

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS: INSPIRATIONAL SOUTH AFRICAN ENTREPRENEURS' ADVICE FOR SUCCESS

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Abstract: The legacy of apartheid is still apparent in South Africa and with a declining growth rate and a chronically high unemployment rate, the challenges faced by entrepreneurs are considerable. Despite these significant constraints, a notable number of successful previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs have emerged. This phenomenological study contributes to the emerging research in this area by not only drawing on the challenges faced by these specific entrepreneurs but also showcases their inspirational advice on how they overcame these challenges. Insights as to whether they believe entrepreneurship can be taught were also obtained. The findings provide guidance to nascent entrepreneurs in the form of a road-map of competencies that they can benchmark themselves against before embarking on the entrepreneurship journey. Recommendations for policy makers for formulating interventions to stimulate entrepreneurship in South Africa, but also in other developing countries, are also provided.

Keywords: challenges, characteristics, entrepreneurship, skills, South Africa

I. INTRODUCTION

Globally entrepreneurship has been regarded as an important force in improving economic growth and development, employment and innovation (Barba-Sanchez, Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2018). Hence, research on entrepreneurship and its relationship with the economy has increased dramatically over the last two decades (Mathew, 2019).

South Africa is no different, however, academic research during the period 1980 – 2011 tended to focus on three main areas of entrepreneurship, namely race, gender (specifically the role of women in business) and ethical issues (moral reasoning and ethical dilemmas faced by entrepreneurs) (Tai-Hing,

2011). Since 2011, a high-level overview of the academic literature indicates that research related to entrepreneurship continued to focus on gender issues (Williams and Kedir, 2018) but the research focus shifted to areas of social entrepreneurship (Littlewood and Holt, 2019), immigrant entrepreneurship (Mankgele and Fatoki, 2018) entrepreneurial intentions (Preisendoerfer, Bits, Bezuidenhout, 2019) and entrepreneurship education (Kalitanyi and Khosa, 2018). Also featuring prominently are the challenges and constraints experienced by entrepreneurs in South Africa (Toerien, 2018).

Although many of the studies on the challenges and constraints faced by these entrepreneurs provide overarching advice on how to overcome these challenges, no recent study, to the authors best knowledge, has considered the

advice on how to overcome these challenges as provided by previously disadvantaged (due to apartheid) entrepreneurs.

The objective of this article is therefore to address this gap and to contribute to the existing academic knowledge in this area by establishing what skills and characteristics these entrepreneurs regard as essential to overcome the challenges they faced in order for them to manage a successful and sustainable business. The question as to whether entrepreneurship can be taught was also posed to these entrepreneurs to determine if their views agree with the literature on this topic – that is, entrepreneurial education promotes entrepreneurship (Budac and Pentescu, 2015). The article is structured as follows. A review of the literature on entrepreneurial landscape in South Africa is first conducted. The research methodology is then reflected on and this is followed by an overview of the challenges faced by the entrepreneurs interviewed as well as the skills and characteristics they used to overcome the challenges. Their advice for nascent entrepreneurs is then provided. The article concludes with a discussion of the article's contribution to academic knowledge and highlights its practical implication. Finally, the limitations of the study are addressed and potential areas for future research are identified.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Almost a quarter of a century after apartheid, South Africa is still faced with high income inequality, a struggling growth rate (0,8%) (Statistics South Africa, 2018a) and chronic unemployment (26,7%) (Statistics South Africa, 2018b). It is therefore evident why the single most critical objective of the South African government's "New Growth Path" is creating employment (National Treasury, 2011). According to South Africa's

then Minister of Finance, Pravin Gordhan, employment creation will be the principal barometer of South Africa's progress in its aim to achieve a more inclusive and equitable economic future for all South Africans (National Treasury, 2011). To achieve this objective, the government aims to create five million jobs by 2021, and it hopes that in so doing it can reduce the unemployment rate to 15% (National Treasury, 2011). The sector of the economy that will predominantly assist government in achieving this objective is the small business sector (National Treasury, 2011; Ramaphosa, 2018). Small businesses contribute more than 40% of the country's total GDP and account for 65% of all employment (SEDA, 2017:3). However, the Small Business Institute (SBI) (2018) claims that small businesses are only delivering 28% of all the jobs and 70% of the emerging small businesses fail within their first two years of operation.

Entrepreneurship is a precondition for any business (Sitharam and Hoque, 2016) hence the findings by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) (2017) that South Africans' entrepreneurial intentions (the belief that they can start a business in the next three years) have dropped since 2013 and are falling behind their African counterparts, is distressing. This is of further concern as three quarters of the entrepreneurial population are Black Africans (previously disadvantaged individuals) and they make up the largest number of early-stage entrepreneurs (GEM, 2017).

The South African government has attempted to address the concerns of South Africa's apartheid legacy by introducing Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) policies to bring about the involvement or participation of historically disadvantaged individuals into the country's mainstream economy (Republic of South Africa, 2013).

Included in the B-BBEE framework is the enterprise and supplier development (ESD) program in terms of which larger businesses are required to generate value for (develop) their intended suppliers (smaller businesses/entrepreneurs) but in turn, by complying themselves, they would be more likely to access funding and/or gain business from government tenders and contracts (Republic of South Africa, 2007). The ESD programs are a combination of preferential procurement, supplier diversity (sourcing from under-used suppliers), supplier development and enterprise development programs to service business needs (Botha, 2018). According to Botha (2018), these programs are not based on the value of a contract given to a black business but are aimed at transferring skills, essential tools and wealth, that can then be used for the development, survival and success of these businesses.

Yet despite these initiatives, findings from a recent entrepreneurship survey (Seed Academy, 2018) revealed that unless the ESD programs are niche, specific and tailor made, they rarely add necessary inputs into an entrepreneur's business. Furthermore, this survey highlights that South African entrepreneurs still face many challenges; the top three being: findings customers, inability to raise funds and servicing too many markets (businesses, consumers and government). These are closely followed by a lack of guidance, slow sales, customers paying late and unpredictability of business conditions (Seed Academy, 2018).

Taking these factors into account and notwithstanding the profound concern regarding entrepreneurship levels in South Africa, there is light in the darkness as a notable number of successful entrepreneurs have emerged, particularly amongst the previously disadvantaged population in South Africa as well amongst the youth and women (Crampton,

2017a). However, academic literature on the skills and characteristics of these individuals is scant and calls for more research on this have been made by Chell (2013).

Neneh and Vanzyl (2012) claim that in order for entrepreneurs to create long-terms surviving businesses, they need to possess certain entrepreneurial competencies, that is, an entrepreneurial mindset, entrepreneurial characteristics and business practices. They describe an *entrepreneurial mindset* as including passionately seeking new opportunities, pursuing opportunities with enormous discipline, pursuing only the very best opportunities, focusing on execution and engaging everyone's energy in their domain. *Entrepreneurial characteristics* are described by them as including creativity, self-reliance and ability to adapt, tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty, opportunity obsession, commitment and determination. *Business practices* they say include marketing practices, performance management practices, strategic planning practices and teamwork.

To ground these findings in theory, one needs to consider entrepreneurship theory which, according to Tai-Hing (2011), can be traced back to the 17th century where Cantillon (a well-known author and economist) defined an entrepreneur as a risk taker. Since then, various entrepreneurship theories have been birthed but all of them can, according to Dontigney (2018), be classified into five broad categories: economic theories, resource-based theories, psychological theories, sociological/anthropological theories and opportunity-based theories.

The broad theory most apt to the current study is the psychological theory as it focuses on the individual and the mental or emotional elements that drive entrepreneurial individuals.

It also suggests personality traits ranging from creativity and resilience to optimism drive entrepreneurial behaviour (Dontigney, 2018). When delving further into recent advances in psychological theories of entrepreneurship, it is apparent that researchers have begun to regard personality traits (behavioural and psychological) as critical predictors of an individual's entrepreneurial intentions, status and performance (Leutner, Ahmetoglu, Akhtar, and Chamorro-Premuzic, 2014). According to Kunene (2008) an entrepreneur's skills are an important determinant of a business' success. Chell (2013) asserts that entrepreneurship is intricate in nature and requires different skills during the different stages of the process. She declares that they are multidimensional and continuous, and context-related and have been associated with opportunity recognition. Bonsetter (2012) found that the skills most predictive of a successful entrepreneur are: persuasion, leadership, personal accountability (demonstrating initiative, self-confidence, resiliency and willingness to take responsibility), goal orientation (meeting a goal, mission or objective) and interpersonal skills (relating well to people). The interpersonal skills are the glue that hold the other four together she says.

Taking these factors into account, this study thus will explore and gain insights for further investigation into the entrepreneurship phenomena amongst certain of these successful previously disadvantaged South African individuals, some of which were born out a ESD program. The definition of a successful entrepreneur as defined by Robinson (2008) is used for the purposes of this study and is defined as a person who has created something of value and assumed the risk of establishing and managing a business.

In order to achieve the research objective, the challenges faced by previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs will first be determined (or reconfirmed), secondly the skills /characteristics that they have adopted to overcome these challenges will be established and lastly, their advice to nascent previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs in South Africa will be sought.

III. METHODOLOGY

This research follows a descriptive approach (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009; UCL Libraries, 2018) and phenomenology was considered the appropriate research method to adopt because it describes how humans experience a certain phenomenon and is typically conducted through the use of in-depth interviews of small sample participants and the data collected is analysed into themes or used to make generalizations of a how a phenomenon is actually perceived or experienced (Centre for Innovation in Research and Teaching, 2018).

The initial sample participants comprised previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs that were located within the Gauteng province and that participated in an ESD programme. For the purposes of this research, purposive sampling was employed because the number of entrepreneurs in South Africa is not known (GEM, 2017; Bureau for Economic Research, 2016). The participants were selected based on information obtained from a relative that was previously a corporate financier and currently a managing director of a medium business that has implemented an ESD program and that he came across during his various work activities. The strength of purposive sampling in primary data collection lies in selecting "information-rich" participants for in-depth analysis (Richardson, 2009). As such, only successful

entrepreneurs, as defined previously, were selected for this research.

Semi-structured interviews were held with three diverse entrepreneurs from different industries (two from a medium sized business (more than 50 employees) and one in a small business (less than 50 employees)). Having a mentor aligned to the entrepreneur's business is believed to add significant value and key success factor for an entrepreneur's business (Seed Academy, 2018). Hence, an interview was also held with an entrepreneurial mentor that has assisted various (more than 30) individuals to set up or grow their businesses in various industries (start-ups and micro businesses) to obtain his views on the challenges and the skills/ characteristics of the targeted entrepreneurs. Including respondents from different stages in the entrepreneurial process is important as Bird (1995) found that different skills are needed at different stages of the business development and growth.

In addition to the data gathered from the interviews, secondary sources (such as entrepreneurial magazines and internet articles) on successful previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs were also analysed for content themes and theoretical assertions as interpreted by the researcher. This was done not only to ensure the results are more robust but also to strengthen the validity of the research.

IV. FINDINGS

In order to address the overarching research objective, the participants were asked three broad questions:

- 1) What are the major *challenges* they faced becoming an entrepreneur?
- 2) What *skills/characteristics* did they use/ need to overcome these challenges?

- 3) What *advice* would they give an up-and-coming entrepreneur in South Africa?

Each of these questions and their responses will be discussed next.

Challenges: The following challenges were mentioned by the respondents:

- a) Access to finance and cash flow constraints;
- b) Pricing and profitability;
- c) Administrative complexity (red tape);
- d) Trust issues with the government (corruption concerns) and crime; and
- e) Access to the market and competition with larger businesses.

Access to finance was a universal problem across all sizes of business, however, cash flow constraints were particularly problematic for the micro and small business entrepreneurs. This is consistent with previous literature (Chell, 2013). *Pricing of goods and the profitability* of the business was of particular concern to the micro business as explained by the mentor – corresponding with findings from other surveys (GEM, 2017; Williams and Kedir, 2018). Their difficulty in determining the correct pricing for their goods and services was evidence of their educational foundation not being solid he said. For the smaller and medium sized business entrepreneurs' their ability to hire an accountant/bookkeeper to assist with these matters was evident and hence this challenge was not highlighted by them as being of major concern.

Notwithstanding certain entrepreneurs being able to utilise the services of accountants, *administrative complexity* in relation to the government, banking and other funding institutions was regarded as very challenging. Spending time on these requirements or having to pay someone to assist with these matters

distracts them from their core business and/or divests much needed resources to this function rather than bringing in more income needed to sustain the business. This concern has also been highlighted in various studies (GEM, 2017; Seed Academy, 2018) but still remains a large challenge for these entrepreneurs.

The *lack of trust in the government and the crime and corruption* in the country in addition to the administrative complexity was also raised as a challenge by all the entrepreneurs. This does not bode well for the entrepreneurs in South Africa as corruption leaves those most in need without assistance. With South Africa's Tax Agency being at the centre of corruption (Gebrekidan and Normitsu, 2018) (and with irregular expenditure by government departments and state-owned entities ballooning by over 50% in 2016/2017 when compared to the previous financial year, topping R45 billion (approximately US\$3.4 billion (Maromo, 2017)) it is no wonder that entrepreneurs are struggling to trust the government.

Entrepreneurs, especially the micro and small business entrepreneurs, found *access to the market and competition with larger business* a challenge. This is despite South Africa introducing the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) policies to bring about the involvement or participation of historically disadvantaged individuals into the country's mainstream economy (Republic of South Africa, 2013). This accords with the findings of Sitharam and Hoque (2016) where competition was viewed as a major challenge for small business entrepreneurs in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

Despite these significant challenges, the entrepreneurs interviewed and those discussed with the mentor, have to some degree managed to

overcome these obstacles and have managed to run successful businesses. The skills that they need and the characteristic traits that they possessed that assisted them with overcoming these challenges are discussed next.

Skills and characteristics needed to overcome challenges:

The following are the skills and characteristics that the respondents mentioned assisted them in overcoming their challenges discussed above:

- a) Willingness to learn/adapt and being passionate about what you do;
- f) Sacrificing time to concentrate on work;
- g) Looking at the long-term and having the end goal in mind;
- h) Persevering through hard times;
- i) Being a good negotiator;
- j) Being a good marketer; and
- k) Believing in yourself (self-efficacy).

The *willingness to learn and adapt* was evident amongst all participants and has been shown in the international literature to be critical for an entrepreneur's success (Chell, 2013, Neneh and Vanzyl, 2018). The ability to go the distance because they are *passionate* about what they do was also mentioned by the respondents and is supported in the literature (Kunene, 2008, Neneh and Vanzyl, 2018). The mentor also mentioned that the micro entrepreneurs should not be underestimated as they are willing to learn and change in order to survive. To achieve their goals, all the entrepreneurs were willing to *sacrifice their time* even if it meant not being able to spend all the time that they wanted with their families. This is an important trait for survival of a business as highlighted by Neneh and Vanzyl (2018).

Looking at the long-term and having the end goal in mind corresponds to international research demonstrating that an entrepreneur's ability to become alert to, interpret environ-

mental conditions and apply these to their business in order to plan for long-term success is linked to the success of a business (Sanchez, 2012). Bouncing back from failure and the ability to *persevere through uncertain conditions* is an important characteristic for entrepreneurs to possess as has also been demonstrated by Carr (2013). *Being a good negotiator* was raised by the medium business entrepreneur. He stated that this skill is essential in dealing not only with customers and suppliers but also with employees, shareholders and financiers. *Being a good marketer*, as also mentioned by Kunene (2008), was raised by all entrepreneurs as being a key skill that enhanced their entrepreneurial endeavours.

Although *access to the market and competition with larger business* was seen as a challenge by the micro and small business entrepreneurs, the small and medium business entrepreneurs interviewed overcame this challenge by using all the above skills and traits to become a beneficiary of an ESD program.

According to Hmieleski and Carr (2008) psychological capital consists of four elements (*self-efficacy*, optimism, hope and resiliency). They profess that these elements become easier to build the further advanced the business is and the entrepreneurs develop the ‘grit’ that is necessary to persevere through the entrepreneurial process. Self-efficacy was specifically lacking amongst the micro business entrepreneurs according to the mentor and he had to spend time coaching them on this issue. This trait was, however, evident in both the small and medium entrepreneurs.

It is evident that the skills and characteristics provided by the respondents are not completely novel and have been addressed in international and local literature to some extent. One

unique element though is that of the ESD program, which appears to have some very meaningful benefits for previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs as well as their customers. To further explore these findings, the respondents were subsequently asked the question: “What advice would they give an up-and-coming entrepreneur in South Africa?”. Their responses are discussed next.

Advice: The lack of focus by many of the youth today was regarded by one of the participants as being a reason for the high business failure rates in South Africa. He urges young entrepreneurs to focus on the ‘bread and butter’ issues first and to keep their minds on the end goal throughout the entrepreneurial journey. Their need for instant success and sense of entitlement was concerning to him and he said that “There is no magic, just desire, hunger and passion” and he urged them to take the leap/risk. The need to focus on the ‘bread and butter’ income can further be illustrated by the case of one previously disadvantaged attorney that had to reposition his law practice to focus on a specific field in law instead of being in general practice (Crampton, 2017a).

Even though an individual loses their job, it does not need to stay that way. Advice from one entrepreneur to whom this happened is that a person should try and contact everyone that he/she knows and offer them services for free – although risky, in her case it paid off. Now her business runs exclusively on referrals (Crampton, 2017a). On the lack of access to funding, other entrepreneurs followed a different path to obtain the funding – they needed to produce schoolbags from recycled plastics that also contained a solar panel and light and managed to do this by raising funds by winning start-up competitions (Crampton, 2017b).

Keeping a positive mind set and under-promising and over-delivering is what another successful previously disadvantaged entrepreneur advises. Adding to this, another entrepreneur encourages entrepreneurs to put their market first and focus on their market's needs in order to supply what is really needed. Starting small, providing the absolute best service and keeping things at their most affordable and value for money was another successful entrepreneur's advice. This entrepreneur expanded her reach by using franchisees' capital to help her grow her brand (Crampton, 2017b).

Advice on marketing from one of the entrepreneurs is to use social media and word-of-mouth as they are powerful platforms to market a brand and they don't cost anything. Once a business expands, time becomes a precious resource for the owner. In this scenario, a successful entrepreneur advises teaming up with people who have the same values and vision as yourself and letting the need to control go and start to empower others (Crampton, 2017b).

Advice provided by one of the entrepreneurs interviewed is that an entrepreneur should know his/her business by subscribing to industry journals and being aware of the laws relating to that particular industry. She urged government to provide a support system and sounding board for entrepreneurs in small and medium enterprises – this call was echoed by all entrepreneurs and the mentor. For the youth, she encouraged them to attend the career days at their schools so that they can get exposure to the different opportunities that are available to them, especially on the technological front. Upskilling yourself while looking for opportunities and doing things that other people don't generally want to do is

where you will see the rewards, said another entrepreneur (Chell, 2013).

Interestingly, when the entrepreneurs that were interviewed were asked if entrepreneurial skills could be taught or if it was inherent in a person, they all unanimously said it can be taught. This is in line with the views of Bonsetter (2012) and Teichler (2003) who point out that entrepreneurial skills can be learned and developed, especially early in life and refined during the course of the entrepreneur's journey. This is re-iterated by Hrehova (2013) who state that entrepreneurship education works because students with access to this education are more likely to start their own businesses and be more innovative and successful than those not having the entrepreneurship training.

It is evident that training and guidance from the ESD programme benefited the small and medium entrepreneurs interviewed. However, most of the micro and small business entrepreneurs interviewed did not receive any entrepreneurial training. Taking this and the literature into consideration, it is profoundly concerning that the schooling system in South Africa does not provide the foundation for entrepreneurial skills nor the skills that the youth need to play a meaningful role in the economy (The Economist, 2017). Despite this, the successful entrepreneurs advise that an entrepreneur can turn another person's rejection or even their hobby into a successful business venture as long as you have passion. Furthermore, business premises are not always necessary (the boot of a car/garage can suffice) and business acumen and perseverance are essential (Chell, 2013). Finding out about and joining incubators are regarded by the entrepreneurs as key as they have helped many businesses with their training and marketing needs.

V. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

There are several academic contributions of this article. First of all, this article draws upon the broad psychological theory of entrepreneurship (personality traits and behaviour) and applies it to previously disadvantaged South African entrepreneurs, highlighting its relevance in the South African context.

Secondly, by interviewing previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs (in small to medium sized enterprises), as well as conducting an interview with an entrepreneurial mentor that assisted small start-up enterprises, not only is the broad coverage of the study highlighted (despite its small sample), but the diverse needs of different sized entrepreneurs are exposed. The need for government and private institutions to develop diverse developmental tools at each entrepreneurial stage is clear and has become imperative from a policy perspective if government is serious about reforms being effective in this sector of the economy.

Thirdly, but showcasing examples of successful entrepreneurs that have arguably faced more obstacles than most entrepreneurs from other developing countries, it has responded to calls in the literature that research in entrepreneurship in the post-apartheid era should pay greater attention to understanding the entrepreneurial characteristics necessary for small businesses to survive.

Fourthly, by not only summarising the major challenges faced by these entrepreneurs but consolidating their advice on how to overcome these challenges, the research provides guidance to nascent entrepreneurs in the form of a road-map of competencies that they can benchmark themselves against before embarking on the entrepreneurship journey.

Fifthly, the current research has, contrary to the concerns raised in recent studies of the shortcomings of the ESD programmes, highlighted that these programmes can have substantial benefits for previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs irrespective of their size of operations.

Finally, the article demonstrates that research in the South African context can add to mainstream debates and solutions on entrepreneurship in other developing countries. From a practical perspective, the research highlight areas, in respect of the training needs of entrepreneurs, where a better understanding by academics and government departments is needed to ensure the long-term survival of entrepreneurs' ventures, particularly in respect of previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs.

VI. CONCLUSION

Notwithstanding South Africa's entrepreneurship levels showing cause for alarm, there is clearly a cohort of entrepreneurs, particularly previously disadvantaged individuals, that have overcome the many challenges facing South African entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs highlight the need to be focused, disciplined and to persevere. Their advice to nascent entrepreneurs is to work hard with what you've got, learn as much as you can and take advantage of new technologies and gaps in the market. Although the ESD programme and incubators are beginning to bare fruits by building business development competencies and support that provides entrepreneurs with robust business basics, more is needed to increase small business success rates so that nascent entrepreneurs can be flexible, able to adapt to new demands and seize opportunities that will arise across all kinds of industries.

In order to overcome the legacy of apartheid, fostering an acceptable business environment but also an entrepreneurial mindset amongst individuals in South Africa is needed. All respondents participating in this research felt that teaching entrepreneurship and soft skills through learning and practical application thereof is possible and can be developed through training initiatives. Differentiated support for different business (size, sector etc.) is imperative and must be actioned by policy makers. Entrepreneurship skills are indisputably essential for socio-economic development and personal growth. Although universities are required to, and do in some instances, teach entrepreneurship, it appears that coaching on issues such as self-efficacy and opportunity recognition at a primary school level could be beneficial. Collaboration between schools, universities, policy makers and the private sector is essential to ensure that entrepreneurial activities do not stagnate but thrive.

The inspirational advice from previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs considered in this article hopefully provides inspiration to other promising South African entrepreneurs so as to motivate them to overcome their fear and embark on the entrepreneurship path and in so doing, also uplift their country that is in dire need of economic growth and employment.

The importance of the long-term sustainability of small businesses owned by entrepreneurs in the theory of entrepreneurship cannot be overemphasized as it can lead to permanent job creation which is critical from the perspective of any developing country. If previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs in South Africa, with not only its harsh economic conditions, but its apartheid history as well, can succeed, then there is hope for entrepreneurs in other developing countries.

VII. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Although Creswell (2014) states that qualitative studies are characterised by small sample sizes and the results in this article should be sufficient to provide reliable results, these findings are not generalizable to all entrepreneurs in South Africa and the findings of this study should be read in this context.

Due to funding and small business database constraints, purposive sampling was used and only entrepreneurs situated in the Gauteng province (the province where the researcher is situated but also the province with the most entrepreneurs (SEDA, 2018)) were considered for this, the first phase of a larger planned research project. Due to this sampling method used, researcher bias may have arisen when selecting the interview participants initially. However, this concern was mitigated by a review of publically available literature focusing on successful previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs. To further confirm and expand the robustness of the findings of this research study, a second phase of interviews (which is planned) should be conducted.

It must be noted that the reason for the entrepreneurial endeavours (opportunity versus necessity entrepreneurs) of the participants has not been considered in this article. Knowing this is important because Calderon, Lacovone and Juarez (2016) have shown that opportunity entrepreneurs – those who start a business because they spot an opportunity – have better performance and higher skills than necessity entrepreneurs (those who start a business because they have no other means of generating income). This aspect should be considered in more detail in future research.

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