

# Experience of youth in the National Senior Certificate second chance matric re-write programme

## Abstract

The aim of this study was to determine the experiences of young people who had participated in the National Senior Certificate (NSC) Second Chance Programme previously offered by the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) and handed over to the Department of Basic Education (DBE)<sup>4</sup> in 2016. Second chance education is based on the idea that 'through an organised structure an individual can actualise an educational opportunity missed or failed the first time around. The study applied the techniques of qualitative methodology and was undertaken in the West Rand, Gauteng in South Africa. It was found that the programme had assisted many young people who otherwise would not have been empowered was it not for this second chance to broaden their academic horizon. This study recommended that the programme be continued by the Department of Basic Education which terminated it two years ago.

**Keywords:** matric, second chance programme, individual development, focus groups, employment, holistic approach, attitude change, technical education

Volume 6 Issue 6 - 2022

Maria Mamolifi Mokalake,<sup>1</sup> Bernard Naledzani Rasila<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Development Studies, University of South Africa, South Africa

<sup>2</sup>Limpopo Department of Education, South Africa

**Correspondence:** Maria Mamolifi Mokalake, Development Studies, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa, 11552 Snap Dragon Crescent Kagiso EXT 6 1754, Johannesburg, South Africa, Email Mamolifimokalake@gmail.com

**Received:** September 09, 2022 | **Published:** November 24, 2022

## Introduction

One of the priorities of the new democratic South African government is to focus on youth development. The government even dedicated a public holiday meant to recognise and appreciate the need for development of young people. Every June 16th, the government addresses young people from different corners of the country through gatherings in the stadium and during the whole month, the youth is reminded about how important they are for building the country as young and future leaders. It is in this regard that the government established the National Youth Development Agency.<sup>1</sup>

To push the agenda of youth development which was youth activist-led within policy frameworks in government the National Youth Council (NYC) and South African Youth Council (SAYC) were established in 1996 and 1997 respectively.<sup>2</sup> In order to enhance young people's participation in the economy, the NYD came up with a cluster of various activities.<sup>1</sup> The interventions by the NYDA had the intention to support youth with varying age groups. Regardless of other interventions, education was found and still remains the key intervention to realize the potential of the youth and better their future.<sup>2</sup>

Making sure that youth get quality education and skills whether in or out of school became the Key Performance Area (KPA) for NYDA. The argument was that it was quite necessary for young people to attain skills that would enable them to have a better life in the future. This then saw NYDA changing its initial goals. Efforts were directed to shift from skills development and enterprise finance to education. This development was established in May 2009.<sup>1</sup> In 2014 South Africa saw the initiation of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) Second Chance program which came as a result of joint efforts between Education Training Development Practitioner (ETDP) and Sector Education Training Authority (SETA). At that time, the country had already seen the rise in numbers of young people failing matric and this initiation was to counter the problem through provision of second chance education programs. From the nine provinces in South Africa, the program had a target number of 4500 young South Africans.<sup>1</sup>

As far as the matric pass rate in South Africa is concerned, there have been fluctuations between 78.2 and 75.8% over the last six years (SANews).<sup>3</sup> When taking a closer look per province, Gauteng to be specific, the numbers have been changing between 87.9 and 84.2% (Department of Education Technical Report). When compared with the aim of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) which is a 100% pass rate, these pass rates are slightly below. An assessment of the average pass rate shows that in the last 10 years, the average pass rate has been 78.2% which is quite a disappointing figure when compared against the expectations of the DBE.

Nonetheless, in January 2016 after being driven as an initiative of the NYDA for 2 years, the second chance program was taken over by the National Department of Basic Education (DBE). Mathematics, Mathematical Literacy, Physical Science, Life Science, Business Studies, Geography, and Economics became the focus of the program under the management of the DBE.<sup>4</sup> Under the management of the DBE, the second chance program proved that it had positive effect as was seen with the 2016 overall results across the nine provinces. A pass rate shift from 70.7 to 72.1% was seen between 2015 and 2016.<sup>4</sup> The arguments observed here serve as a foundation of understanding from beneficiaries, the experiences of youths who have taken part in the National Senior Certificate second chance matric re-write DBE programme in Westrand, Gauteng Province.

## Literature review

### Structure and administration of the South African education sector

The three levels that make up the South African education are inclusive of tertiary, secondary and elementary. Higher education, secondary education and elementary education used to be managed by the National Department of Education and that was before 2009. Having centralized governance of education proved to be a challenge and this led to the government making an initiative whereby its focus was on post-secondary education.<sup>5</sup> The creation of the Department of Basic Education further enabled the government to channel its effort on other educational systems while elementary and secondary

education was overseen by the DBE. Academic institutions concerned with post-secondary education report to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).<sup>5</sup>

Substantial recourses have been devoted towards education by the black led South African govern in an effort to redress the effects apartheid of education. 6% of the country's GDP which accounted for 19.7% of the country's total budget was channelled towards education in 2013. Provincial governments through the DBE manage elementary and secondary schools and the lion's share of the national education budget is allotted to them. Elementary and secondary schools received a lump sum of 57.7% from the national education budget in 2013/14 financial year but this investment drop with the passage of time as more investment was channelled towards post-secondary education.<sup>6</sup>

The efforts by the government to channel resources towards the education system particularly secondary education from which a lot of youth benefit indicate that the government acknowledges that there is a problem with the education system. In as much as these efforts may seem inadequate, they point to a future of South Africa with an educated and empowered youth contributing to the growth of the economy.

### The basics of secondary education

The characteristics of secondary education are that it is divided into two clusters, lower and upper secondary whereby grade 7 to 9 represent lower secondary and grade 10 to 12 represent upper secondary. Every school going person is mandated by right to access education until grade 9. With a total of 27.5 classroom time in every week, learners at lower secondary receive lessons in economics and management sciences, mathematics, life orientation, social science, arts and culture and language.<sup>6</sup>

Grade 10-12 is considered as upper secondary or FET and is not compulsory for any learner. Passing grade 9 is the prerequisite to entering the FET phase. The hours of classroom time at this level are equivalent to the hours at the other phases which is 27.5 hours in a week. FET is further divided into two clusters which include academic (general) and technical and depending on the abilities of the student they are streamed into either one of the two. The two clusters at FET level also determine the degree program that a student will opt for at University level.

Seven subjects are required of every student at FET phase. Of the seven subjects, there are four mandatory which every student takes regardless of whether they are academic or technical. Mathematics, life orientation and two official languages are what characterize the mandatory subjects. The kind of mathematics that students take as a subject is also dependant on the cluster whether it is academic or technical. Whether a student will graduate or not, the decision is solely on the basis of the final matric examinations. There are accredited institutions that offer grade 13 or gap year for students whose marks are not adequate to get them into degree or diploma granting institutions.

In the final year of secondary education, the number of drop-outs increase drastically compared to any other level of education. Statistics are indicative of the fact that without completing matric, the annual approximate number of dropouts is close or just above 1 million young individuals. The given statistics in these sections further substantiate the intention of this study to evaluate the experiences of students who benefited from the DBE NSC Second Chance Matric re-write program.

### The complex picture of high school completion

Irrespective of the challenges in the attainment of education, the rate at which students complete secondary education in South when

compared to other African countries has become better over the years. In fact an increase from 39.6% to 48.5% of South Africans with secondary education and are older than 25 was noted between 2005 and 2015. Countries whose economic development is at the same level with South Africa however have better statistics as it relates to the completion of secondary education.

Out of 562 112 students who sat for NSC examination in 2013 only 439 779 students did well achieving a 78.2% pass rate. This seemingly high pass rate when analysed in the context of high school dropout rates particularly at senior and matriculation phase it shows low completion rates of upper-secondary education. Upper-secondary students who dropped out of school between grade 10 and 11 in 2015 totalled 50%.

There are students who achieve results that are favourable for post-secondary education and not all of them get admitted. When put together, those who pass with sufficient marks only represent a third of the entire student population that sits for matriculation. A mere 19.4% marked the post-secondary education enrolment in 2014. An assessment of the number of students who graduate after every 3 or 4 years highlights that only half of those who initially enrol for post-secondary education actually get to finish.

### An overview of second chance programmes

A plethora of factors are at play which ultimately leads to some young people leaving education earlier than they should. There is a worldwide consensus that school leavers deserve to be awarded a second chance at education which is why second chance education programs are in existence. Considering that most young people who wish to return to school do so at a time when it is difficult to sit in a normal classroom, second chance education programs are designed in such a manner that does not follow the conventional norms.

Blended learning, late night schools and use of online platforms are some of the characteristics of second chance education programs that allow young people a chance at education without causing much distraction into their daily normal lives. There is a stigma associated with being in a classroom where the majority of students are younger than a person trying to score a chance at education for the second time. For this reason, second chance education programs are designed in such a manner that there is no prejudice. The methodology used in the delivering of education is very different when compared to a normal classroom.

Through the adoption of formal learning and multi-professional case management approach, there is in existence second chance education programs that aim to assist students with barriers to learning such as health or housing problems. The adoption and synergy of these two approaches allows for one to tackle their barrier to learning while getting the education they need.<sup>6</sup> The approach used in these programs appear to be formal but they are tailor made to meet the varying needs of the recipients of the education and most young people find this to be a considerate factor. Getting back into mainstream education or directly into employment are two of the major goals behind second chance education program.<sup>7</sup> Developing an interest in learning is the initial stage to which recipients of second chance education are exposed to.

Public employment services often use second chance education as activation initiatives for young people. The participation of the community in second chance education programs and initiatives contribute to the success of the programs and many young people find it easier to get involved.<sup>6</sup>

In order to make the programs more successful, management often takes a gradual process which starts off with soft skills and the building

of a relationship and trust between the teacher and students. Due to the fact that second chance programs are inclusive of a range of initiatives that do not only involve classroom time, a range of staff with varying skills is involved.<sup>7</sup> Social workers, healthcare professionals and other professionals whose work and interest concern young people are also involved in second chance education programs. This is on the basis that they usually have expert opinion on what the young people need and are in constant contact with young people who may need to go through second chance education.

According to Khudu-Petersen and Mamvuto<sup>8</sup> these programs are an alternative of mainstream education in that they offer the same education but in a more flexible way. The flexibility of the program is seen particularly on the number of students who enroll, the timetables they use for learning as well the approaches used by teachers when delivering content.<sup>7</sup>

A comparison of mainstream education and second chance education programs clearly indicates that both of them offer almost the same content but the environments in which the learning is conducted is a major difference. Creating friendly environments in which mutual respect exist is the core of second chance education programs. Confiding in staff about real or perceived learning challenges becomes possible when the students feel respected and seen. In fact, some of the students struggled to learn because of the institutionalized nature of schools and hence the environment in which second chance education is given becomes a key factor towards the success of those students. More so, consideration of the psychological well-being, emotional and physical well-being is given under second chance education program though this is dependent on a student to-student basis.<sup>8</sup> Young people for a various factors are not always forthcoming when second chance education programs are introduced hence in some cases professionals like social workers are used to enroll students. The option of the mentioned professional is valuable as they can not only recruit but, in some cases, identify the barriers that stand in the way of some learners. Alongside teaching staff, social and healthcare professionals offer support services and counselling which is necessary for some but not all students.<sup>8</sup>

In an effort to make sure that approach is holistic, social and emotional support is required as key competences among the teaching staff who are employed for second chance education programs. Other initiatives common with second chance education programs include mentorship and coaching. In order to make sure those students can participate in formal environments, mentorship and coaching becomes a necessity. The approach used on each student going through second chance education is not only informed by the barriers that a particular student has but also by the level at which they dropped out of school and the number of years they were out of school.

Given that a student dropped out of school and got employed then enrolled for second chance education, the program takes consideration of this. Taking into account the knowledge that the student already possess and their interest in life not only makes it easy to teach the student but it also ensures that the student enjoys the process as it is aligned to their interest. The learner's needs, if any exist are noted so that program managers can find a way to address them or outsource help on behalf of the student.<sup>7</sup>

Because employment and development is the end goal, second chance education programs provide accredited qualifications which employers can not only recognize but accept as well. However, not all second chance education programs offer certification that leads to employment but some offer a path back into mainstream education which will ultimately lead to employment. When a young person is

able to change course without having to drop to a lower level then the program is effective.<sup>7</sup> Recommendations to transfer between second chance education programs and mainstream education is not only possible but is of paramount importance and should be made seamless. The synergy between second chance education program and mainstream education allows for students to be treated at workplace and other settings without prejudice.

Synergies with employers allows for students who have never been employed to gain work related learning in specific areas of their choice. When a young person is employed while at the same time receiving education, not only are they able to sustain themselves but their appreciation of education is improved regardless of how that education comes. Local employers understand the local labour market and their involvement in second chance education programs is essential as their knowledge can be integrated in the lessons taught to young people. Engaging with employers sends a message to young people that their efforts are not in vain. For this reason, it cannot be stressed enough that the flexibility of second chance education is necessary and of importance.<sup>7</sup>

Assessing attendant requirements for students under second chance education programs is very important as most of the recipients have unique issues that may hinder their progress. Studies of existing second chance education programs around the globe have brought to light that many recipients are either teen mothers, young people who are recovering from drugs, young people who were once incarcerated and young people from poor backgrounds. An assessment of the different backgrounds where most recipients come from show the need for flexibility for example a teen mother with a child to look after cannot report for learning the same hours as a young person who is working to support his family while pursuing education.

Perceptions regarding second chance education programs have been found to be varying between people. While a straight 'A' student may think that these initiatives are a waste of resources, a young person who dropped out of school because of tuition may consider the initiatives a necessity. Someone who has never had a child may think that these initiatives promote laziness because people know they will be given a second chance but a girl who dropped out of school to raise a child may advocate that these initiatives are quite essential. Opinions surrounding the necessity of second chance education programs need to be spread around because negative opinions make it difficult for potential recipients to enroll for the programs. In some countries, legislation has been passed to accredit institutions that offer second chance education programs and policy makers continue to advocate for more second chance education programs not only in communities but juvenile prisons as well.

## Education and employability

On one hand education is concerned with handing on the beliefs and values of society, that is, with preserving and not with modifying its culture. It will run directly counter to the aims of the existing education system. On the other hand, an education system or curriculum which is based on the findings of modern science and psychology will be concerned- almost by definition- with the process of change." Lewis said, about the purpose of the education that education enables men to understand the world better in which they live, so that they may more fully express their potential capacities, whether spiritual, intellectual or material. The essence of the education is to build human capital. Education increases productivity of labour force leading to increase in economic growth. Employability is defined by Knight and Yorke as a set of achievements, understandings and personal attitudes that make

individuals to gain employment and to be successful in their chosen occupation.

Since independence, different reasons remained behind unemployment in South Africa. It was considered that economic growth will remove unemployment but illiteracy and absence of technical skill were major reasons for unemployment till date.<sup>9</sup> But now even after rapid and high economic growth and expansion of education system, large section of potential labour force is unemployed. In fact the major issue is educated unemployed.<sup>10</sup> Education enables men to learn and understand the environment. Employability demands the attributes of understanding and situational adaptability. A close scrutiny of education scenario in South Africa creates the impression that it has become more technical ignoring human values. High social status of some profession and lower of others imbalances enrolment by students' skill and likings.<sup>11</sup>

Unsuitable selection of education field makes person unemployable. Education makes a person employable if it teaches adaptability. As the level of education goes up from primary to secondary and to higher education, students learn specific subjects and their knowledge become expert in that field but they lose adaptability if they do not get job in the related field.<sup>12</sup>

The other issue of South African contemporary society is social unrest. Education provision by private religious and social trusts narrows students' fraternity definition. This reduces vocational mobility as well.<sup>12</sup>

A close analysis to the employability of students who have passed their graduation and technical education, they are employable outside South Africa. This shows that Higher education of South Africa is technically and qualitatively proved. Therefore there is need to develop South African economy in such a way that educated people do not demand job but they create job for themselves as well as for others too. Again this will require managerial or entrepreneurial skills like adaptability, learning from the situation and continuous lifelong learning approach.<sup>11</sup>

### The developmental role of second chance education

Students derive intangible benefits from participating in second chance education programs and this is particularly true in Australia where there in TAFE and ACE.<sup>12</sup> When students feel that they have greater control of their lives while getting life skills they do not only appreciate the impact of second chance education programs but they also lobby that their peers participate. Furthermore, the other value associated with youth participation in second chance education programs include personal satisfaction which comes from the sense that one is making informed decisions.<sup>11</sup>

While students interact with peers and teachers, a bond and sense of belonging is created and in some cases, there are students who do not have any group to belong to. The relationship fostered by participating in a network with a given people is considered social capital and second chance education programs offer such. For Coleman the strength of ties within the group is an important aspect of social capital.

The interaction between students who are all going through second chance education programs sometimes results in the sharing of business ideas or job opportunities.

Students are able to identify each other's strength and they use this knowledge in referring their colleagues for jobs.<sup>11</sup>

Just as physical capital and human capital facilitate productive activity, social capital does as well. For example, a group within

which there is extensive trustworthiness and extensive trust is able to accomplish much more than a comparable group without that trustworthiness and trust.<sup>12</sup>

In the United Kingdom, re-engagement with learning has proved to have qualitative benefits. The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) survey findings reported that 87% of respondents experienced improvement in their physical health, as a result of participation in learning, while 89% reported positive emotional or mental health benefits. This is supported by findings from the Dench and Regan study, which concluded that a high proportion of people benefited from learning in terms of general well-being. In addition to increased confidence and self-esteem some of the greatest general benefits highlighted were the development of new friends, contact with other people and improved relationships with other people. In this context it is worth introducing Walker's theory of intercultural articulation for a different perspective on the way individuals may add to their social capital.

Education is considered to have a reproductive nature as well as a productive capacity and this is so when consideration is given to second chance education. In Sydney, practices adopted in teaching clearly shows that when groups from different ethnic groups come together through education, there is bound to be cohesion. However the negative effects may be minimised through the implementation of intercultural articulation. This refers to a teaching paradigm that allows for positive and democratic teacher/student, student/student relations. This is achieved through cultural convergence, 'an understanding and affinity' for the cultural groups involved in the educational program rather than cultural divergence.

While cultural divergence forces learners to opt for solutions to their problems exclusively from within the resources of their own cultural group, cultural convergence encourages them to see other options and possibilities for action from the repertoires and reservoirs of other cultural groups.

Findings from the ethnographic study of a bridging programme in Sydney in 1992 and 1993 and from interviews with students enrolled in re-entry programs in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia<sup>13</sup> highlight the positive effects of intercultural articulation. Both studies report the new possibilities and options for action that became available to learners through intercultural articulation with other groups of learners in the class and with teaching staff.

Through these networks of social relations students were no longer trapped in the confines of their own culture but were able to enrich their social capital by drawing on the collective resources of the group.

### Findings of the study

#### The following are the findings of the study: Flexibility in becoming a member of the program

Flexibility of second chance education programs refers to the ability of the program to be easily modified. This does not necessarily mean modified in terms of the content but rather in terms of learning schedule allowing for the participants to attend to some other daily demanding activities like part time jobs or children.

The beneficiaries speak of the amount of flexibility the programme allows them to have, like getting a chance to work and attend school at the same time. Unlike being in matric and having the pressure to apply for university as well as making sure you meet the scoring criterion for the course you want to study. Beneficiary J said that they were interested in studying teaching to further her studies.

“Go nna mo DBE programme, go tshupeditse gore di programme tse ditshwannang le tse dia tlhokagala, ebile ditlhoka” (Being in the DBE second chance Matric re-write, has shown me that these programmes are a need and important). These findings are consistent with existing studies which argue that most second chance education programs are tailored to meet the specific needs and interests of learners. This is so by allowing learners choice in the modules to be undertaken so that learning is relevant. This also follows career counselling which is provided to explore individual skills and aspirations, and matched to training and vocational opportunities.

The findings strongly suggest that the success of these programs and their uniqueness are as a result of their original and tailored project delivery models. As though it were not enough, the programs usually have the appropriate staff delivering them.

A comparative analysis of literature and the experiences of the youth bring to light the fact that the approaches are tailored to the needs of participants. Service providers recognised how crucial this was for engaging participants, discerning and catering to their needs, and providing training activities. “We have got to recognise as trainers their personality types, their different learning styles and make sure we put the right people in pairs because we want it to be constructive not destructive,” one centre manager concluded. This supports McGrath’s call for holistic and relevant training purposely tailored to the learner’s or community’s needs.

The effectiveness of these tailored approaches was evident in participants’ feedback. Many felt that they were being genuinely engaged, often for the first time. This implies that participants could seek the necessary assistance with their learning and personal development if and when they needed it. This was in stark contrast to other programs they had undertaken, where they felt like “a number.” It was also evident that having the right people facilitating these programs is paramount to their success. Service providers must be able to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the participants’ specific characteristics and the barriers that they face. Service providers must also have the empathy, ability and willingness to respond to those needs and provide holistic support to participants. Both participants and service providers highlighted the importance of the above (service provider) attributes in establishing credibility with participants. This does not take away the fact that the majority of the participants were sceptical of education and/or training programs. Hence, the service providers’ ability to relate to participants and build rapport was and still remains integral to the success of these programs. Of particular importance to both participants and service providers is the fostering of trust. This is also coupled with the service providers’ willingness to share their own life stories – “it was important that they gave, so we gave as well” – thereby fostering the strong supportive relationships recommended by Ross and Gray<sup>9</sup> and Hargreaves.

### Studying alone

According to the beneficiaries who were unable to attend the classes, they found that studying alone was a challenge because there was no one to ask clarity seeking questions. Or have a discussion with another person on topics that are not understood.

This is just one reality of distance studying, even if there are groups where one can engage on discussions it is always different from having to discuss in person. Studying on your own is challenging, it was very challenging for Beneficiary J. This led Beneficiary J to suggest that the Programme must have night classes for those who are unable to attend during the day. According to beneficiary J, this will not clash with the abet classes that are there. He believes that the

DBE second chance programme is much better than, the abet classes, especially for those in Matric. Even though those that attended the evening classes at star school mentioned that the night classes affected their concentration.

As highlighted earlier, many participants reported lacking social support within their existing networks. These networks are necessary to engage educational and employment pathways. Indeed for many, participating in one of these programs was the first time they had been provided with sustained personal support. The new social networks that participants formed through these programs often had a profound ‘life changing’ effect. One service provider described – “...there is a lot of facilitation around creating new social networks, so that participants can make it sustainable, because they are breaking away from everything they know.”

It was also evident that the programs that provided mentoring support for participants were more effective. This was especially if mentoring was undertaken using a holistic approach. Here service providers acted more as life coaches.

This meant they engage the complexities of the participants’ lives and acknowledge the need to look at individuals as “a whole person.” Not only that but they also incorporate their health, education, mindset, and financial, social and personal environments. The support provided amongst peers was equally important, and its success in building social and relationship capital amongst learners is consistent with findings in other research. Indeed, the strong rapport and trust established by the service providers often provide the environment and synergy for strong peer relationships to form. An example of the strength of these relationships could be seen in Powerful Pathways for Women. Participants of PPW explained that when some women were dealing with certain family issues they would provide mutual support for each other.

The findings also highlight that for most participants, sustained social, personal and educational/employment outcomes were more likely when mentoring support is provided. The mentoring program would go beyond the conclusion of the programs.

Participants still in contact with service providers reinforced the importance of this ongoing connection and support. Service providers too keenly felt the need to provide follow-up support. However, the provision of this on-going connection and support was unfunded and relied on the on-going investment and goodwill of service providers. It is this ‘investment mind-set’ that the literature asserts is particularly crucial for these types of programs to continue and flourish and for meaningful changes to occur. This is an important consideration for funding bodies and suggests that equity programs serving participants with multiple and complex needs require longer timeframes and support scaffolding. This is done for them to achieve the personal growth and development (the so called “soft skills”), as a prerequisite to undertaking more structured training and education.

### Communication from DBE

Effective communication is the key driver of any endeavour. Not all potential students of second chance education have access to the prerequisites of such programs. Communication therefore plays an important role as it allows for the news to reach all potential beneficiaries thereby increasing the program enrolment.

There are several comments about not having clear information on applying to be part of the programme from the beneficiaries. Beneficiary H, mentioned how they were sent from one department to the other. He adds that “I luckily I work in Pretoria CBD, so I

was able to go to all the departments I was referred to” (Beneficiary H). The lack of full application details for the DBE Second chance programme, found him being sent from one department to another. The Staff at DBE do not have information about the programme when asked for enquiries. “By the time I got all the information needed the year was almost over, so I had to apply for the following year to be enrolled in the programme,” (Beneficiary G). Furthermore, other participants added that, when making enquiries about the programme, mainstream DBE, does not know about the programme, instead you would get referred to ABET classes. It can be concluded that there was lack of communication and publicity of the programme. Many students may be missing the opportunity as they may be unaware of this programme due to poor communication and publicity thereof. The lack of communication between program facilitators and beneficiaries can possibly explain why the program was shut down. The assumption would be that the DBE saw low enrolment numbers and interpreted that as lack of interests from potential beneficiaries.

### Support from home

Although the beneficiaries that were interviewed for the study mentioned, having a lot of support from home, one cannot ignore the fact that they maybe others who did not have the support needed. It is also important to have support from home, while enrolled in this programme, Beneficiary G added that the way the family supported the decision to enrol for the second chance program, they believe they will recommend it to other family member. Furthermore, Beneficiary E said, “the support from home, reminded me why I enrolled in the programme.” Having the support from home kept Beneficiary E motivated to work more and want to do better than the previous year. To some beneficiaries the support from the family was not only psychosocial support, the support for revision was also provided by the family closer to the exam dates for subjects that Beneficiary G struggled with. In general, this programme enjoys support from parents and learners themselves. They all see benefit out of the programme and wish it continue with minor improvements and more support from the DBE. The need for support while attending the DBE Matric re-write second chance program is akin to the need of support when one is sitting for matric the first time.

If the participants had received support during their matric, the possibility of them enrolling for the re-write program would have been eliminated.

### Stigma and level of interaction

Stigmatization is a social phenomenon leading to the marginalization of a specific member or a group of the community. Stigma leads to discrimination and loss of dignity as a result of prejudices by other members of the society. In context stigma is a mark or attribute that makes the person from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one.

Failing Matric already has a stigma attached to it according to John. This is a stigma that a person that failed matric must deal with for a long time. However, it can be quite hard to carry that stigma and be subjected to discrimination of not being able to pay for star school. According to beneficiary E, there was ill-treatment from the people that work at the reception area at Star School. Star School receptionists constantly reminded the beneficiaries that attend with DBE programme to stop bothering them because they do not pay. When looking into the level of interactions with teachers and other learners, there were no comments from the beneficiaries that indicated stigma for not paying. Beneficiaries instead reported on an improved knowledge shift when compared to the year, that they did their matric.

According to beneficiary A, “knowledge on the content covered by the teachers has improved, when comparing to last year”.

This is an indication that the articulation of the content covered was easy to understand for people such as beneficiary A. This can also be an indication of the good interaction they had with the teachers.

In closing, the DBE second chance matric re-write has positives and negatives as identified by the beneficiaries above. Looking at the positives, the programme allows the beneficiaries the flexibility to get their matric and work at the same time. This is something they will not be able to do if they were enrolled full time. In addition, being able to solely focus on the subjects that, they failed in their matric year, gave them a chance to understand the content better and engage with it. The negatives identified, was the treatment given by the staff at star school, where some beneficiaries were attending. The constant reminder that the DBE second Chance programme beneficiaries do not pay to attend there could have hindered the process of learning for participants.

### Conclusions and recommendations

Many learners managed to pass matric or grade 12 through this programme. It is in this breath that at the beginning of the each year many matriculates gather at education districts and provincial offices where they combine subjects they managed to pass during matric class and the ones they only pass aided by the programme. Many ended up taking decisions to further their studies and managed to achieve good academic records they are using currently.

Generally it can be argued that people, mainly young people who get good jobs and change their lives for the better are those with education in comparison to those who dropped out of the education system. For this reason, it is important for the country to invest on empowering young people. In fact, these young people are future leaders of the country.

Undoubtedly, there would be more matric drop-out young people if it was not for this programme. This suggest there were going to be many of these young people who would be living poor life due to less access to developmental and economic activities.

In conclusion, it can be argued that it is important for the country to invest in young people. This does not only help the individuals but it helps the country. Beneficiary A is one example that shows why it is important to invest and offer young people support when they need it. This is evidenced by Beneficiary A's words, “Now that I have been awarded a second chance at education, I stand a better chance of pursuing my dream of starting my own company which will employ a lot of South Africans.”

This beneficiary managed to proceed further with the studies and saw changes in their living conditions. Investing on education of young people is very important in a South African context as the government and development institutions are trying to redress the negative impact of the apartheid regime where better education was provided based on race. Indeed many of the African citizens suffered from the divided economic exposure that many parents could not afford better education for their children. This implies that at times learners from these families fail grade 12 or matric because of limited support they get from homes and neighbourhood. This programme then comes handy.

With regards to perceptions, the challenges that young people face when enrolled in the programme are discrimination by people who work at privately hired facilities such as at the Star School. This is not helping in terms of the productivity of these learners. This is because

it affects their psychological well-being and this could hamper with their concentration levels. This also creates an unpleasant environment for learning.

Late classes prove to be a challenge to learners. One beneficiary mentioned how it affects their concentration levels. Attending late classes is tiring because it is in the evening and they get exhausted from traveling involved. The late classes also raised some safety concerns including the mugging of learners on the way to or from the programme.

No doubt, this programme proves to be very helpful to the learners enrolled in it. This is because all the participants mentioned how they would recommend it to learners who find themselves in a situation in which they need a second chance in getting their Matric. The data shows that the DBE second chance matric re-write programme is necessary for improving youth development and helping young people have access to education for the second time around.

On the other hand, the proposed improvements by the learners may be helpful to the programme as it will help in creating a pleasant schooling environment for the beneficiaries. These improvements will also be beneficial in the long run for the programme. This will not only help the learners, but it will help the learners, their concentration levels will not be affected in a negative way.

It is noted that the DBE has in 2020 decided to stop this programme. Different schools of thought argue that it is because the programme comes with its own challenges and added tasks.

These challenges are inclusive of but not limited to resources to run it and poor facilities mainly in rural areas. However, the department still offer chances to learners to register for supplementary examination and do subjects they failed.

This comes with challenges as these learners do not receive support and have to do their studies on their own. While some enjoy support from relatives with insight, others remain struggling. It is therefore easy for a learner to fail supplementary examination and this will mean dropping out of the education system.

Unfortunately in South African education system currently learners are only examined at grade 12 or matric. This means dropping at matric puts individual to be someone who did not put a foot at school should they have to produce means of verification in a form of certificates. For the two will be having only birth certificate before getting the death one.

This system however, can be blamed to the democratic dispensation of South Africa adhered around 26 years ago. Before and during the apartheid regime learners were examined in different stages such as in Standard 5, Standard 8 and then at matric. Termination of this programme by DBE comes as a blow to academic struggling young people although they can branch to other field such as the vocational studies which is regarded as sub-education by many in the country.

## Recommendations

Having established what are the perceptions and experiences of young people who have taken part in the DBE matric re-write second chance programme, it is prudent to put the following recommendations:

### Management of the program by DBE

When DBE source services of an agency to run the programme it should have a representative at the reception of such agency who will work as an assistance to learners should they have any queries. This will also ensure that there is no ill-treatment of learners who are at the local centres because of the DBE second chance programme.

Although the programme is for the benefit of the learners, it is recommended that DBE offers the learners who stay in the programme and pass well a reward or incentive which will be something like funding that will help them in furthering their studies. This will encourage these learners to pass and proceed further hence becoming economic active.

The DBE can also partner with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). This will help in assisting those who want to study further to have easy access to institutions of higher learning. This is because it will highlight what career paths available they could study for once they get their NSC (Grade 12).

Have motivational talks with the learners at the centres is key. The motivational talks in this case means having someone who was once in the programme and is now doing well to talk to the new recruits and motivate them. There is also a need to have more information on how to apply for the programme and which offices will help prospective applicants. This can be done by having more drives or awareness campaigns that promote the second chance matric rewrite programme across the country. This will help make the community aware about the programme and promote accessibility to all those who want to join the programme to get matric. The other considerations that the programme can have is having a weekend or holiday session that will be conducted towards the final examinations to conduct revision for all those that struggle studying alone.

### Encouraging group work

The learners should be encouraged to walk in groups when they have late classes or project sponsored by government. This will help reduce the mugging and addressing the safety matters in general. Learners should also learn to report to the DBE any problem or challenges they might have or experience when visiting the centres to enquire about this programme. Learners should also consider starting study groups so that they can prepare for the classes before they start attending with the DBE second chance matric rewrite programme or any other programme to be introduced. This will give them a chance to engage with the material that will be discussed in class and only have few questions or ask questions that will test their comprehension levels.

### Addressing gender equality

Gender equality needs to be carefully included, so that second chance education programs extend the access of young women to education and the acquisition of labour and productivity formation will drive a more active role in social and economic areas of the country. The importance and respect of the education of women, especially young, pregnant adolescents and young mothers should be strongly promoted.

### Continuation of the programme

The DBE should consider reviving this programme and come up with some improvement plan. This is because terminating the programme comes with serious challenges in terms of development in the country. There is a rise in economic challenges in the country with already many unemployed young people with many that are unskilled. These challenges can be dealt with only when young people get sufficient education at levels of diplomas and degrees.

The main path to access higher education is through passing matric. On the other hand, there are many young people who do not make it to pass at first attempt. These learners then are exposed to supplementary examination which again is not easy to pass for many learners.

It is also recommended that this programme is expanded and get also provided by other institutions such as the private companies. Other departments can also assist in running or supporting the programme. Institutions can also use the programme to get learners do subject related to what they offer and then provide bursaries for further studies in the field of their interest.

## Acknowledgements

None.

## Conflicts of interest

The author declares that they have no direct or indirect conflicts.

## Funding

None.

## References

1. National Youth Development Agency co-operate plan. Pretoria: Government Printer. 2010–2013.
2. National Youth Commission Policy Framework. Act 19 of 2009. Pretoria: Government Printer. 2009.
3. Statistic South Africa, Quarterly Labour Force Survey. Government Printer: Pretoria; 2019.
4. The National Senior Certificate (NSC) Learner Diagnostic Report. Department of Basic Education. Government Printer: Pretoria; 2013.
5. Gougas V, Malinova L. Teaching Loops At Second Chance Schools (SCS) Using Microworlds. *The Am J Social Sci Educat Innovat*. 2020;2(10):103–109.
6. Mulhall S. Critical moments and second-chance education constructing socially excluded women's stories of career success. *J Education and Work*. 2016;29(2):115–142.
7. Castro EL, Hunter RK, Hardison T, et al. The landscape of postsecondary education in prison and the influence of Second Chance Pell: An Analysis of Transferability, Credit-Bearing Status, and Accreditation. *The Prison Journal*. 2018;98(4).
8. Khudu-Petersen K, Mamvuto A. Second chance education in Botswana: Implementing a holistic approach based on the botho philosophy to empower marginalized youth in the Kweneng District. *AlterNative An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*. 2016;12(1):57–70.
9. Ross S, Gray J. Transitions and Re-engagement through second chance education: *The Australian Educational research*. 2005;32(3):103–140.
10. Ollis T, Starr K, Ryan C, et al. Second Chance Learning in Neighbourhood Houses. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*. 2017;57(1):13–35.
11. Savelsberg H, Pignata S, Weckert P, et al. Second chance education: barriers, supports and engagement strategies. *Australian journal of adult learning*. 2017;57(1):36–57.
12. Ross JI. Getting a second chance with a university education: Barriers and opportunities. *Interchange*. 2019;50(2):175–186.
13. Wyn J, Stokes H, Tyler D. Steppingstones: TAFE and ACE programme for early school leavers, *NCVER*. 2004.