

# Effectiveness of Vocational Training Incubation Centres in Creating Sustainable Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province

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**Abstract:** This mixed methods research used a multiple-case study with multilevel concurrent mixed sampling technique guided by a theoretical framework of Hackett and Dilts's real options-driven theory of business incubation to explore the effectiveness of Vocational training incubation centers in creating sustainable SMEs in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province. Open and closed-ended questionnaires plus interview were employed for generating data from 20 participants (Vocational trainers and Principals or Heads of Departments). This study revealed that Bulawayo Vocational training incubation centres facilitated incubatees/trainees with business knowledge, skills and information services for them to start their own sustainable SMEs through the use of lectures, modules, hand-outs and inadequate practical lessons only. Results from the study also revealed that most of the Vocational training incubation centres failed to facilitate incubatees with educational centres like universities, colleges and industries as co-working spaces to create skilled and sustainable SMES. This study revealed that Vocational training incubation centres were not significantly effective in establishing sustainable SMEs due to inadequate business incubation skills and knowledge, lack of space and facilities for incubatees, poor linkages with internal and external network, lack of seed funds for incubatees and inconsistent support from stakeholders such as government, professional and skilled entrepreneurs, financial institutions and educational institutions. The study recommended that there is need for the government to link Vocational training centres with scientific institutions, international research centres, financial institutions, polytechnic colleges, universities and entrepreneur expertise to engineer the facilitation of sustainable SMEs in the country. There is need for the government to support Vocational training incubation centres' initiatives with grants, soft loans and inputs to empower the effective facilitation of creating sustainable SMEs. There is a need for local city council to provide Vocational training incubation centres with enough space or big stands for incubatees to ensure the success of incubated start-ups hence effective facilitation of sustainable SMEs.

**Key words:** Vocational Training Incubation Centres, Vocational training, Trainers, Trainees, Sustainable Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Facilitation of sustainable SMEs.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe's economy has declined rapidly to a point where the country ranks among the poorest economic performers in the region due to poor quality small to medium enterprises. Bulawayo, once the industrial hub of Zimbabwe has also been hit hard as small to medium enterprises have either been closed or abandoned (Mubaiwa, 2020) despite the provision of entrepreneurship skills by Vocational training incubation centres to the youth (Magaisa & Matipira, 2017; Mandengenda, 2016). Entrepreneurship is the practice of discovering, creating, enacting and evaluating business opportunities to create goods and services (Bruneel, Ratinho, Clarysse & Groen, 2012; Marjanova, Sofijanov, Davcev, & Temjanovski, 2015) as nurtured by Vocational training incubation centres. Vocational training incubation is a programme targeted at developing or training entrepreneurs through an array of support services until they are strong (Majoni, Mutunhu, & Chaderopa, 2016; Obaji, Onyemerela & Olugu, 2015) and sufficiently mature to flourish on their own (Barugahara, Maumbe, and Nzaro, 2017). Vocational training is viewed as one of the basic requirements of starting and running sustainable SMEs (Ladzani & Van Vuuren, 2002). Thus, Vocational training incubation centres are seen as a means to stimulate increased levels of sustainable SMEs and economic activity (Farashah, 2013; Mandengenda, 2016; Martinez, A. C., Levie, J., Kelly, D. J., SaeMundsson, R. J. & Schott, 2010). Education from Vocational training incubation centres plays a crucial role in the facilitation and development of sustainable SMEs (Benassi, Durazzi, Fortwengel, 2020; Mandengenda, 2016; Winarno, Wijijayanti, Agustina, Churiyah & Basuki, 2019). Small to medium sized firms dominate developing economies, including Zimbabwe, in terms of self-employment and number of SMEs but their full potential remains untapped despite their graduation from Vocational training incubation centres (Ayatse, Kwahar & Iyortsuun, 2017; Mubaiwa, 2020; Sibanda, 2016; Zindiye, Chiliya & Masocha, 2012). Vocational training incubation centres in Zimbabwe continue

to churn out graduates every year who cannot sustain their SMEs (Mubaiwa, 2020; Barugahara et al, 2017; Sibanda, 2016). SMEs in Zimbabwe are not expanding and do not survive for more than 5 years (Amoah, Samuel & Richardson, 2014; Majukwa, 2019; Pindiriri & Mubayi, 2011). Therefore, where is the problem? Is there something wrong with the Vocational training incubation centres in Zimbabwe? Could it be the Vocational trainers who are not well trained or there is something wrong with the training methods? The effectiveness and efficacy of Vocational training incubation centres in creating sustainable start-ups and SMEs raised a number of questions in relation to their facilitation and challenges hence the study.

#### *Statement of the problem*

Zimbabwe is experiencing a deep socio-economic crisis despite the provision of entrepreneurship skills by Vocational training incubation centres to the youth. The main issues are the lack of sustainable SMEs and limited opportunities for entrepreneurship amongst Vocational training graduates. There is a mismatch between skills acquired from Vocational training centres and the SME occupations subsequently taken up by the graduates (Pindiriri & Mubayi, 2011). Very few graduates have the capacity to run the meaningful SMEs (Magaisa & Matipira (2017) but the quality of entrepreneurship is very poor and often fragile (Gukurume, 2018). Some SMEs in Zimbabwe are not growing and do not survive longer than 5 years (Majoni et al, 2016; Majukwa, 2019). Therefore, persistence of high failure rate and poor quality SMEs despite the provision of entrepreneurship skills by Vocational training incubation centres motivated this study to explore and evaluate the effectiveness of Vocational training incubation centres in creating sustainable SMEs in Bulawayo Metropolitan province.

#### *Sub-Research Questions*

1. How do Vocational training incubators facilitate the establishment of sustainable SMES?
2. What are the challenges faced by Vocational training incubators in facilitating the establishment of sustainable SMEs?
3. Which are the suggested strategies to promote effective Vocational training incubator facilitation of sustainable SMEs?

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The exploration of the effectiveness of Vocational training incubation centres in creating sustainable SMEs in Bulawayo Metropolitan province was informed by Hackett and Dilts's real options-driven theory of business incubation. Kemp (2013) maintained that to generate data, interpret findings and evaluate the effectiveness of Vocational training incubation centres in the process of developing sustainable SMEs needs a frame of reference like Hackett and Dilts's real options-driven theory. In a Vocational training incubation centre context, Hackett and Dilts's real options-driven perspective

views resource infusions, training methodology, monitoring and assistance as option exercises to create and develop sustainable SMEs (Hackett & Dilts, 2008; Hackett & Dilts, 2004a; Trigerorgis & Reuer, 2017).

This framework offered the best available lens for capturing the operational setting and underlying logic that drove the incubation process of selection, monitoring and assistance, and resource infusion in the creation of sustainable SMEs (Kemp, 2013; Hackett & Dilts, 2004b; Posza, 2019). Therefore, the effectiveness of Vocational training incubation centres in creating sustainable SMEs was achieved due to their real option of selection, training, monitoring and assistance, and resource infusion to establish sustainable SMEs. Thus, the Vocational training centre's ability to select the suitable trainee, the quality of training or monitoring and assistance, the level of financial or material resources and networks to create the sustainable SMEs were explored (Hackett & Dilts, 2008; Hackett & Dilts, 2004a; Kemp, 2013).

This options driven formed the nucleus of the framework to assist the study to establish the effectiveness of the Vocational training incubation centres in creating sustainable SMEs in Bulawayo Province. The framework explains that the real options of Vocational training incubation centers signify an incubation performance to create sustainable SMEs (Hackett & Dilts, 2008; Posza, 2019; Trigerorgis & Reuer, 2017). If there is a gap in any of the Vocational training incubation performance (unavailability of incubator assistance and support, lack of financial resources, space and networks) the result will be a short circuit (challenges in facilitating the establishment of sustainable SMEs) hence the creation of sustainable SMEs is not significantly effective. The assumption here is that, an occurrence of a short circuit at any stage of the Vocational training incubation procedure would result in a major disruption of incubation process in the creation of sustainable SMEs (Posza, 2019; Hackett & Dilts, 2004b). Thus, any challenge or problem (major disruption) experienced faced by Vocational training incubation centres in facilitating the creation of sustainable SMEs would evaluate the effectiveness of Vocational training incubation centres in creating sustainable SMEs in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province.

#### *Facilitation of Vocational training incubators in the establishment of sustainable SMEs*

Studies in developed and developing countries revealed that Vocational training incubation centres must seriously look into utilizing educational and information centres (such as universities, colleges and industrial expertise) as co-working spaces for the internship of their trainees/incubatees to establish sustainable SMEs (Al-Mubarak, 2013; Munkongsujarit, 2016; Mubaiwa, 2020; Knopp, 2012; OECD, 2013). According to Barugahara (2017) and Bubou & Okrigwe (2011) Vocational training centres provides undergraduate students with an opportunity to run a business

during their training. Thus, the Vocational incubation program should provide an opportunity to gain hands-on experience in an entrepreneurial environment through training in real-world business situations (Farashah, 2013; Zindiye et al, 2012). Some studies from developed and developing countries present that Vocational training incubation centres must be able to link up its trainees/incubates with entrepreneur expertise, business and information networks and, funding institutions to facilitate sustainable SMEs (Davies, 2009; Herrera-Restrepo & Triantis, 2018; Mubaiwa, 2020).

To establish sustainable SMEs, Vocational training incubation centres facilitate mentorship services on business administration, financial risks and business innovation to their internship incubates/trainees through the use of experienced and knowledgeable professional entrepreneurs (Barughara et al, 2017; Fernandez-Fernandez, Blanco Jiménez, & Cuadrado Roura, 2015; Lukes, Longo, & Zouhar, 2019). In some developed and developing countries, Vocational training incubation offer coaching and mentoring services on access to a network of support businesses specializing in marketing, business planning and management skills, legal and accounting, low-cost leases and office services to develop sustainable SMEs (Al-Mubarak, 2013; Chandra, He & Fealey, 2007; Stefanovic, Devedzic and Eric, 2008). In developed countries, Vocational training business incubators facilitate the effective establishment of sustainable SMEs by providing financial support such as seed loans or seeding capital to start their SMEs (Barughara et al, 2017; Davies, 2009; Salem, 2014; Skaik, 2013).

#### *Challenges faced by Vocational training incubators in facilitating the establishment of sustainable SMEs*

A number of researchers noted that Vocational training incubation centres, especially in the developing countries, had inadequate incubation skills and knowledge to effectively facilitate sustainable SMEs (OECD, 2014; Hutabarat & Pandin, 2014; Lose & Tengeh, 2015). Vocational training incubation centres lacked the fundamental skills to establish the sustainable SMEs (Lee, 2016; Magaisa & Matipira, 2017). Thus, teaching in Vocational training incubation centres was too theoretical and skills training was generalised rather than specialised hence deterred effective creation of sustainable SMEs. This study believes that there was under-supply of specialised practical skills required to develop sustainable SMEs. A number of studies present that lack of support from stakeholders such as government, financial institutions, professional and skilled entrepreneurs was one of the challenges threatened Vocational training incubators' development of sustainable SMEs (Qawasmi, 2010; Ramraj, 2018; Winarno et al, 2019). Thus, inconsistent support to the Vocational training incubation centres affects the effective creation of sustainable SMEs (Buys & Mbewana, 2007; Matlay, 2008; Zapata-Guerrero, Ayup & Mayer-Granados, 2020).

Vocational training incubators from developing countries faced a challenge of fund shortages and did not have seed funds for their incubates to facilitate and establish the sustainable SMEs (Farashah, 2013; InfoDev, 2010; Kirsty, 2010; Ramukumba, 2014). They failed to obtain funds from investors, banking institutions and the government to empower the creation of sustainable SMEs (Martinez et al, 2010; OECD, 2013; Ramraj, 2018). Limited technology was one of the challenges faced by Vocational training incubators in facilitating the establishment of sustainable SMEs in South Africa (Benassi et al, 2020; Bobsin, Petrini, & Pozzebon,, 2019; Ladzani & Van Vuuren, 2002; Nayak, Panigrahi, Das & Neurgaonka, 2019). Impliedly, technology was highly lagging with very few computers in training centres.

Surveys by Skaik (2013) and White & Kawasmi (2010) in Palestine discovered that the number of Vocational incubators in Gaza strips were affected by economic and political factors in the facilitation of sustainable SMEs. Access to business network like professional entrepreneurs, financial institutions, and educational institutions as mentors was one of the main challenges faced by Vocational training incubators in facilitating the establishment of sustainable SMEs in developing countries (Pindiriri & Mubayi, 2011; Beats, 2013; Rideout & Gray, 2013). This implies that access to attachments, financial help and entrepreneurship knowledge was very limited because of the poor linkages with networks to guarantee a high quality of creating sustainable SMEs.

#### *Suggested strategies to improve effective Vocational training incubator facilitation on the establishment of sustainable SMEs*

Various studies suggested that it is highly important for the governments to stimulate donors and financial institutions towards supporting Vocational training incubators' initiatives in order to create sustainable SMEs (Farashah, 2013; OECD, 2014; Winarno et al, 2019). There is a need to for Vocational training incubators to widen the skills and knowledge base of trainers to achieve effective facilitation of sustainable SMEs (Kasem, 2007; OECD, 2013). Thus, Vocational training centres need to work on developing and improving incubation trainers' innovation and research skills as well as supportive skills to improve effective facilitation of sustainable SMEs (Lee, 2016; OECD, 2014)

Other studies recommended that Vocational training incubation centres need to work on providing working spaces within a Vocational training centre to ensure the success of incubated start-ups hence effective facilitation of sustainable SMEs (Farashah, 2013). Green Business and environmentally friendly vocational business for incubates should be provided by the training centre to develop qualified and sustainable SMEs (Skaik, 2013; Zindiye et al, 2012). Some researchers suggested that linking Vocational training incubators with scientific institutions, international research centres, financial institutions, universities and entrepreneur

expertise empowers the facilitation of sustainable SMEs in developing countries (Herrera-Restrepo & Triantis, 2018; Tengeh and Choto, 2015; InfoDev, 2010; Winarno et al, 2019). Vocational training incubators play the vital role to bridge the gap between their trainees and universities or academic sectors, financial institutions and entrepreneur expertise to integrate research and development hence creation of sustainable SMEs (Tembe, 2018; Skaik, 2013).

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### Research Approach

This study used mixed methods approach where the researchers combined quantitative and qualitative paradigms and techniques in a single study (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Tichapondwa, 2013; Creswell, 2013; Maree, 2007) to explore the effectiveness of Vocational Training incubation centres in creating sustainable SMEs in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province. It allowed the researchers to achieve data triangulation (use of multiple data sources), methods triangulation (use of multiple research methods) and investigator triangulation (use of multiple researchers) which offered a more comprehensive approach to find answers to the research questions (Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

#### Research Design

The multiple-case study was used in this study because it allowed the researchers to gain greater insight of the topic by concurrently studying multiple cases, for instance, Vocational trainers and Principals or HODs (Creswell, 2013; Johnson & Christensen, 2014; McMillan and Schumacher, 2010). Multiple-case study also allowed the researchers of this study to generate a variety of Vocational training participant perspectives (Yin, 2011) over the effectiveness of Vocational Training incubation centres in creating sustainable SMEs in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province.

#### Sample

The sample was drawn from a target population of 60 Vocational trainers and 15 Administrators (Principals or Head of departments - HODs) from Bulawayo Metropolitan province. The Vocational trainers were used in this study because they experienced the training and incubation process of creating sustainable SMEs. Principals and HODs as Vocational training incubation administrators, were directly involved with the supervision and monitoring of the facilitation and creation of sustainable SMEs. The chosen sample was made up of 16 purposively snowballed selected Vocational trainers who voluntarily responded to the closed-ended questionnaires and 4 Vocational training administrators (Principals or HODs), determined by data saturation principle, who also participated in the interviews. Therefore, the sample size of 20 participants was influenced by multilevel concurrent mixed sampling technique in which quantitative and qualitative samples were obtained, approximately at the same time, from different levels of the population under the study (Johnson and Christensen, 2014).

Thus, this study used Vocational trainers for the quantitative phase and their administrators for the qualitative phase hence data from both were combined, interpreted and thematically analysed at the same time.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Facilitation of Vocational training incubators in the establishment of sustainable SMEs

The results from closed-ended questionnaires are presented in the table 1 below:

Table 1. Table showing Trainers' responses on their Vocational training centres' facilitation in the creation of sustainable SMEs in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province

$N = 16$

Possible answers: Vocational training centres facilitate the creation of sustainable SMEs by providing:	Agree	Disagree	Not sure
Business knowledge, skills and information services	15(94%)	1 (6%)	0 (0%)
Educational centres like universities and polytechnic colleges as co-working spaces to sharpen their SMEs skills.	2 (14%)	13 (80%)	1 (6%)
Industrial attachment at entrepreneurial industries as to develop their hands on knowledge and skills.	1 (6%)	12 (75%)	3 (19%)
An opportunity to run a small business during their training	0 (0%)	14 (86%)	2 (14%)

Table 1 illustrated that Bulawayo Vocational training incubation centres facilitated incubatees/trainees with business knowledge, skills and information services for them to start their own sustainable SMEs. This agreed with results from the interviews which emphasised that such facilitation was done through the use of lectures, modules, hand-outs and inadequate practical lessons only. This is evidenced by the participant who said:

*"Yeah, our Vocational trainers use lectures, modules, hand-outs and some practical to provide business knowledge and skills on how to start and run their SMEs".*

The above findings failed to concur with results from some studies which presented that Vocational training incubation centres facilitated their trainees with knowledge on business administration, financial risks and business innovation through the use of experienced and knowledgeable professional entrepreneurs (Barugahara et al, 2017; Fernandez-Fernandez et al, 2015; Lukes et al, 2019), and facilitated their trainees with information services on access to a network of support businesses specializing in marketing, business planning and management skills, legal and accounting, low-cost leases and office services to develop sustainable SMEs (Al-Mubarak, 2013; Chandra et al, 2007; Stefanovic et al, 2008).

Table 1 also showed that most of the Vocational training incubation centres failed to facilitate incubatees/trainees with educational centres like universities, polytechnic colleges;

industrial attachment and, with an opportunity to run a small business during their training to sharpen their SMEs skills. This agreed with results from interviews which reflected that their Vocational training centres had some difficulties in linking their trainees with educational institutions, in facilitating industrial attachment and in providing trainees with an opportunity to run a small business during their training to sharpen their SMEs skills. This is evidenced by the participants who said:

*“Truly speaking, we are having some difficulties to link our trainees with educational institutions such as legal requirements, affiliation conditions, costs and incapacity to match them”*

*“The truth is that industrial attachment or internship conditions of available entrepreneurial organisations are not favourable to us the Vocational training incubation centres hence affected our facilitation in the establishment of sustainable SMEs”*

*“To be honest enough, our Vocational training centre space is too small and it is difficult for our trainees to run their small businesses during training until they are qualified except using practical and theory lessons”.*

The above findings failed to concur with some studies that Vocational training incubation centres must utilize educational and information centres (such as universities, colleges and industrial expertise) as co-working spaces for the internship of their trainees/incubatees to establish sustainable SMEs (Al-Mubarak, 2013; Munkongsujarit, 2016; Mubaiwa, 2020; Knopp, 2012; OECD, 2013). This also failed to concur with results from Farashah (2013) and Zindiye et al (2012) that the Vocational training centre should provide trainees with an opportunity to gain hands-on experience in an entrepreneurial environment through training in real-world business situations.

*Challenges faced by Vocational training incubators in facilitating the establishment of sustainable SMEs*

The results from closed-ended questionnaires are presented in the table 1 below:

Table 2. Table showing Trainers’ responses on challenges faced by Vocational training incubation centres in the creation of sustainable SMEs in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province

N = 16

Possible responses: challenges faced	Agree	Disagree	Not sure
Inadequate incubation skills and knowledge	12(75%)	4 (25%)	0 (0%)
Lack of inconsistency support from stakeholders	13(80%)	1 (6%)	2 (14%)
Lack of seed funds for incubates/trainees	15(94%)	1 (6%)	0 (0%)
Lack of space and facilities for incubates/trainees	10(63%)	6 (37%)	0 (0%)
Poor linkages with internal and external entrepreneurship network.	14(86%)	0 (0%)	2 (14%)

Table 2 shows that inadequate incubation skills and knowledge was one of the challenges faced by Vocational training centres in facilitating the establishment of sustainable SMEs in Bulawayo Metropolitan. This agree with the findings generated from interviews that Vocational trainers’ lack of incubation skills affected the effective development of sustainable SMEs. This is evidenced by the participants who said;

*“Lack of incubation skills and knowledge is one of the main challenges faced by our Vocational training centres in facilitating the establishment of sustainable SMEs.*

*“Technically, our staff are qualified in their Vocational and Technical skills but they do not have enough business incubation skills. Their training of entrepreneurship skills is too theoretical and generalised rather than specialised hence affected our effective creation of sustainable SMEs”.*

This concur with findings from various researches that Vocational trainers in the developing countries had inadequate incubation skills and knowledge to effectively facilitate sustainable SMEs (OECD, 2014; Hutabarat & Pandin, 2014; Lose & Tengeh, 2015). This reiterated with results from Lee (2016) and Magaisa & Matipira (2017) that teaching of entrepreneurship skills in Vocational training centres was too theoretical and generalised rather than specialised.

The above table 2 also illustrates that establishment of sustainable SMEs in Bulawayo Metropolitan province was affected by inconsistency support from stakeholders. This agreed with interviews which disclosed that Bulawayo Vocational training centres lacked consistency support from stakeholders like government, expertise in entrepreneurship, community, financial institutions, local business and educational institutions. This is evidenced by the participants who said;

*“Truly speaking, our Vocational training Incubation centres do not have consistent support from government, financial institutions, community and local businesses”.*

*“Our vocational incubation centre is failing to secure support from the government, financial institutions, entrepreneurship expertise and even local businesses for effective creation of sustainable SMEs”*

This concur with the findings from Qawasmi (2010), Ramraj (2018) and Winarno et al (2019) that lack of support from stakeholders such as government, financial institutions, professional and skilled entrepreneurs threatened Vocational training centres’ creation of sustainable SMEs. In the same vein, inconsistent support to the Vocational training centres affects the effective creation of sustainable SMEs (Buys & Mbewana, 2007; Matlay, 2008; Zapata-Guerrero et al, 2020).

From table 2, unavailability of seed funds for incubates/trainees affected Vocational training centers in facilitating the establishment of sustainable SMEs in

Bulawayo Metropolitan. In the same spirit, results from interviews revealed the same perception that their Vocational training incubation centres failed to obtain seed funds from investors, banking institutions and the government to facilitate the sustainable new SMEs. This is evidenced by the participants who said;

*“We are failing to secure funds from investors, banking institutions and the government to provide financial services such as seed loans. Moreover, our Vocational training centres do not have a capacity to provide entrepreneurial graduates with seeding capital to start their SMEs hence affecting effective establishment of sustainable SMEs”.*

This concur with the findings from some studies that Vocational training incubators from developing countries did not have seed funds for their incubatees to establish sustainable SMEs (Farashah, 2013; InfoDev, 2010; Kirsty, 2010; Ramukumba, 2014). This reiterated with results from Martinez et al (2010), OECD (2013) and Ramraj (2018) that vocational training centres failed to secure funds from investors, banking institutions and the government for the creation of sustainable SMEs.

According to table 2, findings reflect that lack of space and facilities for incubates/trainees was another critical challenge faced by Vocational training centres in facilitating the establishment of sustainable SMEs. This triangulated with results from the interviews which revealed that their small space or and scarcity of facilities failed to provide their undergraduate incubatees with an opportunity to run a business during their training to gain hands-on experience in an entrepreneurial environment. This is evidenced by the participants who said;

*“To be honest enough, our operational stands are too small for us to provide our vocational trainees with space for their internship until they are qualified SMEs. Our facilities are not even enough for trainees to gain hands on experiences in an entrepreneurial environment”.*

Table 2 illustrates that poor linkages with internal and external entrepreneurship network was one of the main challenges faced by Vocational training incubation centres in facilitating the creation of sustainable SMEs in Bulawayo Metropolitan Province. This agreed with the results generated from interviews which disclosed that Vocational training centres failed to link with internal and external entrepreneurship network hence affected their creating sustainable SMEs. This is evidenced by the participant who said;

*“The big challenge we are facing is poor linkages with internal and external network to get support for effectively facilitating sustainable SMEs in Bulawayo. Our Vocational training incubation centres are failing to connect incubates/trainees with professional entrepreneurs, financial institutions, and educational institutions as mentors hence affecting effective facilitation of sustainable SMEs”.*

This concur with results from studies by Pindiriri & Mubayi (2011), Beats (2013) and Rideout & Gray (2013) that Vocational training incubation centres had problems in accessing external network like professional entrepreneurs, financial institutions, and educational institutions as mentors in facilitating the establishment of sustainable SMEs.

From the Bulawayo Vocational training incubation centres' context, the real and exercise options such as resource infusions, stakeholder support and network linkage provided, monitoring and assistance provided made their facilitation in the establishment of sustainable SMEs as not significantly effective (Hackett & Dilts, 2008; Hackett & Dilts, 2004a). Hackett & Dilts framework explains that the real options of Bulawayo Metropolitan province Vocational training incubation centers signified their level of effectiveness in creating sustainable SMEs (Posza, 2019; Trigerorgis & Reuer, 2017). Since there was a gap in their Vocational training incubation process (inadequate skills and knowledge, poor network, lack of seed fund and inconsistent support from stakeholders), the result was a short circuit (Hackett & Dilts, 2008; Trigerorgis & Reuer, 2017) and concluded that their creation of sustainable SMEs was not significantly effective. The assumption here was that, an occurrence of a short circuit (challenge) at any stage of the Vocational incubation process resulted in a major disruption towards the creation of sustainable SMEs hence evaluated as not significantly effective.

## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concluded that Bulawayo Vocational training incubation centres facilitated trainees with business knowledge, skills and information services through the use of lectures, modules, hand-outs and practical lessons only. The results also concluded that Vocational training incubation centres failed to facilitate trainees with educational centres like universities, colleges and industries as co-working spaces to create sustainable SMES. This study finally concluded that Vocational training incubation centres were not significantly effective in establishing sustainable SMEs due to inadequate business incubation skills and knowledge, lack of space and facilities for incubatees, poor linkages with internal and external network, lack of seed funds for incubatees and inconsistent support from stakeholders such as government, professional and skilled entrepreneurs, financial institutions and educational institutions. Therefore, the study recommended that there is need for the government to link Vocational training incubation centres with scientific institutions, international research centres, financial institutions, polytechnic colleges, universities and entrepreneur expertise to engineer the facilitation of sustainable SMEs in the country. There is need for the government to support Vocational training incubation centres' initiatives with grants, soft loans and inputs to empower the effective facilitation of creating sustainable SMEs. There is a need for local city council to provide Vocational training incubation centres with enough space or

big stands for incubatees to ensure the success of incubated start-ups hence effective facilitation of sustainable SMEs.

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