

The Inclusion of Workplace-Based Training in Entrepreneurial Training of TVET Curriculum for the Future of Work

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Abstract

The provision of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes alone cannot be viewed as a unique remedy to the problem of youth unemployment in Sub-Saharan Africa. To solve the problem, Workplace-Based Training (WBT) in Entrepreneurial Training (ET) of TVET has been promoted and supported by governments to help students initiate business ventures and achieve sustainable employment. This paper examines the inclusion of WBT in the ET of the TVET curriculum for entrepreneurial skills acquisition and preparing students for the future of work. In the context of a qualitative research approach, the researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with 9 participants from three TVET colleges in the Gauteng province, South Africa. Findings reveal that partnerships with local businesses provide authentic work experience, mentorship, and exposure to entrepreneurial practices, thereby accelerating the acquisition of skills, competencies, and an entrepreneurial mindset. WBT not only enables students to transition into wage employment but also empowers them to initiate micro-enterprises, positioning them for the future of work. The authors conclude that integrating WBT into ET can enhance graduates' readiness for the future of work and may contribute to progress on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Target 4.4.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Skills, Entrepreneurial Training, Local Businesses, Workplace-Based Training, TVET Colleges

Introduction

The rapid rise of youth unemployment in Sub-Saharan Africa, in general, and in South Africa, is a major concern. To solve the problem, the inclusion of ET in the curriculum of TVET colleges has been promoted and supported by education stakeholders and policymakers to help students become involved in business ventures, hence attain sustainable employment. Bauman and Lucy (2019) note that "entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial training are on the rise in the United States". The main purpose of including ET in the TVET colleges is to develop students' entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, competencies, and mindset necessary to potentially venture into small, medium, and micro-enterprises (SMMEs), which are

considered as contributors to economic growth and employment creation (Lackéus, 2015; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2020), hence reducing graduate unemployment.

In South Africa, TVET colleges offer five vocational training programmes to meet the needs of the South African economy (DHET, 2021). The qualifications offered by TVET colleges are the National Accredited Technical Education Diploma (NATED), National Certificate Vocational (NC(V)), National Senior Certificate (NSC), occupational programmes, and higher certificates (Department of Higher Education and Training [DHET], 2021). NATED qualifications are offered from NATED level 1 to NATED level 6. The levels are shortened as N1, N2, N3, N4, N5, and N6 for ease of reference and are used as such by the Department of Higher Education and Training. N1 up to N3 are on the same level as NC(V) level 2, 3, and 4, while N4, N5 and N6 qualifications are offered to post-matric students or those who have completed a National Qualification Framework (NQF) level 4 programme.

Every NATED level from N4 is offered over six months. This means that a student with a NQF level 4 pass needs to be enrolled for 18 months at a TVET college to complete N4, N5 and N6 certificates. NC(V) qualifications are offered at levels 2, 3, and 4 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) over three years (Galvão *et al.*, 2018). NC(V) qualifications are like secondary schools in that they offer qualifications at the national qualification framework (NQF) levels 2, 3 and 4. The TVET programmes are collected from industries such as engineering, manufacturing, retail, technology, and hospitality (Ngozwana, 2018). The curriculum is designed to prepare students for wage employment by offering workplace skills (Gaffoor & van der Bijl, 2018; Taylor & van der Bijl, 2018; Zulu & Mutereko, 2020). This suggests that TVET colleges are expected to play a role in producing a qualified workforce to help reduce unemployment. However, the concern about the high rate of youth unemployment motivated stakeholders from the private and public sectors in education to ask TVET colleges to integrate ET in TVET programmes (Conțiu & Tefănescu, 2019). The purpose of integrating ET is to improve graduates' sustainable employability.

Similarly, Ratten and Usmanij (2021) also argue that the inclusion of entrepreneurship in TVET helps students become job creators rather than job seekers. This value extends beyond not only business and job creation but also can benefit students who do not become businesspeople but who choose to think entrepreneurially. However, to achieve the students' advantages of including ET in the TVET curriculum, it is important to use teaching and learning approaches that ensure that ET is an active or experiential learning process. Therefore, this paper focuses on the inclusion of WBT in the ET of the TVET curriculum for entrepreneurial skills acquisition and preparing students for the future of work. ET is defined as a continuous process that enables the development of the required knowledge for being effective in starting up and managing new ventures. The concept entails acquiring skills and knowledge to create a venture and become an entrepreneur (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2020). ET is the development of the relevant skills, competencies, and mindset by students to turn innovative ideas into entrepreneurial activities for self-employment and small business start-ups.

The provision of TVET programmes alone cannot be viewed as a unique remedy to the problem of youth unemployment. While some young people who become job seekers may have graduated from TVET colleges, evidence suggests that two key barriers are hindering them from finding jobs, which are skills mismatches and the lack of job opportunities (DHET,

2019; Pavlova, 2019; Trede & Flowers, 2020). Firstly, skills mismatches hampering smooth school-to-work transitions involve the lack of employability skills, the lack of career guidance about the labour market and practical work experience. Secondly, the lack of job opportunities is common in many developing countries (Matli & Ngoepe, 2020; Mursa, Iacobuță, & Zanet, 2018). In this connection, Mursa *et al.* (2018) argue that youth unemployment is a result of a lack of jobs in communities, worsened by a lack of entrepreneurial skills for the youth to become innovative employees or self-employed in micro-enterprises. This constitutes the problem this study addresses.

The inclusion of ET in the TVET curriculum is motivated by the smooth school-to-work transition of graduates. Some scholars argue that the present educational system at TVET colleges does not adequately develop students' motivations, knowledge, skills, competencies and behaviours related to innovation and entrepreneurship (Igwe, Madichie, & Newbery, 2018; Miço & Cungu, 2023; Ratten & Usmanij, 2021). Graduates have resorted to standing in traffic intersections, carrying placards displaying their credentials, to beg for work as reported by various media houses (BRIEFLY, 2018; Citizen, 2021; Fray, 2020; Majova, 2018). The acquisition of entrepreneurial skills from TVET colleges could prepare students for self-employment and the future of work. Target 4.4 of the SDGs states that, "By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship" (United Nations, 2015).

To reduce unemployment due to the lack of entrepreneurial skills among young people, the South African government has encouraged and developed TVET colleges to achieve the following objectives: to assist students in acquiring practical competencies that will aid in the country's development and growth of a qualified workforce (Oproiu & Lițoiu, 2019); to provide students with necessary labour market skills (DHET, 2021); to ensure job development where available skilled labour is insufficient to meet labour market needs (Atari & McKague, 2015); and to prepare TVET students for self-employment and creative work in the labour market (Olabiyi & Chinedu, 2018; Plooy & Du Preez, 2022).

This paper focuses on the objective dealing with preparing TVET students for self-employment and as creative workers in the labour market. Buli and Yesuf (2015) argue that South Africa's volatile economy presents a great opportunity for TVET graduates to participate in entrepreneurial activities. The argument suggests that TVET students need to be trained using a practice-oriented method to help them acquire entrepreneurial skills, competencies, behaviours and mindset to start and grow a small business. In the same vein, Conțiu and Ștefănescu (2019) and Dzisi and Odoom (2017) also note that ET is critical in ensuring that TVET students are given the necessary entrepreneurial skills by enabling them to start up new micro-enterprises or improve existing enterprises, hence find and create sustainable employment. This is why this paper is important in demonstrating the need to integrate ET into TVET programmes to assist graduates to become ready for future work. The present authors argue that students can effectively acquire entrepreneurial skills, competencies and mindset through the inclusion of WBT in the ET.

The inclusion of WBT can improve the effectiveness of ET within a TVET programme. The importance of WBT is emphasised to demonstrate the key role it plays in enhancing ET.

Curricula aligned with these goals are now being developed by TVET colleges (Miller & Volante, 2019). A TVET curriculum must be both school-based and work-based (Rintala & Nokelainen, 2020). WBT takes place primarily in the real world of business settings. Thus, the collaborations between local businesses and other stakeholders are paramount.

The theoretical framework of this study is the systems approach to learning (Lunenburg, 2011). The systems approach is defined by its components, "its constituent parts and by their interrelationship" (Gupta, 2013). In connection with education, a systems approach serves to stress the outcomes or competencies that the learners will demonstrate after receiving a training programme. Salam (2015) argues that in the educational industry, to teach systematically, teachers must consider input, process and output and decide objectives, contents, methods and assessment. The present paper emphasises the importance of aligning the major elements of training delivery environments and fitting these as input, transformation process and output to achieve the systems approach in WBT within ET.

In many developing countries, like in Sub-Saharan Africa, the inclusion of ET in TVET programmes was to enable unemployed young people to embrace entrepreneurship as a career path. While technical programmes provide TVET students with a competitive advantage in the labour market, ET equips them to become self-employed (Ratten & Usmanij, 2021; UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2020). Therefore, the inclusion of ET in TVET programmes aims at helping graduates gain sustainable employment. To achieve this goal, TVET colleges ought to create a partnership with local businesses and other stakeholders to facilitate the delivery of ET through workplace-based training.

The pedagogy of WBT, that is, the way it is designed and delivered, is crucial to the effectiveness of ET within TVET programmes. To clarify the forms of pedagogy available, Fergusson and van der Laan (2021) distinguish three related approaches. Work-related learning refers to education tied directly to work tasks and emphasises hands-on practice. WBT takes place in authentic work environments and allows students to apply classroom knowledge under real business conditions. Workplace learning is a broader concept, encompassing any kind of learning that emerges through participation in work settings. Collectively, these pedagogical approaches highlight that when students engage in structured, work-integrated experiences, they are more likely to develop entrepreneurial skills, competencies, and mindsets.

The component of WBT should be presented in such a way that there is a clear link between what the students are taught and their intended field of work. Any workplace curriculum should include both theoretical and practical components (Fergusson & van der Laan, 2021; Ohei, Brink, & Abiodun, 2019). This argument points to the importance of creating a partnership between a TVET college and industries or local businesses. The reality is that local businesses play a key role in the implementation of ET of TVET students (Lackéus, 2015; Rintala & Nokelainen, 2020). They create conducive factors for the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills, competencies, behaviour and mindset that students need to start their own micro-enterprises as individuals or in groups.

Partnership with stakeholders is paramount for the implementation of WBT and the entrepreneurship endeavour of TVET graduates. A lack of collaboration between local

businesses and TVET may lead to the ineffectiveness of ET. As a result, graduates may struggle to obtain sustainable employment (Mseleku, 2021; Pitan & Muller, 2020). In other words, local businesses and other stakeholders play a key role in the component of WBT of students, hence leads to the acquisition of employability skills (Pavlova, 2019). The arguments imply that the partnership with local businesses will help TVET colleges prepare their students for future work through ET in the real world of business settings. As a result, students graduate having entrepreneurial skills, competencies, behaviour and mindset.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach under the interpretivist paradigm to provide an in-depth understanding of phenomena related to individuals and their environment, including their concepts and ideas (Creswell & Creswell, 2015; Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). This study employed a qualitative case study design across three TVET colleges to explore WBT in ET. The research population included students, graduates, and local business owners, with nine participants purposively selected from the three colleges in Gauteng. Given our narrow aim and specific sample, the sample size constituted thematic sufficiency for the purpose of this study. Data were collected through audio-recorded semi-structured interviews lasting 30–60 minutes, and thematic analysis was used to code and categorise the data into themes (Ozuem, Willis, & Howell, 2022; Nieuwenhuis, 2020). Ethical approval was obtained from North-West University, and all participants voluntarily signed informed consent forms and pseudonyms were used for reporting.

Results and Analysis

In the three selected TVET colleges, the researchers selected three participants from students, graduates and local business owners. They were purposively selected based on sampling criteria and willingness to participate in the research. There are numerous businesses within the ambit of each college; however, only one participant per college was sampled from each participant group. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of nine participants drawn from a group of current students, graduates, and local business owners. Regarding the sample of students, current students were coded as CS-A, CS-B, and CS-C, while the graduates were coded as G-A, G-B and G-C (See Table 1 below). All current students were enrolled in N6 for various programmes and on a full-time basis at the time of the data collection process. The National Financial Student Aid Scheme (NSFAS) covers the tuition costs of all participants in this group. Table 1 presents the biographical details of current and graduate students.

Table 1

Biographical details of student participants

N hain hai	Gender & Age	Programme	Source of funding	Employment type
CS-A	Female 31	Public Management	NSFAS	Unemployed
CS-B	Female 27	Educare	NSFAS	Unemployed
CS-C	Female 25	Human Resource Management	NSFAS	Unemployed
G-A	Male 28	Financial Management	NSFAS	Self-employed
G-B	Male 31	Business Management	NSFAS	Wage-employed
G-C	Female 28	Public Management	NSFAS	Self-employed

The analysis of Table 1 reveals two important findings about the students. Firstly, the funding source for all students was NSFAS. This is an indicator that they came from disadvantaged families and with a poor socio-economic background and needed to find sustainable employment after graduating to support their families. Secondly, the working age of the student participants (between 28 and 31 years) is an indicator that they needed to acquire relevant skills, helping them enter the labour market and participate in the economic activities of the communities. The age group of students also falls within the youth who are classified as ravaged by unemployment. The types of programmes they studied could also help them choose their career path, available to them either wage employment or self-employment. It is noteworthy to mention that all three graduates were either in wage or self-employment in their areas of training specialisation.

It was important to include local business owners from different sectors in the industry to obtain their views on the enabling and disabling factors impacting TVET graduates starting and growing their own micro-enterprises, hence finding sustainable employment. The business owners were coded as LBO-A, LBO-B, and LBO-C. According to the participant selection criteria, the local businesses represented in the study had a history of hosting TVET students from the three colleges. Table 2 presents information on local businesses and their owners.

Table 2
Information on local businesses and their owners

Business Owners	Gender & Business Type	Years in Business	No of employees	Distance from TVET college
LBO-A	Female Engineering	13	155	15 Km
LBO-B	Male, IT & Logistics	27	5	10 Km
LBO-C	Male, Tourism & Entertainment	22	85	15 Km

The analysis of Table 2 reveals that the businesses are within an accessible distance to the colleges. This indicates that it would be easy for students to gain access to these community assets for workplace training to develop entrepreneurship skills. Additionally, the same businesses could be used for incubation and mentorship programmes and could serve as enablers for graduates to start and grow their own micro-enterprises. The findings revealed that the engineering business, which employs 155 people, and the tourism and entertainment business, which employs 85 people, were both sizable enterprises with potential for expansion and providing additional employment opportunities. This means that the business may have more vacancies and more graduates being mentored to start their own micro-enterprises. The next sub-sections present the findings according to the themes that emerged from the study and are selected for the focus of the present paper.

Theme 1: WBT for technical and entrepreneurial skills acquisition

Workplace training is a component offered and accessed through businesses. To examine how local businesses facilitated WBT to gain experience in entrepreneurial skills, competencies, behaviour and mindset, the owners were asked the following question: "*Please explain how your business facilitates that students gain on-the-job training for entrepreneurship experience.*" The question aimed to examine the type of workplace training

the local businesses were providing to TVET students to prepare them for sustainable employment, either in wage or self-employment. Table 3 presents the views of local business owners on WBT for technical and entrepreneurial skills acquisition.

Table 3

Views of local business owners on workplace-based training

Sub-themes	Number of cases reporting sub-theme	Sample size	Percentage
Effective practical work experience training	3	3	100%
Students acquire relevant industry skills	3	3	100%
Access to wage and self-employment opportunities provided	3	3	100%

The analysis of Table 3 reveals that local businesses were offering practical workplace training that results in students acquiring relevant entrepreneurial skills needed to start their own micro-enterprises in the future. One local business owner (LBO-C) said:

Every graduate is assigned to a mentor who is responsible for ensuring that they learn the relevant skills in the department where they may be placed. We allow graduates to perform duties that are also performed by permanent employees. We teach them responsibility, time management, customer service, financial management, etc. We train students across all the different fields that you are likely to find in any other business.

A second business owner (LBO-B) explained as follows:

I get students from the college who have completed their N6 and need a place where they can do their practical work. These students come to our company with funding secured by the college to enhance their practical skills. We then request a pool of students who are qualified in the fields that our business covers and subject them to selection interviews. We then select those who meet the requirements and start training them to do practical work. The aim of the work exposure that we give is delivered in such a way that students have the option to go into waged or self-employment at the end of their training.

A third business owner (LBO-A) was descriptive in explaining how her business offers workplace training. She said:

The programmes offered by TVET students have yielded great results for us. We give credit to the graduates from the colleges for helping us achieve remarkable results. The graduates that we have recruited in our business have achieved a 90% success rate in the projects assigned to them. In contrast, our experiences have shown that students from universities sometimes give us lower success rates. These students that we groom from TVET and get them up the ranks are doing wonders. I allude the success to the programme, and we find the college students to be well rooted and willing to make the opportunity work.

The analysis of the quotes from interviews reveals that the colleges are in partnership with local businesses that have in the past taken in students for practical workplace training. The

findings revealed that the businesses owned by the participants have been facilitating workplace training programmes for students over a considerable period. Local businesses offer workplace training in an organised manner, ensuring a connection between the training programmes and the required experience for students and as such, they have yielded fruitful results. The local businesses provide a comprehensive overview of the duties and responsibilities that students undertake during workplace training. The analysis of the quotes further emphasises that local businesses aim to provide students with real work experience by assigning them projects handled by their permanent experienced employees.

Furthermore, local businesses invest in mentors to train students, which accelerates the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills. This mentorship allowed students to have direct access to their trainers, facilitating the workplace training process. The selection process that students undergo helps local businesses ensure that they receive training in their specific area of expertise and field of study. The results suggest that local businesses contribute to the development of skilled workers who have the option to choose between wage employment or self-employment upon completing their workplace training.

Theme 2: Internships in local businesses as enabling factors for entrepreneurship

The examination of internship programmes in local businesses aimed to determine the impact of entrepreneurial skills gained during internship on students' intention to start their own enterprises. This assessment focused on the role of internships as enabling factors for business start-ups. Table 4 presents the findings from the combined views of students regarding internships.

Table 4

Students' views on internships as an enabling factor for entrepreneurship

Sub-themes	Number of cases reporting sub-theme	Sample size	Percentage
Training enhanced entrepreneurial intent in students	4	6	67%
The relevance of internships is important for proper skills development and business start-ups	4	6	67%
Mentorships by people in business promote business start-up	3	6	50%

The analysis of sub-themes in Table 4 shows that many students perceived that internship programmes enhanced their entrepreneurial intentions or mindset. In other words, internship opportunities stimulated them to start their own micro-enterprises linked to their respective fields, training in TVET colleges. One student (CS-A) who participated in internship programmes said:

On-the-job training in the field of entrepreneurship and good mentorship motivated me to start my own micro-enterprise. However, I will need guidance and exposure when growing my

business. If I find people within the same stream of business that I want to venture into, that can help me to excel in a small business.

A graduate student (G-A) reported his experience by saying:

My exposure to gain practical experience in a business that was directly related to my field of study made it easier for me to start up a small business. As I was exposed to my type of business during the internship programme, I am determined to start my own micro-enterprise.

Graduate G-C explained how her internship programme led her to start a business as follows: *When I did my internship to complete my diploma, they [mentors] made me understand how to run a business practically. I then got retrenched, it became very hard as I come from a poor background and with the high unemployment rate, I could not secure employment. You cannot focus on only on one stream, so I decided to establish my own enterprise within the building and construction industry since I had acquired the necessary technical skills.*

Concerns were raised by G-B about how he missed out on critical responsibilities for his field of study, as he said:

The internship programme did not exactly relate to what I was studying. When you have studied public management, you do public admin in the education system, municipality, hospital, etc. Report writing, writing minutes, scanning, answering phone calls and taking messages. Then you must also go to finance and do basic things. Most public admin students do not get the opportunity to operate in the finance department. You must be able to get training at the supply chain department. You must be placed in HR [human Resources] and do recruitment, labour and HRD [Human Resource Development]. None of those duties were done. I missed HR, supply chain and finance. I did complain, and the logbook is clear on what areas we were supposed to cover. If you are in a municipality, administration is a must, but ours was limited. I feel I missed three important aspects of my career. My internship was not aligned with my area of study at all.

An analysis of the quotes from interviews indicates that the inclusion of internship programmes within local businesses facilitated the promotion of an entrepreneurial mindset among students. The findings suggest that the efficacy of internship programmes has been found to significantly influence the inclination of students towards starting their own micro-enterprises, as indicated by the consensus among many students. The relevance of internship programmes in connection with students' fields of study was a crucial determinant in shaping students' entrepreneurship outcomes. The views expressed in the quotes suggest that internship programmes facilitated the acquisition of relevant entrepreneurial skills. Most of the students agreed on the impact of mentorship and access to experts in their respective fields of study on the likelihood of them engaging in entrepreneurial pursuits.

However, the graduate (G-B) expressed his dissatisfaction with the internship programme as it lacked relevance or connection to his field of training and its subsequent impact on his future career direction. The report from graduate G-B serves as evidence that a few students were not interested in self-employment as a career path. This is evident in the statement, "*If you are in a municipality, administration is a must....I feel I missed three important aspects of my career.*" His passion was to obtain wage employment in the public sector. His view means that the inclusion of WBT in ET of the TVET curriculum was for the

future of work in formal employment. Starting his own micro-enterprises after the internship programme was not his ambition. This implies that the student was placed in the wrong industry for the internship programme.

In summary, the views of local business owners on WBT and students on internship programmes suggest that the WBT enabled students to acquire entrepreneurial skills, competencies, behaviour and mindset, preparing them for the future of work in self-employment. The local businesses were willing and available to make provision for effective WBT that enabled students to acquire entrepreneurial skills after receiving theoretical training at TVET colleges. The mentorship in the local businesses reinforced the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills. The analysis of the quotes suggests that a significant number of students who participated in the internship programme demonstrated readiness to establish their own micro-enterprises with a certain level of guidance.

Discussion

The inclusion of WBT in ET is promoted by many stakeholders to foster the effectiveness of TVET colleges in helping graduates become involved in self-employment. In this regard, a partnership with local businesses and industries played an important role in ensuring that students gain work experience. The findings reveal that local businesses' willingness and availability made provision for effective workplace training required to acquire entrepreneurial skills. Local business owners who participated in the study indicated their readiness to provide workplace training to students. This showed that TVET colleges were in a good position to provide WBT for students. This finding concurs with those in the study conducted by Pavlova (2019), where TVET colleges worked in partnership with local businesses to provide in-service training for the students. As a result, students acquired real-world skills in the workplace. The present finding suggests that the acquisition of workplace skills was important for students to eventually become effective employees or micro-enterprise owners. These findings are also supported by Rintala and Nokelainen's (2020) study, in which students who received workplace training were able to progress into highly demanding tasks.

The willingness of local business owners in the current study to provide workplace training presented an advantage for the students to gain critical entrepreneurial skills. In another study conducted by Miller and Volante (2019), findings showed that WBT had the following impact on students: development of project skills, enhanced professional progression and reputation of students, alignment with workplace priorities and effective engagement among colleagues and stakeholders. Meanwhile, Ohei *et al.* (2019) found that work experience offered as short-term work employment was the essential key to securing sustainable employment. Both these findings demonstrate the numerous benefits associated with workplace training. This finding implies that TVET graduates have improved access to workplace training spaces.

Local business owners were satisfied with the use of a dual training approach that incorporated theoretical and practical training at TVET colleges. The findings from interviews revealed that WBT in the local businesses helped the students to understand and practice entrepreneurial skills acquired in classrooms. The findings concur with those in the study by Hart *et al.* (2020) in which students were provided with educational training programmes and

practical projects training that demonstrated skills mastery and active engagement in the labour market. However, the findings differ from those of a study conducted in Nigeria by Nwajiuba, Igwe, Akinsola-Obatolu, Ituma, & Binuomote (2020), revealing that TVET colleges focused more on the practical component of training in delivering skills training programmes than the theoretical aspect to enhance the employability of the students. The study concludes that prioritising the practical training component at TVET colleges facilitated a smooth school-to-work transition. The present authors also support the approach because it still helps students get jobs or become involved in entrepreneurial activities, hence improving their living conditions.

Contrary to the views expressed by the local business owners, one student participant believed that they were not sufficiently exposed to practical training, a fact limiting their employment prospects. The findings concur with those in a study by Harry and Chinyamurindi (2021) in which students who lacked practical training did not have a positive outlook in the labour market system since the training did not enhance their job success prospects. The study concludes that the employability of graduates depends on the quality of the practical training provided. This argument supports the views of Nwajiuba *et al.* (2020) that the prioritisation of practical training is an effective means for enhancing graduate employability prospects.

Internship programmes facilitated the development of entrepreneurial intent to start micro-enterprises. While only a few went into self-employment after internship programmes, those in wage employment expressed a desire to venture into self-employment as well. Mseleku (2021) attests to these findings as his study acknowledged that certain employability skills, such as teamwork, problem solving, and decision making, can only be acquired through internships and not in the classroom. In another study, Ohei *et al.* (2019) reported that internship programmes were ultimately viewed to provide satisfactory work experience that employers look for when recruiting. The same experience can be valuable for students intending to start micro-enterprises. The fact that TVET colleges engage in internship programmes bears benefits for students in that they are considered more employable and skilled. Similar findings presented by Pitan and Muller (2020) indicate that the provision of internship programmes serves as work experience that provides a smooth transition from school to work for students.

The majority of the students in the study believed that internship programmes enhanced their intention to start their own enterprises. Alonso-Conde, Rojo-Suárez, & Rentas (2020) point out that study programmes should balance content and skills in their training. TVET colleges are providing a balance between the content and skills through classroom teaching and the provision of internships. There was an indication by the students currently in wage employment who were not in self-employment that they were ready to start their own enterprises. The same sentiments were shared by those completing their exit level. This study argues that TVET colleges provide effective internships that stimulate entrepreneurial intent in students.

Conclusion

The paper examined the inclusion of WBT in the ET of the TVET curriculum for entrepreneurial skills acquisition and preparing students for the future of work. The focus was on the role of

local businesses in helping students acquire entrepreneurial skills, competencies and mindset through WBT in the real world of business settings. The findings suggest that local businesses are willing and available through mentors to make provision for the effective workplace training required to acquire entrepreneurial skills. The sampled local business owners were satisfied with the use of the dual training approach of ET that incorporated theoretical and practical training in the TVET curriculum.

The delivery of ET through internship programmes facilitated the development of an entrepreneurial mindset of students to start micro-enterprises in the long run. The partnership with local businesses played a significant role in providing students with real workplace experience and mentorship, accelerating students' acquisition of entrepreneurial skills, knowledge, competencies, behaviour and mindset, hence preparing them for the future of work.

Based on the findings, the authors conclude that students acquired entrepreneurial skills through WBT and were provided with a two-way career path, either to enter wage employment or create their own micro-enterprises. Training young people for jobs and business through classroom-based training and WBT can help them overcome the challenge of making a smooth school-to-work transition. As it happened in the real world of business settings, WBT appears to be suitable for ET to reduce unemployment and poverty among young people because it prepares them for sustainable employment, whether in paid jobs or by starting and growing their own micro-enterprises. The implication from the findings is that the inclusion of WBT in ET of TVET leads to the future of work of graduates and may contribute to progress on SDG Target 4.4. The study is limited to a small sample in Gauteng and cannot be generalised. Future research should employ larger and more diverse samples and utilise longitudinal designs to monitor graduate outcomes over time.

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