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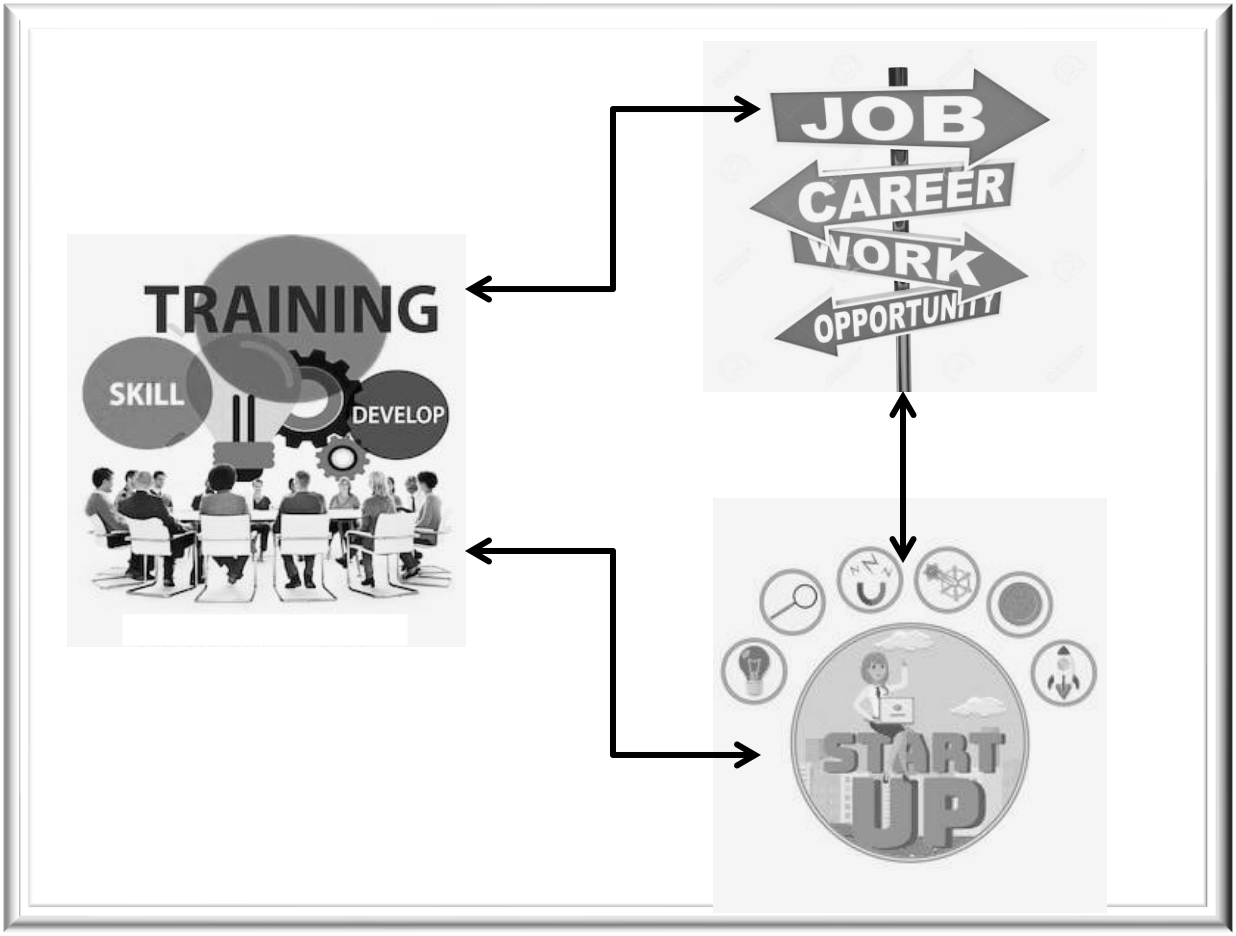
EXPLORING TRANSITIONS FROM YOUTH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES INTO ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN THE NATIONAL RURAL YOUTH SERVICE CORPS (NARYSEC) PROGRAMME



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ABSTRACT

Youth unemployment is a global challenge but is even more acute in sub-Saharan African countries. South Africa is also experiencing high levels of unemployment amongst its youth – the unemployment rate for young people aged 15 to 24 years was 56.4% for quarter two of 2019, while the unemployed rate for those aged 25 to 34 years was 35.6% (Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), 2019). South Africa has an extensive and deep-rooted youth unemployment challenge.

Within the context of youth unemployment, and the proposed skills development, employment and entrepreneurship interventions to address the unemployment of young people, this study aims to understand how young people transition from skills development interventions into economic activity. The semi-structured individual and group interviews that were conducted with the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) youth of this study, provided me the opportunity to study in-depth the experiences of the youth in relation to their attempts to transition into either employment or self-employment.

Providing only skills development interventions for young people is not enough for them to transition into employment or self-employment. What is also required is the creation of an enabling environment, particularly by government, to facilitate the transitioning of the youth into economic activity. This study suggested that the enabling environment with regard to employment, could include work readiness interventions and temporary employment opportunities for the youth; while for entrepreneurship it is suggested that the enabling environment could include structured business support, assistance with securing finance for the business, as well as business "starter packs" that young people require to start their own businesses. In conclusion, the assumption, by many policy makers and government officials, that entrepreneurship is a viable alternative for the millions of unemployed young people who cannot secure jobs, seems to be more complex than suggested. Not all unemployed young people appear to have entrepreneurial aspirations or the requisite attributes to succeed as entrepreneurs.

KEYWORDS

Employability; Entrepreneurship; Pathways; Self-Employment; Transitions; Work Readiness