	107	The first 3 articles seemed relevant
Youth Entrepreneurship Policies South Africa	164	First page 2 articles seemed relevant
Youth Entrepreneurial Sustainability South Africa	88	First page 1 article seemed relevant
Youth Entrepreneurial Education South Africa	98	First page 2 articles seemed relevant
Youth Entrepreneurial Support South Africa	100	First page 2 articles seemed relevant
Total	557	
Websites	Google sites	Comments
Youth Employment Service (YES)	11	2 articles were selected
National Youth Development Agency (NYDA)	15	4 articles were selected
Entrepreneurship Training Program (ETP)	6	1 article was selected
Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA)	9	1 article was selected
Small Enterprise Finance Agency (SEFA)	9	1 article was selected
Black Business Supplier Development Programme (BBSDP)	10	2 articles were selected
Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise (SMME)	9	1 article was selected
Yields of Evocative Entrepreneurial Approaches on Environment and Society (YEEES)	7	1 articles was selected
Total	76	13 articles were selected

Initial screening involved selecting approximately 10 articles per Google page based on relevance, with further scrutiny applied to abstracts, introductions, and, in some cases, entire articles. The search focused on youth entrepreneurship research published in peer-reviewed journals in English within the past five years, aligning with the scope of understanding current trends as depicted in Figure 1.

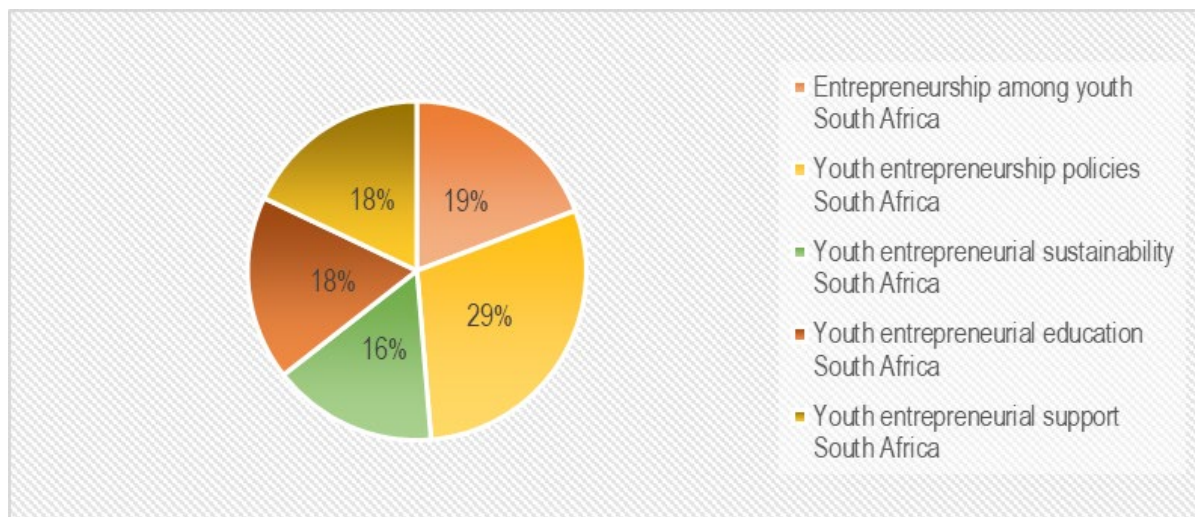


Figure 1: Themed articles elicited from Google Scholar

The exclusion criteria involved eliminating articles published outside the timeframe of 2018, with exceptions for reviews. Papers designed for instructional or educational purposes were also excluded. A meticulous process, depicted in Figure 3, involved stages of scrutiny, ensuring a rigorous selection of relevant research papers. Ultimately, 105 articles comprising 74 articles, 26 web pages, 3 books, and 2 conference proceedings were selected for review. The semi-systematic analysis revealed two main themes in the selected literature: factors influencing sustainable entrepreneurship among South African youth and challenges and opportunities in promoting sustainable entrepreneurship among South African youth. The word cloud in Figure 2 visually represents the variety of themes integrated into the analysis.



Figure 2: A word cloud of emergent themes and subthemes

This analytical process allows for a nuanced understanding of the current landscape of youth entrepreneurship research. The identified themes serve as a foundation for comprehending the complexities and nuances of youth entrepreneurship in South Africa, providing valuable insights for future research directions, policy formulation, and practical interventions. The semi-systematic analysis adopted in this study serves as a robust method for content analysis.

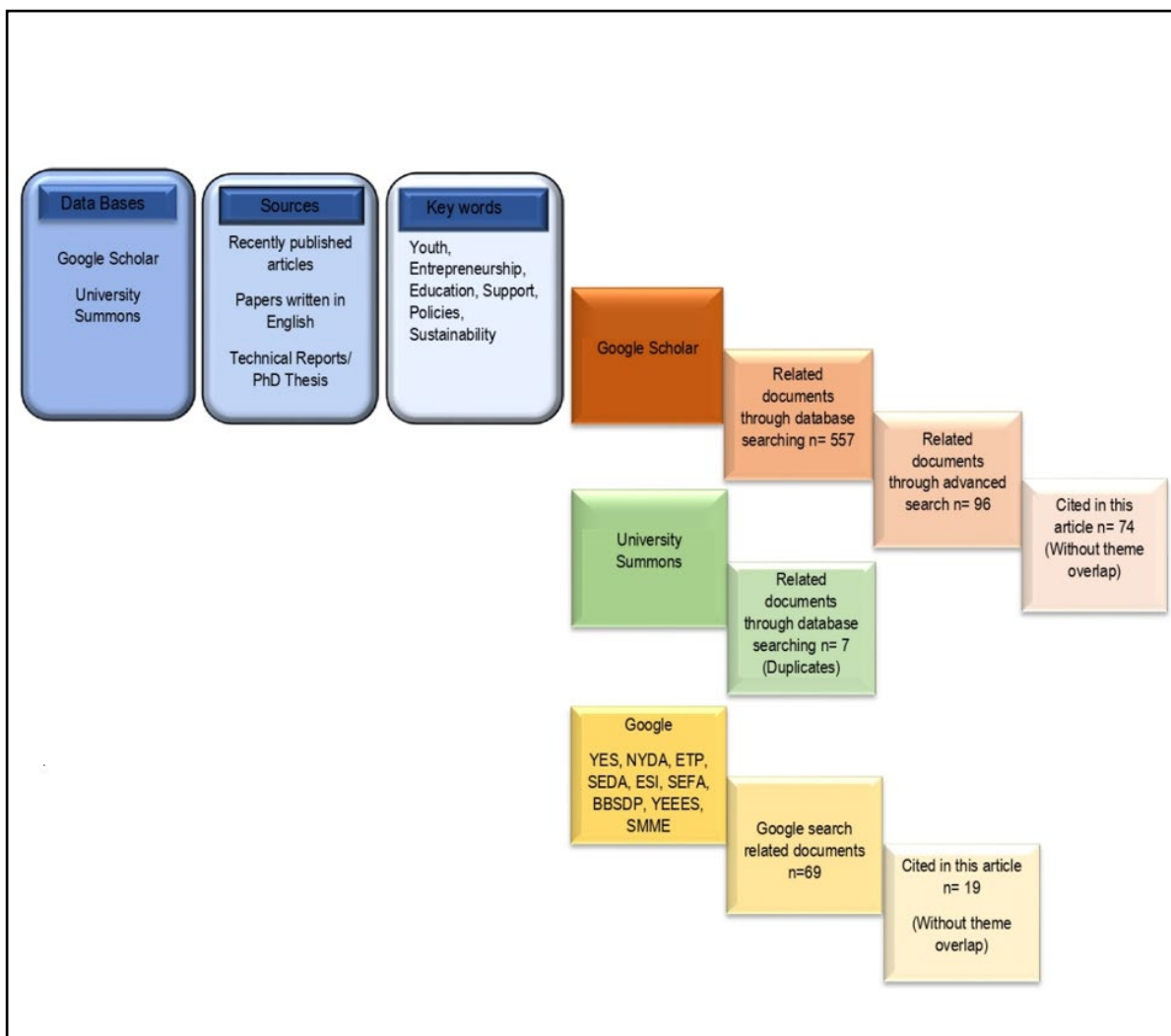


Figure 3: Methodology off a semi-systematic review

Results and Discussion

Despite the increased focus from researchers and policymakers on African youth, Mueller and Thurlow (2019) find significant knowledge gaps. International reports often take a regional perspective, identifying general trends and challenges but neglecting the specific nuances within individual African countries. Studies addressing youth employment at the national level rarely focus on the distinct challenges faced by rural youth. As a result, policies targeting rural youth in Africa are often based on generalised information drawn from cross-country data and broad frameworks.

A recent report by Maluleke (2023) states that the formal sector constitutes 69.3% of overall employment in South Africa, as shown in Table 2. Alarming unemployment rates are observed amongst the youth, particularly those aged 15-24 years and 25-34 years, standing at 60.7% and 39.8% respectively. These figures, when compared to Tanzania, reveal a significant disparity. Notably, South Africa's youth employment rate falls below the average for sub-Saharan Africa. Analysing neighbouring countries, Mozambique exhibits an almost threefold higher youth employment rate than South Africa. In contrast, Ghana, while having a higher overall labour force participation rate, reports a lower female participation rate compared to Tanzania, which concurrently boasts a higher rate of youth employment. Mkandawire's (2022) report makes a substantial contribution to the success stories of youth entrepreneurship in different African countries. There is now a shared agreement that fostering youth entrepreneurship necessitates a profound comprehension of the youth ecosystem and how this system interconnects various stakeholders and institutions.

Table 2: A comparative analysis of youth employment in African countries

Criteria	Sub-Saharan	Nigeria	Ghana	Tanzania	Ethiopia	Mozambique	Botswana	South Africa
	2022	2022	2022	2022	2022	2022	2022/23	2023
Labour force participation (%)	38.1	58.9	71.25	69.17	82.3	78.5	65.0	60.2
Youth (15–24)	23.5	25.09	53.6	66.09	75.0	62.55	35.79	21.7
Unemployment rate (%)	6.75	33.33	3.9	2.76	4.02	3.91	23.65	32.6
Youth (15–24)	12.4	13.44	7.14	4.26	6.33	8.05	37.85	60.7*
Female Participation	37.0	52	65	79	75	78	60	51

Source: Compiled by the author

There are numerous discrepancies in statistics related to youth unemployment and entrepreneurship rates in SA. Several authors such as Mueller and Thurlow (2019), Mkandawire (2022), UNCTAD (2023a) and Van der Westhuizen (2023) provide different figures. According to Zwane *et al.* (2021), the youth unemployment rate is over 30% and has become an impediment to inclusive economic development in South Africa, whereas Matschke (2022) claims that the youth unemployment rate stands at 59%, with a breakdown of 75% for the 18-24 year age group and 53% for the 25-34 age group. The State of the Nation Address, 2023 disclosed that 42% of individuals aged 15 to 34 years old were Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) by the end of the third quarter. However, the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention (PYEI) Quarterly Labour Force survey reported a 32.9% overall unemployment rate, with 44.7% of young individuals aged 15 to 34 being NEET in the first quarter of 2023. Controversially, Egeru *et al.* (2021) find that Africa boasts the world's highest entrepreneurship rate, with approximately 22% of its working-age population venturing into self-owned businesses as of 2021. Their study on youth entrepreneurship in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) uncovered divergent levels of engagement across chosen countries, with rates fluctuating from a peak of 56% in Uganda to a nadir of 13% in South Africa. This variation could be due to a gap in the foundations of a self-sustaining entrepreneurship ecosystem including (i) policy, (ii) markets, (iii) capital, (iv) human capacity, (v) culture, and (vi) support. Despite the significant entrepreneurial potential among Africa's youth, the realisation of this potential faces obstacles due to dysfunctional entrepreneurship ecosystems prevalent in many countries (Egeru *et al.*, 2021).

There are several challenges in implementing entrepreneurship education in South African public schools, as highlighted by Ngcobo and Khumalo (2022), including financial constraints, lack of course modules, limited practical exposure and insufficient support. Government entities such as the Small Enterprise Finance Agency (SEFA), The National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA), the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and the National Empowerment Fund (NEF) should conduct awareness campaigns using youth-centric media platforms to promote entrepreneurship. Radebe and Vezi-Magigaba (2021) emphasise the need for an entrepreneurship-based curriculum, qualified educators and incubation centres. Although DUT plays an important role in supporting youth entrepreneurship, Musariwa and Tinonetsana (2023) identify challenges in skills development structure, university strategies and the relationship with human resource management. A study conducted by Radebe and Vezi-Magigaba (2021) identified two primary challenges impeding youth engagement in entrepreneurship: the lack of rigour in entrepreneurship education curricula and societal attitudes towards entrepreneurship. Barriers such as limited access to credit, cumbersome regulations, high labour costs and the prevailing entrepreneurial culture were also recognised as hindrances to youth involvement in entrepreneurship (Radebe, 2019).

Tshishonga (2023) underscores universities' role in societal transformation through knowledge application and engagement. Mapaling *et al.* (2023) offer perspectives from engineering students on how entrepreneurship can enhance their academic resilience. Innovative information and communication technology (ICTS) solutions are recommended for SMME development using smartphones and social media (Modiba *et al.*, 2023). The implementation of entrepreneurial schemes needs to focus on three key areas: fostering an entrepreneurial mindset and culture; addressing practical and logistical barriers; and providing information, advice, coaching and mentoring to young potential entrepreneurs (Ogamba, 2018). "The transformation of higher education must promote a more diverse economy and give room for youths to thrive" (Matola *et al.*, 2019: 175). Countries must urgently enhance their education systems to gain a substantial advantage, given the incoming cohorts in Africa. Inefficient education systems not only lack efficacy but also condemn a significant portion of the generation to

poverty. Reforms in the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system, along with restructuring the further education and training (FET) system, can address enrolment and employment challenges, thereby fostering flexibility and industry relevance. Sector education and training authorities (SETAs) should streamline operations with simplified bureaucracy and performance-based financing (Filmer and Fox, 2014).

Universities play a crucial role in shaping the institutional context by providing essential elements such as technology transfer offices, research facilities, incubators, accelerators, and mentorship centres. There is a growing trend in universities adapting their training programs to encompass a comprehensive spectrum of entrepreneurship education, covering aspects like education about entrepreneurship, for entrepreneurship, in entrepreneurship, and through entrepreneurship (Egeru *et al.*, 2021). Universities, as institutional entities, also play a vital role in fostering robust entrepreneurial ecosystems through (i) their triple roles in teaching, research, and outreach, (ii) their capacity to advocate, mobilise, and impact policy and public perception, and (iii) their adeptness in piloting initiatives and extracting valuable insights. Iwu *et al.* (2021) report on the quantitative data from a South African university that indicates a strong endorsement from respondents regarding the utility of entrepreneurship education for economic development. The institutions offering entrepreneurship programs should ensure that educators delivering these courses are not only highly competent but also possess the ability to inspire and ignite entrepreneurial intentions amongst students. As per the recommendation of Bhandari *et al.* (2020), it is advisable to incorporate the eco-RBV VREINO model into the curriculum for university students to gain an understanding of entrepreneurship concepts. In 2020, the employment rate for TVET graduates stood at 40.5%. Approximately 55.0% of these graduates were engaged in either employment or further studies (NYDA, 2022).

According to Maka (2023), socio-cultural perceptions and gender disparities are barriers to youth entrepreneurship education. There is a prevalent belief that entrepreneurship is risky compared to traditional employment, discouraging young individuals from pursuing new ventures. Gender disparities further contribute to limited opportunities for young women in entrepreneurship programs, hindering access to funding and support. UNCTAD (2023a) also stated that obstacles faced by women in entrepreneurship include financial exclusion, gender bias in securing bank loans, and limited access to quality education. Overcoming these challenges involves raising awareness about entrepreneurship's value, promoting inclusivity, and challenging gender norms to create a more diverse and inclusive entrepreneurial environment. Akinleke (2023) summarises that there is a lower inclination amongst females towards entrepreneurship education compared to males. This is attributed to lower self-efficacy levels in areas related to business activities, such as problem-solving, money management, decision-making and qualitative abilities. Additionally, women exhibit lower risk tolerance, lack sufficient female role models and are less likely to be self-reliant compared to their male counterparts. However, Epko (2023) found that females were the predominant participants in adult education programs, encompassing basic literacy, post-literacy and vocational training initiatives that enhance entrepreneurship development in Nigeria by adding value to the skills of individuals. Mapaling *et al.* (2023) found that participation in groups like the Women in Engineering Leadership Association (WELA) assisted female students in managing stress by providing counselling and mentorship. These resources aimed to cultivate skills applicable to entrepreneurship.

Improving the well-being of unemployed youth in South Africa necessitates a re-evaluation of the Basic Package of Support (BPS). Graham *et al.* (2020) assert that despite effective policies addressing challenges during the transition from school to work, the country continues to grapple with a high rate of youth classified as NEET. Dickens and Marx (2020) emphasise the importance of practical educational attainment during care, with minimum criteria required before youth disengagement. The existing challenge lies in the lack of policy coordination and integration, causing young individuals to slip through the cracks despite available programs (Graham *et al.*, 2020). In response to the issue of operating in silos, a district-based coordination model has been introduced to enhance the coherence of government program implementation. The Basic Package of Support (BPS) aims to holistically assist NEET youth through an integrated, cross-sectoral approach. Despite the coordination efforts by the National Youth Development Coordinating Forum (NYDC) at various governance levels, ensuring accountability and cost-effective service provision remain a concern. A community of practice (CoP) needs to be facilitated through a public-private partnership that stretches across departments and across various levels of governance to regulate partnerships and foster mutual benefit and a shared purpose in realising BPS commitments.

Kanayo *et al.* (2021) highlight the significant influence of financial resources and government support on the success of Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) in South Africa, emphasising the need for targeted policies. Ogujiuba *et al.* (2020) underscore the role of general entrepreneurship practices in identifying sustainable

opportunities, surpassing the impact of specific factors like start-up capital. Mefi and Asoba (2020) emphasise the importance of individual and societal backing in sustainable social entrepreneurship, acknowledging values related to culture, aesthetics and corporate social responsibility and support as critical determinants. Akoh and Lekhanya (2022) reveal the challenges faced by social entrepreneurs, emphasising the need for collaboration and networking on social platforms. Dzomonda (2021) further outlines challenges, urging government support for social entrepreneurs, and highlighting funding, staffing and security concerns. Policy implementation faces challenges due to inadequate coordination and misaligned priorities amongst government departments. Additionally, variations in regulatory hurdles exist based on the location of businesses, influenced by the differing efficiency levels of public agencies and discrepancies in the interpretation of national legislation (UNCTAD, 2023a). Disparities and deficiencies in the regulation of small and medium-sized businesses (Lez'er, 2019) can be identified using the comparative legal method upon correlating federal legislation with regional and municipal legislation.

PYEI and the Presidential Employment Stimulus (PES) were introduced to provide meaningful employment and improve livelihoods, particularly in response to the persistent unemployment crisis exacerbated by COVID-19. The PYEI includes components funded by PES, which directly creates job opportunities for youth. Operation Vulindlela targets the structural barriers hindering businesses from generating more youth employment. The PYEI is actively implementing priority actions to connect young people with learning opportunities, workplace experience, and sustainable livelihoods (PYEI, 2023). Sumaworo (2023) advises that Governments and stakeholders strategically invest in equipping young individuals with entrepreneurship skills, particularly in sectors like agriculture, information technology (IT), and information and communication technology (ICT). Additionally, comprehensive support and alleviating systematic obstacles that hinder their progress in various African economies must be offered. These barriers include bureaucratic hindrances, high business costs, limited access to financial resources, and the presence of inadequate tangible and intangible infrastructure. Another factor to consider is that the youth require packaged support addressing their psychosocial, educational and economic requirements. The effective progression of engineering students from higher education in SA is significantly hindered by the absence of a comprehensive support structure (Mapaling *et al.*, 2023). After securing fundamental resources, the eco-RBV VREINO should be implemented for sustainable entrepreneurship as suggested by Bhandari *et al.* (2020).

Current literature on sustainable entrepreneurship for South African youth highlights a prevailing trend towards recognising the importance of sustainable business practices. Scholars underscore that integrating social and environmental objectives into business models is essential, signalling a shift towards a holistic approach that extends beyond economic considerations (Mkandawire, 2022). Policy discussions increasingly acknowledge the potential of sustainable entrepreneurship to address societal issues, particularly within the service sector, leading to a heightened emphasis on creating an enabling environment for such initiatives in youth entrepreneurship policies. However, notable discrepancies arise from diverse operationalisations of sustainable entrepreneurship, hindering direct comparisons and generalisations. Varied assessments of the impact of sustainable entrepreneurship on South African youth further contribute to uncertainties, necessitating standardised metrics for evaluation. Additionally, a scarcity of longitudinal studies tracking the trajectory of sustainable entrepreneurship ventures initiated by South African youth limits a comprehensive understanding of their sustainability and enduring impact over time. While the literature synthesis demonstrates strengths in trend identification, policy emphasis, and comprehensive synthesis, addressing challenges faced by young entrepreneurs and establishing standardised impact metrics is essential for nuanced understanding and effective interventions (Mkandawire, 2022).

Proposed Framework for the Sustainability of Youth Entrepreneurship

The sustainability of youth entrepreneurship in the SA context requires a comprehensive framework that encompasses economic sustainability, social sustainability, environmental sustainability, policy and regulatory support, and education and skills development. By addressing these aspects, the framework ensures the long-term success of youth-led businesses whilst driving economic growth, promoting social inclusivity and contributing to environmental sustainability. With the right support, policies and education, young entrepreneurs can overcome the challenges they face and become catalysts for positive change, shaping a more sustainable and prosperous future for SA. There is a myriad of approaches to entrepreneurship in general (Van der Westhuizen, 2023). Broadly attempting to understand youth entrepreneurship, Figure 4 summarises the conceptual framework for youth entrepreneurship. The framework addresses the factors impacting youth entrepreneurship. Young individuals encounter various obstacles when trying to establish a start-up, including the need for essential skills to succeed in their business endeavours. However, these skills are often impeded by lower levels of literacy, an unfavourable

environment marked by bureaucratic hurdles, excessive red tape, limited access to capital, and high taxes and fees. Their choice to pursue entrepreneurship as a career is influenced by their family background, societal structure, as well as their knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) related to new ventures and interpersonal relationships. Successful youth entrepreneurs also need to exhibit a specific mindset and personality traits, including initiative-taking, self-motivation, resilience in the face of setbacks, and a commitment to sustainable entrepreneurship initiatives (SEI).

To address the challenges in initiating a business venture, training and educational initiatives at TVETs and universities are crucial, with a particular focus on practical models, the establishment of business incubation centres (BICs), and the development of innovative projects through research and development (RandD) initiatives (Mkandawire, 2022). Mentorship programs offered by private companies and pilot projects leveraging digital communication knowledge can significantly benefit young entrepreneurs. Furthermore, existing policies, such as those implemented by organisations like Youth Employment Service (YES), NYDA, SEDA, SEFA, Black Business Supplier Development Programme (BBSDP), and various other schemes, require reform. Initiatives such as tax incentives during the initial years, fostering an open market for innovation, and promoting networking through social platforms can serve as incentives for more young individuals to embrace entrepreneurship. The conceptual framework for ensuring sustainable entrepreneurship amongst SA youth can be structured around three key foundations: resource accessibility, capacity enhancement, and a conducive environment (Herutomo *et al.*, 2022).

- i. **Resource Access:** This foundation encompasses gaining entry to financial support, education, networks, mentoring, and social connections. Financial backing is pivotal for initiating and expanding youth-led businesses. Education equips young entrepreneurs with the essential knowledge and skills to thrive in the market. Networks and mentorship aid in securing access to clients, suppliers, and investors. Social capital facilitates the development of trust and credibility with stakeholders. As per RBV theory, identifying and providing key resources are necessary for the sustainability of an enterprise along with capacity building and support (Bhandari *et al.*, 2020).
- ii. **Capacity Building:** This pillar involves training, coaching and mentoring initiatives that enable young entrepreneurs to hone their abilities and competencies. Capacity strengthening programs assist them in recognising and capitalising on their strengths and weaknesses.
- iii. **Supportive Environment:** This base comprises government policies, regulations and institutions geared towards fostering entrepreneurship. A conducive environment furnishes young entrepreneurs with a supportive ecosystem to surmount challenges and attain sustainable success.

Engaging in further discussions and analytical conversations is crucial to enhancing theoretical frameworks and establishing a normative structure for empowering young individuals and promoting entrepreneurship. Ogamba (2018) and Orobia *et al.* (2020) have significantly contributed to the business sustainability framework by presenting ideas and identifying persistent entrepreneurial challenges within their respective contexts. This progress now paves the way for poverty alleviation, intergenerational equity, and sustainable development. There is a shared agreement that fostering youth entrepreneurship necessitates a profound comprehension of the youth ecosystem and how this system interconnects various stakeholders and institutions (Mkandawire, 2022).



Figure 4: Framework on nurturing sustainable entrepreneurship for South African youth

Addressing the challenges young entrepreneurs face requires educational initiatives, particularly at Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions and universities. Practical models, business incubation centres (BICs), and research and development (RandD) initiatives can enhance skills and foster innovation. Mentorship programs and digital communication knowledge leverage can further benefit aspiring entrepreneurs. Existing policies from organisations like YES, NYDA, SEDA, SEFA, and BBSDP need reform, including incentives like tax relief and open-market promotion to encourage youth entrepreneurship. The conceptual framework for sustainable entrepreneurship among South African youth revolves around three foundational pillars: resource access, capacity building, and a supportive environment (Herutomo *et al.*, 2022). Resource access includes financial support, education, networks, mentorship, and social connections. Capacity building involves training and mentoring programs to enhance entrepreneurial abilities, and a supportive environment comprises government policies and institutions fostering entrepreneurship. This framework emphasises the necessity of holistic support for aspiring entrepreneurs, recognising the interconnectedness of various factors. Further discussions and analyses are vital to refining this theoretical framework and establishing normative structures that empower young individuals, aligning with the shared goal of poverty alleviation, intergenerational equity, and sustainable development (Orobia *et al.*, 2020).

Conclusion

Access to financial services remains a significant hurdle for young entrepreneurs, particularly in developing nations. The UN-led SDG Fund addresses this by matching youth skills with resilience-building needs, emphasising the importance of combining impact and profit in social intrapreneurship projects. Business sustainability concepts encompass stakeholder engagement, people management, ecosystem management, market strategies, and innovation. Entrepreneurial framework conditions (EFC) include education, government policies, market openness, IT infrastructure, and finance, crucial for the success of youth and women entrepreneurs. Pervasive challenges in youth unemployment, digitalisation, climate-smart agriculture, healthcare access, and waste management signify market gaps offering opportunities for tailored solutions. Entrepreneurial education, a supportive environment, and a thriving entrepreneurial economy are pivotal for youth entrepreneurship and sustainable business growth. Policymakers should leverage these insights to design effective strategies (RBV theory). Entrepreneurship emerges as a potent remedy for youth unemployment and economic advancement, offering young people skills, resources, and employment avenues. Policies promoting entrepreneurship not only benefit individuals but also contribute to overall economic growth. Collaborative efforts involving community-university partnerships, local governments, and the entrepreneurial ecosystem are essential for capacity-building in youth entrepreneurship. In sub-Saharan Africa, fostering sustainable entrepreneurial programs can reshape the socio-economic profile and enhance resilience to global challenges, positioning youth entrepreneurship as a core driver of economic expansion.

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