



**Reimagining the impact of enterprise and supplier development within the
state-owned enterprise: A case of Umgeni Water**

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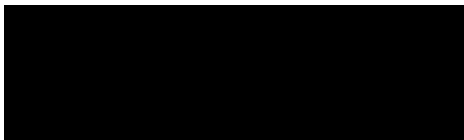
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ABSTRACT

Globally, Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs), also called small businesses, hold a significant role in the world economies. This significance to the economy is based on the SMMEs potential to create employment opportunities, reduce the number of people living below poverty line and drive innovation which are important aspects of economic growth. In South Africa (SA), government acknowledges the importance of SMMEs as it has characterised the small business sector as a vital part of the national economy. The importance of SMMEs is reflected in the various government legislation, policy frameworks and support mechanisms that facilitate the operations of small businesses in their variety. Resulting in mandates that prioritise the redistribution of economic opportunities and commercial relationships between large corporates and SMMEs. Promoting an atmosphere that pushes government, state-owned entities (SOEs) and large private companies to engage in economic activities that involve small enterprises. Such practices, specifically those driven by the Amended Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Codes of Good Practice, influence corporates to grow their Enterprise and Supplier Development (ESD) efforts by procuring or donating to SMMEs. The objective of the Enterprise Development programme is to create a solid business base for entrepreneurial people and in turn create further employment. ESD programs bring to Small Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) development in South Africa. Particularly at a time when SMME's are expected to contribute towards stimulating economic growth and contribute towards the reduction of unemployment. The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of B-BBEE ESD as a growth and SMMEs development mechanism. The purpose of the study was to reimagining the impact of enterprise and supplier development within the state-owned enterprise, in particular Umgeni Water. Data was collected from 12 Umgeni Water cooperatives through interviews with active term contract at the time of the study. The interview based on a predetermined questionnaire method was used to gather data from participants. Thematic data analysis was used to code and categorise the data into themes according to similar perceptions. This study identified the impact of SMMEs within UW value chain and appropriate tools, assessed competitiveness to meet their profitability potential, evaluated capacity building requirements in executing deliverables and lastly ascertained the support intervention and resources accessibility in sustaining for SMMEs

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ACRONYMS

BBBEE	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
CSI	Corporate Social Investment
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
DTIC	Department of Trade, Industry and Competition
ESD	Enterprise and Supplier Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
JSE	Johannesburg Stock Exchange
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
NDP	National Development Plan
NPAT	Net Profits After Tax
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SA	South Africa
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SMEs	Small and Mid-size Enterprises
SMMEs	Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises
UK	United Kingdom
LED	Local Economic Development
USB-ED	Stellenbosch Business School Executive Development (Pty) Ltd
VAT	Value Added Tax

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction and Background

Enterprise and Supplier Development (ESD) in state-owned entities show a remarkable role in the economy as it is employed to respond to socio-economic imbalances of the apartheid era (Sibiya & Barnard, 2020). The legislation implemented previously in South African state-owned entities did not produce the fruits envisioned; this counted in the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) Act, 2003 (Dooms & Pillay, 2020). Indisputable, Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) yield high benefits in economic growth, reduced unemployment rate and people living below the poverty line (Rambe & Mosweunyane, 2017). However, the failure rate of SMMEs is still of great concern in South Africa due to internal and external challenges.

Globally, SMMEs exemplify 90% of companies and above 50% of employment (World Bank, 2021). South African economic growth lessened in the previous years. On the other hand, the country is confronted with fundamental socio-economic challenges, including a steep unemployment rate, impoverishment, and social inequality. The South African economy has been immensely affected. In 2021, the GDP deteriorated by 7% compared to 2019 (www.statssa.gov.za, 2021). Furthermore, the unemployment rate grew in the second quarter of 2021 from 32.6% to 34.4% in the preceding period (Trading Economics, 2021). SMMEs play a crucial role in both emerging and established developed markets. The significance of SMMEs in South Africa has been acknowledged to the extent that a new Ministry of Small Business Development was formed to fuel and progress small, black-owned businesses (SEDA, 2016).

In South Africa, ESD is intended to ensure that organisations, where possible, acquire commodities from black-owned and managed businesses. The main goal of Supplier Development is to ensure that organisations source goods and services from SMMEs, yet Enterprise Development strives for these businesses to contribute a meaningful role in the economy. When the amended BBBEE scorecard was enacted in 2015, ESD became a highlight of one of the three priority elements.

In terms of the National Small Business Act 102 of 1996, SMMEs is well-defined as a discrete business entity, including cooperative or enterprises managed by one owner or more predominantly carried on in any sector categorised as micro, small and medium enterprise. Generally, SMMEs are recognised as a crucial driver for economic success (OECD, 2017); thus, the establishment of SMMEs is key in South Africa to address challenges of economic growth. Progressively, organisations have learned that SMMEs require not only funding to make a mark on the compliance box but allies to hold hands and lead to the growth path (Ravens, 2017)

Umgeni Water (UW) has two established two categories of SMMEs, the Contract Participation Goals (CPG) and Cooperatives for a Suppliers and Enterprise Development (ESD) Programme; the emphasis of the study was more on cooperatives. This study seeks to reimagine the impact of Suppliers and Enterprise Development within State-Owned Entities to reduce the failure rate of SMMEs. This study was based on Umgeni Water Supplier and Enterprise Development Programme case.

1.2 Problem Statement

The effectiveness of ESD programs has become a subject of increasing concern and scrutiny within the realm of SOEs. While these initiatives are designed to foster economic growth, promote social equity, and nurture entrepreneurial ventures, their actual impact on SOEs and their broader communities remains under-examined (Akugri, Bagah, & Wulifan, 2015). This becomes especially pertinent in the context of water utilities, where state-owned entities are pivotal in ensuring the provision of reliable and affordable services.

Umgeni Water, a state-owned enterprise, is mandated with the crucial task of water provision and services in South Africa (Umgeni Water, 2021). The company has adopted ESD programs in its operational framework in order to contribute towards socio-economic development (Umgeni Water, 2022). However, there is a lack of empirical studies that have holistically assessed the impact of these ESD initiatives within the organisation, and more broadly, on the communities it serves.

This research seeks to fill this gap by critically examining and reimagining the impact of Enterprise and Supplier Development within Umgeni Water. It is unclear whether these ESD programs have achieved their intended outcomes, particularly regarding socio-economic growth, enhancement of small and medium-sized enterprises, and improvement of community welfare. There also remain questions about potential unintended consequences, both positive and negative, of these programs.

The study aims to illuminate the role, effectiveness, and potential for improvement of ESD programs within state-owned enterprises, using Umgeni Water as a case study. It intends to provide valuable insights that could help in refining the design and implementation of future ESD programs, to better serve the needs of the enterprise, its suppliers, and the broader community. The results of this study could hold significant implications for policy and decision-making within Umgeni Water and other similar entities.

Friedrich, (2020, p. 1) stated that South Africa has a higher failure rate of SMMEs than elsewhere in the world (70% – 80% of our small businesses fail within 5 years). In previously disadvantaged communities in South Africa, only 1% of businesses progress from employing less than 5 people to having staff of 10 or more (Friedrich, 2020; Small Business Institute, 2020). Between 60% to 70% of jobs stem from SMMEs worldwide, however in South Africa the percentage of jobs created by SMMEs is just above 28% yet more than 98.5% of companies are SMMEs (Small Business Institute, 2020).

There are number of factors that contribute to the failure rate of cooperatives in South Africa as compared to other countries. This has contributed to slow economic growth in the country. Access to finance has been on top of least as the contributing factor of failure of SMMEs, this has resulted in overlooking other essential factors for SMMEs to be sustainable. The protest that took place on 12 July 2021 in Kwa-Zulu Natal and Gauteng worsened the economic growth. This means the organisations must implement vigorous suppliers and enterprise programme assist the nation to reduce the unemployment rate and increase the economic growth.

In 2012, Umgeni Water assisted casual labourers to register as cooperatives to award them five-year contracts. Since the formation of the cooperatives, there has not been a structured plan to

identify skills required by cooperatives to successfully execute their work. This includes the lack of entrepreneurial mind set of the cooperative and identification of level of competitiveness required, the financial viability of the contracts that were awarded, required skills to execute work, and lastly planned monitoring to assess soft and technical skills that have been transferred to cooperatives, resources accessibility. Thus, there is a need to focus on capacity building whereby SMMEs need be skilled on knowledge pertaining to skills on how to run a sustainable business. According to Global Entrepreneurship Monitor South Africa (GEM SA) 2019/2020 Report, (2020) the ranking of the entrepreneurship activity, out of 54 countries, South Africa was ranked 49. Africa, this show there is still room for improvement that is needs to be done. Furthermore, the regulatory environment for example the Code of Good Practice under the B-BBEE has got an explicit element that channels both private and public institutions to focus on supporting SMMEs to be sustainable. It is imperatives the assistance and support of the SMMEs elevates them to the level that makes then competitive so that they perform to the best of their ability and to the satisfaction of the perceived client for example Umgeni Water.

1.3 Motivation for the Study

SMMEs have been acknowledged as fruitful drivers of economic growth in South Africa and throughout the world. South Africa is continuing to experience the social ills of the high unemployment rate, people living below the poverty line, and inequalities that have ravished the country. Currently, there are more than 13 million people who are beneficiaries of the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) for the special Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant (Baskaran, Bhorat, & Köhler, 2020). Regardless of various institutions that were developed to assist SMMEs for example SEDA, the improvements are still far and between, this shows that challenges are both systematic, structural, and endemic, this does not require governments alone but organisations and practitioners on the ground to relook at how support to SMMEs has been rolled out.

South Africa highly depends on SMMEs as it is a vehicle that contributes to reducing unemployment and also boost economic growth. The unemployment rate. While South Africa was suffering a high unemployment rate due to COVID-19 as businesses ceased businesses and others, laid-off employees. The outburst of July unrest that took place in KwaZulu-Natal

and Natal provinces worsened the situation as businesses were looted and closed down. Consequently, SMMEs are a solution to address challenges of devastating economic growth and employment rate.

While there has been substantial research on the topic of ESD, this study adopts a unique perspective by focusing on the case of Umgeni Water, a SOE in the water sector. The majority of extant literature provides a general overview of ESD within SOEs, typically resorting to quantitative methods for evaluation. This study, however, employs qualitative research methodology, which allows for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the realities surrounding ESD implementation.

Through this qualitative approach, we aim to capture the unique complexities, challenges, and opportunities associated with ESD within a water utility SOE. We believe this approach will help shed light on the intricacies and multifaceted nature of ESD initiatives in Umgeni Water that might otherwise be overlooked in broad-spectrum, quantitative studies. Our research also seeks to uncover the lived experiences of stakeholders involved, thus providing richer insights into how these programs affect the daily operations of the enterprise, its relationship with suppliers, and the community it serves.

Furthermore, this study is set apart by its reimagining of the impact of ESD. Rather than simply measuring predefined outcomes, it will delve into exploring both intended and unintended consequences, thereby providing a comprehensive evaluation of the programs' efficacy. It seeks to explore both the tangible and intangible outcomes, such as changes in organisational culture, relationships with suppliers, and community perceptions, aspects that often remain unaddressed in other studies.

By focusing on the case of Umgeni Water, this study further contributes to a contextual understanding of ESD, especially in the water sector, where such studies are rare. Given the vital role of water SOEs in society, a better understanding of their ESD initiatives could have profound implications for improving service delivery, enhancing community welfare, and fostering sustainable growth.

1.4 Study Aim and Objectives

The research aimed to collate the input that could be taken into consideration by authorities and the policymakers in supporting and empowering cooperatives. Specifically, with state-owned entities such as Umgeni Water which already put in place the mechanisms that are geared up to support SMMEs and to elevate them to a level of self-sustainability, performance, competitiveness, and profitability.

1.4.1 Study Objectives

The primary objective of this study was to critically evaluate and reimagine the impact of ESD initiatives within Umgeni Water. Specifically, the study aims to:

- 1.4.1.1. To determine the impact of SMMEs within UW value chain and appropriate tools.
- 1.4.1.2. To assess the SMMEs competitiveness to meet their profitability potential.
- 1.4.1.3. To evaluate the SMMEs capacity building requirements in executing their deliverables to the client.
- 1.4.1.4. To ascertain the SMME support intervention and resources accessibility in sustaining their entities

1.4.2 Research Questions

- 1.4.2.1. What is the impact of SMMEs within UW value Chain?
- 1.4.2.2. How is the SMMEs competitiveness to meet their profitability potential?
- 1.4.2.3. What is the capacity building requirements that SMMEs require in executing their deliverables to the client?
- 1.4.2.4. How is the SMMEs support intervention and resources accessibility in sustaining their organisation?

1.5 Study Focus

Study aim is to collate the input that could be taken into consideration by authorities and the policymakers in supporting and empowering cooperatives. Specifically with state-owned entities such as Umgeni Water which already put in place the mechanisms that are geared up

to support SMMEs and to elevate them to a level of self-sustainability, performance, competitiveness, and profitability.

1.6 Research Methodology

1.6.1 Research Design

Researchers not only select the research method, however there are three approaches a researcher can choose from namely quantitative, qualitative and mixed method. This study adopted a qualitative method approach to assess the impact of enterprise development within the State-Owned Enterprise: A Case of Umgeni Water. The rationale for using qualitative method it is the involvement of exploring and understanding the perceptions of individuals or groups to a human or social problem (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

1.6.2 Sampling

The set of probable participant to universalize the study is population, (Zyl, 2014). The population incorporated cooperatives engaged by Umgeni Water (N = 18). From this population only the cooperatives with term contracts that that were selected to participate in the study, in this case it is 12 cooperatives. The quota sampling was employed to choose participants, while this was a tedious sampling it covered all stratum in the population.

1.6.3 Data Collection

Qualitative research methods is acknowledged and famous in the social discipline (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2018). This method uses interviews mostly since it is appropriate to obtain more in-depth understanding, encourage participants or individuals to elaborate more where there is ambiguity, and it also help to see the behaviour and action of the individual or participants. This study used interviews to collect primary data.

To comply with Coronavirus protocols, three members per cooperative were interviewed wearing masks, social distancing was practiced. A well-ventilated room were used, to ensure air circulation. Semi-structured interview using both closed ended and open-ended questions to draw ideas from the participants.

1.7 Data Analysis

Data was used with the aid of thematic analysis. Data Analysis is a process that dictates sequential steps to follow starting from specific to general with various levels. The levels entailed consolidating and concocting information for exploration, construing and considering all facts, coding, producing of narrative and theme and in conclusion presenting the metaphors and themes Cresswell & Cresswell, (2018).

1.8 Recruitment of Participants

The telephone script was engaged to recruit participants. The chairperson of the cooperative was the point of contact to invite the executive of participants. After the introduction, the researcher informed participants that the interviews were conducted as part of completing the master's degree. This study only focused on all cooperatives that were awarded contracted by Umgeni Water to discover if the level of competitiveness required was attained and that the contract was financially viable. Furthermore, the study was to discover if the required skills to execute work were attained, and lastly planned monitoring to assess soft and technical skills that have been transferred to cooperatives and resources accessibility

It was explained to participants that Umgeni Water was intending to attain the improved B-BBEE the previous non-compliant level. Participants were asked if it was convenient to provide more background information. A go-ahead was sought, the interviews were held in the premises of Umgeni Water, participants were given a lei way of choosing any convenient day and time that was suitable to them.

1.9 Inclusivity and Exclusivity in terms of participation

Before engaging a cooperative on a contract basis or once-off, cooperatives must be registered on the Umgeni Water database. This study only focused on cooperatives that were awarded term contracts of more than three years to align it with the B-BBEE verification process of Supplier and Enterprise Development. Co-operatives that were engaged once and had contract less than 6 months were excluded from the study.

1.10 Context of the Research

1.10.1. The context of this research focus at Umgeni Water which is a public entity, however, the result may change if this gets applied to the private sector or other public entities that are not highly technical due to the nature of business.

1.10.2. Participants of the study was only cooperatives that were encouraged by Umgeni Water to register as cooperatives and were awarded the contract on a single source mechanism. The findings may change if the study included cooperatives that voluntarily identified a need on their own.

1.10.3. Fluency in a language - Lingua franca in South Africa has defaulted as a learning and teaching language. The interview schedule was in English and translated to IsiZulu, responses were provided in both Zulu and English.

Since this is a qualitative study, results cannot be generalized for all SMMEs in South Africa thus a further investigation needs to be conducted.

1.11 Significance of the Study

SMMEs are a crucial tool to for unlocking the challenges of job creation, economic inclusivity and equity. This research aims to hasten the cooperatives' situation so that they can think outside the box and not just focus on one client, Umgeni Water. To be viable, SMMEs, in this case cooperatives, must be conscious that running a business necessitates a constant search for new opportunities, being innovative, and adapting an entrepreneurial mindset.

Policymakers, decision-makers, and practitioners involved in the Supplier and Enterprise Development value chain need to continually revisit the impact of the intended beneficiary made by the regulation framework.

1.12 Structure and Outline of the Study

Chapter One provided the introduction and background, problem statement, motivation of the study, aim, objectives of the study, and synopsis of the literature review. The research questions that the researcher intended to find answers to were also stated, the location of the study and the number of participants to be interviewed have been clearly stated.

Chapter Two outlined detailed literature review that was conducted to gain acumen on the topic. This chapter acknowledged important elements required by SMMEs to be sustainable. These factors embrace entrepreneurial mind set, level of competitiveness, technical skills and resources accessibility

Chapter Three stated the research methodology. This chapter describes the research methodology, research design, sampling, data collection, and data analysis methods employed for this study. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. Then the data were analyzed using Thematic software.

Chapter Four detailed the results obtained from the interviews and findings. This chapter studies how participant responses are relative to the literature and objectives presented in the study.

Chapter Five summarized the conclusions and recommendations of the study and evaluates if research questions and objectives were responded to accordingly. This chapter further details recommendations and new fields of study to be investigated and explored.

1.13 Chapter Summary

This chapter covered the root cause of the challenges faced by SMMEs with the provisions of the enterprise and supplier development. The motivation also narrated the status core that continues to show that a long road still need to be travelled in reducing the frustrations of SMMEs. Recruitment of participant inclusivity and the context of research also formed part of the discussion above, choosing focus of the research was also elucidated. The next chapter will assess the review of the literature.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This section presents a review of available literature on the subject of this study. The researcher used B-BBEE and ESD, SMMEs and SMEs as key search words. This chapter begins with defining and discussing B-BBEE as a transformative framework that prescribes interventions fundamental to SMMEs catalysts to increase their contribution to economic growth. A discussion of SMMEs and ESD will follow up by examining their role in socio-economic development. This will be followed by a discussion of the theory of justice as theoretical underpinning related to SMMEs and ESD deliberations.

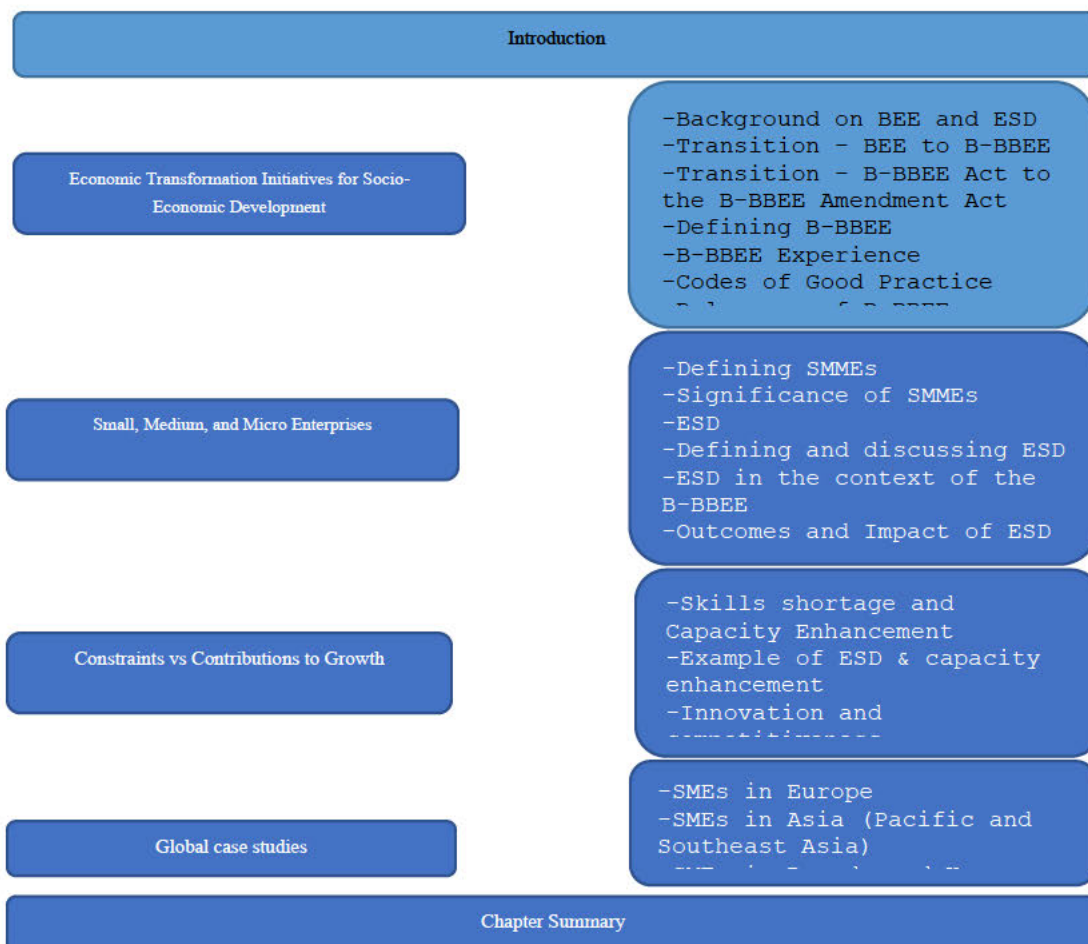


Figure 2.1: Literature Review Chapter Outline. Source: Author, 2023.

2.2 Theoretical Underpinning

2.2.1 *The Redress and Transformative agenda resonating with Theory of Justice*

The definition and discussion of the B-BBEE presented in this paper have pointed out that the genesis of past racial exclusion, inequality, discrimination and other unjust practices was the apartheid regime. Leading the SA democratic government to the course of a corrective and transformative path as means of redressing past injustices to support and uplift the previously disadvantaged (Thorsten, Demirguc-Kunt, & Levine, 2005). Doing this through a legislative approach to affect nationwide participation. Thus, resonating with John Rawls theory of justice, a political philosophy presenting the importance of equal distribution of power, prioritisation of fairness, and respect of rights for societal equality by public law and government (Rawls, 1999).

The standpoint of Rawls's theory of justice share similar sentiments with the objectives and existence of the B-BBEE Act. According to Follesdal, (2015) a democratic political system should be characterised by fairness despite the diversity of beliefs and views when approaching social issues. For instance, despite cultural and population diversity in SA, equality is one of the constitutionally mandated rights that apply to all citizens in their differences.

An example of inequality is how “the Apartheid regime actively supported the development of cooperatives in the agricultural sector to develop an economically successful class of white commercial farmers who operated with disregard to the black farmers” (Rena, 2017, p. 3). This injustice was mandated and implemented through the Land Acts of 1913 and 1936, which perpetuated the racial divide and favoured White farmers. These paved the way for benefits such as subsidised loans for White farmers co-ops and influenced many other co-op support initiatives leading to their success (Piesse, Doyer, Thirtle, & Vink, 2005, p. 10; Rena, 2017, p. 3).

To this day, such inequality provisions have been inherited into the new regime. Hence, the SA government has prioritised previously disadvantaged groups (Rena, 2017; Ortmann & King, 2010). This resonates with the gist of Rawls's theory of justice which contend that equality for all citizens and fairness in the state and legal practices is a must.

The B-BBEE Act characterises state-led equality and justice intervention aiming to make the markets inclusive and beneficial to all, including the disadvantaged. Drawing from the theory of justice, the author can label the B-BBEE as an approach questing economic justice, opening access to enable the disadvantaged to participate, gain ownership and control of businesses and cooperatives. The RDP postulated that it would be the achievement of a successful BEE.

Rawls, (1999) argue that politics or the law reach a state of disregarding morals or rights when they are driven by the need to reach maximum welfare despite the cost, even if the rights of others are compromised in the process. Rawls labels this as utilitarianism and caution against it. Arguing that it is unjust to sacrifice the rights of a few for the benefit of many (Rawls, 1999). Advising that welfare can be attained through treating citizens in their variety equally, fairly and democratically.

“Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override. For this reason, justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others. It does not allow that the sacrifices imposed on a few are outweighed by the larger sum of advantages enjoyed by many” (Rawls, 1999, p. 3).

With the above insertion from Rawls (1999), it can be argued that the apartheid regime promoted the utilitarianism practices that the theory of justice caution against. This argument is made on the basis that in the past, the rights of Black people were exploited and compromised for the benefit of White people. Rawls’s theory of justice emphasises that democracy should not be enjoyed by the few elite or minority; it should be just and equal to all citizens (Rawls, 1999).

2.2.2 The Resource Based View Theory

The resource based view (RBV) is the brainchild and the originally authored by Penrose (1959) and later fine-tuned and modified by Barney (1991) and Wernerfelt (1984). The centrality of is predicated within competitive advantage that the enterprise could leverage within the capabilities of its internal resource such as monetary or non-momentary and associated tangible and non-tangible.

RBV connotes the significant role that resources and competences that are in possession of the enterprise within its entire value chain in terms of its maximisation and optimisation to its

benefit and sustainability (Barney & Hesterly, 2012). The enterprise competitive advantage could be attributable as the centrality of its profit seeking endeavours, the enterprises thus strive to solidify its niche in the market which comprises amongst other stakeholders rivalries, competitors, complementors, buyers, customers and the broader business community (Barney, Ketchen, & Wright, 2001). The positive oriented efficiency plausibility that is strengthening by the critical role of the nexus between enterprise resources and capabilities has been succinctly illustrated in the downstream contours of the business value chain such as marketing and customer interface which inadvertently bolster its competitive edge (Kozlenkova, Samaha, & Palmatier, 2014). Gueler and Schneider (2021) opined that the competitive advantage can be further accentuated by the enterprises ability to continually evolve, adapt, while applying the agile and nimbleness that propels it to continually ramp-up its performance stakes amid the competitor threats.

The RBV the inevitability of the enterprise to sustainably navigate its market headwinds and turbulences while maintaining its competitive advantage in check thus culminating in desired performance and profitability and the associated upward trajectory with resources and capability at the forefront (Pereira & Bamel, 2021).

Scholars maintains resource-based view theory (RBV) emphasis on the connectivity and adjacent relationship between the enterprise resources, capabilities and its overall business performance. The SMMEs ordinarily do not have the luxury such as the one endowed in big firms of an endless open book but have to improvise with its limited resources and capabilities while not losing sight of organisational performance, sustainability and performance.

The resource-based theory is constructed within the frontiers of essential ingredients, firstly that refers to how an enterprise could out-compete, out-smart and outwit its competitors within the market place and the external environment. Secondly, the firm had to ascertain its optimisation and maximization of its resources and capabilities that translate into a performance driven, sustainable and profitability of such enterprise (Barney and Hesterly 2012).

The application of the RBV theory in this project is to galvanise the argument that the SMMEs should have no illusions in the comprehension and diagnosing of the resources and the capabilities that they possess and where improvement or strengthening is warrants, decision making swift action, execution and commitment that results in optimal business performance,

profitability and sustainability. Therefore, while exogenous factors that are beyond the SMME's control will always indirectly affect the enterprise fortune, a laissez faire culture should not be in the business DNA and culture since competition headwinds could exacerbate the business volatility exposure. The enterprise should also explicitly categorise the differentiation of these diverse and continually adjust its financial, technological, human capital, physical resources in such a way that they all complement and synergise the business competitive advantage.

2.3 Economic Transformation Initiatives for Socio-Economic Development

2.3.1 Background on BEE

As a country that is still in its developmental state, South Africa's development initiatives are channelled towards improving people's lives in masses. The initiatives targeting development and change are guided mainly by state legislation or mandates (Bracking, 2019). State legislation influences policies, frameworks, and practices implemented by State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), public and private institutions, and individuals in their variety. At the heart of these initiatives is the prioritisation of groups who were previously disadvantaged during the apartheid regime (Vilakazi & Bosiu, 2021). The course is on transformation and inclusion to create opportunities and lessen the burden of socio-economic challenges or inequalities, which are a legacy of apartheid (Acemoglu, Gelb, & Robinson, 2007). Hence the creation of policies such as the BEE Act.

When South Africa (SA) ushered into the democratic state in 1994, the mandate was centred on improving the lives of all citizens, especially the marginalised and disadvantaged, emphasising addressing social challenges (Seekings & Nattrass, 2005). The year 1993 marks the inception of the BEE as a phenomenon that was part of the national peace talks in preparation for the South African political system transition (Acemoglu, Gelb, & Robinson, 2007). Leading to the BEE being introduced "as an aspect of the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) in the year 1994" (Bracking, 2019, p. 418). This introduction aligned with the new government agenda of dealing with the Apartheid legacy through distributing assets and opportunities for social and economic development (Acemoglu, Gelb, & Robinson, 2007).

Within the broad nature of the RDP policy, there is a great significant trace of the BEE focus. This focus outlines the reasons behind the proposed socio-economic development interventions paying particular attention to supporting the previously marginalised. For instance, the RDP policy postulated that the democratic government parastatals should support small enterprises and proposed the formulation of policies guiding the support of small-scale producers and micro enterprises (O'Malley, 2016). Despite the mentioning of BEE, there are views that the RDP narrowly focused on socio-economic aspects and ownership share transfer but failed to prioritise encouraging business and foreign investment (Habib & Padayachee, 2000).

Examples of the realisation of the RDP mandate include the formulation of the B-BBEE Act by the government. Furthermore, SOE examples such as SMMEs support from the Transnet Enterprise Development Hub and the Umgeni Water BEE Policy that regulate procurement from Black companies speak directly to what the RDP policy postulated. As such, BEE can be deemed a strategic pillar of the RDP policy. The below detail some key points presented in the RDP as drivers behind the focus on redress, transformation and prioritisation of the previously disadvantaged.

<p>Apartheid had unjust laws that discriminated against the majority of citizens of this country.</p> <p>O'Malley, (2016, 1.2.1)</p>	<p>Due to the past racism and sexism dominated system, SMMEs especially Black owned hardly manage to develop productive linkages with the large-scale sector. Furthermore, the small business sector is mainly made up of people with limited if not none management and productive skills, access to business sites and capital.</p> <p>O'Malley, (2016, 4.1.6)</p>	<p>The RDP held the belief that policy objectives will be achieved and sustained through joint efforts led by the state accompanied by an actively involved private companies, various sectors and civil society.</p> <p>O'Malley, (2016, 4.2.1)</p>
<p>SMMEs were confronted by these limitations, low credit access, closure of markets and lack of capacity support from institutions.</p> <p>O'Malley, (2016, 4.4.7.3)</p>	<p>The economy is in the hands of small proportion of the population, as domination and control are concentrated to the specific companies, subsidiaries and large conglomerates mostly dominating finance and supply chains. This directly affecting smaller or unpopular businesses access opportunities into the economy.</p> <p>O'Malley, (2016, 4.1.6)</p>	<p>Proposition of a policy led black economic empowerment facilitation to focus on deracialising business ownership, make it easy for black businesses to attain financial support for business development and to prioritise black people business training in ownership.</p> <p>O'Malley, (2016, 4.4.3.6)</p>

Error! Reference source not found.: Some Black Economic Empowerment justification points found in the RDP Policy. Source: (O'Malley, 2016).

2.3.2 Formalisation Transition - From BEE to B-BBEE

As years went by into democracy, the country saw limited progress in social and economic development as key challenges such as unemployment and poverty persisted despite the state framework and development initiatives of the RDP (Vilakazi & Bosiu, 2021). Nine years down the line, the government introduced the formalisation of BEE as the B-BBEE which was geared to be more inclusive and scalable (Bracking, 2019, p. 418). The B-BBEE Commission was tasked with within the DTI (Bracking, 2019). Central to the establishment of the B-BBEE Commission was “strengthen the reporting obligations for South African companies and those listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE)” (Bracking, 2019, p. 418).

The B-BBEE Act mandated the process of widening access into the markets through having large corporations and institutions supporting Black-owned SMMEs and Co-Operatives (co-ops) (Ministry, 2016). This being done as means of patching the inequality gaps, unevenness and broad economic disparity caused by apartheid (Impact Amplifier and NYU Centre for Global Affairs, 2013). Participation of large corporations, both public and private, including SOEs, on the B-BBEE was voluntary. Not much effort was given to encouraging compliance. This implied that the gazetted potential positive contribution of SMMEs in economic growth through job creation, contribution to the Growth and Development Product (GDP) and poverty alleviation would be the reason for engagement (Saah, 2021). Given such high regard for the potential benefits of B-BBEE initiatives, especially on SMMEs development, the expectation was that voluntary prioritisation of the B-BBEE from relevant institutions would not be a challenge.

2.3.3 Defining B-BBEE

The B-BBEE as a concept is defined as the socioeconomic sensitivity policy considered as means of creating viable economic empowerment for all Black People (B-BBEE Act, 2014; Acemoglu, Gelb, & Robinson, 2007). Primarily attending to the vulnerable designated and rural area communities (B-BBEE Act, 2014, p. 12). As the emphasis of the B-BBEE is on Black people, it should be noted that this racial categorisation is a generic concept referred as "*Africans, Coloureds and Indians- (a) who are citizens of the Republic of South Africa by birth or descent; or (b) who became citizens of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) by naturalisation-*

(i) before 27 April 1994; or (ii) on or after 27 April 1994 and who would have been entitled to acquire citizenship by naturalisation prior to that date" (B-BBEE Act, 2014, p. 12).

Arguably, the categorisation of Blacks in the B-BBEE definition encompasses all groups of disadvantaged people who did not attain any preferential treatment or equal access to opportunities during the apartheid regime. The B-BBEE understands that this category of people may not have received equal education and employment opportunities to participate meaningfully in the economy. Therefore, a redress and transformation route aims to create opportunities with extra support to enable their participation in the economy.

2.3.4 The B-BBEE Experience

Insights from literature and national statistics indicate that the B-BBEE accelerated the multiplier effect of huge investments into support and product development for Black-owned or managed businesses. However, there has been limited success in market accessibility reform graduation into established value chains for Black-owned SMMEs in SA (Vilakazi & Bosiu, 2021, p. 207). It can be argued that the slow success rate of the B-BBEE framework is not isolated to this Act alone. Similarly, most state policy initiatives dating back from the RDP up to the current National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 implementation have been short of success. This argument is based on the constant climbing unemployment rate, poverty, and numerous socio-economic development challenges (Stats SA, 2021).

The B-BBEE Act prescribes the how, what, and how of B-BBEE implementation. However, it is vital also to have a brief overview of the Codes, given that they inform the actual practical practice of B-BBEE implementation (B-BBEE Amendment Act, 2019; Dreyer, Viviers, & Mans-Kemp, 2021).

2.3.5 Codes of Good Practice

The B-BBEE opened a platform for the private sector to partake in the nationwide socio-economic transformation of SA (Impact Amplifier and NYU Centre for Global Affairs, 2013, p. 11). The DTI first introduced the Codes, rolling out the generic scorecard to present a balanced approach (B-BBEE Commission, 2013; BEE Commission, 2001). These initial codes outlined three components of B-BBEE being direct support, capacity building as well as

indirect support (B-BBEE Act, 2014; B-BBEE Commission, 2021). Examples of direct empowerment include the appointment of Blacks in managerial positions, HRD includes skills training, capacity enhancement or employment equity and direct empowerment such as preferential empowerment (B-BBEE Act, 2014; B-BBEE Commission, 2021; B-BBEE Commission, 2013).

Bracking, (2019, p. 419) explains that in 2007, the revamped Codes introduced the execution, evaluation and accreditation criteria whereby accreditation agencies scaled business compliance to B-BBEE principles. All this is done to achieve a better score, or BEE level increases the likelihood of attaining state contracts and tax rebates (Bracking, 2019, p. 419). Moreover, the Codes revamped the Act by reducing the scoring elements from seven to five in the generic scorecard (Vilakazi & Bosiu, 2021, p. 196; Bracking, 2019, p. 419).

The following Table 2.1 presents the initial and amended B-BBEE

	Initial Old Elements		Amended New Elements
	Ownership		Ownership
	Management Control		Management Control
	Employment Equity		Skills Development
	Skills Development		Socio-Economic Development
	Preferential Procurement		Enterprise and Supplier Development
	Enterprise Development		
	Socio-Economic Development Initiatives		

Error! Reference source not found.: Initial B-BBEE Code of Good Practice Generic Scorecard Elements vs Amended Elements. Source: (B-BBEE Act, 2014; B-BBEE Amendment Act, 2019).

Codes formalised the rewarding of points for acting in good faith. Bracking (2019) states that even large businesses normally have initiatives such as rural-based, women-led, or youth education support programmes. These initiatives relate to Corporate Social Investment (CSI), but they are different from BEE as they broadly focus on development rather than Black ownership and sustainable economic development for beneficiaries (Bracking, 2019). Moreover, B-BBEE demand corporates to embed these practices within the corporate’s key

business and enterprise focus. To this end, businesses can bring on board, partner up or incubate black businesses and co-ops into their value chain or management structures and ensure their long-term access and performance in the economy (Bracking, 2019). Thus, making initiatives such as ESD different from CSI.

The breakdown of the scoring points per scorecard element is displayed in the following *table* 2.2, and the analysis of each scorecard element is outlined in *table*.

Scorecard Element	Weighing Points	Code Label
Ownership	25	100
Management Control	15	200
Skills Development	20	300
Enterprise and Supplier Development	40	400
Socio-Economic Development	5	500

Table 2.2: Code and Weigh of the B-BBEE Generic Scorecard Elements. Source: (B-BBEE Amendment Act, 2019).

Element	Analysis
Ownership	<p>Businesses can score points under this pillar based on the number of Black participants with influence for ownership in the new or existing enterprises.</p> <p>Examples include Black people who are shareholders with the power to influence the strategic planning, direction or decision making of the enterprise.</p> <p><i>NB: businesses can score a Bonus point if the Black shareholder has never benefited in B-BBEE related deals in the past.</i></p>
Management Control	<p>Businesses can score points in this pillar for having a certain amount of Black people at the managerial level to lead, make decisions, and direct the business operations.</p> <p>For instance, a Chief Operating Officer controls enterprises or co-operatives operations.</p>
Skills Development	<p>Businesses can score points for having specific or sector-specific skills development programmes, skills training and organisational learning programmes for Black people.</p> <p>For instance, digital and virtual learning is marked as a scarce critical skill across many sectors, highlighted in the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS). Therefore businesses can score points for digital or virtual learning programmes offered to Black people.</p>
Enterprise and Supplier Development	<p>Businesses can score points for buying from black-owned suppliers and offering support initiatives to black co-operatives or enterprises.</p> <p>For example, the act of purchasing stationery from a rural-based Black-owned small business and availing mentorship, staff training or bookkeeping services to a start-up Black-owned small business.</p>
Socio-Economic Development	<p>In pillar, points are earned if the corporate spends 1% accumulated net profits after tax (NPAT) on social or economic support development initiatives for Black people. The initiatives must go beyond opening doors into the economy for the beneficiary as they must be sustainable.</p> <p>For example, academic sponsorship through sector-specific bursaries that covers tuition and sustenance costs and offer a post-qualification serving period such as internship opportunities.</p>

Table 2.3: Five Elements of the B-BBEE Scorecard. Adapted from: (B-BBEE Amendment Act, 2019; B-BBEE Commission, 2013; Coetzee, 2020).

Similarly to the B-BBEE Act in SA, other African countries have similar frameworks for economic empowerment, promoting diversity, inclusion and addressing inequalities that are a legacy of previous colonisation. Below are examples of the legislative frameworks with the SADC cluster region concerned with economic transformation and empowerment (Citizens Economic Empowerment Act, 2006; New Equitable Economic Empowerment Framework, 2008; Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act, 2008). What all these legislative frameworks have in common is the intention to have pathways for previously marginalised groups to join the mainstream economy.

The mandate of the frameworks mentioned earlier is centred on the agenda of economic transformation, promotion of skills development and increasing financial inclusion of co-operatives, SMMEs and those owned by vulnerable groups (Citizens Economic Empowerment Act, 2006; Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act, 2008; New Equitable Economic Empowerment Framework, 2008). Furthermore, the focus on racial transformation through economic development policy formulation is not limited to SA. The affirmative action and indigenisation policies redressing the legacy of colonisation in countries such as Malaysia also drive the economic development of the previously marginalised groups through state economic policy (Vilakazi & Bosiu, 2021, p. 191). Central to it all is the need to decrease the quality of life and standard of living for all citizens free from systematic exclusion that disadvantages or favours specific individuals unjustly.

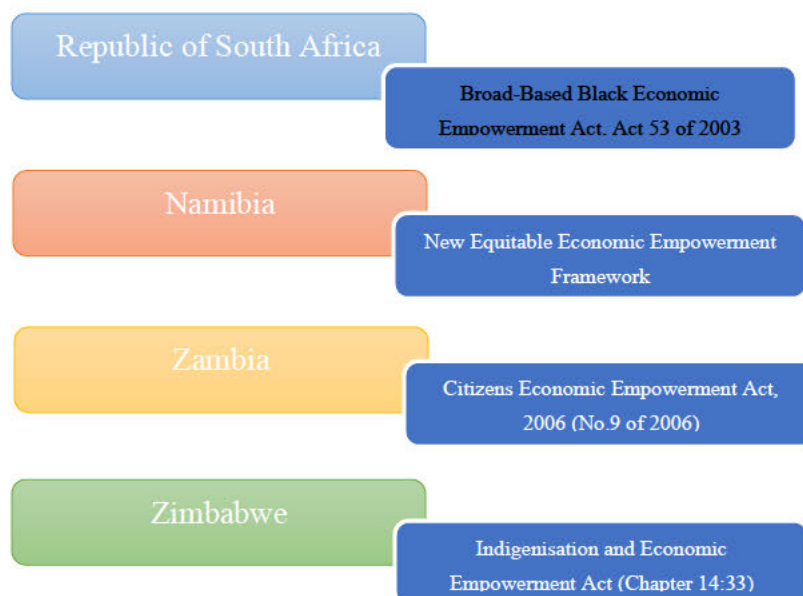


Figure 2.3: Objectives Driving the Economic Empowerment Legislation in SA, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Source: (Indigenisation and Economic Empowerment Act, 2008).

2.3.6 Relevance of B-BBEE

Central to the B-BBEE mandate is to undo the legacy of the apartheid regime through policy led restructuring. This is done to decrease the existing inequalities, which are racially based, as the uneven scales of development overshadows the previously marginalised. For example, in the past, "access to skills and self-employment was racially restricted, the accumulation process under apartheid confined the creation of wealth to a racial minority and imposed underdevelopment on black communities" (Ministry, 2016, p. 4). Therefore, the B-BBEE is relevant as it is one of the state-led approaches of economic development characterised by the principles of deracialization, equity, redress and equality, which are emphasised in the critical frameworks of democracy in SA, such as the 1995 Freedom Charter, in the Constitution of SA and in the RDP mandate as well (Ministry, 2016, p. 4).

Demonstrating how the past influences the present Mariotti and Fourie (2014) exemplify how poverty in SA dates back to the apartheid era. Arguing that the then political system racial orientation position segregated the world into Black and White were unevenly, and unjustly socio-economic privileges belonged to the White minority whilst the Blacks masses suffered abject poverty (Mariotti & Fourie, 2014; Wilson, 2011). For example, structurally, the system subjected Blacks under low income, unemployment, poor education, occupation of homelands/reserves and other similar disadvantages. As a result, the past laid a strong foundation of poverty that has become cyclic and currently haunt the majority of indigenous Black people who still battle poverty in the new SA (Mariotti & Fourie, 2014).

It is important to present the current national statistical profile given that content throughout this literature review is centred on the topics linked to the population, race and socio-economic dynamics. The researcher refers to the official statistics released in the first, second and third quarters of 2021 by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA). Based on the national statistical count, the South African population is estimated to be **60 041 994** in numbers and out of this total number of people **39 806 445** are estimated to be above the age of 18, with the African/Black race counting as the majority of the population in the country (Stats SA, 2021, p. 17&19).

South African Population Statistics: 2021 mid-year official estimation

<i>SA Population Total Number</i>	60 041 994	
<i>Categorisation by Race</i>	Number of Males	Number of Females
<i>Black African</i>	23 761 051	24 879 278
<i>Coloured</i>	2 578 930	2 716 038
<i>Indian/Asian</i>	790 412	754 810
<i>White</i>	2 257 654	2 404 805

Table 2.4: Number of people in South Africa categorised by race. Source: (Stats SA, 2021, p. 17).

The current realities of people’s lifestyles and the profile of the people most affected by unemployment and poverty demonstrate what the researcher characterises as the residue effect of the apartheid regime. A practical example of this can be drawn from the national unemployment statistics, where a large proportion of unemployed people are primarily women, Black and possibly due to poor education or skills (Stats SA , 2021; Stats SA, 2021). According to the Department of Trade and Industry, (2016, p. 7) in the past regime, the job reservation policy enforced a low-quality education system for Black pupils, access to higher education was limited for Black students, and there were numerous inadequacies in the teaching of mathematics and science in Black schools.

The previous political system impositions generated unfavourable circumstances. Created a direct effect on Black people’s skills, mainly technical and scientific skills, automatically disadvantaging Black people in the labour market, modern industry, and the commercial economy (Ministry, 2016, p. 7). These effects position Black people at a disadvantage and inability to competitively participate in the labour markets or the economy, leaving the options income generation being semi-or-unskilled unskilled labour or less paying jobs or self-employment.

The following graph in *figure 2.4* displays the unemployment rate characterised by qualification, indicating the undeniable interrelation of type and level of education with access to labour markets. Hence the existence of transformative policy initiatives such as the B-BBEE emphasise making the market/economy more accessible for those believed to have been defaulted disadvantaged by the system.

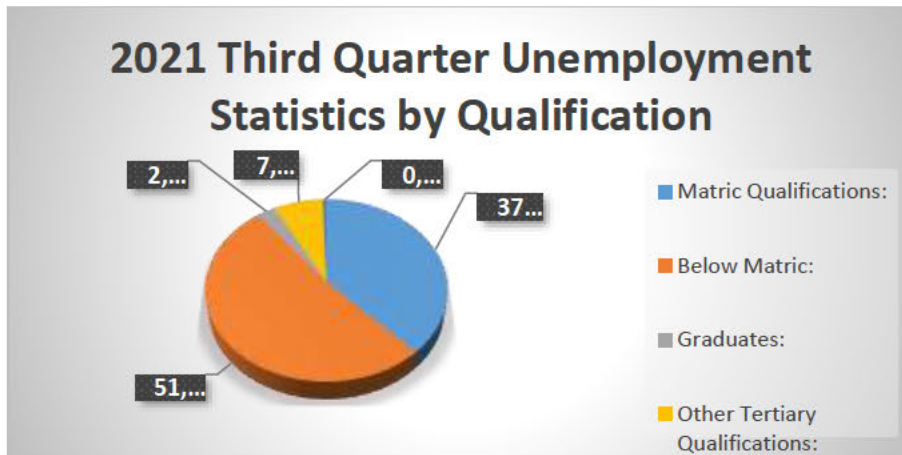


Figure 2.4: 2021 Unemployment Statistics by Qualification. Source: (Stats SA , 2021, p. 13).

Speaking further to the issue of the legacy of apartheid haunting the present, Vilakazi and Bosiu, (2021, p. 191) state that barriers to market entry for Black people or businesses can be directly and indirectly linked with inequality. Therefore, BEE (BEE) policies are a vehicle of economic transformation. Arguing that inequality is centred on race makes an example of how 90 per cent of the SA population is Black, yet majority ownership of economic assets, income and wealth belongs to White South Africans. Pointing out that it is harder for Black business people to escape barriers to actively, productively and sustainably participate in the economy. Thus, making politically driven economic policymaking initiatives such as the B-BBEE key in economic transformation (Chatterjee, Czajka, & Gethin, 2020; Vilakazi & Bosiu, 2021; Stats SA, 2021; Seekings & Natrass, 2005).

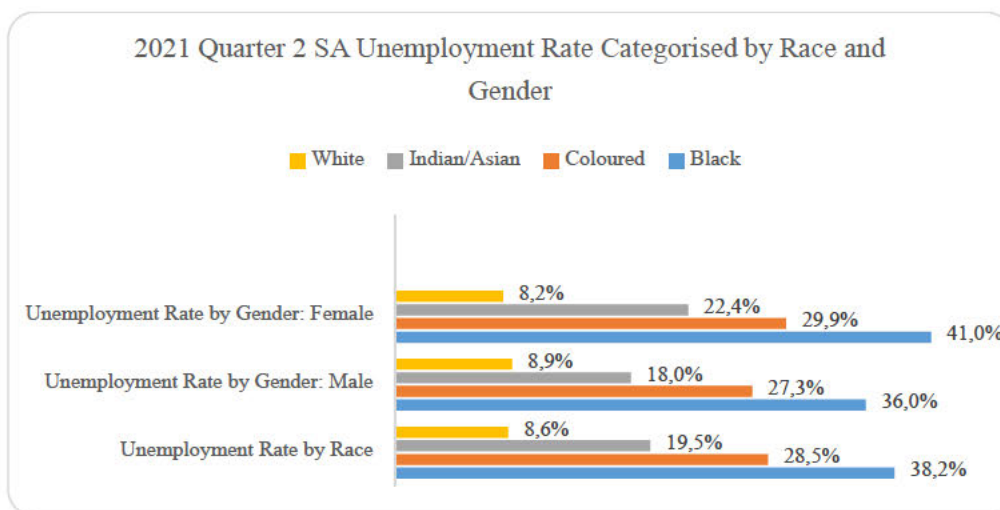


Figure 2.5: SA Unemployment rate Characterised by Race and Gender. Source: (Stats SA, 2021).

The year 2021 marks 27 years of democracy in SA. Over the years, numerous approaches, strategies and plans have been introduced and implemented as means of social and economic development and improving livelihoods and the standard of living (Wilson, 2011). However, all the development efforts employed thus far have been inadequate based on the current state of socio-economic development in the country (Bracking, 2019; Chatterjee, Czajka, & Gethin, 2020; Trading Economics, 2021).

Due to the noticeable inability to achieve the intended objectives, there has been vocal requests for revisiting the B-BBEE Act. For instance, a call necessitating an expiry date for B-BBEE due to its limiting foreign investment was raised by (Gules, 2018). The Institute of Race Relations (IRR) shared similar concerns, arguing that over the years, B-BBEE has not been effective in eradicating poverty for Black people, nor has it decreased the income inequality gap that exists in SA (Institute of Race Relations, 2012). These concerns are accompanied by the questionable impact of ESD, given the limited contribution of SMMEs in socio-economic development (Piesse, Doyer, Thirtle, & Vink, 2005; Yawar & Seuring, 2020). Instead, reports postulate that most of the previously disadvantaged South Africans remain have not yet been uplifted, pointing out that the B-BBEE has lacked efficiency in inclusive and transformative economic development (Dreyer, Viviers, & Mans-Kemp, 2021).

The comprehensive standpoint of various authors posit that both the state and large businesses have failed to combat social and economic challenges in SA, all channelled efforts have been insufficient (Machirori & Fatoki, 2013; Oyelana, 2014; International Finance Corporation, 2018; Chatterjee, Czajka, & Gethin, 2020; Makwara, 2019). Job creation, poverty reduction and equal distribution of wealth remain envisaged as the country has been unable to reach sustainable Socio-economic development (Bracking, 2019; Chatterjee, Czajka, & Gethin, 2020; International Finance Corporation, 2018; Makwara, 2019).

It can be argued that to inform economic growth, SMMEs "should be viewed within a broader vision of the South African economy, which includes all the business sectors - big business, multinationals, parastatals and also the small-enterprise sector as part of an integrated, interdependent process. The small enterprise sector is neither a "junior partner" in that process, nor is it a separate sector that has to be treated according to different rules or principles, even though it has been neglected and disadvantaged in the past and therefore needs

to be helped to take its rightful place among all the sectors" (Department of Trade and Industry, 1995, p. 2).

2.4 Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises

2.4.1 Defining SMMEs

Globally, there is no uniform definition of SMMEs, also known as SMEs. However, literature shows that definitions of SMMEs vary by categorisation used in each country (Beyers, 2015; Zavatta, 2008; Netshandama, 2006). The definition of SMMEs greatly relies on the host country's measurement characterisation of a business type, such as the number of employees, the size of the annual revenue or even company asset ownership status (United Nations, 2009, p. 3). Officiating the definition of SMMEs in each country is ordinarily done through legislative framework documents, such as the National Small Business Act (1996) in SA, the Micro and Small Enterprises Policy (2020) in Kenya or the Small Business Act for Europe (2008) (Dilger, 2016; State Department for Industrialization, 2020; Department of Trade and Industry, 1996).

Looking at the overall concept of small businesses, the National Small Enterprise Amendment Act define small enterprises as "a separate and distinct business entity, together with its branches or subsidiaries, if any, including cooperative enterprises, managed by one owner or more predominantly carried on in any sector or subsector of the economy mentioned in column 1 of the Schedule and classified as a micro, a small or a medium enterprise by satisfying the criteria mentioned to categorise micro, small or medium enterprise" (Department of Small Business Development, 2019, p. 110).

In SA, the term SMMEs is a cluster concept referring to the four different categories of small businesses. Namely, Survivalist Enterprises; Micro-Enterprises; Small Enterprises and Medium Enterprises (Department of Trade and Industry, 1995). For instance, co-ops are an example of SMMEs as they are usually small, micro or medium enterprises that are considered an economical alternative for the unemployed. As an economical alternative, co-operatives enable vulnerable communities to enter the markets and participate in the economy (Rena, 2017).

The analysis of the SMMEs categorical breakdown detailed in Section 2.1.3 of the DTI, (1995) is presented in *table 2.6* Additional to the categorical analysis is the specification that SMMEs support must pay special attention to black-owned or controlled enterprises as well as all other disadvantaged groups such as women, co-operatives and the disabled due to the history of racial discrimination and marginalisation (Department of Trade and Industry, 1995). Moreover, *table 2.7* presents a multiple-country categorisation of SMEs.

Category	Description	Annual Turnover in Rands
Survivalist Enterprises	These are very small economic activities by people who cannot secure formal paying jobs to receive income, no matter how little, to survive. People who engage in survivalist activities ordinary start these enterprises with limited capital and no skills training in the field they have ventured to, limiting growth opportunities.	These businesses ordinarily accumulate income lower than the poverty line per year.
Micro-Enterprises	These are very small enterprises, ordinarily involving the owner and less than five employees or family member(s). These enterprises are generally informal in terms of licenses, VAT, having an office or work space or operating permits. Moreover, these businesses start or operate on limited capital, and most of these micro-enterprises grow and graduate into small businesses.	Each year, these businesses ordinarily make an income of less than R150 000.
Small Enterprises	This category refers to the established businesses that can employ not more than fifty people. These businesses are typically owned or managed by the owner directly or by the owner-community. Moreover, small businesses tend to be formally registered for VAT, licenses, operating permits, and they usually operate in a business or industrial space such as an office.	Depending on the sector or industry, the annual turnover ranges from less than 2 million up to 25 million.
Medium Enterprises	These businesses generally have shareholding or community control ownership/management, which can employ up to 200 people.	The annual turnover ranges from less than 2 million to 50 million depending on the sector or industry.

Table 2.6: Categorical Definitions of SMMEs. Source: (Department of Trade and Industry, 1995; Department of Trade and Industry, 1996; Department of Small Business Development, 2019).

In Kenya, small businesses are categorised as Micro, and Small Enterprises (MSEs), with Micro enterprises referring to businesses with less than ten employees and making an annual turnover, which is less than KShs. 1 million. Meanwhile, small enterprises are categorised as businesses that can employ ten to fifty employees whose annual turnover ranges between KShs. 1 million and KShs. 5 million (State Department for Industrialization, 2020, p. viii).

In Europe, small enterprises are categorised as Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) whereby Micro enterprises are businesses that employ less than ten people and make an annual balance sheet is less than EUR 2 million. While Small enterprises categorise businesses that employ not more than fifty people and make an annual turnover of not more than EUR 10 million. Moreover, Medium enterprises can employ up to two hundred and fifty people with an annual turnover of not more than EUR 50 million or an annual balance sheet less than EUR 43 million (Dilger, 2016, p. 4; World Bank, Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) finance. Improving SMEs' access to finance and finding innovative solutions to unlock sources of capital, 2020).

In Cambodia, small businesses are categorised into three types: Micro enterprises, which refers to businesses with less than ten employees and has a start-up capital of not more than USD 50 000. Small Enterprises refer to businesses whose employees range from eleven to fifty with a start-up capital of USD 50 000, ranging up to USD 250 000. Medium enterprises refer to businesses that can employ fifty-one to a hundred employees with a start-up capital ranging from USD 250 000 up to the maximum of USD 500 000 (Asian Development Bank, 2008; Yoshino & Taghizadeh-Hesary, 2018).

Table 2.7: Categorisation of small businesses in Kenya, Europe and Cambodia. Source: (State Department for Industrialization, 2020; Dilger, 2016; World Bank, 2020; Asian Development Bank, 2008; Yoshino & Taghizadeh-Hesary, 2018).

As different as the SMMEs characterisation or definitions can be, one thing they have in common is the disregard of a legal entity such as being private or public and the absence of ownership profile such as the race or gender as these specifications do not constitute or affect the definition of SMMEs (Zhang, Veltri, Calvo-Amodio, & Haapala, 2020; United Nations, 2009). Categorising small businesses according to employees' size or income seems to be the primary determinant of SMMEs. Perhaps another common denominator of SMMEs despite its lack of uniform definition is the fact that SMMEs are typically the largest employer as they typically make up more than 90 per cent of all registered enterprises in most countries (United Nations, 2009; Akugri, Bagah, & Wulifan, 2015; Cravo & Piza, 2016). To this point, the significance of SMMEs cannot be disputed.

2.5 Significance of SMMEs

SMMEs have been identified as critical contributors to economic development (OECD, 2021). The importance of SMMEs in economic growth is well documented in the literature (Akugri, Bagah, & Wulifan, 2015; Machirori & Fatoki, 2013). SMMEs role in the economic prosperity of nations cannot be understated due to their ability to be an agent of change (Dzomonda, Fatoki, & Oni, 2017). SA holds a similar belief given that since the dawn of democracy, the government has positioned SMMEs as a key driver of economic growth through job creation and innovative market expansion initiatives (Department of Trade and Industry, 1995).

The performance trends of the SMMEs sector have a direct impact on the economy. “Studies have identified the performance of a county’s SMMEs sector as a good indicator of its overall vitality and future prospects” (Xesha, Iwu, & Slabbert, 2014, p. 37). Implying that successful and efficient SMMEs sectors contribute to the country’s economic growth whilst failing the

SMMEs sector put additional strain and stagnation on the economy (Zhang, Veltri, Calvo-Amodio, & Haapala, 2020).

Figure 2.5 presents an example of how active SMMEs contribute to the GDP, positively impact the economy and potentially grow the small business. In a sense that the more economically active SMMEs can get is the more they can pay Tax from their profits (Cant & Rabie, 2018). The researcher puts forward the technology company *Apple Inc* as a practical example of how a small business initiative can grow into a giant company that can contribute significantly to the economy beyond just employment and Tax and advance competitiveness and innovation.

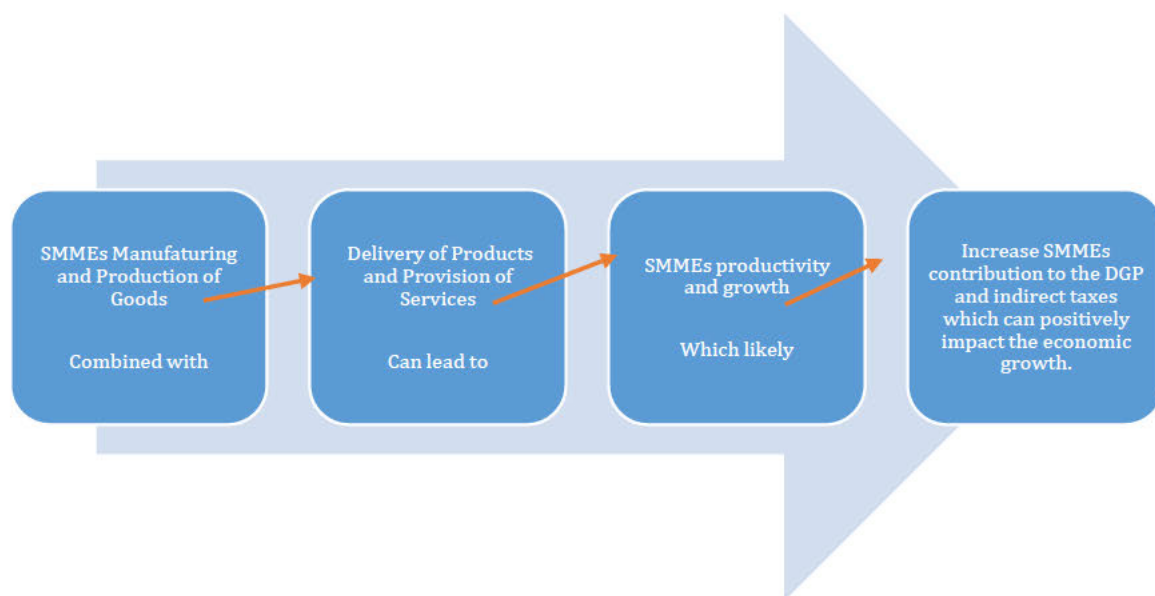


Figure 2.5: Example illustration of SMMEs contribution to economic growth. Source: (Cant & Rabie, 2018).

SMMEs play an integral role in absorbing labour, opening up new markets and widening economies creatively. Therefore, appropriately creating an enabling environment for SMMEs to flourish and make a positive mark in the South African economy is important to economic growth (Department of Trade and Industry, 1995, p. 1). For instance, in SA, The Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) reported that in 2020 the number of SMMEs declined from 2.65 million to 2.36 million. As a result, 232 000 SMMEs closed down for business in the second quarter, and an additional 58 000 closed their doors in the third quarter SMMEs (SEDA, 2021, p. 2). Undoubtedly, the number of employment held by SMMEs indicates that SMMEs can positively impact the economy if capacitated and supported accordingly.

Due to their small nature, SMMEs can easily and swiftly adapt to the constantly changing market demand compared to well-established businesses (Fynn-Munda & Owusu-Sekyere, 2021; Cant & Rabie, 2018). Therefore, it is argued that given the right ammunition, SMMEs can be capable of efficient and effective production and distribution better than larger companies due to their nature of easy adaptability and flexibility (Zavatta, 2008; Cant & Rabie, 2018; Fynn-Munda & Owusu-Sekyere, 2021). Supporting the argument of the ability to adapt to changes, it is noted how the small business sector remained stable despite expected the adverse impact of the pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), especially the small agriculture businesses (SEDA, 2021). This argument is made in comparison to the tremendous devastating impact of COVID-19 in many large companies.

In many countries, the small business sector is regarded as a catalyst of employment as SMMEs absorb many unemployed people (Dladla & Mutambara, 2018). This is the case in developed and developing countries (Oyelana & Adu, 2015). SMEs are considered a driver of empowerment and economic growth due to their track record of being instrumental in expediting economic growth in Asian and North American countries (Akugri, Bagah, & Wulifan, 2015). Given that SMMEs cover a larger geographical presence than well-established companies as they are the most registered businesses in many countries, they can be the primary source of employment, competition, innovation and promoter of entrepreneurship (UNCTAD, 2006; United Nations, 2009).

Essentially, it is commonly argued that SMME's can facilitate economic growth through poverty alleviation, job creation and social stability (Cravo & Piza, 2016; Zhang, Veltri, Calvo-Amodio, & Haapala, 2020). The development perspective believes that SMMEs promote competition and a culture of entrepreneurship, which are the key ingredients to economic growth (United Nations, 2009; International Finance Corporation, 2018).

Mostly in developing countries, "SME development holds the added allure of being a key component of wider economic development and poverty alleviation" (United Nations, 2009, p. 2). This suggests that the SMMEs sector has the potential to drive economic growth and address socio-economic challenges, particularly in SA (Beyers, 2015). *Table 2.8* presents an argument by the United Nation's Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), which emphasises small businesses' importance

“Most policymakers and development practitioners deem the health of the SME community to be highly important for an economy, whether subnational, national or regional. Not only do SMEs typically constitute the vast majority of company registrations in any economy, there is also the expectation that an elite few will make the leap “from garage to great”. The likes of Microsoft and Apple Inc. serve as living proof that the “American Dream” of SME development is no fantasy; it can be done, given the right set of factors and conditions.” (United Nations, 2009, p. 2)

Table 2.8: The root cause of the importance of SMEs. **Error! Reference source not found.**Source: (United Nations, 2009, p. 2).

In SA, the government took a robust forward stance towards prioritising the small-enterprise sector. For instance, the generation of income through SMMEs and the prioritisation of Black-owned and -controlled small enterprises characterises the mandate of putting attention to what was significantly neglected in the past and growing the local economy (Department of Trade and Industry, 1995). Against the known significance and impact of SMMEs in the economy, literature shows that SMEs possess a low survival rate (Xesha, Iwu, & Slabbert, 2014).

In a study conducted in Polokwane, SA, it was found that most small businesses and co-ops fail at their starting phase, with some who survive for a year or two but fail within five years (Dzomonda, Fatoki, & Oni, 2017, p. 104). The failure of SMMEs is not isolated to SA only; it is evident in many other countries (Akugri, Bagah, & Wulifan, 2015). SMEs hold a strong economic significance of socio-economic growth has not matured as SMEs have a high failure rate (Machirori & Fatoki, 2013).

Despite the policy initiatives and positive principles of SMMEs, SA has not yet achieved positive strides that have been known to be the possible achievements of SMMEs (Beyers, 2015). Literature points that lack of access to funding, limited access to the markets as well as low levels of education, training and skills are the main contributing factors to SMMEs inefficiency and lack of growth (Akugri, Bagah, & Wulifan, 2015; Andreoni, Barnes, Black, & Sturgeon, 2021; Bracking, 2019; Wiid & Cant, 2021; Saah, 2021; World Bank, Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) finance. Improving SMEs' access to finance and finding innovative solutions to unlock sources of capital, 2020).

Having discussed SMMEs and their significance as well as the support structures needed to promote SMMEs success, it is important to note that the basis of the proposition that successful SMMEs can automatically drive economic growth and eradicate poverty and inequality has no hard-empirical evidence (United Nations, 2009, p. 3; Saah, 2021; Thorsten, Demirguc-Kunt,

& Levine, 2005, p. 199). Most importantly, it should be clear that “SMEs are not a magic bullet for poverty alleviation, and they are not specifically pro-poor, contrary to popular belief” (United Nations, 2009, p. 3). Instead, the inference of positive impact of successful, productive, efficient and sustainable SMEs is based on the magnitude size of the SME sector in a particular economy accompanied by the contribution made to the GDP per capita growth in each country (United Nations, 2009). As observed, countries with productive and sustainable SMEs obtain a positive socio-economic impact from SME contribution.

SMMEs play an integral role in the growth of most economies worldwide, in both developed and developing countries (Saah, 2021, p. 549). SMMEs continue to play a key role in the growth of economies in developed countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and the United States and developing countries. SMMEs have proven to be playing a strategic role in economic development in most countries, constituting approximately 90% of enterprises in the global economy (Akugri et al., 2015). SMMEs are the backbone of the South African economy, and their role in the national economic development cannot be underrated, which is why the government has been giving increasing policy attention to the sector in recent years.

Since 1994, South Africa has as one of the nation's main objectives to promote the creation, sustenance and development of SMMEs to achieve rapid economic development, particularly in this present democratic dispensation (Bello et al., 2018). According to Bello et al. (2018), the analysis of the relationship between SMMEs and economic development has revealed different and conflicting results that need further investigation (Thorsten, Demirguc-Kunt, & Levine, 2005).

However, there is a noticeable trend that African SMMEs, like many in developing countries, are less productive than larger companies and often struggle to survive and grow. Some of the contributing factors are highlighted by Lawson and Samson are arguments based on the lack of innovation and understanding of growth within SMMEs. Future growth and productivity of SMMEs are dependent on greater determined innovation capability as "the ability to continuously transform knowledge and ideas into new products, processes and systems for the benefit of the firm and its stakeholders". Thereby, innovation capability is central to small businesses and co-ops aiming to compete with their larger and more resource possessing competitors (Saunila, 2020, p. 260). Moreover, Innovation provides a plausible explanation for any organisation's ability to sustain its competitive advantage. In intensively competitive and

dynamic business environments, sustainability-oriented small businesses pursue increased innovation (Liu, Ndubisi, Liu, & Barrane, 2020, p. 1).

Relating the above argument to the South African context, it can be argued that innovation is one of the items highlighted by the government and featured across the majority of the state strategic plans and strategies, including the NDP. However, in actual practice, innovation has not been implemented by the state itself through national rollout in state-owned entities or departments and not championed by the DTI. Perhaps this reality is a call for attention or prioritisation of innovation, not just in SMMEs but in business as a whole. This might just be a contributing factor to the growth of SMME efficiency and success.

The challenges of limits to success and growth are addressed through the small business support initiatives that are ordinarily driven by each country's legislative frameworks. In SA particularly, national legislative frameworks prescribe small businesses and co-ops support. For instance, the B-BBEE Act calls on joint efforts of the public and private sector institutions voluntary partnerships based on the grounds of commonly making a positive contribution to the social-economic development such as the ESD of SMMEs (Coetzee, 2020; Pooe, 2016). The ESD programmes and activities designed to support SMMEs broadly include opening market opportunities, financial assistance, and capacity enhancement through education, training, and skills development.

2.6 Enterprise and Supplier Development

Within Sub-Saharan Africa, SA is leading in terms of the GDP per capita levels; simultaneously, SA holds the record of being an unequal country on income distribution (International Finance Corporation, 2018, p. 8). A countrywide reality of poverty and increasing unemployment contribute to socio-economic challenges and inequality, particularly in the previously disadvantaged groups (Makwara, 2019; Vilakazi & Bosiu, 2021).

Strong claims suggest that the apartheid regime is the impetus of the inequalities and unevenness that haunt this country, putting it in a dormant state regarding socio-economic development (Ministry, 2016; Mariotti & Fourie, 2014). Making the informal and small business sectors attract and absorb a large number of people (Fynn-Munda & Owusu-Sekyere,

2021; International Finance Corporation, 2018). SMEs are predominantly businesses and co-ops with employment opportunities making SMEs a good example of economic resilience (Dreyer, Viviers, & Mans-Kemp, 2021).

There is a strong belief that small and medium enterprises and co-ops that all fall under the banner of SMMEs are an alternative means of generating income. Given that SMMEs are characterised mainly by ownership and staff who are less skilled than those found in formal employment (Chatterjee, Czajka, & Gethin, 2020). This assumption is based on the point that, typically, SMEs account for most registered companies in an economy; they create job opportunities and drive innovation (United Nations, 2009). Thus, making the survival and sustainability of SMMEs critical to socio-economic development (Rena, 2017; United Nations, 2009; Andreoni, Barnes, Black, & Sturgeon, 2021). To this assumption, ESD is believed to be the potential transformation tool that can drive inclusive socio-economic development (Impact Amplifier and NYU Centre for Global Affairs, 2013; United Nations, 2009; Akugri, Bagah, & Wulifan, 2015).

2.6.1 Defining and discussing Enterprise and Supplier Development

Entrepreneurship and organisational management literature considers enterprise development and supplier development as two separate concepts, but for the purpose of this study, these terms are combined as one as the B-BBEE prescribe (Pooe, 2016, p. 1). In practice, corporations in SA that are registered in the JSE fitting the category of complying with the B-BBEE legislation have a single strategy, policy or programmes for ESD (Pooe, 2016). For example, Sasol ESD policy and the Sun International ESD policy (Sasol SA, 2021; Sun International, 2016).

According to Wagner, (2010) enterprise development is defined as any action meant to develop suppliers who are not in the corporate's supply chain, considered 'indirect'. Wagner, (2010) makes an example of a company purchasing from a supplier outside its supply because the supplier matches the company's chain needs and requirements. According to Haçbek and Lavios (2021, p. 2), supplier development is a concept that Leenders first introduced in 1966, defining direct initiatives implemented by businesses to shape and improve a supplier's performance. Moreover, SD is understood to be various support efforts of a supplied enterprise

by the buying company. Driven by the aim of improving skills and capabilities, meeting suitable supply needs of the buying company and establishing a long or short term with the supplier to improve supply chain competitiveness and buyer needs simultaneously (Yawar & Seuring, 2020; Wagner & Fillis, 2005).

According to Wagner & Fillis, (2005) supplier development roots are in the automotive industry, and it has since grown across various sectors as in the United Kingdom (UK) is popular in the agriculture sector, especially in co-ops local supplier support. Citing the example of the “Locally Grown” initiative introduced by Tesco in the year 2000 encouraging large corporations to consider small suppliers over well-established brands such as the ASDA local sourcing championing initiative in Scotland (Wagner & Fillis, 2005, p. 720). These examples demonstrate the characterisation of ESD as a driver of local economic development (LED).

ESD initiatives intend to improve the supply chain value, eliminate uncertainties or risks between the supplier and buyer and graduate the supplier-buyer interactions to a relationship. (Yawar & Seuring, 2020). Undoubtedly, ESD is a much-needed approach for expanding market access for equitable economic growth that caters for small unrecognised enterprises or co-ops to sell their goods and services without systematic exclusion or disqualifications. Unlike large and well-established businesses, SMMEs may need a unique supply process, procedure and practices to attain supplier opportunities, as opposed to large corporations (Wagner & Fillis, 2005). ESD is a unique activity that builds a collaborative culture between the buyer and supplier.

ESD initiatives include support pathways by corporations to sustainably increase access to the market opportunities for Black-owned or -managed SMMEs (Pooe, 2016; USB-ED, 2019). This refers to activities improving the beneficiary is the production and performance making enabling SMMEs and co-ops with limited market access opportunities to participate, generate revenue possibly sustainably (USB-ED, 2019). Meaning, ESD is more than merely reeling a way for SMMEs and co-ops to put their foot on the doors of the market economy. Instead, ESD promotes sustainability to assure the long term survival of beneficiaries free from dependency. Other than the B-BBEE Act, the state has provided a number of economic policies and institutions that speak to the prioritisation of ESD as a potential driver to inclusive economic growth. Some examples are listed in *figure 2.6* below.

White Paper on the national strategy for the development and promotion of small business, in 1995

National Small Business Act 102 of 1996

Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 - Chapter 13: (Finance) Section 271 (Procurement)

Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act 5 of 2000 (PPPFA)

The Financial Advisory and Intermediary Services Act 37 of 2002

Establishment of the Small Enterprise Development Agency (Seda) in 2004

The launch of the Apex Rural Micro-Enterprise Fund in 2004

The Co-operatives Act 14 of 2005

Integrated Strategy on the Promotion of Entrepreneurship and Small Enterprises in 2005

The establishment of the Ministry of Small Business Development in 2014

Figure 2.6: Some Legislative frameworks and Institutions that inform ESD. Adapted from: (B-BBEE Commission, 2021; B-BBEE Commission, 2013; Department of Trade and Industry, 1995; Dreyer, Viviers, & Mans-Kemp, 2021; RSA Presidency, 1996).

2.6.2 Enterprise and Supplier Development in the context of the B-BBEE

The B-BBEE Act includes Codes of Good Practice and other clear guidelines, principles, and measures detailing how businesses can redistribute economic opportunities to Black South Africans. Whereby businesses score points in the B-BBEE Scorecard for procurement, donating to non-profit organisations and any other support and donor activity benefiting black-owned or managed businesses (Coetzee, 2020). According to the B-BBEE Act (2014, p. 54), ESD is one of the priority elements of the B-BBEE Scorecard that is concerned with measuring the effectiveness of the suppliers and procurement empowerment initiatives promoting growth and sustainability in Black enterprises. Meaning that businesses or corporates that implement supportive, developmental or funding initiatives on supply, procurement, and preferential procurement in Black-owned SMMEs and co-operatives comply with the B-BBEE Act to obtain points.

ESD is considered as one of the 'priority' elements of the B-BEE Scorecard (B-BBEE Commission, 2013). Meaning that it is one of the scorecard elements that should not be sidelined. For instance, ESD is one of the initiatives that are aligned with most national development priorities and plans. Due to the belief that ESD can advance transformative economic development (Habek & Lavios, 2021). Most sectors have gazetted sectoral

scorecards; however, general businesses with an annual turnover of R50 million employ the generic Scorecard when measuring their compliance in the B-BBEE Codes of Good Practice (Coetzee, 2020). For instance, Banking institutions follow the Financial Sector Codes, Estate Agencies comply with the Property Sector Codes, but businesses such as corporates go under the Generic Scorecard.

The weighting of the ESD proves the importance of ESD in development. “The high targets for preferential procurement reinforce the need to drive effective ESD programmes. This means that for a company to achieve a good score on the ESD element, it needs to procure goods and services from suppliers with equally good, if not better, B-BBEE recognition levels” (Pooe, 2016, p. 1). It can be argued that corporates that fail to implement ESD activities might score poorly in the B-BBEE.

Perhaps, one of the aims behind ESD having the highest score was strategically positioned to push corporates towards uplifting smaller and Black-owned businesses. Enable these businesses to enter the market system, grow, improve skills that strengthen local supplier and procurement development (B-BBEE Commission, 2013). Annually, billions of Rand are channelled by SA state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and private sector corporates into ESD (USB-ED, 2019; Impact Amplifier and NYU Centre for Global Affairs, 2013). “In the aim to accelerate enterprise development. Thus, it is evident from the foregoing that enterprise development forms a critical part of the government’s strategy to grow the economy” (Pooe, 2016, p. 2).

The contribution of private corporates or well-established institutions towards community development or upliftment through social, economic and environmental programmes is quite common worldwide. Such developmental initiatives are commonly found under the CSI, especially in the private sector companies (Habeck & Lavios, 2021). ESD holds similar principles than that of CSI. However, ESD aims to differ from CSI's due to the focus on sustainability and involvement of the supply chain broadening the scope to access and enabling. The policy directive of the B-BBEE Act prescribes that ESD beneficiaries can only be SMMEs with at least 51% Black-ownership who have an annual turnover of less than R50million (Coetzee, 2020).

Ideally, when a well-established business work with local Black-owned or managed small or medium establishments such as a co-operative, that action should accelerate social and economic progress as the benefiting businesses continue functioning and keeping its employee/s, the business or co-op learn, grow from the experience, exposure and opportunity. *Figure 2.7* presents the points distribution of the three measurement principles within the ESD priority element of the Codes of Good Practice, namely Preferential Procurement, Enterprise Development, and Supplier Development (Coetzee, 2020).

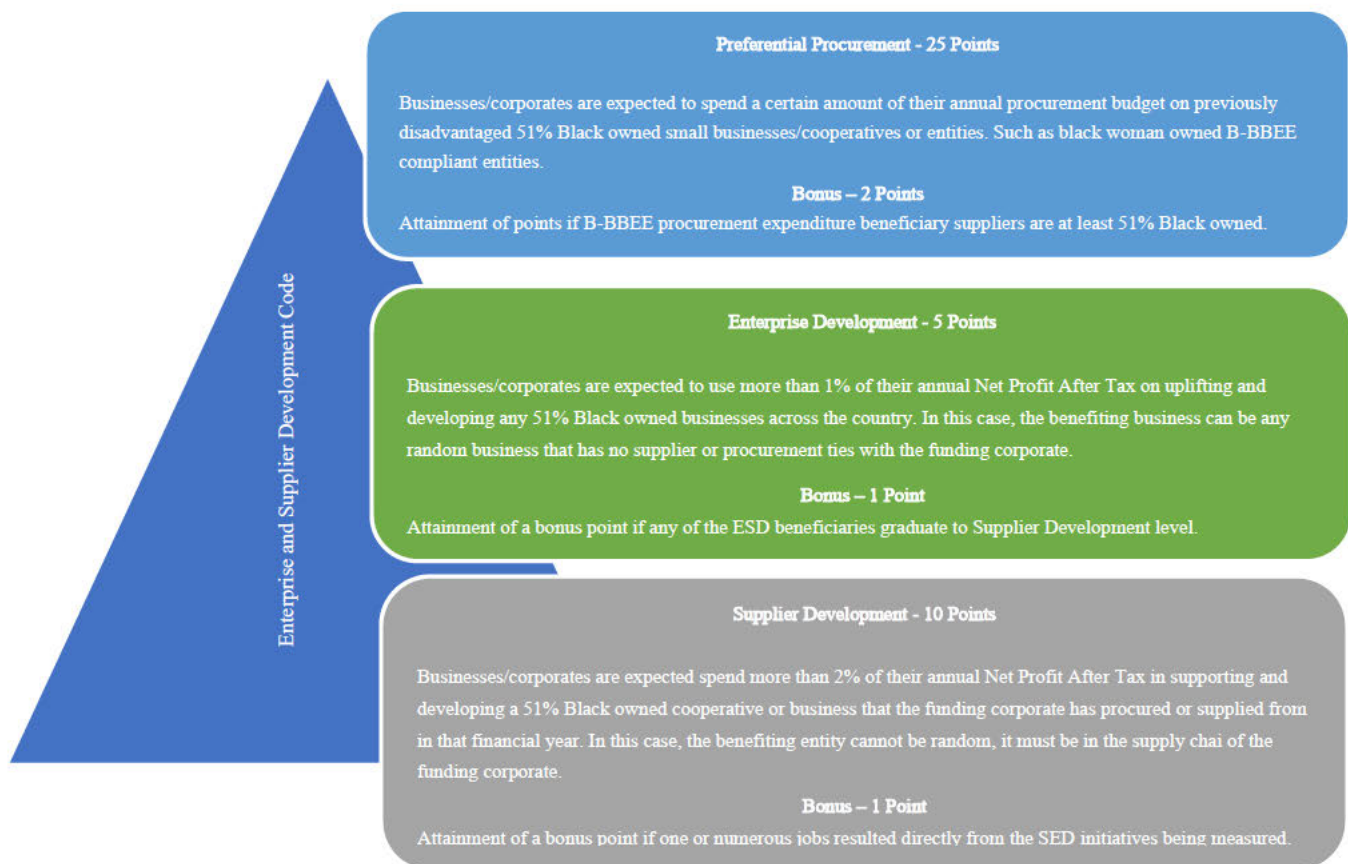


Figure 2.7: Point Distribution for the Enterprise and Supplier Development Code. Adapted from (B-BBEE Act, 2014, pp. 3-5).

The above illustration in *figure 2.7* demonstrates how the currently active B-BBEE Codes of Good Practice and the B-BBEE Act as a whole has mandated and standardised the commercial relationship between corporates and ESD beneficiaries. This legislation points out the type of entities that can benefit, how to benefit these entities, and what score will the corporate attain. In this way, legislation has created a uniform way of pushing transformation, redressing historical, socio-economic inequalities, and accelerating economic growth. For example,

Coetzee, (2020, p. 10) argue that the legislation lists mentorship, skills training, business incubation, coaching, investing, loaning, donating, paying levies or license fees, or even providing consultation services as acceptable benefits that corporates can offer under ESD to earn points.

2.6.3 Outcomes and Impact of ESD

The above example drawn from Coetzee demonstrates that there are various programmes or initiatives that can be channelled towards ESD, which makes adaptability and compliance easy. Expanding the ESD pathways, Haç bek & Lavios, (2021) mention supplier skills and personnel training, knowledge sharing, on-site visits, the capital provision for equipment or tools purchase and increased purchasing from the supplier as some of the practices taken by corporations (buyer to the supplier) actions that can positively affect ESD beneficiaries (SMMEs. This makes ESD a collaborative approach that improves mutual benefit between buying or investing corporations and suppliers.

The surmounting failure of SMMEs in SA calls for the state and large institutions to improve their support approaches as they provide to the potential causes of SMMEs failure. It is clear that SMMEs can affect economic growth; therefore, developmental initiatives such as ESD are a possible efficient tool that drives the optimal performance of SMMEs. *Figure 2.8* outlines the strategies or initiatives that can be implemented to make ESD efficient in growing SMMEs (Yawar & Seuring, 2020).

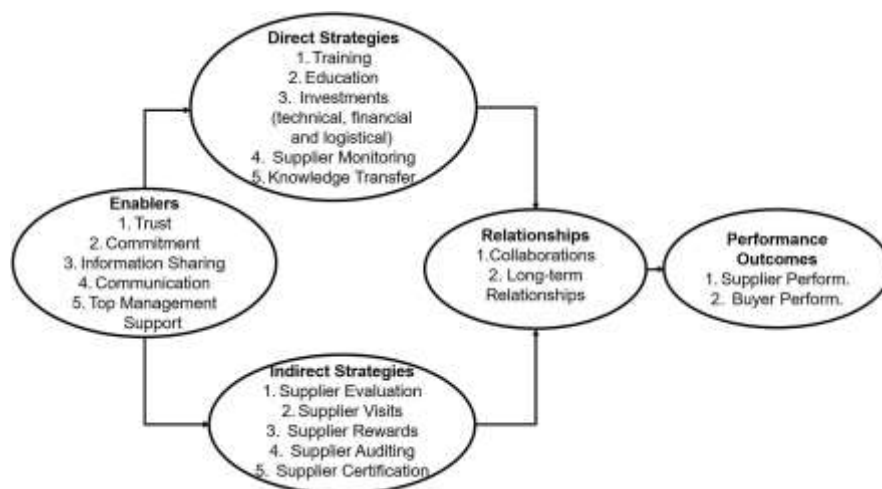


Figure 2.8: Activities and Outcomes of Enterprise and Supplier Development. Source (Yawar & Seuring, 2020, p. 2567).

The above *figure 2.8* shows that ESD engagement is broad; corporates can select initiatives suitable to their operations. As long as the outcome will realise the intended chain reaction of corporates enticing growth and sustainable development of small entities. The ESD prescriptions are intended to make positive contributions to small developing entities to boost and sustain their economic performance. Most importantly, supplier development is dependent on the institutions' efforts to create and maintain competent suppliers (Chavhan, Mahajan, & Sarang, 2012, p. 37). For example, supplier competency may influence buyer satisfaction, igniting long-term cooperation to the point that the buyer can invest in improving the supplier's product quality and advise on efficient or cost-effective suggestions. Which can lead to sustainability and growth for the supplier.

The modern-day is characterised by constant change, unpredictability and continuous growth. Thus, demanding business institutions to consider change as a critical factor that can affect internal and external operations. According to the United Nations, (2009) the 21st-century environment is unpredictable, constantly changing due to factors such as globalisation and the opening of global markets. The effects of this unpredictable nature of the environment demand SMMEs to remain competitive and valuable for survival. Furthermore, there is a great diversity of economies, development experiences, and challenges; this has called for swift adaptation (Liu, Ndubisi, Liu, & Barrane, 2020).

Undeniably, technology and innovation directly impact the operations of the global market, forcing structural changes, and businesses need to catch on for survival. For instance, digitalisation influences innovation, production, trade, consumption changes that are inevitable in today's dynamic environment (Andreoni, Barnes, Black, & Sturgeon, 2021, p. 265). Thus, demanding SMEs to be flexible enough to adapt. Failure to adapt may cause constraints to growth as SMEs due to lack of competitiveness. "SMEs do not operate in splendid isolation and are not divorced from a constantly changing global business environment" (United Nations, 2009, p. 2). It can be argued that since most SMEs operate on limited finance, it may be challenging to keep up with constant changes or maintain production at the phase and context of demand which also contributes to the limitation of competitiveness. Hence, the importance of incubation, funding, training, and support from larger and well-established entities can boost SMMEs and entice their performance.

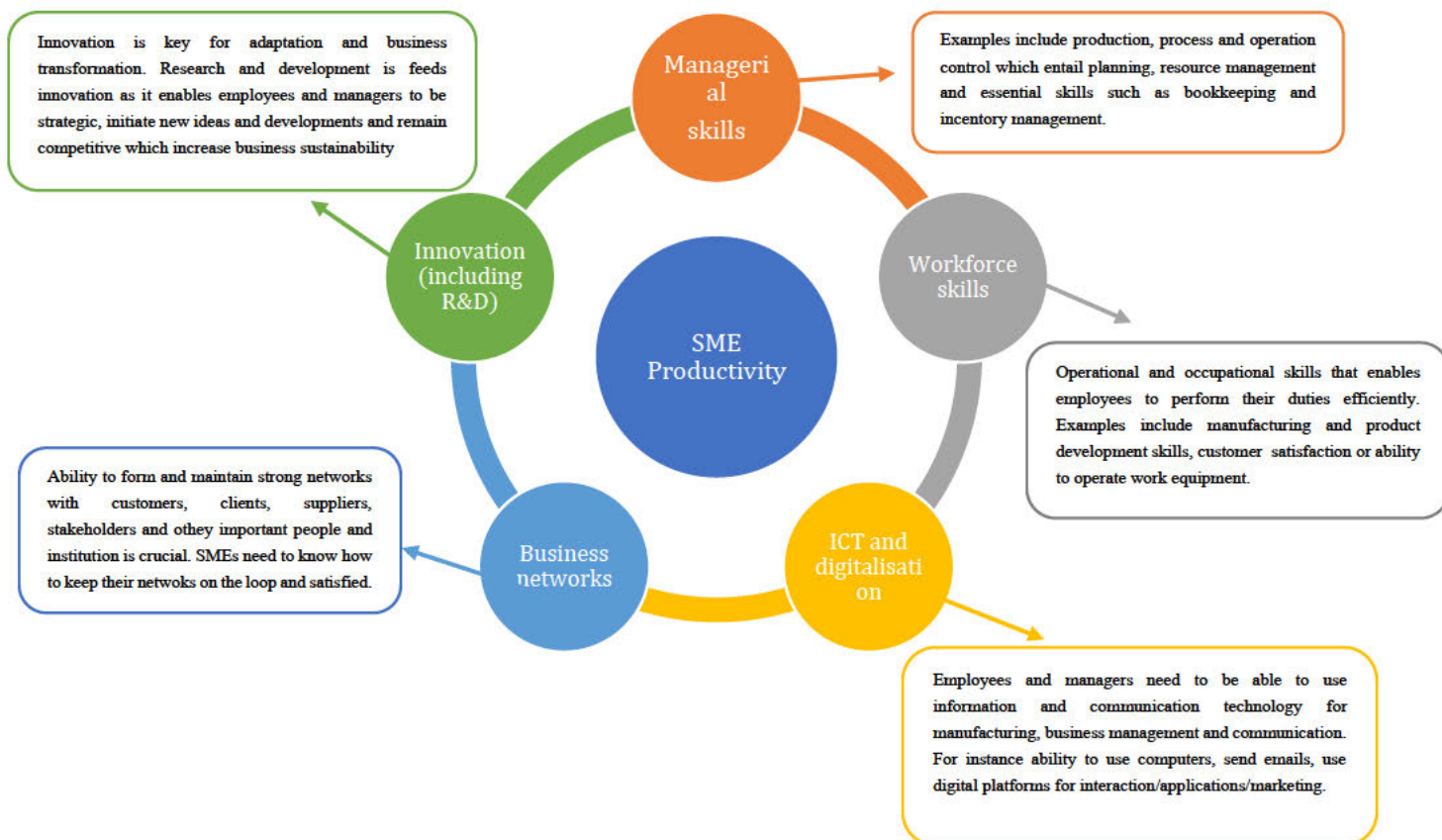
2.7 Constraints vs Contributions to Growth

2.7.1 Skills shortage and Capacity Enhancement

SMMEs performance heavily relies on the output product or service of the business or co-op. Meaning, the small business requires the ability to manufacture, produce, or deliver the business product and operate and run the business's functions. All these expectations demand knowledge and skill for getting the job done. According to Douglas et al. (2017, p. 227), on-the-job training and having a good quality of employees and good end product directly contribute to the success or failure of SMEs. As a result, a lack of employee skills and managerial skills or training weakens the organisation's performance capability and contributes to organisational failure (Douglas, Douglas, Muturi, & Ochieng, 2017).

Within the SME sector, performance and productivity are determined by internal factors such as skills of the business managers, owners or employees as they are the main determinants of business performance (Marchese, Giuliani, Salazar-Elena, & Stone, 2019, p. 5). In a SMMEs study in SA, Urban and Naidoo (2012, p. 147) found that the lack of managerial and employee skills is the main reason behind the high failure rate of SMMEs. In response to this challenge, skills development and training for capacity enhancement is key. According to the United Nations, (2009) capacity enhancement through skills training is key in SME productivity. It capacitates and equips SMEs with the appropriate skills to function and operate.

Figure 2.9 present the five key internal factors that determine the productivity of SMEs adapted from Marchese et al., (2019, p. 6) contextualised with the researchers' analysis and examples. The diagram lists instrumental and necessary skills and capabilities that can enable SMEs to function productively. The absence of these internal determinants raises the high likelihood of failure for SMEs. For instance, small business or co-ops managers who lack financial skills are highly likely to fail in inventory, resource management, and bookkeeping, limiting the institution's productivity or even success. This brings in the importance of SMMEs support activities such as ESD, enabling skills training and capacity development. *Table 2.9 presents* SMMEs development interventions drawn from (United Nations, 2009).



Error! Reference source not found. 2.9: Main internal drivers of SME productivity. Source: (Marchese, Giuliani, Salazar-Elena, & Stone, 2019, p. 6).

Intervention	Description
Skills training and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -It is essential to encourage an entrepreneurship culture. This extends beyond the SME and includes instilling this culture at the educational institution, policy and community level. -Employee training programmes equip SMEs with on the job skills as well as operational and professional skills. -Information technology and digital education and training for employees, owners and managers.
Business support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Access to markets and finance platforms. -Incubation -Business forums, associations, expos and other platforms can increase access to information and lessons learned.
Capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Mentorship and guidance. -Consultation and constant communication (between the buyer and supplier in the case of ESD). -Progress monitoring (online and one-on-one) -Progress reporting, assessment and feedback -Impact assessment. -Consultation (availing services such as auditing or health and safety checks to SMEs)

Table 2.9: Main internal drivers of SME productivity. Source: (United Nations, 2009, pp. 28-29).

According to Harvie, (2004, p. 14) improving SMEs capacities through development allow SMEs to actively participate in the market, which is dominated by globalisation, technology and innovation, making the environment dynamic. Capacity development then equips SMEs with the relevant and necessary skills and knowledge to have the entrepreneurial spirit, be flexible, be resourceful and innovative (Harvie, 2004). Due to the small size of SMEs and their limited financial muscle and infrastructure, these small businesses and co-ops are primarily unable to afford skills training and capacity development programmes. To this end, large companies can play an instrumental role in providing such developmental programmes to contribute to SMEs' growth and survival.

Country	Initiative	Description
Colombia	Centres of Excellence and Appropriation (2019-22)	Continuous training or short courses of professionals in emerging technologies such as Big Data and IoT, in order to devise technological solutions that can impact the processes of digital transformation of the productive sectors in the country.
Germany	Go-digital (2017-21)	The programme supports SME under 100 employees and with a balance sheet total up to EUR 20 million in the areas of IT security, digitalisation of business processes and digital market development. SME benefit from the expertise of consultancy firms that have been authorised for the programme and support businesses individually throughout the whole process.
Israel	ICT Training for SMEs (2014)	ICT training for SMEs to improve their businesses and productivity
Latvia	Support for training of employees (2014-20)	Supports upskilling of Latvian employees regardless the size of the organisation they belong.
Spain	Acelera PYME programme	In the context of COVID-19, supports SMEs and self-employed to rethink their business models and strengthen managerial and digital skills.
United Kingdom	UK Small Business Leadership Programme (2018 onwards)	Provides management training to 2 000 small business leaders in its first year, with an aim to scale-up to 10 000 beneficiaries by 2025. Package of measures aiming to assist businesses in improving their productivity, which includes the strengthening of local networks, getting businesses signed-up to mentoring programmes, and promoting "Knowledge Transfer Partnerships" whereby postgraduates are placed in businesses to translate their research insights into business growth.

Error! Reference source not found. 2.10: Skills development Programmes: examples from various countries. Source: (OECD, 2019).

2.7.2 Example of an ESD approach to skills and capacity enhancement

As an SMME's support initiative, a hands-on approach is essential for learning and development when large companies work with small businesses or co-ops. According to Hartley and Jones, (1997) having a professional from the buying team present throughout the enterprise development process is advantageous. The advantage is that the staff member

coming from the buying company can determine the level of supplier involvement and motivation, increasing the supplier teamwork ethic and capabilities (Eisto, Holtta, Mahlamaki, Kollanus, & Nieminen, 2010). Having an accessible team driving the ESD programmes or initiatives empowers the beneficiaries, opens room for learning, problem-solving, and increases communication. In the South African context, the results-oriented approach in ESD activities can assist SMMEs to actually learn from practice, expose beneficiaries to the corporate realities, which can be educational and empowering.

Moreover, Krause et al., explain that involvement of the buying institution is crucial because it educates the supplier, ease in feedback for ongoing performance, which directly improves the supplier's capabilities (Krause & Ellram, 1997; Kadir, Tam, & Ali, 2011). In this way, the large company can determine from observation the skills gaps and areas that need improvement and be able to suggest or offer the relevant training. As a result, the large company can get the quality product and efficient service whilst ticking the compliance box of having taken on a small development business. Simultaneously, the benefiting small business or co-op achieve gaining access, ability to operate and accumulate capital and benefit from learning, training and guidance which increase success likelihood of the SMMEs.

2.7.3 Innovation and competitiveness

Literature shows that amongst the contributing factors of SMMEs failure is the lack of innovation and competitiveness (Andreoni, Barnes, Black, & Sturgeon, 2021). In this globalised modern world, businesses across various industries heavily rely on innovation to remain successful and relevant (Chege & Wang, 2020). Innovation can be defined as the ability to continuously change and adapt knowledge and skills to develop new ideas, products, or operations to satisfy the needs of the markets and customers or clients (Saunila, 2020).

Undoubtedly, being innovative is essential in SMMEs success and longevity. A study conducted in Chinese SMMEs found that innovation is a key instrument in sustaining the competitive business advantage (Liu, Ndubisi, Liu, & Barrane, 2020). This conclusion is based on innovation making business products more substantial, and meeting the expectations and demands of the clients, customers, and markets enables the business to be contingent and improve business performance (Liu, Ndubisi, Liu, & Barrane, 2020). Moreover, innovation is

said to be potent for cost reduction as new ideas inform reduced cost practices (Zhang, Veltri, Calvo-Amodio, & Haapala, 2020).

In a study looking into SMEs competitiveness and cash flow generation in Hungary, Markus and Rideg (2020) concluded that innovation positively correlates with competitiveness performance, meaning that innovation capabilities such as transformation and new product design can improve business success (Chege & Wang, 2020). Supporting this conclusion, Lewandowska asserts that “in the times of a global economy, innovations are perceived as a way of overcoming difficulties, ensuring and preserving economic growth. A permanent competitive advantage can be achieved primarily due to the growing innovative potential” (2021, p. 288).

However, it is noted that well-established businesses mainly prefer innovations compared to SMEs (Markus & Rideg, 2020). Perhaps financial constraints and lack of capacity contribute to the SMEs limited innovation practices. Innovation is too costly in underdeveloped and developing countries, and SMEs cannot afford innovation (Lewandowska, 2021). Hence, the importance of large businesses intervention in SMME support is a means of enabling small businesses to unlock their innovative potential that they are unable and financially constrained to tap into.

2.7.4 Lack of finance and Access

Similarly to other forms of businesses, the operations of SMMEs heavily relies on finance. Once again, similar to other types of businesses, SMMEs also require access to credit. SMEs' access to finances is categorised as one of the main ingredients of SME productivity (Marchese, Giuliani, Salazar-Elena, & Stone, 2019; Asian Development Bank, 2008). In general, finance is a great asset that can directly influence economic growth through job creation (International Finance Corporation, 2018). For instance, SMEs with access to finance can absorb people and be functional or productive, which directly affects social and economic development.

Regardless of the importance of finance, the literature indicates that financial providers are prone to finance large and developed business compared to SMEs (Akamanzi, 2019; Beyers, 2015; International Finance Corporation, 2018). Access to finance is one of the main obstacles

to SME success and productivity (Chavhan, Mahajan, & Sarang, 2018; Yoshino & Taghizadeh-Hesary, 2018; Zavatta, 2008).

Throughout various countries, improving access to finance is a common focus for policymakers or government to support SMEs (United Nations, 2009, p. 17). Given that banks are the primary source of finance that SMEs can approach for assistance, the policy initiatives promote the influence of making the banking sector accessible to SMEs despite the prevalent risk associated with financing small or start-up enterprises (World Bank, Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) finance. Improving SMEs' access to finance and finding innovative solutions to unlock sources of capital, 2020). Regrettably, SMMEs find it challenging to access credit or formal financial due to the stigmatisation of being a credit risk by financial institutions (Beyers, 2015).

Numerous factors contribute to categorising SMMEs as a financial risk, making financial institutions hesitant to quickly finance SMMEs (World Bank, Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) finance. Improving SMEs' access to finance and finding innovative solutions to unlock sources of capital, 2020; Yoshino & Taghizadeh-Hesary, 2018). Beyers, (2015, p. 260) argue that the key contributing factor is that financial institutions mainly in SA use a "one-size-fits-all" in the financial application processes, which significantly reduce the approval likelihood of SMMEs given the nature of SMMEs businesses or cooperatives.

In developing countries, SMMEs, particularly micro and small enterprises, find it challenging to access finance, limiting their growth potential (Zavatta, 2008). Arguing that SMMEs need to invest in sustainable decision making, from decision making to sustainable manufacturing up to evaluation. This form of systems thinking or approach in business. For instance, the authors suggest that SMMEs need to make informed decisions by making a business case in all their actions. An example is the strategic thinking approach in business decisions (Zhang, Veltri, Calvo-Amodio, & Haapala, 2020). Arguably, this is an important point given the lack of entrepreneurial thinking observed in small businesses, such as mismanagement of funds when there is access without thinking

In a SMMEs study conducted by the World Bank Group in collaboration with Genesis Analytics and the SA Department of National Treasury, access to finance in SA is mainly limited to the better established and formal SMMEs (International Finance Corporation, 2018, p. 10). Moreover, the bank system finance offering to these types of SMMEs is granted long-

term collateral to the owners' assets such as property (International Finance Corporation, 2018). Given such dominance of financial access constraints for SMMEs, it can be argued that the SMMEs support and development agenda needs to increase contribution towards expanding finance and market access for small businesses and co-ops through investments. *Table 2.11* presents the International Finance Corporation (IFC) recommendations to the SA policymakers in the SMMEs sector.

IFC Recommendations to the SA small business sector
<i>Better Data on the SMMEs Sector</i>
Achieve consensus among various stakeholders on how SMMEs are defined and measured, including firm size and formality. The National Small Business Amendment Act is too complex with 11 sets of criteria.
Disseminate public data electronically on SMMEs characteristics – demographics, access to finance and support services – split between SMMEs segments, such as survivalist and growth-oriented SMMEs and across the value chains.
Collect regular and comprehensive updates on the state of the SMMEs sector in South Africa. This could be achieved by i) collecting a richer set of data from business owners interviewed in regular household surveys such as the QLFS, or ii) a unique nationally representative survey of SMMEs owners.
<i>Sharpen Policy Focus</i>
Operationalize better public sector coordination: Recommend DSBD to be the key coordinator of SMMEs support programs among government stakeholders.
Improve public and corporate procurement for SMMEs access to markets. Includes on-time government payments to SMMEs contractors and executing the government commitment to allocate a percentage of all contracts to SMMEs.
<i>Increase Formalization</i>
Reduce regulatory red tape to improve the operating environment for SMMEs. Includes the rollout of one-stop-shops and technology-enabled business registration to grow the bankable SMMEs market segment.
Minimize onerous tax obligations, one of the reasons businesses remain informal, by adopting the recommendations made by the Davis Tax Committee to improve small business incentives and encourage more SMMEs to be on the tax radar.
<i>Expand Access to Finance and Markets</i>
<i>Private Sector Initiatives</i>
Banks should reform their operating models to increase SMMEs funding scale and cost effectiveness. Action areas include: i) Personal and business banking unit integration to use data on entrepreneur's personal financial activity; ii) Credit scorecards to facilitate unsecured lending; and iii) Product and channel innovations.
Banks should increase digital technology adoption targeted at SMMEs in both the formal and informal segments. Includes analytics that reduce the cost of risk assessment and banking services.
Form partnerships to expand SMMEs reach such as with corporate partners that have large supply chains.
<i>Financial Market Infrastructure</i>
Improve coverage of credit bureau reporting to cover lending activities of individuals for business purposes, as well as trade credit and other data sources.

Develop a movable collateral registry that extends beyond yellow metal assets to help secure lending using asset types that are more prevalent among SMMEs owners, particularly those that do not have access to traditional forms of collateral.
<i>Public Sector Initiatives</i>
Adopt more strategic government funding support to private providers. This includes effective credit guarantees to banks and financial support to alternative financing models such as non-bank financiers and fintechs whose scale is limited by small balance sheets.
Regulatory reforms to encourage financing of informal SMMEs. Includes issues around FICA/KYC requirements, which make extending financing to informal/undocumented SMMEs difficult, and onerous MFI regulations.

Table 2.11: IFC recommended initiatives to strengthen SMMEs. Source: (International Finance Corporation, 2018, p. 11).

2.8 ‘Other’ constraints to SMME growth in SA

2.8.1 *Spatial neglect*

Cant and Rabie, (2018, p. 228) conducted a study looking into the sustainability of SMMEs in South African townships and found that despite legislative framework mandate on SMMEs, these small businesses receive limited attention as they are overlooked as an instrumental contributing factor to economic growth through job creation in SA. Moreover, these authors argue that townships are located closer to cities, and they are largely populated, are mostly underdeveloped, and are home to many unemployed and poor people. Therefore the government’s “emphasis should be placed on the provision of infrastructure in townships and spatial transformation in order to create opportunities for SMMEs and enabling them to participate meaningfully on the market which would ultimately reinforce the value chains, both downstream and upstream” (Cant & Rabie, 2018, p. 231). The SMME sector, inclusive of township enterprises, is considered a beacon of hope due to its vast, untapped potential to boost South Africa’s economic growth and employment (Wiid & Cant, 2021).

In a similar study looking at small businesses in the rural areas conducted in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), Lekhanya and Manson (2013) found that despite the positive economic impact of small businesses, SMMEs in rural areas have significant environmental, financial and infrastructural challenges that deepen the limitations of business survival. For instance, in addition to the global lack of access to finance and market entry, SMMEs in rural areas have additional constraints such as electricity, transportation, poor infrastructure and access to services

(Lekhanya & Mason, Selected Key External Factors Influencing the Success of Rural Small and Medium Enterprises in South Africa, 2013, p. 336).

With the above in mind, it is worth noting that implementation of SMMEs support needs to pay closer attention to small businesses and co-ops, which on top of being small, are accompanied by additional challenges threatening their survival and performance even more. The researchers' argument is made on the basis that *“the government is privy to the challenges facing small businesses and cooperatives within the township economy. Government institutions focussed on SMMEs are expected to be at the forefront of SMMEs development also within the broader township economy in order to assist businesses through the provision of support and services, and to create a favourable environment for their growth and sustainability”* (Cant & Rabie, 2018, p. 228). Thus, calling for strategic interventions to strengthen the existing failing ones.

2.9 Global case studies

2.9.1 SMEs in Europe

In most countries, SMEs are believed to be an important tool for economic growth. This belief is well presented in literature and in different countries' various economic transformations or development policies. Exemplarily, SMEs are greatly recognised and prioritised in the European Union (EU) countries. The European Commission's has passed legislative frameworks to reduce barriers that hinder the growth of SMEs' growth by creating an environment that allows SMEs to enter the markets and be efficient sustainably (Rotar, Pamić, & Bojnec, 2019). This is because most SMEs are regarded as the job creation engine as they are largely responsible for the majority of employment opportunities in EU countries (Mandl, 2017; Gherghina, Botezatu, Hosszu, & Simionescu, 2020). The policy framework mandate targets the promotion of SME entrepreneurship, competitiveness, and increased access to the markets or finance and innovation (European Commission, 2021; Rotar, Pamić, & Bojnec, 2019).

The impact of the EU policies on SMEs can be seen in the positive contribution of SMEs as they contribute 50% to the GDP. Additionally, 99% of enterprises in the EU are SMEs with job opportunities, as every second job out of three come from SMEs (European Union, 2020).

To this end, SMEs in the EU are considered an essential tool that can be crucial in driving Europe’s competitiveness and technological sovereignty as the emphasis is on innovation and digitalisation (European Union, 2020). It can be argued that the policy agenda of digital transformation is fitting given the volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA) of the modern-day that is fast-tracked by globalisation and technology. Therefore, a digital transformation policy focus understands that “globalisation and technological changes can enable SMEs to reach new opportunities” (Rotar, Pamić, & Bojnec, 2019, p. 3302).

The SME support strategies are designed to make the European business environment accessible and conducive for SMEs to reach their highest potential (European Commission, 2021). These strategies enable the European macroeconomic environment to favour SMEs growth (Rotar, Pamić, & Bojnec, 2019). *Table 2.12* presents some examples of initiatives targeting to boost SMEs success. These initiatives arise from the EU’s position that SMEs are the backbone of Europe’s economy. Therefore they must be capacitated and supported to reach their full potential (Alajääskö, et al., 2018).

EU SME Support Strategy	Brief description
The European SME week	SME events that are held throughout the year bring SME owners and workers together. Enabling knowledge sharing, lessons learned and networking. This initiative builds an open platform for the state and SMEs to communicate, share information, and entice inter-SME collaboration, which broadens the likelihood of SME growth.
Internationalisation and Standardisation	Fairtrade framework designed to assist SMEs to enter into foreign markets beyond the European business. The standardisation system assists with reducing costs, making it easy for SMEs to operate. These initiatives enhance innovation, competitiveness and increase SME productivity, increasing SMEs' efficiency.
European Enterprise Promotion Awards	The awards honour public authorities who have created opportunities, supported or invested in SMEs.

Table 2.12: Support Strategies for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in Europe. Source: (European Commission, 2021; European Union, 2020).

2.9.2 SMEs in Asia (*Pacific and Southeast Asia*)

In Asia, SMEs are considered the backbone of economic growth as small businesses account for over 96% of all businesses in the country, with a track record of providing two out of three jobs throughout the continent (Yoshino & Taghizadeh-Hesary, 2018). The prioritisation of SMEs dates back to 1993 when the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (APEC) in a Seattle meeting came with the resolution of putting SMEs at the centre of the industrial policies (Harvie, 2004). Within a few years, in 1997-98, Asia suffered a financial and economic crisis, and literature shows that SMEs survived the crisis better than large companies as they were resilient (Harvie, 2004; Jansen, 2016).

The business environment in Asian countries is significantly impacted by the changing business environment, such as globalisation which causes implications for SMEs in Asia and the Pacific (Andreoni, Barnes, Black, & Sturgeon, 2021). For instance, SMEs operate in an environment characterised by trade liberalisation and global trade economics red tape. To this fact, SMEs who maintain traditional operations fail to be competitive and productive, which constrain growth (Andreoni, Barnes, Black, & Sturgeon, 2021). Undoubtedly, SMEs positively impact the Asian economy; the approach forward in sustaining the growth and performance of SMEs as the agenda is centred on competitiveness, digitalisation and innovation (Lopes de Sousa Jabbour, Ndubisi, & Roman Pais Seles, 2020).

According to Schaper (2020, p. 3), SMEs amount to 70 million in Southeast Asia, and they absorb over 140 million employees. Despite the significant contribution of SMEs in the economy and the Southeast Asian economy being one of the fastest-growing, many people remain living below the international poverty line, which creates an income gap (OECD, 2018). As a result, inclusiveness is one of the critical challenges that need to be addressed in the SMEs sector. Literature recommendations argue that the region requires pro-active solid government policy intervention to foster inclusive growth (OECD, 2018, p. 22).

Within Asia, there is a great distinction between SME performance in between developing and developed countries. For instance, in low-income countries such as India, SMEs contribute less to the GDP whilst higher-income countries such as Malaysia contribute more (Kadir, Tam, & Ali, 2011; Yoshino & Taghizadeh-Hesary, 2018; OECD, 2021). Despite the efficiency of

SMEs in Asia, small businesses face financial access challenges as business finance comes with high lending rates (Yoshino & Taghizadeh-Hesary, 2018). “It is difficult for banks to evaluate SMEs since they often do not have solid accounting systems. Many SMEs in Asia borrow money by paying high-interest rates or offering costly collateral. Many banks prefer to lend to large enterprises rather than SMEs” (Yoshino & Taghizadeh-Hesary, 2018, p. 3).

2.9.3 SMEs in Rwanda and Kenya

In the African developing countries, SMEs are considered the backbone and engine of economic development. However, SMEs do not succeed as expected; they tend to have limited growth or fail completely (Douglas, Douglas, Muturi, & Ochieng, 2017; Akamanzi, 2019). In the majority of African countries, SMEs are considered an important sector. In Rwanda, for instance, over 60% of jobs are within the SME sector, and the growth of this sector is championed by the state (Twesige & Gasheja, 2019). *Table 2.13* presents government initiatives directed at supporting SMEs in Rwanda. Moreover, the state-led initiatives operate because since 98% of the businesses are SMEs, the state pulls the weight to ensure SMEs operate in a conducive environment promoting their success.

Initiative	Analysis
Umurenge Savings and Credit Cooperatives (Umurenge SACCOs)	This initiative aims to increase access to finance for the SMEs, especially those in rural areas and owned by the marginalised (Twesige & Gasheja, 2019).
Business Development Fund	The business development fund also drives the access to finance agenda as it offers SME loans given the limited access in the banking sector (Akamanzi, 2019).
International Trade Fairs	These are international exhibitions that allow SMEs to showcase and promote their services and products to overseas markets such as China, the UK, Kenya, Germany and Italy (Akamanzi, 2019). This initiative promotes inter-Africa and overseas trading exposure for SMEs.

Table 2.13: State initiatives supporting SMEs in Rwanda. Source: (Akamanzi, 2019; Twesige & Gasheja, 2019).

In Kenya, SMEs are found across all industries or sectors, and they are the source of sustainable livelihoods as they absorb a large proportion of the population (Wanjohi, 2011). According to

FSD Kenya, (2021) SMEs make a 24% contribution to the GDP and 90% of these small enterprises 90% are in the private sector (FSD Kenya, 2021). Even though SMEs play a considerable role in the economy through employment opportunities, the sector is threatened by various challenges due to the informality nature of SMEs stagnating productivity and contributing value (FSD Kenya, 2021). Thus causing SMEs to be neglected by private and public support initiatives as their informality position them as an investment risk, lacking sustainability and potential to positively impact socio-economic development (FSD Kenya, 2021; Chege & Wang, 2020).

2.10 Chapter Summary

Discussions in this chapter have demonstrated that since the dawn of democracy, the South African government has embarked on a journey to create an enabling environment for SMMEs to operate at full potential. Through the White Paper on National Strategy for the Development and Promotion of Small Business in SA, the B-BBEE and other similar strategy frameworks, the state has stimulated SMMEs. Exemplary, the Codes of Good Practice that mandate the private sector to nurture SMMEs through investments, incubation and various support is one of the models of stimulating SMMEs.

The state approach has centred on addressing the past systematic exclusion. In an attempt to balance the scales and champion the support of SMMEs so that they can be productive and grow. One of the key drivers of SMME support is the B-BBEE prescribed ESD intervention aimed at enabling SMMEs to be active, survive, and thrive so they can meaningfully contribute to the inclusive socio-economic development objective of the country.

However, throughout the twenty-seven years of democracy, SMMEs have failed to make an efficient and sustainable contribution to the economy. This failure conclusion has resembled the constantly climbing unemployment rates, the limited SMMEs labour absorption records, noticeable lack of sustainability of SMMEs and lack of SMMEs positive contribution to the GDP. Some of the contributing factors to the failure rate of SMMEs are the issue of access to the markets and finance, skills shortage, low education levels of SMMEs owners, managers and employees and lack of sustainability. Capacity enhancement, skills development, access to markets through preferential procurement and similar initiatives have been discussed as SMMEs support initiatives that can reduce the practical challenges to SMMEs growth.

These mentioned restrains to SMMEs full performance are not only limited to SMMEs in SA. Literature shows that many other developed and developing countries experience low SMMEs productivity and survival rates as they face similar challenges. It can be argued that the state approach to socio-economic development through championing ESD and SMMEs lacks conventional logic of solving the problem and strategic leadership. Another issue observed from the examination of literature is the attitude towards SMMEs as they are seen as a survival strategy for the unemployed, uneducated and unskilled individuals rather than arising from business-minded and oriented impetus.

Drawing from literature, the conclusion is that SMMEs have limited contribution to the SA economy. There is no apparent, direct successor to the economy through employment opportunities, GDP contribution, or moving vehicle driving socio-economic development. Poverty and unemployment rates continue to rise, SMMEs continue lacking longevity.

Perhaps the recommendation would be for Government to revisit the whole B-BBEE link to economic development and employ a more critical, practical and strategic approach. Perhaps the question would be to assess whether B-BBEE compliance can be instilled as a culture to be a business competence rather than the imposition of compliance as just a box to tick. The question to this is, would the participating companies have participated or engaged if this was not a government-driven agenda? Perhaps to answer this, corporates should tick both boxes of ESD as a meaningful contribution or support of the national economic transformation agenda whilst it is a core business target alike. Corporates should question the real driver of ESD internally

Chapter Three:

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a detailed discussion on the research design and method utilised to reach the objectives of this study. Discussions will explain the reason behind employing the qualitative approach in this study and discuss the population of this study and the methods used in the data collection, analysis and presentation. Moreover, this chapter will also address the reliability and ethical considerations related to the research of this study.

3.2 Research Design and Methods

3.2.1 Research Design

Research design can be defined as the procedures followed during collecting, analysing, interpreting, and reporting data in a research study (Creswell, 2013). Explaining further, the research design is “the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study’s initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions” (Yin, 2009, p. 29). Moreover, the research design is said to be the blueprint of the research as it is concerned with the question of the study, the type of data relevant to the research and the approach used in collecting and analysing the research data (Sam Sloss, Philliber, & Schwab, 1980). Based on the objectives and aims of this study, a qualitative research approach will be employed. Merriam, (2002, p. 10) explains that the qualitative research approach is process, understanding and meaning oriented, and it allows the researcher to be the primary lead in collecting and analysing data.

3.2.2 Research Method

The selection of a research method is always based on the context of the research topic, the research questions, and the objectives of the research. Qualitative research refers to “an inquiry process of understanding based on a distinct methodological approach to inquiry that explores a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture; analyses words;

reports detailed views of participants; and conducts the study in a natural setting” (Creswell, 2013, p. 300). Elaborating further, Creswell explains that “the procedures of qualitative research, or its methodology, are characterized as inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher’s experience in collecting and analysing the data” (2013, p. 22).

Moreover, Creswell (2014) detail that qualitative research emphasises thoroughly enquiring on the research topic to get an understanding in order to generate meaning based on views, realities, and opinions based on the participants' experience. Furthermore, qualitative research studies allow the researcher to attain a rich breadth of information (Asenahabi, Basics of Research Design: A Guide to selecting appropriate research design, 2019). In this case, the researcher will be able to assess the impact of enterprise development within the State-Owned Enterprise: A Case of Umgeni Water through a qualitative research method. The qualitative research enables the research to take a naturalistic and interpretive approach to the focus of this study. Thus, resonating with Creswell’s assertion that qualitative research takes a holistic approach to the discovery of the subject matter as it occurs in a natural setting whereby the researcher can draw meaning from actual experiences (Creswell J. W., 2014).

Research Philosophy primarily suggests the emerging data and nature of that data. The chosen research philosophy is considered the researchers point of view (Saunders et al., 2009). The process of the research concerns assumptions. Four research philosophies exist, that is Ontology deals with the reality on the ground that will articulate the actual experience, Epistemology deals with what is regarded as acceptable knowledge in the research. Axiology concerns the value that is attached to the project and Phenomenology is about experience and consciousness (Saunders et al., 2009). Saunders et al. (2009) illustrates the reach ‘onion’ in Figure 3.1 below to comprehend the methods involved in the research process.

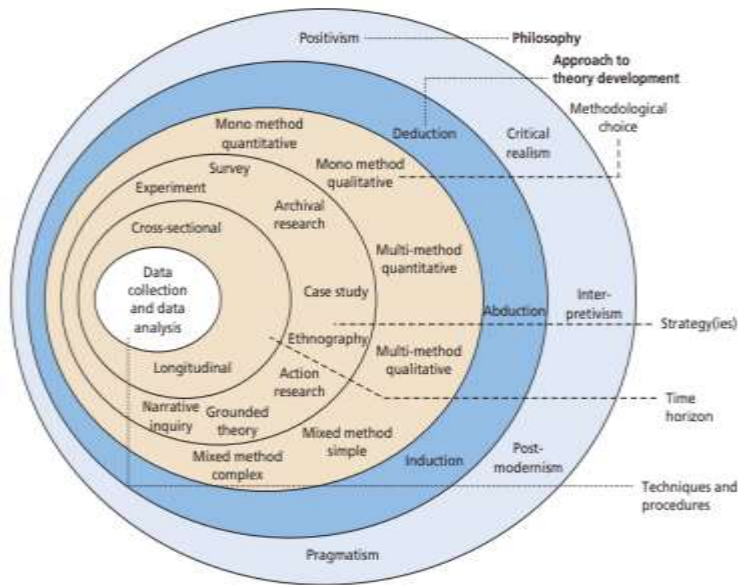


Figure 3.1: The Research Onion. Source: (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 108).

3.3 Research Paradigm

A research paradigm refers to the philosophical position taken by the researcher to guide the research process (Devers & Frankel, 2000). Qualitative research falls under the banner of the poststructuralist paradigm, which directs qualitative research to be inductive, given that the researcher draws meaning from responses posed by the research question (Williams C. , 2007, p. 67). This research interpretivism paradigm gave the intention to respond to the question of this study based on the understanding and worldviews of the participants' experience and understanding. According to Hudson and Ozanne (1988), interpretivism believes that reality is multiple and relative.

Interpretivism supports the methodological approach that allows the study to be informed by meaning that humans make out of their experience realities which the researcher analyse and draw meaning from (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2020). The interpretivism view posits that analysis can be drawn from the understanding and social realities of people's experiences

(Creswell, 2013; Angen, 2000). This study aims to understand the impact and influence of ESD within the SOE from the participants' point of view. Thus, positioning this study under the interpretivism paradigm given that the participants point of view will inform the findings of

this study. Resonating with the analysis that an interpretivism approach understand that a single phenomenon is subject many meanings as it constructs meaning based on the world view of individual subjective experiences and perspectives (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2020).

3.4 Setting of the Study

The study setting refers to the description of the place where the research took place, including physical and social characterisation (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). Explaining further, Creswell asserts that in a qualitative study, it is essential that the researcher select a location where the participants live, work or experience the issue being studied (Creswell, 2013). Arguing that the study setting should be a natural setting because “qualitative researchers gather up-close information by actually talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context. In the natural setting, the researchers have face-to-face interaction over time” (Creswell, 2013, p. 45). In the context of this study, the data collection sites were natural settings where the participants work. Therefore, the location was conducive for the participants to be comfortable as they were in a familiar environment.

3.5 Population and Sample of the Study

A population can be described as the overall number of units in which data can be collected from (Neuman, 2000). In this study, the population was the total number of all the cooperatives within the Umgeni Water database. Within the overall population of the co-operatives, the process of exclusion and inclusion determined the most suitable participants of this study. The participants of this study were 36 members from 12 cooperatives which had active contracts with Umgeni Water. According to Patino and Ferreira, (2018, p. 84) the process of exclusion refers to characterising specific features out of the target population that speaks to answers of the research study. In contrast, inclusion refers to flagging out specific people out of the target population based on key features set for the study, whereby the flagged people lack the eligibility criteria. “Inclusion criteria (Patino & Ferreira, 2018). *Table 3.1* presents the inclusion criteria for this study.

Characteristics of the participants
Internal staff members who work directly with co-operatives within the division of ESD in the Supply Chain Management
An employee of the owner of a cooperative registered with co-operatives registered on the Umgeni Water database
The co-operatives that have received contracts from Umgeni Water for three years and above

Table 3.1: Participants Characteristics and Inclusion criteria. Source: Author, 2023.

3.6 Sample Size

According to Newman (2000), a sample refers to the selected group of people, institutions, or items selected from a larger population due to meeting the criteria of a research study or measurement. Furthermore, a “sample size in qualitative research generally follows the guidelines to study a few individuals or sites, but to collect extensive detail about the individuals or sites studied” (Creswell, 2013, p. 31). Moreover, Newman (2000) argues that the sample size does not hold any influence of the quality of the study. For instance, having a large number of participants does not necessarily hold quality significance when compared to a similar study with fewer participants. The key in sample size is the complementary or positive match between the selected participants and the study's objectives because, in that way, the participants will be able to answer the research questions. In this study, the sample size was 12 cooperatives which each had 3 participants available for the interviews during. Umgeni Water has 17 cooperatives and this study initially targeted to secure 15 cooperatives for better representation. Invitation for participation in the study was sent to all 15 cooperatives, however, 12 cooperatives voluntary accepted to participate in this study. Therefore, securing 12 cooperatives allowed this study to get a broad and comprehensive experiences and various perspectives from a diverse group of small businesses .

3.7 Sampling Method

This study employed a non-probability sampling method and a purposive sampling technique. Non-probability sampling (in a qualitative it is a representation) methods are an inclusion element used in qualitative research whereby the sample is selected on a non-randomisation basis through the researcher selecting participants based on the targeted characteristics (Moule, Aveyard, & Goodman, 2016). This sampling method complements the purposive sampling technique, which refers to the researcher using their own judgement and knowledge to recruit and select participants in a study. Given the small size of this study and the categorization of

suitable participants, purposive sampling was suitable for this study. The selection of the people participating in this study was deliberate.

3.8 Data Collection

Data collection is defined by Peersman, (2014) as the process of gathering and measuring relevant information systematically to find research question answers, evaluate outcomes or even test hypotheses. Furthermore, Peersman (2014) argues that the main emphasis in data collection is accuracy and honesty across disciplines and methods of research to gather respondents' perceptions, beliefs, knowledge, and views. Semi-structured interviews are the data collection method used in this study. Research questions were administered through face-to-face interviews with the participants. Special consideration and compliance with the COVID-19 regulations, the author ensured that the participants were seated at a regulated distance and wearing a mask. The researcher provided a hand sanitiser to all the participants. The selected data collection method was influenced by the fact that this is a qualitative study aiming to capture the participants' knowledge, views and experience on the impact of ESD within Umgeni Water. As a registered student it was one's responsibility to collect the data for my study. Moreover, as an employee of Umgeni Water, the familiarity with the study location, processes and systems of how small and medium businesses operated qualified the researcher to conduct the interviews during data collection.

Supporting this argument, Neuman, (2000) states that qualitative research is characterized by its aims, which relate to understanding some aspect of social life, and its methods which (in general) generate words, rather than numbers, as data for analysis—to this point, employing semi-structured interviews in order to capture the participants' subjective views. The data collection and analysis process is interrelated processes that should not be viewed as distinct processes (Almalki, 2016).

The utilisation of the semi-structured interviews to collect data of this study and the rigorous reading, re-reading, sorting and generating themes during data analysis was advantageous to this study as these bests fitted responding to the objectives and questions of this study. Most importantly, the methods and processes used were consistent with the prescriptions of qualitative research validity and integrity of the research findings. To avoid biases in this study,

data triangulation using semi-structured interviews, secondary data sources and all the noted made during data collection as well as interviewing various cooperatives helped reduce biases by cross-verifying and corroborating findings. Comparing and contrasting different data sources can enhance the reliability and validity of the research

3.9 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis refers to non-statistical examination, assessment and interpretation of the collected data in order to extract underlying meanings, patterns and relationships within the data gathered from various participants (Moule, Aveyard, & Goodman, 2016). This is an aspect of data analysis in case study research where the researcher establishes patterns and looks for correspondence between two or more categories. According to Creswell, (2013, p. 298) data analysis in qualitative research interpreting data going beyond abstracting and beyond codes and themes. Meaning, the researcher should map out patterns correspondences in order to produce meaningful analysis.

In this study, data analysis employed a thematic data analysis process. This process began with sorting field notes and tape-recorded audio into categorised related groups. Data codes were created and later translated into themes within these groups. The data themes were developed according to the research questions and objectives. Thematic analysis was used to code and categorise the data into themes according to similar perceptions.

3.10 Trustworthiness Hallmark of the Study

There is a common unanimity that qualitative questioners need to prove that their research is credible thus trustworthiness is fundamental in upholding the qualitative research in the scholastic world (Rose & Johnson, 2020). The qualitative research applies dependability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability approach to ensure the trustworthiness of the qualitative study (Anney, 2014).

According to Moon *et al* (2016) dependability is about consistency and reliability of the enquiry judgement and how the study techniques are acknowledged by letting an external person to audit and reproach the applied research method. The objective is to validate that the

results are dependable with the collected raw data to ensure the other academics would get the same results, interpretation and conclusion about the information. Hence dependability is vital to trustworthiness.

Credibility is a notion that jaggedly resembles internal validity that eliminates the negative hypothesis that paradigms are probable real and reliable and the tool is gauging factual content. Credibility denotes the extent the collected data truthfully mirrors the manifolds certainties of the phenomenon (Sikolia, Biros, Mason, & Weiser, 2013).

Transferability is the extent to which the findings termed in research are valid and worthwhile to philosophy and future study. Transferability can be fundamental to the solicitation of the research findings due to policy and controlling reliability of the data, ending and recommendations (Lincoln & Guba, 1986)

Confirmability to attain this, investigators must validate the findings are explicitly interconnected with conclusion in a manner that can be shadowed. The relevance of the confirmability is comparable to credibility (Moon, 2016)

3.11 Ethical considerations

According to Creswell, (2013) “ethical issues in qualitative research can be described as occurring prior to conducting the study, at the beginning of the study, during data collection, in data analysis, in reporting the data, and in publishing a study”. At the beginning of this study, the researcher requested permission from Umgeni Water for ethical clearance to conduct this study. The university's ethical standards were also met (see Appendix 3). Data was collected after attaining ethical approval from the University, which was among the documents presented to the study participants prior to signing the informed consent. Prior to the data collection process, the research questions were accompanied by a cover letter that detailed the study's objectives and informed consent—signing the informed consent indicating that the participants agreed to participate on the study.

There are quite a number of principles of ethical, social research. Drawing from the listed principles in (Vanclay, et al., 2013:246), the most relevant to this study was respect for participants, informed consent, voluntary participation and no coercion, right to withdraw, no harm to participants, the confidentiality of personal matters, no use of deception as well as the preservation of anonymity. These principles were applied through the researcher explaining the research to the participants thoroughly, explaining that their participation is voluntary and at any point of the sessions should they feel like discontinuing, they could stop. Most importantly, no promises were made or remuneration offered for participating. Also, no possible harm can be caused by this research. An informed consent detailing everything about the research was signed. Upon taking the participants through the above, the data collection process began.

3.12 Limitations of the study

The first limitation of this study was the sample size and generalisability; given the qualitative nature of this study, the sample size was smaller than what would be found in a quantitative study. Therefore, the findings may not be generalisable to all state-owned enterprises or to all water utilities. The study's findings will be most applicable to Umgeni Water and similar contexts. Secondly, as the study involved qualitative methods, it relied heavily on subjective experiences and perceptions of stakeholders. There were potential personal biases; hence the researcher made the number of participants broad so that personal biases could not affect the findings of this study. Thirdly, this study was confined to ESD within Umgeni Water. The results might differ in the context of other development programs or state-owned enterprises. Since this is a qualitative study, results cannot be generalized for all SMMEs in South Africa; thus, further investigation needs to be conducted.

3.13 Chapter summary

This chapter discussed in detail the methodologies that were used in this research project. A justification of their use accompanied these methodologies is this study to show the motive behind the researchers' selection of the research design, method, data collection and analysis approaches. The researcher also detailed the ethical considerations pertaining to this study to show steps taken to ensure that the study took conducted ethically.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents this study's results as meanings drawn from the collected data. As detailed in the previous chapter, this research looked into the impact of enterprise and supplier development within the state-owned enterprise and used Umgeni water as the case studied. A prepared interview schedule with 15 questions was administered to 12 participants through semi-structured interviews (*see interview schedule in Appendix I*). The study participants were cooperatives who had active-term contracts with Umgeni Water for various services at the time of the interviews and willingly agreed to share their experiences in business. The captured responses were thoroughly broken-down using thematic analysis to capture the meaning and to make sense of the data. The drawn results are presented according to the discovered themes and integrated with the relevant literature. The discussed findings are presented in themes under each research objective of this study.

4.2 Themes Overview

The presented themes are aligned with the study objectives and questions in the following manner: Braun and Clarke (2006) defined themes as a final product that comes from data analysis in a thematic approach. Moreover, themes describe subjective meanings or contextual messages of data codes that were common points of reference in the collected data, giving the researcher ideas or answers on the phenomenon being studied (2019). In the thorough analysis of the primary data of this study, common responses from the participants generated data codes which were further scrutinised for meanings, resulting in 6 themes. Table 4.1 depicts the emerged themes aligned with the relevant research objectives.

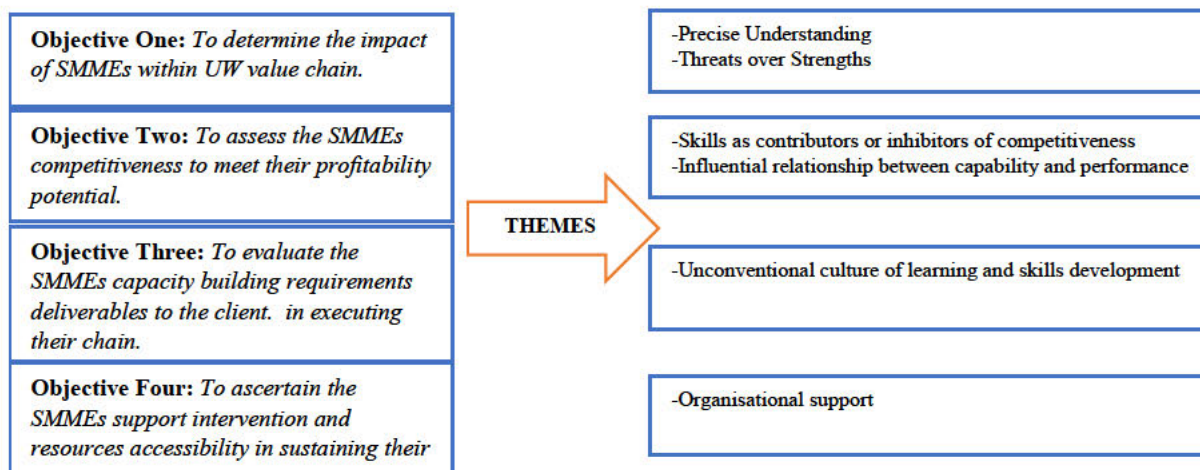


Table 4.1: Presentation of Themes. Source: Author, 2023.

4.3 Discussion and Analysis of Results

In qualitative research, the data analysis approach can either be deductive or inductive, despite the form of analysis method. The deductive approach allows the researcher to use pre-set structures or a predetermined framework for data analysis (Spencer, Ritchie, & O'Connor, 2004). Conversely, the inductive approach involves a comprehensive analysis of data which is not driven by a predetermined theory, structure or framework. Instead, the researcher works through the data, makes sense of it and presents the themes and categories that emerged from it (Pope, Ziebland, & Mays, 2000). Of the various inductive approaches to qualitative data, the most common is a thematic analysis which involves transcript analysis, theme identification, gathering examples, and providing a descriptive account of the findings (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). These findings are reported according to themes, incorporating verbatim participant quotes for detailed illustration (Burnard, Writing a qualitative research report, 2004).

This study employed an inductive data analysis approach as it utilised thematic analysis to draw meaning from primary data collected from the participants. The research findings discussed in this chapter begin with the analysis of the demographic profile of the participants, followed by the presentation of emerging themes (*see themes in Table 4.1*) sorted in the order of the research objectives and study questions. Direct quotations from participants are presented in italics, and secondary data is cited and utilised to add substance to the presented findings.

4.3.1 Participants Demographic Information

The first section of the interview schedule of this study consisted of demographical profiling questions. According to Hammer (2011), participants' demographic information refers to persona data such as gender, race, ethnicity, educational level or any other similar information that characterises the participants involved in a study. The inclusion of the participant's demographic profile provides valuable insights about the pool of participants. It also satisfies the transparency of the researcher, given that the provided demographics can determine a fair balance of participants' characteristics (Dou, et al., 2015). This information is important because it gives the reviewers or readers an idea of the study unit's relevance or level of connectedness to the study phenomenon (Beins, 2009).

This study included the sexual category, educational levels, length of business operation (*counting from inception to November 2020*), and the geographical location of the business operations of the respondents to establish demographic factors. Results of the participants begin with Table 4.2, presents the profile of the various the various SMMEs who participated in this study giving a gendered statistical count in numbers, this profile is followed by paragraph analysis. It should be noted that the pool of participants represented all services rendered by cooperatives at Umgeni Water.

Pseudonym Coding	Service Rendered	Number of Females	Number of Males	Years in Business
Participant 1C	Office Cleaning	13	3	8
Participant 2C	Office Cleaning	4	1	8
Participant 3C	Office Cleaning	7	2	3
Participant 4C	Office Cleaning	5	0	3
Participant 5C	Office Cleaning	5	0	3
Participant 6G	Grass Cutting	10	2	8
Participant 7G	Grass Cutting	8	5	8
Participant 8G	Grass Cutting	6	2	8
Participant 9G	Grass Cutting	8	3	12
Participant 10G	Grass Cutting	5	2	7
Participant 11M	General Plant Maintenance	0	8	8
Participant 12M	General Plant Maintenance	7	16	8

Table 4.2: Participants' Profile. Source: Author, 2023.

4.3.1.1 Comprehensive Profile Analysis

Gender representation of the participants included both sexes (male and female). Regarding gender, it was noticeable that a high number of females were within the office cleaning and grass-cutting business while males dominated general maintenance service. This discovery is fitting given the geographical background of the participants, as most of them come from rural and township areas where gender beliefs play a part in occupational choices for most individuals. Traditional gender role beliefs influence occupational choices when individuals select career choices based on associating responsibilities or behaviours that are appropriate for males and females (Dicke, Safavian, & Eccles, 2019). Gendered career choice examples resemble when females tend to value helping others, care provision or human service occupations, while males value careers that make lots of money and work with tools and machines (Lauermann, Chow, & Eccles, 2015; Ramaci, et al., 2017). Given such research proclamations, the gender difference in this study's findings suggests that occupation type is associated with the gender of the participants.

Questioning the period or number of years in service, it was revealed that the majority (66.7 %) of SMMEs had been in business for more than seven years. This was an exciting discovery given the challenging fact that most SMMEs in SA are reported not to fail in a short period. According to Bushe (2019), 70% of SMMEs fold in the first 5 to 7 years of their inception. Concurring with this conclusion, Lekhanya (2015) explained that South African SMMEs survival and growth rate is low due to various factors such as illiteracy, limited access to finance, and shortage of skills, leadership and training.

The profiling of the participants' education history indicated relatively low education levels. It was noted that none of the participants had post-matric or tertiary education qualifications, others had matric, and the rest dropped in primary school education level. Findings of this study resonate with existing reports and literature on SMMEs. Figure 4.1 presents a statistical account of this study's participants' education levels. What is noted in these figures is a concerning factor, given that education is associated with skills and development. An important point to note is that this argument is not made on the basis that higher education levels equate to business productivity. This argument is based on Bosire and Etyang (2003) whose study on the effects of education on business skills in Kenya's SMEs concluded that more education expands knowledge, skills and business practice. These authors further concluded that "*more*

education widens the scope of perception, hence enhancing the individual's abilities to perform certain tasks better. Improved entrepreneurial abilities are likely to enable one to overcome the various constraints that would otherwise inhibit entry into self-employment. These abilities and other competencies required for successful business practices could be enhanced through deliberately designed entrepreneurship development programmes in educational institutions” (Bosire & Etyang, 2003, p. 5).

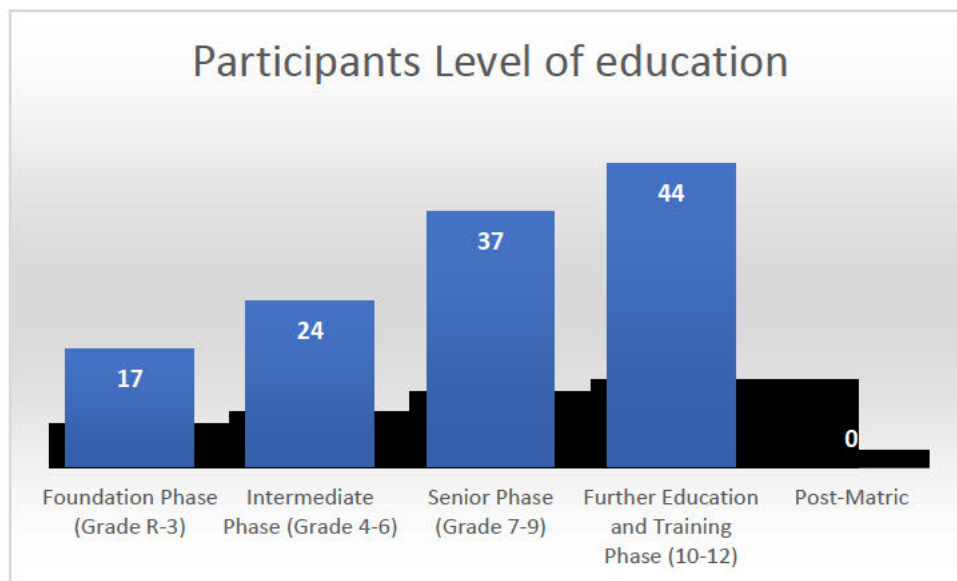


Figure 4.1: Participants' Levels of Education. Source: Author, 2023.

Resonating with the above suggestions on the significance of education, Monk (Why small businesses fail, 2000) stated that education influences the efficient management of business functioning. It equips small business owners with necessary skills such as financial, operational, planning, marketing, human resources and general awareness or alertness on entrepreneurial management. In a South African study on entrepreneurship and education, it was suggested that higher entrepreneurship education could benefit SMMEs growth in SA as most SMMEs owners' or managers' education levels were discovered to range from grades R-12 and are poorly trained (Isaacs, Visser, Friedrich, & Brijlal, 2007). This suggestion is a sound one given that literature reports that nearly 75% of SMMEs in SA fail in the formation of five years; this is also accompanied by poor performance when assessed by turnover and profitability.

According to Lekhanya, entrepreneurs should receive finance and cash-flow management education to minimise failure (Lekhanya, Key internal factors affecting the small, medium and

micro enterprises (SMMEs) marketing strategies in rural South Africa, 2015). Indeed, literature shows that education contributes to business skills, competencies and entrepreneurial knowledge and is commonly labelled as a good platform for formal employment. It is, therefore, arguable that there is a high likelihood for low education levels to be one of the contribution factors to the challenging survival rate of SMMEs.

Judging from the results of the educational profile accompanied by the researchers' observation of communication skills and age factor, as the participants were adults between the ages of 25-60, it was clear that the cooperatives are mostly made up of previously disadvantaged individuals. To some degree, entrepreneurial education could contribute meaningfully to skills growth and boost understanding and information processing levels, which are essential elements of entrepreneurial success. In the modern business environment where digital literacy along with entrepreneurial and financial literacy is critical, it is pretty disadvantageous for SMMEs to have uneducated or untrained individuals as it can limit growth.

4.3.1.2 Objective One: To determine the impact of SMMEs within UW value chain.

The first objective of this study aimed to pinpoint the impact of SMMEs within UW value chain. The intent was to discover how the participants viewed their contribution to UW and to capture their views on the elements that affect profitability by mapping them according to a SWOT analysis. Moreover, as experienced small businesses who have offered service to UW, it was essential to capture the participants' ideas on the tools that aid small businesses to operate efficiently. **Questions under Objective One were:**

- i. How would you describe the influence of the cooperative in contribution to the value chain of UW?*
- ii. What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that the business should take into consideration to be profitable?*
- iii. What are the strategic and performance-oriented tools that the business possess to equip them with operational excellence.*

4.3.1.2.1 Theme One: Precise Understanding

Throughout all the participant's responses on the role or influence of SMMEs in UW's value chain, it was evident that the participants understood the role of SMMEs in the overall UW activities and operations. Across all responses, emphasis was put on offering quality and efficient service to ensure that the SMMEs do not compromise or inconvenience UW operations. For instance, participant **3C** confidently stated, '*The importance of clean offices is crucial in this environment to ensure that employees are able to perform their duties effectively; without our service, offices will be unhygienic, and people will get sick*'.

According to Barrett (The Importance of Values in Building a High-Performance Culture, 2006), the value stand is critical to human decision-making. Therefore, in the workplace, value stand contributes to the individuals' values, energy, enthusiasm, commitment and level of alignment with organisational culture and success. Indeed, this was evident in the participants' beliefs on the importance of their contribution to UW value chain.

Another important factor noted in the responses was that, as much as the SMMEs are involved with UW on a contract basis, the participants did not consider themselves as outsiders who are not considered as significant given the size of their businesses, lack of professional skills or low levels of education. A high level of inclusion or belonging was noted. Participant 12M stated that *as service providers, they are the chemical that fuels the engine (UW being the engine) in order for the organisation to run efficiently*. This description stood out and characterises that the SMMEs working with UW have a sense of belonging, know what UW stands for, understand the importance of operations and contribute meaningfully to the process.

The importance of inclusion is paramount because individuals who feel isolated at work tend to have a lower organisational commitment and engagement, which is dangerous as exclusion can be damaging (Carr, Reece, Kellerman, & Robichaux, 2019). One of the researchers, psychologist Abraham Maslow emphasised that the need for belonging is instrumental in human nature. In the workplace, it brings out the best in employees, and if certain employees do not feel a sense of belonging, they are likely to be insecure and less productive (Maslow, 1943). A good example that reflects inclusion and complete commitment to offering quality support service was reflected from one of the participants, who explained that water supply disruption commonly occurs in the communities and showed an understanding of how to represent UW.

According to participant **7G**, *'We must cut grass where UW vehicle go to fix pumps and chambers in the event of interrupted supply of water. Most pipeline are in the outskirts of town, so when the grass is long on pipelines, UW vehicles will be unable to get where the problem is so it can be fixed. It is crucial that pipeline and chambers are clean to provide access to UW vehicles to get to the infrastructure.* The response showed that the participants were apparent in terms of their role in the value of purifying water.

This is a mutual benefit factor for both the SMMEs and UW, given that commitment and efficiency are likely to improve UWs satisfaction with the service received. The small business can benefit from good references or reward of the contract based on service excellence. Value can be positive, or it can be limiting to both the organisation and employee alike. For instance, the positive value of trust results in a cohesive and efficient work culture. Nevertheless, if reversed, the absence of trust between the organisation and service provider can cause compromise, resulting in disconnection, dissatisfaction and rigid work culture (Sisodia, Wolfe, & Seth, 2007). This point resonates with participant **11Ms** assertion that *'We clean the reservoir that keep clean water. When there is a broken nozzle in water we also report that so we can replace that to prevent water supply disruption. We also remove sand from filters and assist other plants where there is a problem with a valve failure'*.

Commenting from the perspective of being small businesses working with a large institution, all participants demonstrated a precise understanding of the role played by SMMEs and characterised this role as being a support structure for UW. The responses indicated a clear understanding of the responsibilities between the client and the enterprise. The value chain is crucial as it goes beyond the part of the supply chain, but it also necessitates for businesses with related activities to produce a unique competitive advantage; by doing this, it enables the business to improve significant value to services rendered to clients (Epede & Wang, 2022).

4.3.1.2.2 Theme Two: Threats over Strengths

The questions that assessed factors contributing to SMMEs' profitability and the tools critical to efficient operation resulted in a report of threats and challenges. Most of the responses on the elements that strengthen SMMEs' profitability were skills and high levels of experience acquired through practice over the years. In this manner, the participants strongly believe that skills and experience put SMMEs at an advantage for recruitment or attaining contracts. Participant **11M** mentioned, '*It will take a lot of years to be able to learn this job; our strength is that we are the only SMMEs in the province if not national that can do this work*'. This contribution infers that unique service is a vital element of profitability. In business, unique product or service provision holds excellent strength, making providing organisations stand out and likeable over the competition (Faster Capital, 2022).

Expanding participant **11Ms** assertion, participant **9G** argued that besides providing rare services, it is essential to incorporate delivering services and products better than others. These arguments speak to competitive advantage described by Peterdy (2022) as the ability to produce or deliver services better than competitors, which positively affects the company's superiority in terms of profit and value.

Quality service was cited as another strong factor that contributes to SMMEs' profitability. According to participant **5C**, '*If you give good service that stands out from others, you are able to be trusted for more contracts, more contracts means more profit*'. Concurring, participant **7G** added that '*Your work as a small business is how you make profit. Good work gives you a good chance to make good money but bad work will blacklist you from hiring companies. In our business as grasscutters, our quality work is our CV, so, it must look good enough to get us opportunities*'. These responses resonate with Bozo (Service Quality as a Profit Strategy in Marketing: The Service-profit Chain Model, 2020) who emphasised that quality service is critical to productivity and profitability as it speaks to the delivery of expected service and desired performance by the client.

Citing another essential factor highlighted by the participants, a significant contributor to SMME's profitability was customer satisfaction. According to participant **3C**, '*Customer satisfaction is what gives us contentment that we are doing our job perfectly. We often get commendations from employees that work outside our offices advising us that our office is the*

cleanest of them all'. Adding further, participant **7G** argued that *'We understand the environment we are operating in and we know that UW as the client wants and we understand the dynamics of our sites'*. According to Anderson and Jacobsen (Creating Loyalty: Its Strategic Importance, 2000) customer satisfaction is beneficial to the organisation as it creates value and increases purchases and company reputation. Agreeing with this assertion was participant **4C** who stated that *'the only way to make a profit is to make sure that the client is happy with our cleaning job'*. Similar responses were noted from the majority of the participants; they all spoke to customer service as an important element to the profitability and sustainability of SMMEs.

Related to strengths, the opportunities cited by the participants cited very minimal opportunities that they considered critical to profitability. Most participants reported the factors they mentioned under the strengths they considered crucial to profitability. There was only an exception of two participants who raised different factors. Participant **5C** cited the importance of offering standard services in a cooperative as opportunistic. Citing that *'Since the cleaning and grass cutting services goes hand in hand, we can be able to buy the machine and also do grass cutting to supplement our cash flow. Secondly we can also do deep cleaning services'*. This example speaks to economic diversification, which is considered an excellent factor for business growth and resilience as expanding services and products or moving from one source of income to multiple (Usman & Landry, 2021).

The second cited opportunity was levelling up from being a primary level cooperative to a secondary one. This graduation is seen as an opportunity to make more profit due to the level of service offered by secondary cooperatives. Speaking to this point, participant **12M** mentioned that *'We do get opportunities outside Umgeni Water, we receive Request for Quotation and the challenges we are having is that we are unable to complete document. It is our dream to move from being a primary cooperative to a secondary cooperative'*.

Hindrances to profitability

Coming on top in the assessment of factors that influence profitability was the report of complex challenges which are labelled as threats and weaknesses. Coming across as the most cited challenge was a lack of business management skills. According to participant **7G**, *'Our*

business is falling short in business management skills, we still need to be trained on how to manage the business'. Citing a similar issue, participant **2C** explained that *'Our problem is that we have lots of experience, but we do not have creative business management to support our experience and sometimes this is a problem'*.

For example, participant **9G** mentioned teamwork as the downfall and said, *'Working as a group is one of the disadvantages among us due to personal conflicts. Some of us think we are employees and not directors yet during profit distribution they demand more share of salary. This puts us in very predicament situation'*. This cited example by participant **9G** demonstrates how SMMEs are challenged by an issue that competent business management skills can strategically address. According to Lekhanya (Key internal factors affecting the small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) marketing strategies in rural South Africa, 2015) entrepreneurial skills are a nurturing source of maturity for SMMEs' growth, and if properly handled, they can be resourceful. The alternative is that a lack of business skills leads to poor business planning, poor systems and poor entrepreneurship, which reduces potential business growth (Lekhanya, Key internal factors affecting the small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) marketing strategies in rural South Africa, 2015).

Another factor that was reported to limit profitability was the lack of diversity. Diversity in business is essential. Participant **3C** *'Advised that their business is not diversified to supplement low cash flow. Our business often lacks cleaning chemicals due to poor costing imposed on us. We need to pay for the compliance documents such as SARS to ensure that our Tax Compliance Status is active. COID also is another killer for such small businesses like us'*. Additionally, participant **4C** advised that *'No adequate cash for sustaining our business, we live from hand to mouth. Since we have employees we try to save small profits on a monthly basis, however, due to late payments, we end up using our cash to pay employees'*.

Elaborating further, participant **12M** concern was personal protective equipment *'Our PPE is getting older and older and we are unable to buy a new one since our cash flow is bad, we end up compromising safety which is not an ideal situation as it is important.'*

4.3.1.3 Objective Two: To assess the SMMEs competitiveness to meet their profitability potential.

The growing speed of businesses rendering similar services to clients has increased competition amid businesses. Objective two was enquired to assess the competitiveness to meet profitability potential. Research questions in this objective also aimed to determine the technical, operational, financial, and marketing skills the business needs to improve on to be competitive and to discover constraints that hinder SMMEs from improving to be competitive. Objective Two questions were as follows:

- i. What are technical, operational, financial and marketing skills that the business need to improve on in order to be competitive?
- ii. What are the constraints in terms of technical, operational, financial and marketing skills that the business need to improve on in order to be competitive?
- iii. How would you describe the feasibility, viability and the business plan readiness for the business to support the business goals and objectives?

4.3.1.3.1 Main Theme: Skills as contributors or inhibitors of competitiveness

The majority of this study's participants revealed that competitiveness, productivity and profitability are heavily reliant on skills possessed by SMMEs. According to Bushe (The causes and impact of business failure among small to micro and medium enterprises in South Africa, 2019, p. 15), “enterprise competitiveness is the ability of an SMMEs firm to grow and become a full-fledged and viable business through professional management. In this regard, some of the major challenges that have led to business failure include poor business planning, lack of a good business case, lack of leadership, ignoring the competition, poor systems of control, uncontrolled growth and diminished customer share”. Bushe’s assertions resonate with the empirical evidence of this study, as the participants agreed that a lack of technical, operational, financial, and marketing skills disadvantages SMMEs and inhibits competitiveness.

4.3.1.3.1.1 Technical Skills:

Technical skills are essential in all sectors of business. It was pleasing that all interviewed participants advised that they possess technical skills in their field of work. Participant **8G**

mentioned that *'When we started doing grass cutting, we used to take long days due to machine breakdowns, at that time we were not aware of the cause of the breakdown unit we were advised that we need to clean the machine after every use to prevent the machine from failing. , now we long have those since we know how to avoid failure'*. This issue of technical skills in SMMEs is reasonably represented in literature. Authors such as Lekhanya (Key internal factors affecting the small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) marketing strategies in rural South Africa, 2015) concluded that SA SMMEs' lack of technical and managerial skills creates a web of problems that limit the success and growth of these small businesses. Concurring, Boz (Service Quality as a Profit Strategy in Marketing: The Service-profit Chain Model, 2020) argued that technical skills promote technical competence and improve the continuity of service and customer satisfaction in SMMEs.

Giving an example of the impact of technical skills on SMME's competitiveness, participant **5C** pointed out that *'Office cleaning is a technique it is not similar to home cleaning, we do pride ourselves that we have acquired enough technical knowledge through training from our previous employer, well we have improved over the years with obviously more practice, in a nutshell, we can boldly say we do have the technical skill'*. This example reiterates the close relationship between technical skills and service outcomes. According to Bruwer and Smith (The Role of Basic Business Skills Development and Their Influence on South African Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise Sustainability, 2018), skills positively contribute to SMMEs' abilities to attain business objectives.

Giving further emphasis on technical skills' positive influence on SMMEs' ability to attain competitive advantage, participant **12M** advised that *'There is no qualification for maintenance and cleaning of the waterworks infrastructure I am aware of, we have been doing this work for more than ten years, and it took us time fully understand due to its complexity. Our knowledge of the reservoir is vast and cannot be beaten by anyone'*. A few participants showed a high level of ignorance of the available platforms and programs for technical skills development. This lack of information was explained by Maas and Herrington (Global entrepreneurship monitor South African executive report, 2006) who pointed out that most SMMEs are in the dark regarding available skills development services such as those offered by SEDA. This discovery raises the question of who is required to take responsibility for educating SMMEs on the

existing opportunities because this study suggests that SMMEs do not make a reasonable effort to research and access available skills development initiatives.

4.3.1.3.1.2 Operational Skills:

Operational skills describe the skills used in day-to-day business functions that require strategic and efficient planning and management (Lekhanya, Key internal factors affecting the small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) marketing strategies in rural South Africa, 2015). This skills type was most cited by the participants and a crucial to business success. For instance, participant **8G** explained that as a grasscutter, *'If I have excellent operational skills, I am more likely to be popular for my talent than my competitors because it is all about my talent of operating my tools'*. According to Urban (Business sustainability: Empirical evidence on operational skills in SMEs in South Africa, 2012) operational skills deficiency is a significant contributor to SMMEs' failure and lack of sustainability.

In a study looking at causal failures of SMMEs in the manufacturing industry, Naidoo and Urban (The relevance of operational skills towards business sustainability : a focus on SMME manufacturers in the Vaal triangle region, 2010) concluded that operational skills and SMMEs' sustainability have a fragile relationship because poor operational skills compromise the SMMEs' performance whilst excellent operational skills maximise growth and sustainability of the SMMEs. Empirical findings of this study traced similar assertions from the participants as most responses cited how poor service due to inexperienced operating affects SMMEs negatively. Participants' responses demonstrated commendable qualities for business support that aid in maximising efficiency and achieving success. Participant **2C** mentioned that *'When we started the contract, we noticed that the cost of cleaning material was too high, and this had a negative impact on our profit. We collectively strategise to see how we save costs of the cleaning material, we agreed to buy in bulk and also not use the renowned retailers, but small enterprises. Since then we did not have any problems'*.

Another participant expressed that *'cutting grass in pipeline is not the same as in offices, there are more stones in pipelines thus you need to assess the area before cutting. You cannot wake up in the morning and just go to a pipeline, secondly you cannot cut in pipelines using normal boots, you must use gum boots. Furthermore, when working, you must have two options as the*

weather changes, so that when it rains you must wear raincoat to be able to finish work. Machinery is dangerous so we also have breathalysers to test level of alcohol, participant **6G**.

According to participant **11M** *'We can say we possess operational skills, since we work often in water, we have acquired safety jackets for swimming to ensure that there is more than one person to do work underwater. Furthermore, we always keep stock of these jackets since they become dangerous and do not do the job they desired to do if there is whole in them'*.

4.3.1.3.1.3 Financial Skills

The findings of this study revealed that none of the participants possessed financial skills; this was a significant concern since all businesses are required to make money. Bruwer and Smith (The Role of Basic Business Skills Development and Their Influence on South African Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise Sustainability, 2018) cited the same concern as they argued that SMMEs lack financial management skills essential to money management and financial business objectives. Financial management aids in circumventing losses and nurturing business more rapidly (Kirsten, 2018). However, this study reveals that enterprises lack the financial skills to manage their businesses successfully. Some participants admitted to the lack of financial skills as an inhibitor to achieving competitive advantage. For instance, participant **4C** mentioned that *'We are still lacking in financial skills and we are unable to tell if the business is doing well or not, we rely on the bank statements which sometimes might be misleading. Presently, we outsource that skill'*.

Additionally, participant **9G** stated that *'Currently we are unable to prepare financial statements; we appoint a consultant to do our financials. Raising a suggestion, participant **12M** raised call that 'If the organisation can train us on financial skill, we can be able do that in-house, we can save a lot of money'*. According to Lekhanya (Key internal factors affecting the small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) marketing strategies in rural South Africa, 2015), many SMMEs in SA have unsatisfactory financial management skills, making it difficult for these businesses to strive to manage cash flow or control business performance.

4.3.1.3.1.4 Marketing Skills

Marketing a business is fundamental in every business, enabling companies to uphold long-lasting dealings. Although marketing is a necessity, most companies tend to neglect it. Participant **1C** revealed that *'We do not have marketing skills; since we were able to secure this cleaning contract without marketing it, we believe some organisation will hear about us and approach us'*. Similarly, participant **11M** also advised that *'Advertising a business needs lots of money which we do have and a dedicated resources thus we currently do not market our business'*. Adding further, participant **12M** mentioned that *'We do not advertise our business, however since we are registered on the National Treasury Central Supplier Database we do get invites from other organisation but due to time constraints we do not respond to request for quotation'*.

SMMEs are unique, especially in developed countries as they constitute most of the budget (Marshall, Vasiuta, Meynek, & Yatsenko, 2021). Competing with large corporations in a challenging environment for years, its position in the market is almost unmovable due to competitiveness that is incomparable with large corporations.

4.3.1.3.2 Sub-theme: Influential relationship between capability and performance

More and more, highly competitive corporations are investing in the training and education of their employees as this is a long-term investment in any business, including SMMEs. Without knowledge, even highly competitive corporations that report health balance sheets yearly cannot compete successfully worldwide (Mutula, 2010) This study revealed that no participants have initiatives planned for the capacity building or capacity building programme for their businesses. However, two participants indicated their capacity-building aspirations. Participant **3C** stated, *'Our capacity building aspiration is on the deep cleaning services to boost our cash flow should the organisation extend the scope of work to include deep cleaning'*.

Similarly, participant **5C** also advised that *'our ambitions are grass cutting, we are confident that if we can be awarded a grass cutting contract, we will financially sustainable, besides we believe that grass cutting and office go hand in hand'*

Participant 7G advised that *‘The business is heavily reliant on the client to assist with capacity building of unavailable skills’*. Additionally, participant 8G alluded that *‘Although there is still a long way, but we have improved from when we started, the client has capacitated us, you can’t compare with an ordinary grass cutter walking around the township with a machine looking for job, we professionals now, thanks to Umgeni’*. Moreover, participant 10G stated that *‘Will appreciate if the client offer skills where we fall short, we are open for anything since learning is a continuous process’*.

Since SMMEs contribute substantially to the economic growth of the country, training, amongst others, is the potential tool for capacity building of enterprises to ensure the viability of SMMEs (Abdullah, Razak, & Azam, 2020). The following table points out the most critical aspects that need improvement in SMMEs' sustainability and competitiveness.

Intervention	Description
Skills training and development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -It is essential to encourage an entrepreneurship culture. This extends beyond the SME and includes instilling this culture at the educational institution, policy and community level. -Employee training programmes equip SMEs with on the job skills as well as operational and professional skills. -Information technology and digital education and training for employees, owners and managers.
Business support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Access to markets and finance platforms. -Incubation -Business forums, associations, expos and other platforms can increase access to information and lessons learned.
Capacity building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Mentorship and guidance. -Consultation and constant communication (between the buyer and supplier in the case of ESD). -Progress monitoring (online and one-on-one) -Progress reporting, assessment and feedback -Impact assessment. -Consultation (availing services such as auditing or health and safety checks to SMEs)

Table 4.3: Capacity Building Factors. Source: (United Nations, 2009, pp. 28-29).

4.3.1.4 Objective Three: To evaluate the SMMEs' capacity-building requirements in executing their deliverables to the client.

Objective three was enquired to establish the abilities, skills and expertise improvement initiatives in the business for the members of the cooperative and capacity-building goals.

Questions under the third objective were:

- i. How would you describe the abilities, skills and expertise improvement initiatives in the business for its members?
- ii. How would you describe the capacity-building aspirations of the business?

4.3.1.4.1 Main Theme: Unconventional culture of learning and skills development

On the question of capacity building and its potential impact on service outcomes, all participants cited a positive relationship between the two factors. Most participants cited that capacity development is important and sharpens business skills, improving business outcomes. For instance, participant **2C** explained that *'If I get capacity training on improves ways of cleaning, I can do my job better next time and grow'*. Due to the nature of the ever-evolving business environment, capacity development improves organisations' continuous learning, and among the success factors is improved leadership and creativity in tackling challenges (Subijanto, Valiant , & Hidayat, 2013).

However, it was noted that almost all the participants revealed that they had no history of attending or completing capacity enhancement programmes or initiatives such as learning or training. Only two participants demonstrated eagerness or aspiration to prioritise capacity building. It was evident that learning and development or skills training is not signified by SMMEs which is a significant concern. Lack of prioritisation, eagerness or appreciation of training, learning and development at a personal level across all participants was noticeable. Capacity development requires a willingness to learn and face new challenges (Subijanto, Valiant , & Hidayat, 2013)

This discovery is concerning, given that several studies have looked into the role of capacity enhancement on SMMEs and suggest that capacity enhancement has a significant and positive impact on SMMEs. “By distinguishing between ability on the one hand and willingness on the other, attention is drawn to the centrality of ownership to capacity development, and of the influence of incentives and motives on transforming capacity into performance” (Subijanto, Valiant , & Hidayat, 2013, p. 184). For durability and effectiveness, capacity enhancement needs to be expansive, persistent and long-term to strengthen the organisation's knowledge gaps, skills and capabilities to improve business outcomes (Virji, Padgham, & Seipt, 2012).

Future growth and productivity of SMMEs are dependent on greater determined innovation capability as "the ability to continuously transform knowledge and ideas into new products, processes and systems for the benefit of the firm and its stakeholders". Innovation capability is central to small businesses and co-ops aiming to compete with their larger and more resource-possessing competitors (Saunila, 2020, p. 260).

According to Douglas et al. (2017, p. 227), on-the-job training and having a good quality of employees and a good end product directly contribute to the success or failure of SMEs. As a result, a lack of employee skills and managerial skills or training weakens the organisation's performance capability and contributes to organisational failure (Douglas, Douglas, Muturi, & Ochieng, 2017).

Training and skills acquisition positively link business improvement; therefore, it can enhance SMME development (Rogerson, 2008). Capacity enhancement gives SMMEs a robust entrepreneurial orientation and strengthens their survival (Rambe & Mosweunyane, 2017). Capacity development helps small businesses succeed in all business elements, from human to social and financial aspects (Omri, Frikha, & Bouraoui, 2015).

4.3.1.5 Objective Four: To ascertain the SMME support intervention and resources accessibility in sustaining their entities.

4.3.1.5.1 Main Theme: Organisational support

Questions under the objective were:

- i. How do you describe the business and technical support that could be accessed from external sources on behalf of the business?
- ii. What are the networking and relationship building strides within the business?

Participants responded to questions posed concerning the support interventions and resources accessibility for their businesses. All participants advised that nonfinancial intervention was provided at the beginning of the contract. Participant **2C** revealed that *‘When were awarded the contract we did not have any capital to acquire uniforms and cleaning chemicals to execute work, we had to borrow money for the uniform from the loan sharks. With regards to the resources accessibility, initially, we were going to but the detergents, however, the clients waived that and opted to buy chemicals and toilet papers. We can say yes resources were made available to us’*.

Contributing further, participant **6G** mentioned that *‘Protective clothing, tools, brush cutters and lawn mowers are expensive, we do not think we were going to be able to commence the contract, thanks to Umgeni Water for buying us the equipment on a loan basis since the Ithala Bank did not help us to fund us’*.

Participant **8G** advised that *due to different areas that need to be cut grass, we needed a vehicle to drive around, Umgeni Water assisted us with a van.*

Citing a practical example of the UW support, participant **4C** shared that *‘Invoicing is done on a computer, Umgeni Water donated computers to us to ensure that we compile invoices and submit them on time’*. In 2020 alone, the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) reported that the number of SMMEs declined from 2.65 million to 2.36 million. As a result, 232 000 SMMEs closed down for business in the second quarter, and an additional 58 000 closed their doors in the third quarter SMMEs (SEDA, 2021, p. 2). Therefore, such calls for assistance from SMMEs should be taken with great consideration if the intent is to support and promote SMMEs and their sustainability.

Raising a concern, participant **11M** asserted that ‘We work in a confined space, and sometimes we need equipment to access the area underground, *Umgeni Water provides us with resources to execute our work*’.

Giving another example of support received, participant **12M** shared that ‘*When we started, the client provided us with life jackets to work on the water, now our jackets are old, torn and not safe as they do not serve the purpose. We need new jackets as we can unable to buy them*’.

This study revealed that all participants were aware of the business support offered by government institutions outside Umgeni Water. Due to the vital role played by SMMEs worldwide, the South African government has numerous programmes and initiatives to develop and support enterprises, in particular, the historical disadvantages individuals and designated groups like cooperatives.

Bestowing that SMMEs are the critical drivers of economic growth (Dladla & Mutambara, 2018). These programmes and initiatives aid SMMEs in solving financial and nonfinancial limitations that hamper the business processes while firming up their entrepreneurial practices (Nakku, Agbola, Miles, & Mahmood, 2019) Access to funding seems to be the dominant challenge for SMMEs. The results of this study agree with the annual report of the Banking Association of South Africa (2018), stating that access to finance continues to be a sure challenge for SMMEs. Yet, the demand for start-up loans is great.

The findings of this study point to a strong need for restructuring SMMEs in SA. It calls for state institutions UW to improve their support approaches as they provide to the potential causes of SMMEs failure. It is clear that SMMEs can affect economic growth; therefore, developmental initiatives such as ESD are a possible efficient tool that drives the optimal performance of SMMEs. ESD is an excellent remedy that can grow SMMEs (Yawar & Seuring, 2020).

SMMEs have been identified as critical contributors to economic development (OECD, 2021). The importance of SMMEs in economic growth is well documented in the literature (Akugri, Bagah, & Wulifan, 2015; Machirori & Fatoki, 2013). SMMEs' role in the economic prosperity of nations cannot be understated due to their ability to be an agent of change (Dzomonda,

Fatoki, & Oni, 2017). Therefore, SMMEs' support initiatives should be prioritised as well in order to maximise the chances of meaningful contributions to the economy.

4.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter deliberated the data results of the study acquired from 12 participants. The data presented underscored experiments and success stories of SMMEs during the contract period with Umgeni Water. Each response was linked objectives of the study. The participants managed to share their experiences through a structured interview. The following chapter will discuss the recommendations and conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE: RECOMMENDATIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RELATED STUDIES

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents conclusions and recommendations of this study, drawing from the integration of secondary data and empirical evidence presented in the second and fourth chapters. Discussions of this chapter are linked to this study's research objectives and speak to the overall assessment of the impact of ESD in SMMEs, with a particular focus on Umgeni Water cooperatives engaged in this study.

5.2 Recommendations

The following paragraphs summarise highlights from the research findings based on the participant's responses to the study questions. Therefore, the following discussion integrates the identified themes and critical conclusions from each theme with the study's research objectives.

5.2.1 Objective One:

To determine the impact of SMMEs within UW value chain and appropriate tools.

5.2.1.1 Precise Understanding

This first objective intended to attain a picture of how the participants saw and understood the role of SMMEs in UW's overall activities and operations. Tapping into the participants' perspectives in this manner enabled a thorough profiling of how outsiders who have experienced working with UW view the contribution or significance of small or medium businesses in UW.

5.3 Objective Two:

To assess the SMMEs' competitiveness to meet their profitability potential.

5.3.1 *Kills as contributors or inhibitors of competitiveness*

The majority of this study's participants revealed that competitiveness, productivity and profitability are heavily reliant on skills possessed by SMMEs. For instance, one of the participants emphasised that their job requires technical knowledge, skilful practice and a thorough understanding of the operations. Another participant raised a similar response that being knowledgeable and skilled improves the SMMEs' capabilities to perform, automatically moving them up the value chain as it makes them more attractive or suitable to the roles required by UW. Raising a critical point, one of the participants used the lack of financial management skills as an example of an assassination of competitiveness and profitability potential. It makes SMMEs vulnerable to various disadvantages, such as losing opportunities and money through outsourcing.

5.3.2 *Influential relationship between capability and performance*

The findings of this study revealed that merely having the necessary skills is not enough for SMMEs to maximise profit and achieve competitive advantage. The interviewed participants demonstrated that the key has the capability to utilise the right skills advantageously to improve performance standards. For instance, one participant explained that better responding to the work demands and doing your duties better than others improves the SMME's chances of being entrusted by UW to deliver, leading to making a profit and becoming the preferred provider.

The primary factors identified by the participants as the main skills influencing the intensity of competitiveness and profitability were *technical and operational skills*. On the other hand, a lack of *financial and marketing skills* hindered growth, development, profitability and competitiveness. In a study assessing firms' capabilities and competitive strategies, Keskin *et al.* (the simultaneous effect of firm capabilities and competitive strategies on export performance: the role of competitive advantages and competitive intensity, 2021) concluded that unique organisational capabilities such as communication, information, marketing and

well-planned competitive strategies on cost leadership and differentiation improve competitive advantage and performance over other organisations in the same business.

In another study on the direct and indirect impact of capabilities on competitive advantage and SME performance in Portugal, Ferreira and Coelho (Dynamic capabilities, innovation and branding capabilities and their impact on competitive advantage and SME's performance in Portugal: the moderating effects of entrepreneurial orientation, 2020) emphasised that small and medium enterprises need to develop superior strategic orientation of all their employees and resources in order to achieve high levels of performance. These authors concluded that improving capability factors such as marketing programmes, innovation approaches and business branding could improve small businesses' survival, performance and customer satisfaction in this increasingly competitive, complex and demanding business environment (Ferreira & Coelho, 2020). Indeed, resonating with the finds of this study, which suggested that capabilities make or break competitiveness and profitability.

5.4 Objective Three:

To evaluate the SMMEs capacity building requirements in executing their deliverables to the client.

5.4.1 Unconventional culture of learning and skills development

The participants in this study acknowledged the importance of capacity enhancement as instrumental in efficiently delivering SMMEs deliverables to clients. However, empirical evidence revealed that none of the participants had capacity enhancement programmes or initiatives such as learning or training.

This discovery is concerning, given that several studies have looked into the role of capacity enhancement on SMMEs and suggest that capacity enhancement has a significant and positive impact on SMMEs. Training and skills acquisition positively link business improvement; therefore, it can enhance SMMEs development (Rogerson, 2008). Capacity enhancement gives SMMEs a robust entrepreneurial orientation and strengthens their survival (Rambe & Mosweunyane, 2017). As the findings of this study suggested otherwise, the researcher

identifies this as a gap that UW can fill in its contractual agreements with SMMEs which will be elaborated in the recommendations section.

5.4.2 Objective Four:

To ascertain the SMMEs support intervention and resources accessibility in sustaining their entities.

Common throughout the participants' response to the praise of the organisational support interventions and resources made available to SMMEs at the beginning of each contract. All participants commended this practice and highlighted it as a developmental approach that boosts them as small enterprises, given that it eliminates the financial burden associated with accessing service equipment, tools and resources. However, it was noted that similar to the negative attitude towards learning or improving capacity through training, the participants were clueless about existing public business support interventions and resources outside UW. This is another concerning factor given that the sustainability and growth of SMMEs is greatly affected by having an excellent capability to deliver services or products when contracted. Through legislation and numerous support programmes, the South African government prioritise and invest in SMMEs. This prioritisation and investment is made on the basis that SMMEs are considered as the key drivers of economic growth (Dladla & Mutambara, 2018).

This significance to the economy is based on the SMMEs' potential to create employment opportunities and drive innovation which are essential aspects of economic growth (Department of Small Business Development, 2022). In South Africa (SA), the government acknowledges the importance of SMMEs as it has characterised the small business sector as a vital part of the national economy (SME South Africa, 2018). Therefore, the lack of trying to learn about SMMEs development and support programmes available in the country is another great concern. The author concludes that this is another great contributor to SMMEs failure or poor performance, which can be categorised as self-inflicted when distinguished from the many other disadvantaging challenges, such as lack of formal access to finance and similar broad challenges.

5.5 Implications of this research for management and Recommendations

5.5.1 Objective One:

To determine the impact of SMMEs within UW value chain.

UW needs to improve its communication with SMMEs to empower these small businesses. The focus on communication improvement should be on UW's future direction or plans so that SMMEs can align themselves with the organisational plans and direction. Additionally, participants demonstrated concern with regard to partnership certainty when working with UW. Enhancing the clarity and frequency of communication about UW's future plans and direction will enable SMMEs to align their strategies and operations more effectively with those of the organisation (Liu, Keller, & Shih, 2011). This aligns with the suggestion that clear and timely communication from larger organisations is instrumental in creating an enabling environment for small businesses to thrive (Agyepong, et al., 2018).

Furthermore, as the study participants expressed concerns regarding the uncertainty of their partnerships with UW. As such, improving feedback communication with SMMEs and cooperatives they contract with is highly recommended. This not only addresses the concerns of the partners but also promotes trust and long-term relationships, contributing to enhanced performance and sustainable growth of SMMEs (Paulraj, Lado, & Chen, 2008). Therefore, it is highly recommended that UW improves feedback communication with cooperatives or other SMMEs they enter into a contract with. This form of communication would build confidence, enable corrective behaviour or service improvements and boost the morale of SMMEs when they work with UW. Most importantly, SMMEs would feel acknowledged as instrumental stakeholders of UW.

5.6 Objective Two:

5.6.1 To assess the SMMEs' competitiveness to meet their profitability potential.

It would be beneficial to the growth and success of SMMEs if UW could increase the facilitation of skills development offerings or training. This initiative would benefit UW and partner SMMEs alike, given that the organisation can receive improved service whilst the small

businesses achieve their competitive advantage and profitability through efficient and improved performance.

The study recommends that UW intensify its efforts in facilitating skills development offerings or training for SMMEs. Research underscores the critical role of continuous training and skills development in enhancing the performance and competitiveness of SMMEs (Botha, Nieman & van Vuuren, 2007). Not only do these initiatives foster growth and success for the SMMEs, but they also create a win-win situation as UW stands to benefit from improved service delivery. As corroborated by historic studies, an investment in skills development not only aids small businesses in achieving a competitive advantage and increased profitability but also results in higher quality service for the investing organisation (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Chidoko, Makuyana & Matungamire, 2011). Thus, by amplifying its role as a facilitator of skills development, UW can contribute significantly to building a robust and competent supplier base while simultaneously enhancing its service delivery standards.

5.7 Objective Three:

5.7.1 To evaluate the SMMEs' capacity-building requirements in executing their deliverables to the client.

It is recommended that contractual and service agreements between UW and its active SMMEs mandate capacity-building requirements. For instance, the organisation should schedule learning or training programmes relevant to the active SMMEs providing service in each financial year. Arrangements will not cost the organisations as services can be rendered by the relevant sister entities such as SEDA. In this manner, the SMMEs will not complain of lack of funding to attend capacity-building programmes, and UW will build a database of capable and skilled small enterprises. Most importantly, it could realise one of ESD's central objectives: to create a solid business base for entrepreneurial people and stimulate economic growth. On the other hand, this recommended practice can strengthen inter-governmental collaboration if it becomes a standard practice that annually, UW invites training and development units to strengthen the capacity of its SMMEs. On a broader scale, UW would increase its footprint of SMMEs development, particularly at a time when SMMEs are expected to contribute towards reducing unemployment in the country.

Literature shows that continuous learning and skills development are integral to the survival and growth of SMMEs, especially in dynamic and competitive business environments (Mambula, 2002; Ndabeni, 2008). Therefore, scheduling relevant training programs for active SMMEs annually can significantly enhance their performance and competitiveness. Interestingly, such arrangements may not imply additional costs for the organisation as services can be facilitated by relevant sister entities such as the SEDA. In this way, the hurdles of funding constraints faced by SMMEs in attending capacity-building programs can be circumvented, leading to the creation of a capable and skilled small enterprise database for UW. This aligns with global best practices where public and private organisations play a proactive role in fostering an enabling environment for SMME development (OECD, 2020).

5.8 Objective Four:

5.8.1 To ascertain the SMMEs support intervention and resources accessibility in sustaining their entities.

It is suggested that UW create a culture of SMMEs self-awareness through emphasising the need for consulting and broadening knowledge of existing support services outside the organization. Recommending UW to foster a culture of self-awareness among SMMEs should be done by emphasising the importance of consultancy and extending their knowledge of existing support services beyond the organization. This strategic move aligns with contemporary research which advocates for empowering SMMEs with information and resources to improve their resilience and competitiveness (Rogerson, 2019). Instituting this action at the commencement of a contractual relationship can create an environment conducive to growth and development for SMMEs. This recommendation is intimately tied to the third objective, suggesting that UW should champion capacity development as an internal process. The promotion of capacity building has been identified as a crucial step in ensuring the sustainability and success of SMMEs (Fatoki, 2019). Therefore, by taking on the role of capacity development champions, UW can contribute significantly to the sustainable development of SMMEs and ultimately, the socio-economic betterment of the nation.

It is an act that should be done at the beginning of the contractual relationship with SMMEs, whereby they are inducted or cultured to broaden their scope. This action is closely related to the recommendation made in objective three, suggesting that UW takes the responsibility of

championing capacity development as an internal process. Perhaps pointing the SMMEs in the direction of available resources and support initiatives can be a standard action when communicating with active SMMEs.

5.9 Recommendations for Future Studies

Given the state of the nation regarding socio-economic challenges, now more than ever, SMMEs should be considered an important tool that can be weaponised against the increasing poverty and unemployment rates. As substantiated by recent literature, SMMEs are increasingly recognized as engines of economic growth and job creation, contributing significantly to national GDP and employment (Fatoki, 2019). They present an effective tool in mitigating socio-economic disparities, particularly in developing nations where they form the backbone of the economy (OECD, 2020). Now, more than ever, it is imperative to leverage and bolster the potential of SMMEs, weaponizing them as a strategic resource in the fight against escalating poverty and unemployment. Through targeted enterprise and supplier development initiatives, state-owned enterprises like Umgeni Water can play a pivotal role in enhancing the capacity and competitiveness of SMMEs, thus contributing towards an inclusive and resilient economy (Fatoki, 2019; OECD, 2020). It is clear that current mechanisms that should be backing the legislated priority and potential positive impact of SMMEs in economic growth and development are not as fruitful and effective as they should be. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies look at the possibility of innovation being used to ignite and fast-track SMMEs growth and effectiveness in the country.

5.10 Limitations to the study

Study limitations describe shortcomings or weaknesses that may have challenged the research process potentially influences research outcomes or conclusions (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). This study had two limitations, the first one being the limitation to Umgeni Water. Therefore, results may differ if the study were conducted in another public entity or private sector. Secondly, the study participants were cooperatives with active contracts with Umgeni Water at the time of data collection. This is a limitation to research results, given that the SMMEs sector is broader than cooperatives.

5.11 Conclusion

Given that SMMEs experience difficulties when making an effort to recognise their full potential, yet they play an integral part in the economic growth of the country. It is agreeable throughout the responses; there was a noticeably good understanding of UW, its operations, and how small enterprises fit into UW operations' whole value chain. This noted precise understanding of roles indicated that the participants know the consequences of partnering with UW. For instance, most participants cited how their role is a deal-breaker in terms of service rendered. Good performance may lead to a sustained relationship with UW, while poor performance may disrupt UW business operations or create a bad reputation for the small business as well.

Regarding competitiveness and profitability, the overall responses from participants led to the conclusion that it intensifies skills, whilst a shortage of skills results in incompetence or unproductiveness. Primary contributions from participants proved to speak to Jagannathan and Geronimo (Skills for Competitiveness, Jobs, and Employability in Developing Asia-Pacific, 2013), who argued that in the modern day, competitiveness is no longer solely associated with industrial policies, exchange rates or labour costs. Instead, it is influenced by workforce skills, management of how skills are utilised and investing in improving skills through learning, training and well-planned skills development strategies. Concurrently, Froy et al. (Skills for Competitiveness: A Synthesis Report, 2012) reported that the 21st-century economy demands organisations to sharpen their skills and ensure their effective utilisation to be competitive and productive, and increase their socio-economic inclusion productivity and increase socio-economic inclusion.

Since there were two participants that demonstrated aspired to prioritise capacity building. This led to the conclusion that learning and development or skills training is not signified by SMMEs which is a great concern. This conclusion was based on the observed lack of prioritisation, eagerness or appreciation of training, learning and development at a personal level across all participants.

Lastly, support intervention and resource accessibility are key to the sustainability of the SMMEs. However, this was only provided at the inception of the contract, the conclusion is

that SMMEs require continuous intervention as it is proven that a once-off intervention is not adequate for the success of the enterprise.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Schedule

Title of the Study

REIMAGINING THE IMPACT OF ENTERPRISE AND SUPPLIER DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE STATE OWNED ENTERPRISE: A CASE OF UMGENI WATER

Interview Schedule

Demographic Questions

1. Please indicate gender equality distribution of the cooperative and the services you render?
2. Please indicate ownership distribution from Gender representation?
3. What is the business Lifecycle phase of the cooperative in terms of operations?
4. Where is the geographical location of the business operations?
5. What are the highest business or academic qualification some members have?

Research Based Questions

Objective one: To determine the impact of SMMEs within UW value chain and appropriate tools.

6. How would you describe the influence of the cooperative in contribution to the value chain of UW?
7. What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that the business should take into consideration to be profitable?
8. What are the strategic and performance oriented tools that the business possess to equip them with operational excellence.

Objective two: To assess the SMMEs competitiveness to meet their profitability potential.

9. What are technical, operational, financial and marketing skills that the business need to improve on in order to be competitive?
10. What are the constraints in terms of technical, operational, financial and marketing skills that the business need to improve on in order to be competitive?
11. How would you describe the feasibility, viability and the business plan readiness for the business to support the business goals and objectives?

Objective three: To evaluate the SMMEs capacity building requirements in executing their deliverables to the client.

12. How would you describe the abilities, skills and expertise improvement initiatives in the business for its members?
13. How would you describe the capacity building aspirations of the business?

Objective four: To ascertain the SMME support intervention and resources accessibility in sustaining their entities.

14. How do you describe the business and technical support that could be accessed from external sources on behalf of the business?
15. What are the networking and relationship building strides within the business?

Appendix 2: Informed Consent Letter

Appendix 1: Informed Consent Letter

Informed Consent Letter

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP
Master of Business Administration Research Project (MBA)

Researcher: Ntombizethu Khumalo

200277114@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Supervisor: Dr Tony Ngwenya (031 260 7825)

Ngwenyat2@ukzn.ac.za

Research Office: HSSREC (031) 260 8350/3587

Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za

Dear Respondent,

My name is **Ntombizethu Khumalo**, I am a **MBA** student at the Graduate School of Business and Leadership of the University of KwaZulu-Natal Student number: 200277114. You are invited to participate in a study entitled "**Reimagining the Impact of Enterprise and Supplier Development Within the State Owned Enterprise: A Case Of Umgeni Water.**"

In this study, the researcher is trying to reimagining the Impact of Enterprise and Supplier Development (Cooperatives) engaged by Umgeni Water. The study aims to assist UW to learn success stories and failures and propose recommendations for future enterprise development programs. For the collection of primary data, an in-depth interview will be conducted. Participants will be able to answer the 15 questions in approximately 45 minutes. Kindly note that participation in this study is voluntary and at the participant's discretion.

Anonymity and confidentiality of research participants will be handled with great care, ensuring no data provided will be leaked to unwanted persons or traced back to participants in any form. The research data will be stored in a secure location at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Graduate School of Business and Leadership. If you are willing to participate in this study, kindly sign the form below that acknowledges your voluntary willingness to participate and your awareness of the nature of the research being conducted.

Yours Sincerely,

Ntombizethu Khumalo

I, the undersigned (Full Name) _____ as (Position)
_____ of (Name of Entity)
_____ have been fully informed of the nature of the
research to be conducted and give consent to participate in the interview at my facility. I reserve
the right to withdraw consent to participate at any time.

Please indicate:

I agree/do not agree to audio-recording during the interview.

Signature

Date

Appendix 3: UKZN Approved Ethical Clearance

Appendix 2: UKZN Approved Ethical Clearance



22 October 2021

Ntombizethu Abegail Khumalo (200277114)
Grad School Of Bus & Leadership
Westville Campus

Dear NA Khumalo,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00003496/2021

Project title: Reimagining the impact of enterprise and supplier development within the state owned enterprise: A case of Umgeni Water

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 13 October 2021 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid until 22 October 2022.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hialele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix 4: Umgeni Water Research Approval

Appendix 3: Umgeni Water Research Approval



Improving Quality of Life and Enhancing Sustainable Economic Development

Ref: ResearchAppiSept2021

Enquiries: Mr Zakhele Dube
[REDACTED]

3 September 2021

Ms. Ntombizethu Khumalo
[REDACTED]

Dear Ms Khumalo

Re: Application to conduct study research at Umgeni Water

The subject refers.

After careful consideration of your application to conduct research at Umgeni Water for study purposes on **Reimagining the impact of Enterprise and Supplier Development within the State Owned Enterprise: A Case of Umgeni Water**, Umgeni Water Research Panel in its meeting held on the 2nd September 2021, has approved your application based on the following condition:

- That upon completion of the study, findings and recommendations of the study will be shared with Umgeni Water.
- Provision of ethical clearance
- Ensure adherence to the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPI Act).

We wish you the best of your studies. For any enquiries, kindly contact Mr. Zakhele Dube
[REDACTED]

Regards

Signed by: Thulasizwe Derrick Shangase

Signed at: 2021-09-13 10:24:44 +02:00

Reason: Witnessing Thulasizwe Derrick S
[REDACTED]

On behalf of Umgeni Water Research Panel

UMGENI WATER

HEAD OFFICE • P.O. Box 9 • Pietermaritzburg 3200

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E-mail: info@umgeni.co.za • Internet: <http://www.umgeni.co.za>

Acting Chief Executive: Mrs. N Mkhize

Non-Executive Directors: M Mzobe (Chairperson) | T Tselane (Deputy Chairperson) | V Ndana | S James | M Mgqoba | B Dladla | P Ntombela |

U Mhlope | M Ngubo | L Ngcobo | S Getyeza |

Think water, think Umgeni Water

Appendix 5: Turtitin Results

Appendix 5: Turtitin Results

Reimagining the impact of enterprise and supplier development within the state-owned enterprise: A case of Umgeni Water

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