Enabling Articulation for Entrepreneurial Development through Private - Public Partnerships

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Abstract

The legacy of apartheid lives on in democratic South Africa as evidenced by the high rates of unemployment, inequality and poverty that are prevalent in the country. Almost 3 million youth between the ages of 18 and 24 are disengaged from education, training and employment. The Post School Education and Training system in South Africa is tasked to engage these young adults through availing programmes that empower them with functional skills required in the labour market and to engage in entrepreneurial activities. However the post school system is riddled with challenges related to the delivery and implementation of policies intended to redress the educational inequalities that were created during the pre-democratic era. One major challenge relates to inadequate delivery of learning programmes that enable vertical or horizontal learner progression or articulation and also promote career development in all sectors of the economy. The challenge that prevents most people from articulating from education and training institutions to the work place or entrepreneurial activity may be driven by structural elements related to the labour market and the education system. A qualitative study was conducted in the footwear and leather sector to identify some of the challenges facing the education system. The primary aim of the study was to explore how entrepreneurial readiness can be promoted through a partnership between industry, government and the post school system. Interviews with research participants focussed on establishing the extent to which the education and

training offered at Centres of Footwear Entrepreneurship prepared graduates for further study and entrepreneurship. The study revealed that articulation as a driver for entrepreneurial readiness and skills acquisition could be thwarted by; financial insecurity of students, the nature of delivery of programmes, failure to meet minimum requirements for learning programmes and fear of failure. The post school education system should promote articulation with a view to foster entrepreneurial readiness among graduates as entrepreneurship is key in dealing with the unemployment challenge.

Keywords: employment creation, entrepreneurial development, entrepreneurial readiness, private -public partnerships, post school education and training, footwear entrepreneurship

Introduction

Over two decades into democracy, South Africa still battles with issues of poverty, inequality and unemployment. Herrington, Kew and Mwanga (2017: 5) attribute the country's persistent poverty and inequality to weak job-creation capacity that has led to high unemployment and underemployment. Unemployment is at 27, 6% and youth unemployment at 65% (Herrington *et al.* 2017: 5). A key priority is to introduce policy reforms aimed at creating an enabling business environment which contributes to the creation of employment opportunities. However, starting and running a successful business enterprise requires prior acquisition of skills that can be impacted through the education and training system. A number of policy interventions targeting the education and training sector have been developed to ameliorate the consequences of inequality and unemployment. However, the transformation of the South African Post School Education and Training (PSET) system as described by Maringe and Osman (2016: 120) has proven to be a daunting task. Maringe and Osman (2016: 121) note that transformation has been elusive and that South Africa still finds itself reproducing the past resulting in a high rate of poverty, inequality and unemployment. A large number of youth who possess no professional or technical skills and who exited the education system prematurely are effectively unemployable (Draft National Youth Policy 2014 - 2019: 21). Almost 3 million youth between the ages of 18 and 24 are not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET)

(Perold, Cloete & Papier 2012; Department of Higher Education and Training, DHET 2013). These young people will remain excluded from the economy unless a targeted intervention is sought. Moloi, Mkwana and Bojabotseha (2014: 470) argue that the NEET challenge is not only an educational problem but also constitutes a social and economic disaster.

The challenge facing democratic South Africa is to create an education and training system that is all inclusive and relevant to the needs of the economy. The principle of articulation has to be made a key component in all discourses relating to education and training as it addresses issues of access, progression and success¹. The ultimate goal of articulation and the policies related to it is to find strategies to re-engage those that are NEET. Young people exit the schooling system with insufficient literacy, numeracy and livelihood skills to be able to participate productively in the economy (Herrington *et al.* 2017: 30). Too many adults have not reached their full potential due to systemic barriers that do not allow for lifelong learning (Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) Strategic Plan 2010-2015: 18).

Field, Musset and Alvarez-Galvan (2014: 7) suggest that effective vocational programmes can be a part of the answer by providing practical training linked to the prospect of a job and smoothing the transition from school to work. However, with the high unemployment rate vocational programmes that promote specifically entrepreneurial readiness would provide a better answer to the NEET crisis. According to Herrington *et al.* (2017: 21) the education system is failing to prepare potential entrepreneurs to start a business and it also has not done much to address the massive skills shortage which hampers economic growth. The Draft National Youth Policy (2014 - 2019: 35) advocates that an enabling environment for entrepreneurship can be created through inculcating a spirit of entrepreneurship in the education and training system and reducing barriers to entry in various value chains. A partnership between post school institutions and industry is required in the design of the

¹ Hoppers (2009:68) describes articulation as actual connections between different learning pathways at the horizontal level, and the transitions from one level to the next in vertical terms. Hoppers further describes these horizontal connections and the vertical transitions in the education and training system as the bridges and ladders that allow people to move through the system according to their changing circumstances and needs.

programmes and in providing experiential learning as a way to address youth unemployment that is caused by mismatches within the education system and the labour market. The articulation challenges facing the PSET system have had a negative impact on skills development across the different sectors of the economy. The PSET system, through its institutions of learning and a partnership with the labour market is expected to be a driving force for imparting skills that increase employability and entrepreneurial development.

The discussions in this paper will be based on a qualitative study titled: *Enabling Articulation and Social Development through Private Public Partnership: A case study of Centres of Footwear Entrepreneurship*. The focus of this study was to explore how the education and training delivered through Private Public Partnerships (PPPs) can promote articulation for entrepreneurial development. The Centres of Footwear Entrepreneurship (CoFEs) were set up through a cross-sectoral partnership involving government and private industries with the aim of addressing the skills shortage and promoting entrepreneurship in the footwear sector. The questions to be explored is to what extent do the CoFEs promote education and training that imparts skills required in the footwear sector and also adequately prepare graduates to engage in entrepreneurship. Herrington *et al.* (2017: 32) contends that strategies that need to be adopted to address the youth unemployment challenge include education and skills development as well entrepreneurship development.

Literature Review

The review offers a systemic focus on, (i) articulation issues in the South African post school education and training system; (ii) the role of the PSET system in promoting entrepreneurship; and (iii) a brief overview of the Footwear and Leather sector in South Africa.

The Post School Education and Training (PSET) System and Articulation

The South African education and training system was grossly affected by social inequalities. The post-apartheid democratic government sought to address the disparities created prior to democracy through legislation and policies to enforce equality in education for all. Cloete (2014:1356) outlines a

number of the structural flaws of the pre-democratic higher education: unequal access for staff and students in relation to race and gender; an unarticulated system not providing for student mobility within sub-sectors; a lack of relevance of various curricula in the system and failure to produce graduates with competencies requisite for a society in transformation. Achieving equality is clearly stated in the Constitution, which is the supreme law of the Republic, as one of the values that South Africa as a sovereign democratic state seeks to uphold (Constitution of the RSA 1996, Chapter 1 sec 1). To achieve educational equality, the PSET system is called upon to transform the structure and delivery of education and training to make it more accessible to previously marginalized groups.

The White Paper of PSET (2013: xi) describes the role of the PSET system as that of providing education and training to those who have completed school, those who did not complete school, and those who never attended school. The PSET System is called upon to deliver schooling, education and training that caters for individuals from diverse educational and social backgrounds. The White Paper on Higher Education (1997:7) states in this regard that

the transformation of higher education and its institutions requires increased and broadened participation, increased access for women, disabled and mature students and generation of new curricular and flexible models of delivery to accommodate a large and more diverse student population.

The Draft National Youth Policy for (2014 - 2019: 20) notes that the challenge facing post school education in South Africa is to find ways to assist the majority of school leavers who do not qualify for direct entry into higher education and who possess no professional or technical skills for employment.

The severity of South Africa's youth unemployment is largely the result of a pervasive lack of appropriate skills, competencies and work – relevant capacities among young labour market entrants (Spaull 2013: 2).

Spaull attributes the lack of skills and employability among the youth to the

poor quality of education received by learners in primary, secondary schools and in Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges. Gibbon *et al.* (2012:130) argue that there are hardly any institutions offering qualifications in intermediate skills in technical and vocational fields that are needed in the labour market. One of the major functions of the PSET system is to produce graduates with functional skills that are useful in the economy. To achieve this, a partnership between institutions of learning and the labour market actors is required. Maringe and Osman (2016: 131) contend that it is currently difficult to articulate from learning to the labour market because of mismatch of supply and demand and the difficulty of creating links with industry that deliver appropriate and quality work experience for students. An important piece of the TVET puzzle is a framework enabling industry and college to engage around access to workplaces for experiential learning which has been found to be a significant determinant of employability (Wolf 2011:48). Experiential learning is also critical in preparing graduates to engage in entrepreneurial activities which is an alternative to seeking employment. Private Public Partnerships are a prerequisite for an education and training system that results in the generation of skills that are required to drive the South African population towards entrepreneurial development.

The PSET System and Entrepreneurship²

The emphasis of education is to provide life and occupational skills that will enhance the potential of an individual reinforcing self-sufficiency and improving quality of life (Bukola 2011:27). Herrington, Kew and Kew (2010:45) revealed that entrepreneurship education could be of positive influence in; boosting learners' confidence about their ability to start a business, boosting learners' understanding of financial and business principles and promoting learners' desire to undertake higher education. In spite of the positive influence of entrepreneurial education highlighted above, South Africa has a challenge of teaching entrepreneurial skills in its institutions of learning. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) report of 2010 revealed that there is a lack

² Bukola (2011:26) defines entrepreneurship as the willingness and ability of a person or persons to acquire educational skills to explore and exploit investment opportunities, establish and manage a successful business opportunity.

of entrepreneurship education and training in primary and secondary schools in South Africa due to a lack of capability among teachers to teach entrepreneurial skills. Herrington *et al.* (2017:47) allege that although entrepreneurship is meant to be a part of the secondary school curriculum it is neither taught widely nor effectively. The majority of the youth in South Africa will not be in a position to access higher education and are dependent on the skills embedded in them in the general education and training phase (Herrington *et al.* 2017: 47).

Global Entrepreneurship Monitor reports for South Africa reveal that there is a relationship between educational levels and success in entrepreneurial ventures. South Africa's poor skills level is definitely a critical contributing factor to the country's below average entrepreneurial capacity (GEM 2016/2017 South Africa Report). Herrington *et al.* (2017:46) stress that entrepreneurial training may better prepare school leavers for the transition from school to the labour market, enable them to identify business opportunities and improve their chances of success in business and self-employment ventures. A poor education and training system becomes a stumbling block to entrepreneurial readiness as young people are released from the system with inadequate life and technical skills for employability and to start and grow a successful business. Herrington *et al.* (2017:21) argue that the education system has failed to instil entrepreneurial readiness in learners and it has also done very little to address the massive skills shortage which hampers economic growth and business efficiency. The GEM report for 2016/2017 insists that the different forms of post-secondary entrepreneurial training remain insufficient in preparing young people for a successful career in entrepreneurship. A good education has a positive influence on an individual's sense of self-efficacy and self-confidence which are key attributes required by entrepreneurs (Turton & Herrington 2012: 28; Herrington *et al.* 2017:32). Herrington *et al.* further note that self-efficacy and self-confidence increase the chances of individuals starting a business and successfully navigating in a competitive and changing business environment.

Factors Constraining Entrepreneurial Activity in South Africa

A survey carried out by GEM in 2009 revealed that the most important constraining factors to entrepreneurial activity in South Africa are education and training, government policies and financial support. The GEM 2016/2017

report expounded that in South Africa entrepreneurial activity is hindered by a poor skills base, severe environmental limitations including poverty, a lack of active markets and poor access to resources. Herrington *et al.* (2010:14) note that in South Africa overall levels of education and training, social and cultural norms and the regulatory environment play a key role in determining the level of early stage entrepreneurial activity. Research conducted by GEM revealed that South Africa has failed to keep up with other developing countries in promoting early stage entrepreneurial activity due to the following reasons; a low level of overall education especially in mathematics and science, social and entrepreneurial factors that do not encourage entrepreneurship as a career option, a lack of access to finance, particularly in the micro-financing arena and a difficult regulatory environment. The GEM 2016/2017 report indicates that early stage entrepreneurial activity tends to be relatively low in the 18-24 years cohort, highest among the 25-34 and 35-44 year olds. The report attributes the higher participation rates among those in their early to mid-careers to the fact that the individuals have time to develop their skills and knowledge through education and work experiences. The low prevalence of entrepreneurial activity among the youth, 18-24 years old is of concern in South Africa as 50% of the population is under the age of 24 (Herrington *et al.* 2017:28).

The culture and social norms that people are exposed to can also promote or hinder entrepreneurship as a career option. Herrington *et al.* (2010:47) state that the environment in which South African children are raised influences them to believe that securing a job will give them financial security rather than starting their own businesses. Herrington *et al.* further note that most people fear failure as it results in loss of capital and social respect. Turton and Herrington (2012:34) reveal that South Africa has a high fear of failure rate of 31 per cent which results in only 14 percent of the country's population having intentions of starting a business venture. There is a need to cultivate an entrepreneurial culture through the education and training system. However, Herrington and Kew (2014: 15) state that currently the South African education system is not developing positive perceptions of entrepreneurial intentions and this has had a negative impact on the size of the country's pool of entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship becomes a critical solution for South Africa because of a high unemployment rate, low economic growth and an unsatisfactory level of poverty (Driver, Wood, Segal & Herrington 2001: 30; Herrington *et al.* 2017: 22).

The Footwear and Leather Sector in South Africa

The Footwear and Leather sector falls under the Fibre Processing and Manufacturing (FP&M) Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETA). According to the Sector Skills Plan (SSP) annual update 2013-2014: 119), the FP&M SETA is committed to,

improving the qualifications levels of both employees and new entrants in order to meet the skills requirements of the sector and to developing a strong emphasis on research and development that promotes innovation and entrepreneurship as a way to achieve global competitiveness.

Despite the well-articulated goals, the FP&M SETA is faced with challenges relating to the delivery of education and training programmes that promote learning and skills development in the sector. The biggest challenge in the Footwear and Leather sector is that, at present, there is no continuity of the NQF Level 2 qualification which is currently on offer (Centre for Social Entrepreneurship Proposal 2016:7). However, FP&MSETA is in the process of developing learning programmes that target the sector at higher levels of the NQF to ensure continuity from the NQF level 2 which is on offer. The qualification is presently a dead end as students cannot progress to higher levels of the NQF due to the unavailability of accredited sector specific programmes to allow for this progression.

One of the key barriers to articulation for workers in the FP&M sector is the low level of schooling among the workers. The skills audit finding of 2008 reflects that approximately 31 percent of the FP&M workforce possess a GET (Grade 9) or ABET Level 4 qualification and below. A low level of education among workers and a lack of relevant learning programmes hinder articulation and also contribute to a deficiency of specialised skills in the sector. Some of the workers in the Clothing Textile Footwear and Leather (CTFL) sector left the schooling system before acquiring the necessary level of numeracy and literacy skills to cope with occupational learning. This lack of required entry-level skills becomes a barrier to access the PSET system and a challenge for skills development in the sector (FP&M SETA Sector Skills Update 2015-2020; 39). Throughput and graduation rates remain low in the PSET system (Sector Skills Update 2015-2020: 39). This problem has resulted in skills shortages at a managerial and technologist level in the CTFL sector.

The Sector Skills Report further notes that prospective students are discouraged from registering for the available programmes because of the poor image of the sector and are attracted to higher paying labour absorbing sectors. However, the deficiency of specialised skills and relevant learning programmes can be attributed to liberal trade policies which weakened the performance of the industry due to the import of cheaper leather goods (CSE proposal 2016:18). Import of cheaper leather goods led to the loss of the skill set and knowledge domain to the level that the industry did not remain a factor of employment opportunity (CSE proposal 2016:18).

Modern manufacturing is increasingly dependent on higher levels of education and skills that are crucial to sustain this sector. The current training effort is not bringing large enough numbers of workers into learnership programmes and the industry itself is not able to finance a major skills upgrade (SSP 2013-2014:57). A significant scaling up of skills development is therefore needed if the sector is to achieve the targets it has committed to. There are opportunities for career paths within the Clothing Textile Footwear and Leather sector as a whole, as well as potentially across the FP&M sector (SSP 2013-2014:58). The SSP report points out that there is currently no research institution, no centre of innovation and no Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) offering training programmes in the footwear sector. As a result, the industry is starting to recruit internationally for the supply of employable skills in this sector. In response to the gap in training programmes in the footwear sector the Centre for Social Entrepreneurship at a University of Technology (UoT) has partnered with industry to establish training Centres of Footwear Entrepreneurship (CoFEs). It is hoped that this initiative will develop the skills which the industry is currently seeking in international labour markets and also promote entrepreneurship within the sector.

Study Setting

This paper is informed by a case study drawn from the larger SAQA-DUT research partnership on understanding students, enablers and barriers to articulation within and across institutions of learning and the workplace. The intent of the case study is to explore how the education and training offered at CoFEs can promote articulation for employability or entrepreneurial development.

The study was conducted at two Centres of Footwear Entrepreneurship

(CoFEs) which fall under the jurisdiction of the Footwear and Leather sector. One centre is situated at a footwear company and the other at a University of Technology. Education and training within the Footwear and Leather sector falls under the FP&M SETA. The challenge of a lack of progression routes is more pronounced in vocational training due to limited sector specific learning programmes. According to the FP&M Sector Skills Plan annual report (2013-2014: 125), the current status of the higher education training sector has important implications for the FP&M sector. The key challenge and opportunity facing institutes of technology involved with the sector include too few Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) which have relevant programmes on offer. The Centres of Footwear Entrepreneurship were set up through a partnership between government and industry. The mandate of the CoFEs is to provide education and training that equip students with the relevant skills required in the footwear industry and to produce footwear entrepreneurs.

Methodology

A qualitative case study was carried out at the two CoFEs and government departments that are involved in the running of the Footwear centres. Participatory Action Research was used to collect data from the research participants. The research participants were selected purposively because of their relevance to the case that was explored. A total of twenty-three participants were involved in the study as indicated in the table below.

Table 1: Sample groups and number of participants

Sample group	Number of participants
CoFE Representatives (one from each CoFE)	2
CoFE Trainers (one from industry and two from a UoT)	3
CoFE Students (5 from industry and 7 from a UoT)	12
Industry Workers (CoFE graduates)	3
CSE Representative	1
Government department 1	1
Government department 2	1
Total number of participants	23

Sources of data included face-to-face interviews with representatives from government departments and CoFEs, and focus group discussions with students at the CoFEs. All the interviews were recorded and later transcribed verbatim for the purpose of analysis. The researcher also observed non-verbal forms of communication during the interview process and derived meaning from it. Review of documents kept by government departments involved in the running of the CoFEs and the Centre of Social Entrepreneurship (CSE) also provided secondary data. The data that were collected from these sources were analysed through themes that were generated from responses given by the participants.

Findings and Discussion

This section of the paper discusses findings from the interviews that were conducted. Findings are unpacked in relation to how the education and training at CoFEs promote skills development for employability and entrepreneurial development

Issues Relating to Skills Acquisition

In response to the question on which age cohort was targeted by the CoFEs, the representatives indicated that the education and training offered targeted the youth between the ages of 18 to 35 years. Graham and De Lannoy (2016:3) argue the 18 to 35 year old NEET group is the most vulnerable to chronic unemployment, poverty and social exclusion, as they are neither improving their skills through education nor gaining the work experience needed to progress in the labour market. By targeting youth the CoFEs are opening avenues for the youth to progress from institutions of education and training to the world of work. Graham and De Lannoy (2016:4) contend that the South African labour market favours highly skilled employees therefore those with a post-secondary qualification are more likely to articulate to the work place than those with only a matric certificate. The industry CoFE also enrolled youth employed in footwear industries to give them more skills required in the labour market. As a way to address seamless articulation from institutions of higher learning to the work place, the UoT CoFE is planning to extend the training programme to unemployed graduates with engineering and fashion design

degrees as a way to give them more skills for employability and to create employment.

However, by targeting the youth only, the CoFEs discriminate against adults who also need to gain skills for employability. This is a concern as the articulation policy advocates for access and inclusiveness in education and training to cater for those who were previously marginalised. The DHET Strategic Plan (2010-2015: 18) notes that many adults have not had the opportunity to access post-school institutions. In this regard, the industry representative who was interviewed pointed out that they appointed youth to replace the pool of aging personnel. Young people are also more receptive to the new technology the industry is using. Adults above the age of 35 years from the community within the vicinity of the UoT CoFE expressed interest in the training programme. A recommendation was made to Government department 1 to expand the programme by also training adults beyond the age of 35 years who were initially not targeted by the project. One of the trainers at the UoT CoFE revealed that if the recommendation is accepted the CoFE will assist the people trained to form cooperatives that produce footwear for their community.

When asked about the success of the training programme the trainers indicated that the UoT CoFE had a 40 percent dropout rate while the industry CoFE did not experience any drop outs. This resulted in the UoT CoFE registering a 60 percent throughput rate while the industry CoFE had a 100 percent throughput rate. Some students dropped out due to financial constraints as they claimed the stipend they were receiving was not adequately covering their expenses and others enrolled for other training programmes with better funding. The CoFE representatives indicated that the enrolment at the centres is constrained by limited funding. Field, Musset and Alvarez-Galvan (2014: 12) advocate for a need to reform the funding for TVET colleges to cater for the additional cost of teaching disadvantaged students and to address the high dropout rate. The students from the Industry CoFE were receiving stipends from their companies and those that were not employed were supported by funding from Government department 1 and industry. Student funding is a key issue that requires attention and if not addressed can hamper government effort to provide education and training to the NEET group. The Green paper for PSET (2012: 9) and Field *et al.* (2012:12) identified insufficient financial aid for students and inappropriate funding modalities as some of the key barriers to the transformation of the education and training system in South Africa. Students from both CoFEs expressed their desire to pursue further studies,

however, they all wanted to work and study on a part-time basis. Employed graduates from the Industry CoFE indicated that they were the sole breadwinners at their homes and therefore would not manage to study on a full-time basis. Unemployed students at the UoT CoFE indicated that they would continue with their studies on condition that they are offered scholarships or bursaries for their studies. The expansion of training programmes in public institutions depends on the funds availed by the government to support the training. Interviews conducted with the CoFEs' representatives revealed that there is a need to source funds from other organisations to ensure continuity of the training as the funds from the government are limited. A lack of financial assistance for students on full-time study programmes could be a barrier to articulation and a hindrance to further skills acquisition for prospective students who are employed and unemployed, as their greatest concern is financial security.

When asked about the nature of training that was received through the CoFEs the representatives revealed that the course structure was 25 per cent theory and 75 per cent practice. Experiential learning is a key determinant for employability and entrepreneurial readiness (Wolf 2011:48) and was offered both at the training centre and at a footwear company. However, finding an industry partner was one of the key challenges that was faced by the UoT CoFE. The challenge of finding places for experiential learning for students has also been a stumbling block affecting most TVET colleges in the delivery of vocational programmes. Maringe and Osman (2016: 131) outlined that creating links that provide appropriate work experience for students was a difficult task.

A low level of numeracy and literacy skills among students was highlighted as a barrier preventing students from excelling in their theoretical work. The responses on how the students had performed in their training revealed that grade 10 dropouts from the UoT CoFE struggled with English oral and written communication. However, in practical assessments, their performance was on par with those that had a matric qualification. To overcome this challenge, the Industry CoFE administered literacy and numeracy assessment tests during the recruitment process to ensure that all their students were able to cope with occupational learning. This finding reinforces what Herrington *et al.* (2010:85) expressed about the poor quality of education offered in schools that releases students without operational numeracy and literacy skills to cope with further learning. This becomes a

cause for concern especially in the footwear sector where an articulation gap exists in terms of available sector specific programmes. The programme offered at the UoT CoFE is at NQF Level 2 and the next programme in the pipeline is at NQF Level 6. A pertinent question to be asked is if the students with an NQF Level 2 certificate could be allowed to articulate to an NQF Level 6 programme. Furthermore, it should be considered if the students will be able to cope with the demands of the curriculum considering the fact that some of them accessed the NQF Level 2 programme with a grade 10 school leaving report card. The trainer at the CoFE suggested that a bridging course was needed to prepare the learners to articulate to a NQF Level 6 programme. The CAT Policy (2013:7) states that,

all individual institutions and providers should include pathways for articulation in the design of new qualifications and part qualifications and that those pathways should be widely publicised to existing and potential students, it should be clear how these pathways connect with the world of work.

Field, Musset and Alvarez-Galvin (2014: 51) emphasise that entrants to vocational programmes need to have open avenues for further upskilling beyond their initial qualification. There should be no dead ends in vocational training programmes. The government has a challenge of dealing with the articulation gap that exists in the Footwear and Leather sector in terms of its training programmes. Vocational programmes need to prepare students for further education and training as a way to give them more specialised skills to prepare them for the labour market and future employment.

The question relating to the major challenges affecting skills development in the footwear sector revealed that the footwear design programme offered at the Industry CoFE was not accredited and that graduates do not receive any form of certification. In response to why the CoFE had initiated training without accreditation the CoFE representative indicated that the footwear industry had a critical shortage of footwear designers and there was an urgency to fill the skills gap. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) becomes the only avenue that these students can use to access institutions of higher learning as expressed by government representatives. It is still to be established whether the students have a satisfactory portfolio of evidence to meet the criteria of accessing higher education through RPL. Important to ask

in this regard is to what extent the current curriculum used at the Industry CoFE can enable students to articulate into the Diploma programme. If students from the Industry CoFE are to be permitted to access the Diploma programme through RPL, is there a system to facilitate this process? If students are not able to articulate into a higher programme because of any of the reasons provided this barrier to articulation will need to be removed to facilitate the acquisition of high-level skills are a prerequisite for entrepreneurial readiness. The South African education and training system should address the challenge of dead-end pathways particularly in vocational training as this has a negative effect on entrepreneurial development. Sigh and Deij (2016:27) profess that many developing countries are confronted with this problem.

Partnerships in Skills Development

The study has shown that the establishment of CoFEs had improved relations between government and industry. The Industry CoFE representative noted that industry was satisfied with the mutually beneficial relationship it had established with the government. The CSE had helped the industry to access funds from Government department 1 for training. In the past, industry did not receive funds from the government to run training programmes. The establishment of the CoFE had facilitated a partnership between industry and government. A partnership between industry and government through its educational institutions is critical for aligning training programmes to the needs of the labour market to avoid a skills mismatch which is a contributory factor to the high unemployment. The government representatives noted how government had engaged with industry in designing curriculum for the footwear sector. The labour market actors had a significant input in curriculum design as they are aware of the skills that are required by industry. A key contributory factor to a high level of unemployment among graduates is that they exit the post school education and training system with skills that do not match what the industry requires and they become unemployable. The expertise from industry and institutions of higher learning is required to promote articulation for entrepreneurial development. The representative from government department 1, however, expressed concern in the unwillingness of Universities to partner with industry in designing curriculum that is relevant for the economy. The representative revealed that their department had received an overwhelming response from industry to participate in curriculum

design but that participation from TVET colleges and Universities was limited. Herrington *et al.* (2017:46) emphasises the importance of the education system teaching competencies that are relevant to the modern economy. To build an economy the institutions comprising the PSET system need to collaborate and work with industry in designing programmes and curriculum that addresses the needs of the economy. Entrepreneurial development requires specialised skills that result from the joint effort of industry and institutions of education and training. One of the CoFEs is situated at a University of Technology and the university recognises it as one of its community engagement projects. More endeavors of this nature are required to involve higher education institutions in providing pathways to re-engage the NEET group in the education and training system and ultimately into the labour market.

Students' Preparedness to Engage in Entrepreneurship

The training programme did prepare students for entrepreneurship to some extent. The curriculum offered at the UoT CoFE includes an entrepreneurship module to equip students with entrepreneurial skills. The students trained at the UoT CoFE are expected to start up their own enterprises after graduating given the poor prospect of finding employment in the province. However, students who participated in the focus group discussions were not confident enough to start up and grow a successful business enterprise. Students from both CoFEs preferred to be employed before pursuing an entrepreneurial avenue.

Students still needed to be mentored in order to acquire skills to allow them to produce quality products that could compete in both the local and international markets. Students expressed big intentions of engaging in entrepreneurship but would need to be mentored before they start up their own enterprises. The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) for South Africa 2016/2017 report suggests that there is a relationship between educational levels and success in entrepreneurial ventures. The unpreparedness of CoFE graduates to engage in entrepreneurship is an indication that they were not equipped well enough to confidently start a business despite the objective of the training to produce entrepreneurs. Students from both CoFEs strongly felt they needed more exposure in an industry setting to gain skills in running a successful business. The students further noted that they needed more training in administrative issues such as financial and human resource management

which are key to running a successful enterprise. Herrington *et al.* 2017:31 expressed similar concerns by that school leavers who attempt to engage in entrepreneurial activities lack managerial, technical and marketing skills as well as experience and do not have the resilience to compete in a changing business environment. The GEM 2016/2017 report further notes that a poor skills level is a contributing factor to South Africa's below average entrepreneurial capacity. The education and training system has a key role to play in closing the gap between capacity and readiness to start a business. It should be noted that in addition to skills acquisition, entrepreneurial readiness is also affected by social and cultural factors that influence the decisions made by students. The fear of failure prompted the students to seek employment instead of setting up their own enterprises. The students might have felt that getting a job will make them financially secure as opposed to starting up their own business enterprises.

The government department 2 pointed out that the challenge in education and training in South Africa is the lack of understanding of the concept of transformation. The government must be responsible for supplying skills and education and that sector specific education could not be privatised given the high cost and the fact that it is not accessible to many. Specialisation is required to address the challenges in industry. The representative from government department 2 strongly noted that

industry is working with democracy and not technocracy that is why there has been a skills deficit for so long and this has contributed to poverty and unemployment.

Technical know-how is important in creating entrepreneurs and the education system needs to teach competencies that are relevant to the needs of a dynamic economic environment. To achieve this, competent trainers with sector specific education and training are required. The study which informs this article did not, however, explore the competency of the trainers at the CoFEs.

Conclusion

The transformation of the South African post school system is driven by a skills development agenda (Maringe & Osman 2016:122). This agenda becomes relevant as the acquisition of skills is crucial in addressing the social challenges

facing the country. Poverty, inequality and unemployment have become chronic challenges and the education and training system continues to battle to resolve these problems. Despite efforts to transform the education and training system challenges of access, progression and success still persist. Many young people are categorised as NEET and it is the responsibility of the post-school system to develop programmes to re-engage this group through skills training. Programmes allowing for articulation and entrepreneurial readiness are needed to address the unemployment challenge. Articulation and entrepreneurship maximise human potential in acquiring livelihood skills that will improve their living conditions. A partnership between the public sector, through its institutions of education and training and the private sector, through industry is required to achieve the anticipated progress in skills development and in entrepreneurial development among the South African population. The establishment of the CoFEs in the footwear sector was an initiative by government to involve private sector in addressing the challenges in the education and training sector.

This study revealed that financial insecurity of students, the nature of delivery of learning programmes, failure to meet minimum requirements for access into training programmes, poor funding of programmes and the fear of failure would thwart government effort to promote education and training and entrepreneurship in the Footwear and Leather sector. The barriers to articulation and entrepreneurship highlighted in this study need to be addressed by the education and training system in order to alleviate the social challenges facing the South African economy.

Articulation challenges still exist in the Footwear and Leather sector. It is evident from the GEM reports that a good education and training system that allows for progression and acquisition of higher skills increases the chances of entrepreneurial activity among graduates. At present there is a lack of sector specific programmes to allow for seamless articulation through all the levels on the NQF in the Footwear and Leather. More alternative learning pathways that are adequately funded should be created to cater for students or employees that wish to further their studies but do not meet the minimum requirements for the available programmes. Entrepreneurship is not a career option that graduates from the CoFEs are readily prepared to engage in. The barriers constraining the graduates from engaging in entrepreneurship need to be addressed through skills training and entrepreneurship education if the CoFEs are to remain relevant. The key question that remains to be answered is

the extent to which CoFEs will address the skills shortage challenges facing the Footwear and Leather sector as a way to promote entrepreneurship and ultimately reduce the unemployment problem. Based on the evidence presented in this paper the post schooling entrepreneurial training programmes remain insufficient in preparing students for a career in entrepreneurship

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