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Construction and validation of a theoretically derived PEST Analysis Type Tool for LED and Community Entrepreneurship programmes in South African rural economies

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14. Name of supervisor: _____ Dr. Robert Venter _____

Discipline _____ Senior Lecturer _____

School _____ Wits Business School _____

Signature  _____

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15. Signature of candidate:  _____

Date: ___30/07/2015_____

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WBS MM [E&NVC] INTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT

MM ENVC Report Title: Construction and validation of a theoretically derived PEST Analysis Type Tool for LED and Community Entrepreneurship programmes in South African rural economies

Student Number: 690167

Student Name: Andrew Donovan Stockil

1. Is the MM Research Report title appropriate?	Yes	No
2. Is the abstract adequate?	Yes	No
3. Is the MM Report a new and useful synthesis of previously published material and original contribution?	Yes	No
4. Are the methods clearly described?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5. Is the MM Report academically sound and logical?	Yes	No
6. Are the results adequately analysed?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7. Is the text clearly presented and concise?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8. Are there any errors of fact, calculation or interpretation?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No
9. Are the references adequate?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
10. Are the figures adequate?	Yes	No
12. The MM Research report is: • acceptable as is _____ • requires minor revision X • requires major revision _ • unacceptable _____ Please refer to further comments and suggestions on another sheet giving reasons for negative replies and suggest improvements. [see below]		
I am willing to be identified to the student	Yes	No

DETAILED EXAMINER'S REPORT

Local Economic Development (LED) is a topical issue within the broad economic development debate in South Africa. That makes this attempt at developing a LED analysis tool a relevant and current research topic. In undertaking this research, the student demonstrated ability to conduct independent and structured business science research. The choice of the mixed-method approach the student applied is acceptable for the research topic. A sustainable planning or measuring tool for local economic development will always have useful application be it in South Africa or any emerging economy around the world.

Having noted the relevance of the area of research, the research problem formulation and identification are not well aligned to the research objectives:

*The purpose of the study is to **identify the specific and most prominent factors that influence Economic Development in rural areas**, allowing for the creation of a tool to diagnose the degree to which these factors may affect Community Entrepreneurship programmes in each specific locality, thereby assisting in strengthening their chances of success [P2].*

Problem Statement

... Despite 20 years of concentration on LED as an important development strategy in South Africa, not many initiatives have shown measurable and sustainable results.

The problem statement is drawn from a general statement that is not supported by any specific reference nor is it substantiated in the subsequent literature review. It is easy to generalise that LED initiatives have failed but research at this level may not be formulated from such generalised perspective without adequate references to back such a claim.

Identifying the context and background of the study is made more difficult by the candidate's tendency to "telescope" some critical events relevant to the research topic. For example, in discussing the significance of the study, the candidate stated the following:

This RDP Plan was replaced by GEAR, which was replaced by the NDP, none of which have been able to solve the problem of the actual implementation of the various plans. The gravity of the current situation is well summarised by Bond;

'South Africa is a socio-economic time bomb, and a new approach to development strategy is desperately needed (Bond, 2003).'

While the sequence of the national plans from RDP, GEAR to NDP is be correct, citing Bond (2003) in emphasising this sequence is problematic because the NDP was adopted a decade after Bond (2003) made that statement. Similar inconsistencies are noted through the report.

While the candidate demonstrated a general familiarity with the relevant literature on the subject matter, there are serious reference errors across the report. For instance, the problem is not limited to telescoping references mentioned above, the candidate also made several statements as facts without referencing them. For example:

Publications from the United Nations, OECD, the South African Government and the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor have also been used from a policy and provisions perspective.

***By fully reviewing many papers and publications,** an idea can be gathered as to the various factors, discussed in the various sources, suggested to be important in the Local Economic Development sphere. These factors, although named or referred to differently by the various authors, have been categorised into the groups outlined in Table 3. [p.15]*

The candidate, on several occasions through out the report, mentions publications or claim that there are several sources on a subject matter but does not insert or place the actual references. Such general statements made without reference degrades the quality of substantial sections of the report.

Furthermore, the candidate did not follow the standard WBS recommended referencing system. The entire report is riddled with such errors. Take the following as an example, several sources are cited but none are dated in this instance:

The Literature review is based on peer-reviewed literature on the South African situation from various sources, including well-known LED practitioners such as Dr. Jorg Meyer-Stamer and Colin Mitchell from Mesopartner, and Economic geography experts such as Mike Herrington, Prof. Etienne Nel, Tony Binns and Christian Rogerson. In terms of the overall theories of Economic development, Community Entrepreneurship and Local Economics, Venkataraman, Singer, Porter, Johnstone & Lionais, Coffey & Polese, Korsching & Allen and Hindle, amongst others have been reviewed. [Page 15]

***It is the opinion of a number of authors** that the South African Government has followed a more neo-liberal path to development and economic policy than was planned in 1994, as a result of external market and economic pressure. [P18]*

This problem is compounded by the candidate's inconsistency in referencing sources in full. For example, the final Reference list had more than 20 incomplete references.

One of the major limitations of this research is that, while this is a current and topical research area, the candidate predominantly used very old sources to inform or direct the research. For example, this examiner could only identify only 10 out of 103 references dated post 2010. This is a serious challenge, which suggests the candidate may have been out of sync with the research trends on the subject.

The candidate was often casual in the manner of writing making sections of the report inconsistent with formal academic writing:

LED Practitioners and Advocates all over the world cite various definitions for LED, many of which suite a specific angle, such as the ones described previously in the text, but for the purposes of this study the following inclusive definition will be used: ...[P.17]

In other instances, the candidate used emotive expressions or over stated perspectives without follow-through or references, not even evidence to back the claims.

This study used aspects of Economic Geography, Business Economics, Entrepreneurship, Development Economics and Planning in an attempt to develop the beginnings of a deeper study

into the Entrepreneurial environment in rural communities in South Africa and all the characteristics, promoters, antagonists and stakeholders involved. [P. 1]

Declining local economies are a common, constant feature of the capitalistic society of today, and their features include high populations with very little economic activity or potential due to one or other changing factor or barrier (Johnstone & Lionais 2004). [P.35]

These are instances where the candidate over stated or made generalised statements. Take the paragraph from page 1 quoted above, reading the report, this examiner could not find evidence of application of all these disciplines mentioned above (*Economic Geography, Business Economics, Entrepreneurship, Development Economics and Planning*).

I also found the discussion on the propositions to be inadequate. For example, the presentation of the findings pertaining to proposition 2 were inconsistent to what proposition 2 actually says.

I observed that the research design and method were not well articulated. The sampling procedures are not clear or well discussed. For example, under subsection 4.5 on Findings pertaining to proposition 3, the candidate makes reference to **validation by expert opinion** [P 87]. Nowhere in the report is the panel of expert or the quantification of such expert opinions is discussed or presented. There is no reference in this section on the definition of these mentioned experts.

During the process of communication some respondents requested further clarity on some factors and their contexts and so telephonic and email conversations were initiated in order to clarify any issues which arose from the respondents and gain further insight into the opinions of the respondents to the instrument. Correspondence and Interview notes can be found in Appendix E.

On the subject of poor methodological considerations, the statement above suggests that the candidate did not treat all respondents equally. Extended discussion with select respondents on the instrument potentially distorted the outcome as this suggests that not all respondents interacted with same questionnaire or research tool. Other received changed questionnaires or received

further explanations of the research tool whereas others were not accorded the same privilege.

The discussion on Proposition 3 includes some sample figures which were not discussed or presented anywhere earlier:

There were 29 responses out of 100 approaches to the survey and 6 responses out of 10 to the more detailed PEST tool enquiry. Within the detailed responses, as well as some of the surveys there were comments given for each of the factors. These have been presented in Chapter 4 and the relevance of them will be discussed here.

This level of inconsistency degrades the quality of the results and the overall discussion. I found it difficult to follow the candidate's conclusions particularly where they discussed virtuous and vicious cycles of economic development and decline. These models were not mentioned or presented in the literature review. In fact, it reads as if the candidate presents another literature review in the discussion chapter. The development of the models the candidate ends up presenting or discussion does not seem to be related to the analytical tool proposed.

The consistency and the literal writing style applied by the candidate had some considerable quality problems. The referencing challenges already highlighted in this report are of concern. The candidate used large sections of direct quote text through out the paper. Use of considerable direct quote paragraphs in the report highlights the candidate's failure to interpret the sources they read.

Overall, the report is generally sound. Subject to some editorials and corrections of some aspects raised in this examiner report, the report should be accepted.

GRADING

(Reading from my brief comments and observations presented above, it is my final recommendation that this Masters report is acceptable subject to editorials suggested).

Changes to Final Submission

By Andrew Stockil - 690167

- Pg. 5: Problem Statement has been referenced with up-to-date reference from 2010 and further aligned with references from 2005.
- Pg. 9: I have amended the reference on the success of RDP, GEAR and NDP to a more relevant one and replaced Bond (2003) with Cohen & van der Heijden, (2010). Telescoping has been removed by being more specific.
- Pg. 15: I have added in the years in which the various papers by the authors were written in. I have also referenced the document years published by the organisations mentioned.
- Pg. 17: Casual manner of writing has been amended
- Final References: I have checked and amended the final reference list to ensure all references are as full as possible.
- Pg. 1 and 35: Emotive writing in the first instance was in the Abstract of the Paper and the second instance was a direct quote from Johnstone and Lionais (2004)
- Pg. 87: Sampling Procedure was difficult to outline as was the definition of an expert in LED. LED being such a narrow field with very few lay people even being aware of what it means meant that anyone with experience and knowledge in the field was sampled. Maybe 'Expert' was the incorrect wording. I have changed Expert to Practitioner.
- The feedback mentions the use of Generalised Statements and apparently lacks evidence of the following disciplines: Economic Geography (Pg. 15 outlines all the authors on Economic Geography cited), Entrepreneurship (The paper is about LED and Entrepreneurship), Development Economics and Planning (LED is Development Economics and Planning – Pg. 15 cites the authors referenced through the paper)
- The Feedback mentions out-of-date references but in the Abstract and Definitions and Historical applications the range of historical LED in declining economies is mentions to be as far back as WWII and therefore

literature is used in order to develop a full understanding of the history of LED in Western Society and lessons learned to be applied to the current developing world. Below is the excerpt from the first paragraph of CH.1 describing the reason for old literature to be considered.

It is often cited that Local Economic Development (LED) planning has been neglected (Rogerson, 1997) and that constructs from the last 70 years from the Northern or developed economies cannot be automatically applicable to developing economies (Peng, 2000) (Burton, Ahlstrom & Obloj, 2008). From the constructs of these 'Northern' theories, as well as from literature and practice specific to Africa and South Africa from the last 20 years, a number of established Socio-Economic environmental factors have been gathered and verified against established peer-reviewed literature in order to find the most prominent ones.

- On the issue of poor methodological considerations with regards to the fact that some respondents contacted me personally for clarification on the instrument, this could not be helped and all respondents had my details and could contact me, some did and some just responded with the completed survey.
- Feedback mentions that the Proposition 3 sample figure was not presented but it was presented directly below the highlighted paragraph on page 147 and were supplementary to the results and so discussed as an additional outcome to the research as they were opinions of the respondents in writing not rankings in the numbered scale which was the main point of the questionnaire.
- The feedback questions the relevance of the models and their relevance is shown in **Diagram 5: The Framework Proposed fits into existing models as illustrated on Pg. 173**
- Direct Quote used in the document is used specifically to highlight literature excerpts which were not covered in the literature review but whose contents add to the discussion. The fact that they are direct quote is specifically mentioned and highlighted between pages 53 and 59 and some are even relegated to Appendix D (in which the Sugden, Wei and Wilson Framework is discussed in full) in order to not clutter the body of the document.