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# The Role of Handicraft Micro-Enterprises as a Catalyst for Youth Employment

Oluwayemisi Adebola Abisuga-Oyekunle and Ian Fillis

## ABSTRACT

There is a pressing need to equip South African's youth with the means to develop their entrepreneurial potential. In this context, there is the need for the government to create a support mechanism to help integrate young people into the job market, through the handicraft Entrepreneurship. The objective of this study is to examine job creation, income generation and poverty alleviation opportunities in developing the microenterprise-handicraft linkage, with special attention to vulnerable sectors of society, the youths.

However, the handicraft sector is performing at a level far below its potential in South Africa. This research study into the reasons behind such weak performance, its developmental aspects, and different implication shall be suggested on the contribution of handicrafts in eradicating poverty and maintaining a sustainable livelihood for the youths. The paper shows key findings from a literature review and from semi-structured interviews with local producers, supporters, and buyers of handicraft products in the Western Cape Province. The methodology used for this research is an exploratory approach using a qualitative data collection method. Finally, the study provides a comprehensive strategy on how to enhance the South African handicraft sector to better meet its needs as a micro-enterprise to create a better living for the people.

**Keywords:** *Handicraft, Micro-enterprises, Youth employment, Entrepreneurship, Unemployment, Development.*

## INTRODUCTION

South Africa, like many other countries in the world, is faced with the difficulty of how to create employment for the country's young population. Presently, the country is challenged with the youth's poor participation in the economy, which hinders the country's economic development, thereby imposing a greater problem in the state. The first quarter of 2015 shows that the country's working population was 35.8 million with 15.5 million employed, 5.5 million unemployed and 14.8million not economically active, thus, resulting in an overall unemployment rate in the country to be at 26.4% (South Africa, Statistics, 2015). The ratio of youth-to-adult unemployment as about 1:3 (i.e. for every unemployed adult there is three unemployed youth) (SA, Department of Trade and Industry, 2013). Therefore, it is important to recognise the need to promote entrepreneurialism amongst the youth and a series of training piloted in specific communities planned to encourage youth to visualise themselves as micro-entrepreneurs (Habito, 2009).

The Department of Art, Culture, Science and Technology (1998) reported that not only does handicraft sector provide income generation opportunities for groups which have access to resources, but also offers employment opportunities for the most economically disadvantaged people in South African society. Despite the industry informality, the craft industry has been an important strategy of the South African government for sustainable livelihood and the creation of employment opportunities (Department of Labour 2011). Handicraft is big business worldwide (UNWTO, 2008; Littrell and Dickson, 2010). Notwithstanding South Africans handicraft sector contributed 0.14% to GDP in 2011, of about ZAR3.32bn and employs approximately 273,495 people (DTI, 2013), hence, a good number of the traditional craft sectors have folded up over the past two decades, mostly due to the challenges of sustainability. Sustainability of the sector involves a development process that preserves all types of creative assets, from minority cultures and traditional artworks, artefacts and heritage, etc. (Oyekunle, 2015a).

A number of important initiatives like poverty alleviation through handicraft development and other cultural initiatives as part of the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) to create employment in identifying rural and urban nodes have been created (Joffe and Newton, 2008). Also, the government has introduced many projects to promote tourism in South Africa, which comprise crafts aimed at the tourist market (Stevens, 2007). The Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport (DCAS) has implemented several initiatives, for instance, a partnership with South African Fashion Week on developmental initiatives to fuse fashion and craft to address job creation (South Africa, 2013). Despite all government and non-government programmes, the problem of youth unemployment still persists. This has led us to pose questions like: "are they doing the right thing?", "which youth-oriented actions and labour market initiatives would result in employment creation?" etc. The objective of this research is to examine job creation abilities, and poverty alleviation opportunities in developing the microenterprise-handicraft linkage, with consideration for the vulnerable sectors of society, the youths.

The research seeks to find out improvement on the living conditions of the youth through income generated by the business activities of the handicraft products. The findings from this research contribute to the debate on the poverty alleviation potential of micro-enterprise, through the handicraft sector, by which participants are opportune to access livelihood, most especially human capital, economic, and social life. These findings are applicable when considering a means of sustainable livelihood strategies for youths with limited or no access to the financial base and formal education background. Set on the right background of standing upon principles of occupation, access to a solid and diversified market, and the combination of training activities, the handicraft sectors have the potential to alleviate poverty among the youths through accelerating access to economic and non-economic assets that can reduce unemployment.

## **SOUTH AFRICAN HANDICRAFT SECTOR**

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI, 2013) in its industrial policy action plan 2013/14 – 2015/16 provides the baseline research done in 2010, which estimates that the handicraft sector contributes R3.32 billion to GDP (0.14%), with a provision of income and employment to about 273,495 people – of which a little number are employed permanently and the greater number are employed as seasonal workers (South Africa, CATHSSETA, 2014). Mostly, the sector is characterised by trading operation of approximately 31,800 micro-enterprises spread out through the whole craft value chain (South Africa, CATHSSETA, 2014). However, support must be provided at all levels in the craft value chain (Rogerson and Rogerson, 2011).

The total number of handicraft producer organisations has increased by 40% with an average growth of 8% per year, which is double the national average (Department of Labour 2008). The South Africa government spent approximately R97 million on the formation and growth of the craft industry in the country between 2001 and 2003 (Grobler 2005). A number of initiatives have proved the growth of the craft industry in South Africa, as demonstrated by the creation of the Cape Craft and Design Institute (CCDI) in the Western Cape Province, the North-West Craft Design Centre, and the Gauteng Craft and Design Centre in the Gauteng province (Makhitha, Wiese and Van Heerden, 2014). The operations in the South African handicraft production are characteristically home-based and small-scale, with hand-processing as the key provider of the end-product. As the South African handicraft sectors improve its design and business skills, it has the prospect of making a progressive, positive impact on both rural and urban economies and produce substantial numbers of new jobs.

The Western Cape Province has the highest number of employment, production and marketing of handicraft compared to other provinces in South Africa. The youths having compelled to live with uncertain future conditions in immense poverty have obliged them to indulge in the hunt for other economic activities apart from agriculture (Chakraborty, 2013). The women take the leading role in this respect by engaging themselves in handicraft micro-enterprises to help earn a daily living. The number of people engaged in handicraft related work is very low in South Africa, unlike other parts of the world.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **WHY FOCUS ON HANDICRAFT MICRO-ENTERPRISE AS A CATALYST FOR EMPLOYMENT**

Handicraft is a type of work where a useful and decorative device are made completely by hand or using only simple tools, with individual crafter's cultural and/or religion a paramount criterion (Abryareh, 2009; De Silver & Kundu, 2013). Rogerson (2010) attests that craft products must be 80% handmade from different materials, which may include clay; natural fibres, beads, recyclable materials and textiles, to qualify as craft products. Abryareh (2009) describes handicraft as a skill, specifically involving practical arts. (Thompson 1995) defines 'craft' simply as "skill, especially in practical arts, a trade or an art, to make in a skilful way". However, in the handicraft sector, some skills are passed on from an older generation to the younger (South Africa, CATHSSETA, 2014), which make the enterprise prone to learnability.

The United Nation World Tourism Organisation (2008) puts forward the huge merchandising potential of handicrafts as; contributing significantly to sustainable socioeconomic development and poverty alleviation in local communities; and creating substantial employment and income opportunities for people, for instance, young people and other disadvantaged segments of society. Bennell (2007) indicates that youth programming is now being given more attention with a particular emphasis on the promotion of youth employment creation through non-farm micro-enterprise development, for instance, the support for traditional craft apprenticeship schemes, which are well established in West African region. Weijland (1999) affirm that the handicraft sectors provide an ideal employment option. Szydowski (2008) substantiated that, handicrafts have been proved to be a sustainable generator of income and employment in Vietnam, especially in rural areas. Ferreira (2001) proven that, in rural Brazil, 21.8 percent of the working population is engaged in rural industries as a primary means of employment.

Also, in India, the sector created employment for millions of Indians regarded as “craftspeople,” whose livelihoods and income are dependent on selling crafts, which makes it the second largest means of employment in the country (Wood, 2011; Sood, 2002).

Kapus (2012) contributes to the debate on the poverty-reducing potential, by identifying that, through handicraft cooperative membership, crafters are able to access livelihood assets, mostly the economic, social, and human capital. Ahamad and Yasmin (2012) support that the handicraft sector has an enormous potential to generate profitable employment opportunities to unemployed people and has an unlimited potential for economic development of a country/region. Olanipekun, Brimah and Rabiou (2015) believes that in order to readily fit into the global market on which today’s economy depends on, there is a need for technical and vocational manpower training, particularly at the craft. The South African statistics (2014), states that:

*“... One in every ten young persons (14,1%) who lived in households in which no one was employed had only “primary and lower” levels of education, while an additional 58,9% had not completed their secondary education. More than two out of every three young persons who lived in households in which no one was employed depended on other household members for financial support, and an additional 27,0%–29,0% relied on persons outside the household. This once again highlights the vulnerability of young people in the labour market.”*

Rogerson and Rogerson (2010) argue, for catalysing the craft sector in South Africa a range of other options exists, particularly concerning integrating craft hubs, such as linking crafters to markets. For instance, the South African statistics (2013) provides that, the succeeding largest occupational categories for women are clerical (17,0%), sales and services (14,8%) and technician (14,1%), while the next largest occupation groupings for men are craft and related trade (19,1%) and sales and services (14,5%). Therefore, the craft has a potential of being the next generation job creation openings. Table 1 below shows, within the young people, sales personnel, elementary workers and managers were the only occupations with an increase in employment between the periods of 2008–2015. The South African Statistics (2015) also indicate job losses among youth over this period were most severe among craft workers (down by 184 000) and professionals (down by 70 000).

**Table 1: Change in employment by occupation among youth and adults, 2008 – 2015**

	2008	2015	Change	2008	2015	Change	2008	2015	Change
	Youth 15 - 34 yrs (Thousand)			Adults 35 – 64 yrs (Thousand)			Total 15 -64 yrs (Thousand)		
Manager	289	341	52	730	911	181	1 019	1 252	233
Professional	333	263	-70	459	519	60	792	782	-10
Technician	560	502	-58	967	917	-50	1 527	1 419	-108
Clerk	877	834	-43	679	836	157	1 556	1 670	114
Sales	1 101	1 191	90	789	1 258	469	1 889	2 449	559
Skilled agric	28	24	-4	102	59	-43	129	83	-47
<b>Craft</b>	<b>977</b>	<b>794</b>	<b>-184</b>	<b>1 105</b>	<b>1 079</b>	<b>-26</b>	<b>2 082</b>	<b>1 873</b>	<b>-209</b>
Operator	501	472	-29	740	853	112	1 241	1 324	83
Elementary	1 516	1 588	71	1 705	2 012	307	3 221	3 600	378
Domestic work	279	233	-46	701	776	75	980	1 009	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>6 460</b>	<b>6 239</b>	<b>-221</b>	<b>7 977</b>	<b>9 220</b>	<b>1 243</b>	<b>14 438</b>	<b>15 459</b>	<b>1 022</b>

**Source: South African Statistics, 2015.**

Rogerson and Rogerson (2010) highlights that one of the constraints that need to be addressed nationally for the development of craft is; lack of understanding by many local governments of the potential of craft to be a catalyst for local economic development. As an essential component of culture, the crafts can be an important catalyst for indigenous business development (Kamara, 2006). The importance of catalysing the handicraft industries as a future employment creation tool has also been highlighted by a number of scholars (i.e. Rogerson & Sithole, 2001; Elk 2005; Makhado and Kepe 2006; Hewitt and Janse van Rensburg 2008; Hay 2008).

## **ACCELERATING YOUTH EMPLOYMENT IN THE HANDICRAFT SECTOR**

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) describes the situation of youth unemployment as a global problem with the situation as attaining crisis proportions. For many years, youth unemployment has been very high in South Africa and is one of the crucial country's socioeconomic challenges. Reducing South Africa's high rates of unemployment and precisely youth unemployment needs the economy to do more with the labour-absorbing growth path, particularly reindustrialisation to boost job creation. Presently, one of these industries is the creative sector, which is developed in most countries, particularly in Europe, where it takes more than 5% of the GDP, especially the handicraft sector. Since 1994, there has been an increasing attention on handicrafts in South Africa, comprising many activities and initiatives, for an instant; the government has identified handicrafts sectors as a focus area.

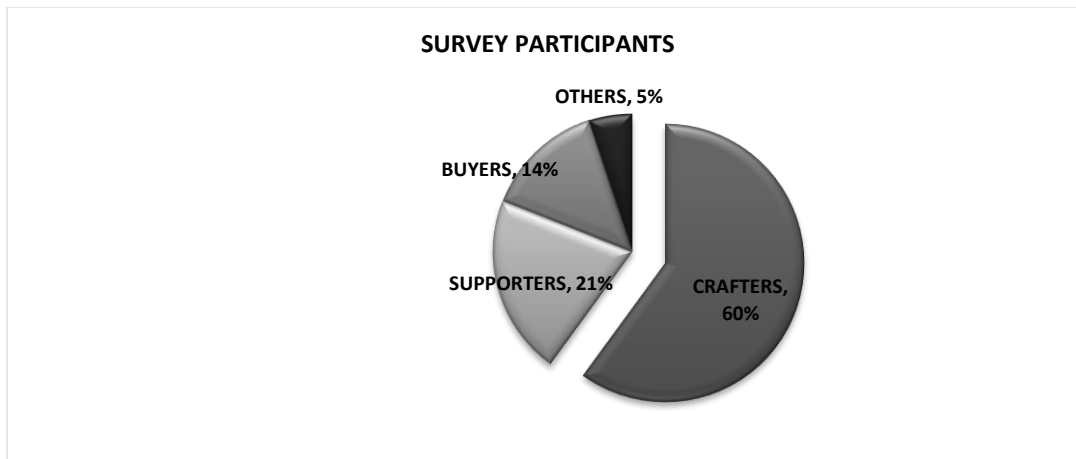
Today, handicraft industries are confronted with a big problem of shortage of qualified workers. Due to this, there is a need for producing many qualified craft workers. Oyekunle (2015b) provides that, the creative entrepreneurship training is a lifelong learning process which involves six phases; fundamentals, skills awareness, creative diligence, start a business, progression and growth. Thus, the vocational training for youth in the handicraft enterprises is an assurance that future preservation of the handicraft sectors will not be at risks of extinction. Oyekunle (2015b) found that what is hindering the desires of creative youth is the development of new business and failure of business entrepreneur education.

Crafts might help to transform the society into a better one, like in developing countries, such as Morocco and Indian, the crafts are obviously an imperative aspect of cultural life, popular culture, the general economy, particularly employment opportunities, as well as tourism and life seen on the streets (Stevens, 2007). Handicraft production in South Africa depends to a great extent on the demand created by the tourism industry and by the intermediaries' business activities. In the Western Cape Province, the commitment made to the economy through handicraft work is expanding as new craftspeople; particularly youths are brought into the business as a solution for both provincial and urban unemployment. The World Tourism Organisation (2008) attests that the employment and training priority for handicraft production and sales must be given to local communities, and especially to young people.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A survey design approach was used for this research. The data collection used will be qualitative sources. This is based on a purposive non-probability and snowball sampling techniques. The population of the study is taken from crafters (Producers), supporters of craft establishments (tourism operation in the study area), buyers (i.e. marketers, suppliers and middlemen) in Western Cape Province. The population sample was limited to ten handicraft centres. The population of the Western Cape in 2013 is estimated at 6million people representing about 11.4% of the total national population with relatively 60.27% being younger than 35 years (South Africa, 2014). A total sample of one hundred and thirty-five participated in the research. Primary data were obtained through observations and semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Secondary data were collected from reports, textbooks, articles/journals, theses, periodicals, and the Internet.

**Figure 1: shows the sample of respondents who participate in the survey**



The interviews and observations were carried out over a period of 18 weeks at the producers' outlets and various craft markets. The interviews were of direct personal investigation type, intended at understanding the economic and sustainability of the handicraft business and their activities as a whole. A total of thirty crafters/artisans were interviewed. The analysis followed a process of an eight-step approach normally used in qualitative research, i.e. code schedules, assemble answers, sort by categories, identify themes, state themes, and provide examples, identification of similarities and differences, and reporting of the process and results (McMurray, Pace & Scott, 2004). The qualitative data were organised and then arranged categorically into themes and patterns in accordance with the questionnaire and then the practicality of the data was evaluated in answering objective of the study. A questionnaire was developed into two sections with a total of thirty items. Section 'A' gathers information on respondent's bio-data while section 'B' investigates on respondent's assessment of the factors relating to the sustainability and development of the handicraft sector and the items they produce. Out of the one hundred and fifty questionnaires administered, one hundred and thirty-five returned. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, especially frequencies and percentages.

## SURVEY RESULTS

The analysis of the result of the background information for crafters is presented in the table (2) below:

**Table 2: Respondents Bio-data**

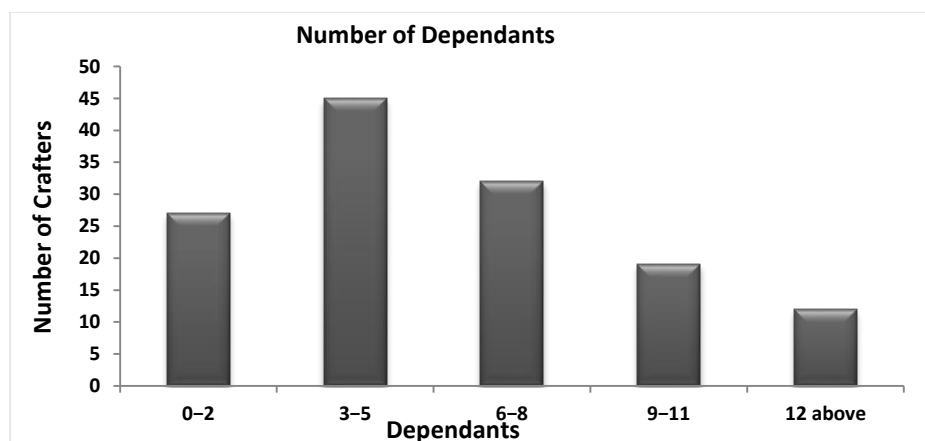
Statistics		Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	53(39.3)
	Female	82(60.7)
Age	18 – 25	32(23.7)
	26 – 35	29(21.5)
	36 – 45	52(38.5)
	46 – 55	14(10.4)
	56 above	8(5.9)
Education	Graduate	18(13.3)
	University	22(16.3)
	Diploma	27(20)
	Certificates	26(19.3)
	Matric	16(11.9)

	Studying	11(8.1)
	None	15(11.1)
<hr/>		
	0 – 5	30(22.2)
	6 – 10	38(28.2)
	11 – 15	27(20)
Years in business	16 – 20	19(14.1)
	21 – 25	14(10.4)
	26 and above	7(5.1)

Table (2) indicates that all handicraft micro-enterprises surveyed; the male involved in the craft business activities is only 53(39.3%). The remaining 60.7% were females. This indicates that the major craft businesses (textiles, beads, fashion accessories, clothing and shoes) in this region are female dominated. The table also shows that 45.2% of the crafters fall within the youth age ranges, which are 18- 35 years. This was not a good sign that the youth had a lower interest in the industry. As this research deals with accelerating youth employment, there is the need to enquire into the educational standards of the crafters, as the results showed that most have attained some form of formal education. Only 11.1% have no educational background, but learn the craft through apprenticeship. Eleven (8.1%) had enrolled in school programmes, and 67% have a higher education qualification (i.e. Diploma, University degree and postgraduate qualifications)

### Sustainability and Economic Results

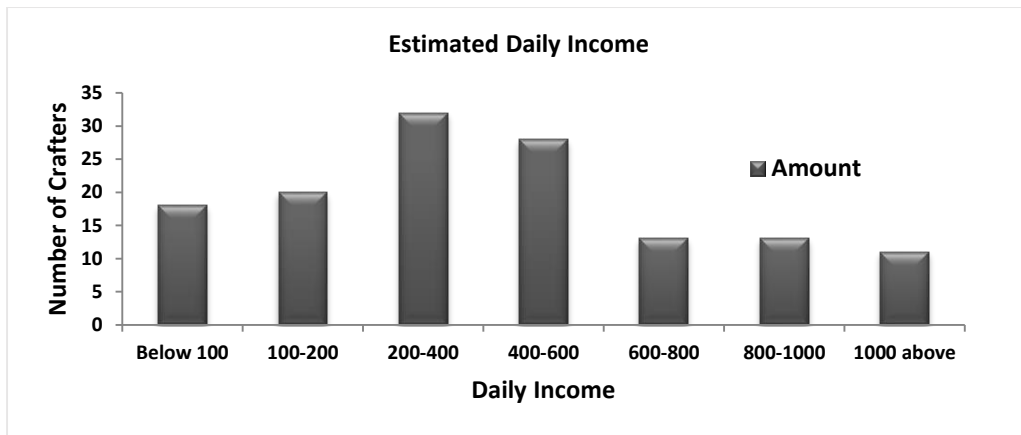
**Figure 2: shows results of the number of dependants of the crafters**



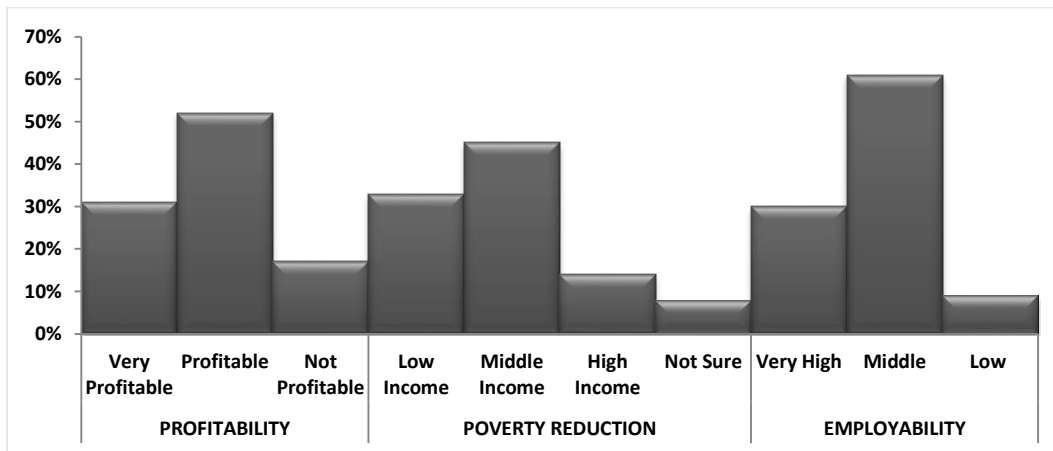
As shown in figure (2) above, 3 – 5 dependants had the highest (45) respondents (Crafters). This was followed by 6 – 8 dependants receiving 32 responses. By average score rate, most of the crafters had a substantial number of dependants.

The daily income of crafters towards their family maintenance was estimated in figure 3. The figure (3) displays the estimated daily income that crafters generate from their handicraft products production, marketing and sales activities. The majority (32) of the crafters receives R200 – 400 over per day from their business. Eleven of them earns above R1000 daily from their business. Only 18 crafters realised below R100 daily. Also, 26 crafters generate between R600 to R1000.

**Figure 3: Estimated Daily Income of Crafters**



**Figure 4: Issues on Employability, Poverty Reduction and Profitability of Handicraft products**



The results of issues on employability, poverty reduction and profitability of handicraft products were estimated and presented in figure 4. Regarding the profitability of the business, almost half (70) of the crafters confirmed that the business was a profitable venture. About 45% of them accepted that the handicraft industry is in the middle-income job category, while another group of 33% crafters categorise it as a low-income job. Fourteen percent were of opinion as a high-income job and the remaining 8% are not certain of the business status.

Two straight statements were additionally put forward to crafters on particular issues concerning sustainability of the handicraft industry and the results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Sustainability of the Handicraft industry**

Statement	Yes	No
Do you think that this business is a reliable source of employment?	92(68%)	43(32%)



Does involvement in the handicraft sector allow the marginalised youth access into the economy?	83(61%)	52(39%)
Do you feel that handicraft industries have the potential to generate wealth and create jobs?	114(84%)	21(16%)
Does provincial authorities' give adequate concern for the development of handicraft industry?	38(28%)	97(72%)

As shown in the table (3), 92(68%) of crafters agreed that the handicraft business was an appropriate source of employment for them as against the minority 43(32%) who believed it was not a better means of employment for them. According to the crafters, a majority (84%) believes that the handicraft sector has the capacity to generate wealth and jobs. Also, due to the low level of integration of the youth into the economy, (61%) of the respondents established that the handicraft sector permits the marginalised youth of the society access to the economy.

### Summary of findings from semi-structured interview

According to the semi-structured interviews, three main markets are identified for Western Cape craft products:

- Domestic market - Handicrafts for domestic markets are those manufactured, distributed and sold within South Africa.
- Export market - Exports markets are products made in South Africa and ship to customers out of the country.
- Tourist market - The tourist market is established to have common characteristics with the domestic and export markets, and some occasion means indirect exports. The indirect export involves the activities of tourist who purchase handicraft in shops, hotels, airports and tourist attraction centres.

Amongst the three markets, the participants identify the export and tourist markets as having the prominent potential for growth. However, it is shown that tourism plays a very important function in the distribution of handicraft products, which has inspired motivation to purchase, thereby linking the local handicraft to the international market. The participants made known that the number of sales for export and tourist activities has declined in the province as a result of global economic recession, xenophobic problems and crime rate. Undoubtedly, some handicraft enterprises have in recent times centred around recovering or building on market share of domestic sales. However, the South African craft sector contributed 0.14% to GDP in 2011, approximately ZAR3.32bn and employs approximately 273,495 people (DTI, 2013 in South Africa, 2013). Also, the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (ASGISA) has now recognised the creative industries, and particularly the handicraft sectors, as one of the identified drivers of sustainable economic opportunities and livelihoods for local communities at the same time as expanding business opportunities for small, medium and micro enterprise (SMMEs) (Joffe and Newton, 2008).

The main actors in the supply of handicrafts are families, artisans, communities and micro-enterprises. These actors fall into two major groups of producers and end-suppliers. The family, artisans, and communities sometimes existing as a group of producers while microenterprises serve as end-suppliers. Additionally, producers mostly work from home or in a shared space; a number of them are young adult age 36–45. It is observed that some of them inherited the business as a family business. The handicraft communities are not only served for microenterprise, but some are also part of a production process for exports.

## DISCUSSION

*The objective of this study is to examine job generation abilities, and poverty-alleviation opportunities in handicraft microenterprise, particularly for the most vulnerable sectors of society, the youths. The handicraft product is more natural, culturally motivated and sustainable; therefore people should be interested in investing in it. We think our findings might help the government and policy makers in re-shaping their activities around the development of this sector.*

Handicraft micro-enterprises offers a potential for accelerating incremental income and employment. The employment and entrance flexibility of the industry are very high and can bring about a considerable poverty reduction to increase the economic capacities of the crafters involved in the business. Regardless of the lack of precise statistics on the handicraft sector, it is obvious that it is making a significant contribution to the Western Cape Provincial economy, especially in terms of micro-enterprise development and employment. It seems like the sector may be particularly important to youths and new entrants to the informal economy as a “means of advancement”. As one of the factors that show the flexibility of entering into the craft market, this study evidenced that the business does not need large capital to start a business. It was gathered that 58% of the participants source finance from personal investment; 55% were able to access government and other grants; 36% source from crowd funding; 29% sourced through debt financing, and 14% are able to access loan to fund the business.

The survey, conducted found that the product range of handicrafts produced in the Western Cape is very diverse. However, it was estimated that the dominant product types in the craft market include: Jewellery 24%; textiles 18%; ceramics 16%; woodcraft 15%; painting 11%; toys 9%, and fashion accessories - bags, belts, hats, etc 7%. Many interviewees believed that the handicraft industry is an extremely innovative industry, and by itself can act as a test marketer of innovative ideas, which could be produced on a larger scale in the future. Innovation is a nature of handicraft production. Innovation and design in the craft industries are important for overcoming barriers to international trade and experiencing a long-term economic.

Handicraft micro-enterprises can reduce poverty if supported and manage for sustainability. In South Africa, one of the ways for human resources development is through micro-enterprise, through informal training, which skills are attained through apprenticeship and training. The survey shows the result of some of the craftsmen, that is, 18% are willing of having formal education and 52% skilled training while 30% believe they need an entrepreneurial training, which could provide them with the capability of managing the business and developing their career in the future. It can be seen that most of the craftsmen have used the learning and training medium to acquire valued knowledge and ability and have proceeded on to establish the handicraft businesses on by themselves. With the research result, a revealing majority of the craftsmen as youth is something promising. The handicraft sectors can in the future indisputably be the main income provider for the majority of South Africans. This is on account of the available formal sector which can only employ a restricted number of the economically active workforce (Agyapong, 2010). Therefore, if more of the South African youths are involved in handicraft micro-enterprises, then the unemployment situation will be reduced to some extent.

Defeating poverty involves, creating employment and income generating opportunities for the youth. According to Jitsuda (2010) handicrafts contributes to rural poverty alleviation through employment and income generation, and by generating economic growth. Additionally, the study is essential because it argued that handicrafts have significant potential for accelerating job creation and supporting youth development and sustainable livelihoods.

The majority of the crafters has an average dependant of one to five people, this shows that they could be able to provide for their family members from their businesses. This corresponds with the amount of income they generate daily on their business. The money earned from micro-enterprises is not a salary, but most times are the only source of income the households have (Eversole, 2003). If the crafters could through their business enjoy some form of income, that means they will be able to afford some basic necessities of life for their families and that will help in poverty alleviation (Agyapong, 2010).The study shows that handicraft micro-enterprise have high potentials to speedily increase income by means of direct employment for the crafters. The crafters could not have remained in their businesses till now, as they evidently specified that handicraft business was a profitable venture.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

This section proposes some recommendation and policy proposals that are developed from the study analysis.

### **Developing the Handicraft Industries as a Means of Accelerating Youth Employment**

Development strategies must recognise the youth as important stakeholders in the development process. Therefore, as emphasised in this study, employment creation strategies should take into consideration unemployment multidimensional nature through handicraft multi-sectoral intervention. There is a need for continuous promotion of projects, to enhance the development of handicraft products in order to; paves a way for the marginalised youth to develop merchantable skills, to protect their cultural heritage and strengthen their sense of direction and confidence. Reducing poverty does not only mean increasing the scope of economic and social options available to individual, but also comprises empowering the youth and increasing their level of contribution to the development process. This will also allow concentration on social integration at the community, municipal, provincial and national levels.

In order to create a democratic system that supports the creation of partnerships, networks and inter-group bonds, there is the need to develop policies on handicraft products at a provincial and national level. This is highly required to encourage long-term investment strategies, support to crafters, and developing a good action plan for economic development and good governance. Therefore, to support the handicraft sectors, employment generation policies based on the following actions must be implemented; the marginalised youths must have access to training, semi and low-skilled handicraft workers must have access to information, communication facilities and markets where they can sell their products and micro-finance facilities must be increased. Proper implementation of this can develop awareness and inspire interest in handicrafts sectors.

### **Policy Recommendations**

Poverty alleviation through employment generation in the handicraft industries should be performed both at the institutional/policy as well as local/capacity-building levels. At the institutional level, this may include improving the policy and legal framework, with the aim of facilitating the creation of new jobs. At the local level, this may include technical, technology, marketing and promotion, management and networking training for handicraft workers. This recommendation is proposed to increase employment among youth to assist them to generate a sustainable livelihood. Ministries functioning in the capacities of education, culture, and micro-enterprises need to place emphasis on youth issues in creating a more organised institutional environment. The different provinces should engage more in the direction of implementing a policy that encourages youth to engage in professional training that would support them to increase their economic independence.

At the institutional level, the development agencies should help to address poverty alleviation in a structured way to balance the work at national level. This is to facilitate handicraft workers in networking with national, provincial and international business affiliations, to help generate a sustainable sector that provides employment for the youths. The agencies should work towards establishing entrepreneurial networking that is essential to facilitate information, marketing, technologies, raw materials and advertisement pertinent to the sustainability and improvement of the micro-enterprises. Also, creating handicraft councils to facilitate networking amongst craft workers will help them in producing quality products on a large scale.

Government agencies should likewise pay more attention to providing basic infrastructure, for instance, roads, water and electricity facilities, to support handicraft business activities particularly in the rural area. Doing this will address the shortage in publicity, promotion, marketing and awareness of handicraft programmes/events, and will enable the Department of Tourism to generate craft events and projects to give youths more confidence to produce and sell their products. However, handicrafts sector initiatives have not been included at a full level in the local development plans and should be given more consideration. Strategies to implement mutual beneficial local development plans need to be institutionalised in the rules and regulations that govern local economic development.

The organisations that promote handicraft development needs to create more awareness by circulating information on training, workshops, projects, seminars and other income generating opportunities available to the youth, especially in the rural areas. This will help in promoting a handicraft village where crafters locally and internationally come together to interact skillfully on manufacturing and marketing their products. This can also be done by introducing handicraft education in the school curriculum of formal education, teaching material, books can help to address preservation and sustainability of handicrafts sectors and cultural value of the community. It will, therefore involve the youth to participate in matters that affect the communities and make them dedicated as cultural partners.

There is a need to improve access to credit as the best way to empower the youth and increase their income generation opportunities, i.e. micro-finance. It is essential for the financial institutions to provide credit facilities to the crafters to support the development of their businesses, and also of the handicraft sectors.

At the local level, an intervention in the form of projects targeted to increase employment for the youth to help them generate sustainable livelihood are proposed. This calls for capacity building intervention. Creating a craft education programs for school drop outs in the local communities will help develop creativity, self-fulfilment and sense of belongings. Creating a training centre for the craft market is important. This will also create attention to the protection of intellectual properties and securing indigenous/traditional cultural products from vanishing. A good training should be provided for marketing and promotional methods. Through this, the youths will be encouraged to be more involved in production and sales, and to relate easily within their environment. Lastly, the youth will have the opportunity for networking, dignity and self-confidence. They will be able to network among themselves and operate a joint business together with brand names to promote their products. The government and other international organisations could support in creating a craft centre for local, national and international trade.

## CONCLUSION

The focus of this study is handicraft micro-enterprises and its primary aim were to investigate a sample of crafter and other business supporters in Western Cape Province of South Africa in order to examine the viability of the business for the youth, towards solving the problem of unemployment nationwide. This study is considered important because there is a rising emphasis on handicrafts in South Africa, from individuals, non-governmental and governmental organisations. Stevens (2007) state a reason for this speedy intervention: because crafts are an essential aspect of the development of micro businesses that are required if the South African economy is to experience fast growth; they can contribute to employment and generate job opportunities; and they are also part of a growing national heritage in the arts.

Handicraft industries can contribute to poverty alleviation through income generation and employment creation. This study will assist governments to identify that handicraft industries have a constructive economic value in addition to their cultural nature. With this twofold character, the support for handicraft industries should enhance the traditional sustenance for culture by planning and executing integrated economic policies to support the enhancement of their development potential, to address the constraints and barriers to growth existing in different components of the system.

Oyekunle (2015a), resolve that: "In the near future, the crafts sector can be built through a social process whereby: large number of people can engage in its profession as a means of livelihood; capacity-building to promote the quality of the work; and capacity measure to develop entrepreneurial and marketing skills." Conclusively, the major features of the Western Cape handicraft sector include: accelerating the business growth of emerging youth who ventured into handicraft micro-enterprises; improving efficiency and effectiveness of national/provisional government and other support services; providing youths with diverse opportunities and training for artistic and creative expression and personal growth

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