

# The Capability Approach as a foundation for craft self-help enterprises in South Africa

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Many rural craft initiatives in South Africa have as their core objective the alleviation of poverty. A popular assumption is that personal income or wealth is the primary solution to alter social deprivation. Economist and philosopher Amartya Sen argues that capabilities refer to the ability to choose a life one has reason to value. Capability deprivation minimises the choices people can make – poverty, thus, is reframed as a form of capability deprivation. What the capability perspective does in poverty analysis is to enhance the understanding of the nature and causes of poverty and deprivation by shifting primary attention away from means (such as income) to ends that people have reason to pursue, and, correspondingly, to the substantive freedoms to be able to achieve these ends. This article discusses how income poverty is but one of various capability deprivations which curtail the success of some craft self-help enterprises. Furthermore, it suggests a way to evaluate how well people are doing – be it an enterprise or an individual, which ideally would result in an interaction of a rise in standards of living and an improvement in the quality of life.

**Key words:** deprivation, capability approach, substantive freedoms, evaluation

## **Die bekwaamheids-benadering as grondslag vir ambagsopleiding**

Etlike ambagskuns-inisiatiewe in Suid-Afrika het as uitgangspunt die bekamping van armoede. Die algemene veronderstelling is dat persoonlike inkomste of rykdom die belangrikste oplossing is om sosiale veragterliking te bowe te kom. Amartya Sen, 'n ekonoom en filosoof, redeneer dat bekwaamhede betrekking het op die vermoë om 'n lewe te kan kies wat iemand van waarde kan ag. Die keuses wat mense kan maak, word uiters beperk indien hulle hulle nie kan bekwaam nie – armoede word dus hergestruktureer as 'n vorm van gebrek aan bekwaamheid. Wat die bekwaamheidsperspektief tydens die analiese van armoede doen is om die ontstaan sowel as die redes vir armoede en beperkte bekwaamheid te verstaan deur die fokus van middele (soos inkomste) na doelwitte wat mense nastreef, en die dienooreenkomstige selfstandige vryhede om sulke doelwitte te verwenslik, te verskuif. In hierdie artikel word geredeneer dat inkomste-armoede slegs een van vele bekwaamheids-beperkings is wat die welslae van selfhelp ambagsinisiatiewe kortwiek. Dit stel ook 'n manier voor om te bepaal hoe goed mense vaar – hetsy 'n sake-onderneming of 'n individu, wat ideaal gesien, 'n interaksie tussen 'n styging in lewensstandaard, sowel as 'n verbetering in lewenskwaliteit tot gevolg sal kan hê.

**Sluitelwoorde:** bekwaamheidsgebrek, bekwaamheids-benadering, selfstandige vryhede, evaluasie

**H**istorically the formal sector was primarily instrumental in absorbing potential employees in South Africa but this is not the case anymore. On the contrary, jobs have been shed. According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey of Statistics South Africa released on 01 June 2017 (Lehohla 2017), the unemployment rate in South Africa increased to 27,7 % in the first quarter and more retrenchments, especially in the mining sector, are expected. The expanded unemployment which includes those who wanted to work but did not look for work stands at 36,4 % and youth unemployment contributed 38,6 %. This is approximately 9,3 million persons who did not have work but wanted to work in the first quarter of 2017.<sup>1</sup> Unemployment figures are as high as 60% in some rural areas. Approximately 500 000 youths enter the employment market annually (the median South African age is 25.9 years) and currently sixty percent of the workforce are under the age of 30.<sup>2</sup> The result is an ever-increasing deficit in employment required by a growing population versus available employment of around 48%.

As of mid-August 2017, the population of South Africa was 55, 491, 886 million, based on the latest United Nations estimates. Out of approximately 15 million working South Africans 3.8 million are termed skilled; 7 million are semi-skilled and 4.3 million are low-skilled.<sup>3</sup> Nicholas Kruger (2016), CEO of the World Economic Forum, claims that the inadequately educated workforce is due to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which is, in part, due to fast-paced technology progress combined with other socio-economic and demographic changes, which will further transform labour markets and could lead to over five million job losses.

Even though inventions and new technologies spring from and reside in the human mind, technology transfer depends on contact between people. Technology and innovation can help to improve living standards; increase productivity; generate new industries and employment opportunities; improve public services; and create more competitive products in world markets. Instruction in craft technology can be described as technology which is devised to promote the practicing and mastery of skills, that is, ways of doing things, as well as techniques to enable the application of such skills. Examples are elementary printing methods, fabric dyeing, knitting, wood carving and metal work.

Out of approximately 30 million potentially economically active people, a staggering 20 million (plus) are reported to be without sufficient or appropriate work-related skills training. Out of necessity people turn to survivalist methods (such as hawking, subsistence farming and vending), which merely provide minimal means to keep the unemployed and their families alive. Crafts often fall into this category. Lack of experience and skills, shortage of financial resources, social barriers and lack of access to markets are entry barriers that keep survivalists out of the micro-economy category. Expanding the informal sector of the South African economy and more specifically self-employment and micro and small enterprise initiatives are identified as the primary hope in expanding alternative employment opportunities, but, in reality, these initiatives are not gaining the required traction for significant impact.

Many rural craft initiatives in South Africa have as their core objective the alleviation of poverty. A popular assumption is that personal income or wealth is the primary solution to alter social deprivation. The author supports economist and philosopher Amartya Sen's argument that, in analysing social justice, there is a strong case for judging individual advantage in terms of the capabilities that a person has. Whereas the role of income and wealth is undeniably important when policy analysis is considered, these have to be integrated into a broader background when describing success and deprivation in terms of social justice. This article links poverty to capability deprivation, rather than merely low income, where income poverty is one of the variables that constitute deprivation – poverty, thus, is reframed as a deprivation in the capability to live a life of choice, and development is seen here as an expansion of capabilities. The article proceeds with a discussion of the importance of individual agency, followed by an explanation of how substantive freedoms impact on a person's potential capabilities and deprivations. The last section of the article suggests a way forward. After approximately 20 years of having observed and participated with crafters in self-help enterprises, the author suggests benchmarks for a more sustainable future for rural crafts.

### **Individual agency**

Karl Marx had a foundational concern with “replacing the domination of circumstances and chance over individuals by the domination of individuals over chance and circumstances” (quoted by Wells 2012: 3). There is force in the claim that people themselves are responsible

for the development and change of the world in which they live. In terms of responsibility and whether others should take responsibility for influencing individual lives, self help fits well into the mood of the present times. Samuel Smiles coined the phrase “self help” in 1859. Smiles (1968: 11) states:

Even the best institutions can give man no active help. Perhaps the most they can do is to leave him free to develop himself and improve his individual condition. But in all times men have been prone to believe that their happiness and well-being were to be secured by means of institutions rather than by their own conduct. Hence the value of legislation as an agent in human advancement has usually been much overestimated.

Smiles (who was a physician by profession and belonged to the class of labourers and artisans of society rather than the aristocracy) lived in a society that was largely governed by “thought versus action” and professed that liberty must rest upon the solid foundations of individual character, which is the only true guarantee for social security and national progress. Professor of business ethics James O’Toole (1993: 56) refers to enormous inequalities in Britain at the time, with the ratio of richest to poorest incomes as high as one hundred thousand to one. Smiles (1968) notes that in British society, “self-made men” proved themselves worthy of respect as they earned their place in society by being industrious and useful. Hence the concept of self help.

Smiles (1968) insists that self help is concerned with more than how to be a good capitalist. Seen within the context of the capitalist (mid-Victorian) Britain in which Smiles lived, he refers to the poor as having an opportunity to alter the fabric of society and being afforded a stimulus denied the “complacent” rich and the well-born (aristocracy). He found merit in conciliation between the state and the individual person, because he expressed strong belief that the emergent middle class (made up of lower-middle and working-classes) was “making over British institutions and British society in its own image” (Harrison 1968: 267).<sup>4</sup> Self help was not presented as a creed of class, but as the secret of national greatness. However, during the 1880s one-third of London’s population were purportedly living below the subsistence margin. The question arose whether the poor were able to help themselves under those conditions. He concluded that self help was only possible if the state raised the minimum conditions of life.

Despite state aid then as now, there is no substitute for individual responsibility – any social responsibility that replaces individual responsibility is counterproductive. There are arguments that dependence on others is ethically problematic, practically defeatist in sapping individual initiative and effort, and also erodes self-respect, leading to loss of motivation. Cognisance should be taken that the degree of state involvement influences the degree of freedom experienced by its citizens. Citizens’ freedom is compromised in proportion with state involvement because state decisions determine their destiny to a lesser or greater degree. It follows that state involvement in social development causes dependency on its development programmes. State involvement must, therefore, be managed to secure an acceptable trade-off between dependency and freedom.

Sen (1999: 288) similarly argues that central to development is individual agency. This is a person whose achievements can be judged in terms of own values and objectives – a true participant in economic, social and political actions. Individual agency is suggested as a solution to the growing problem of employment – people need to accept that they will be responsible for creating solutions for the generation of personal income. However, responsible lives are dependent on having certain basic freedoms. Personal, social and environmental circumstances impact on the ability to meet obligations and responsibilities. If social support is employed to

expand people's freedom, this can be seen as an argument *for* individual responsibility, not the contrary (Sen 1999: 284).

### **Substantive freedoms**

South Africa has constructed policies based on aspirations shared by developed countries of the world. It also boasts a progressive Constitution, inclusive of a Bill of Rights. Yet, South Africa experiences impoverishment, illiteracy and a lack of skills to a degree associated with developing countries. Most rankings of countries or economies are based primarily on Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is a simple and useful measure of a country's economic activity. It refers to the sum of all the goods and services produced and sold in a given year. GDP is important, but the limitation is that it measures the quantity of economic growth but not the quality.<sup>5</sup>

One of the most influential capability metrics currently used is the Human Development Index (HDI) developed by Sen and Mahbub ul Haq in 1990. It contains three criteria for consideration, which are weighted equally: longevity, literacy (as in years of schooling), and Gross National Income per capita (Wells 2012: 16). Although a truer reflection of human well-being than per capita income, it still falls short. The World Economic Forum compiles a list of ratings according to criteria that indicate the standard of living of a group more accurately than GDP or HDI. These criteria include data with a social-support bias such as life expectancy, educational attainment, unemployment figures, as well as adjusted per capita income. According to these criteria, South Africa is regarded as having a medium level of human development. This rating, however, is not a true indicator of the quality of life enjoyed by all South African communities. Quality of life, in terms of development, goes beyond the personal physical resources or income of a person and includes independent or substantive freedoms.

Thus, a better measurement of human development should reflect substantive freedoms. These substantive freedoms can be measured by extensive international criteria that reflect a country's ability to create an environment that is conducive to international competitiveness and the flourishing of enterprise. The International Management Development (IMD) assesses the relationship between a country's national environment and the wealth creating process. In this regard, economist Stéphane Garelli (2004: 730) opines: "A nation's environment hinders or supports this process through its policies". A national environment is defined by outcomes of the interaction of four competitiveness factors, namely: economic performance, government efficiency, business efficiency and infrastructure (which includes basic infrastructure, technological infrastructure, scientific infrastructure, health, environment and education). A national environment that sustains world competitiveness, and by implication a flourishing society, is underscored by healthy performance in these four sectors, as well as factors reflected in more than 320 assessment criteria (Garelli 2004: 731). Given the natural endowments that South Africa possesses (such as coastlines, harbours, arable land, minerals and infrastructure, to name a few), it has underperformed consistently when measured and compared with other countries.<sup>6</sup> This points to a serious lack, or breakdown, of substantive freedoms in real terms, which Sen (1999: 38-40) describes as follows:

1. Political freedom (including civil rights) – subsists in opportunities that people have to determine who should govern and on what principles, the freedom/right to scrutinize and criticize authority, the freedom to experience an uncensored press, freedom of political expression, or the choice to vote for various political parties.

2. Economic facilities – these refer to the opportunities that individuals enjoy to utilize economic resources for the purpose of consumption, or production, or exchange. The scope of these depends on the resources owned or available for use, as well as conditions of exchange, such as relative prices and the working of the markets. (Free trade and production can help to generate abundance and public resources for social facilities).
3. Social opportunities – subsist in social arrangements to provide education and health care, prevent or eliminate deprivations like starvation and undernourishment, reduce morbidity and premature mortality, promote literacy and numeracy. Such arrangements increase the individual’s ability to live well and promote effective participation in economic and political activities. For example, illiteracy can be a barrier to both political participation and participation in economic activities that require production according to global specifications.
4. Transparency guarantees – subsist in a presumption of trust as well as the freedom that people can expect when dealing with each other under guarantees of disclosure and openness. These guarantees have a clear instrumental role in preventing corruption, financial irresponsibility and underhand dealings.
5. Protective security is needed to provide a social safety net for preventing the population from being reduced to abject misery, and in some cases even starvation and death.

Substantive or instrumental freedoms advance the general capability of a person, which in turn drives development. There should be an interconnectedness between these substantive freedoms for development to be sustainable and thus, if one or more of these break down, the individual or group is at a disadvantage at the outset. Personal, social and environmental circumstances impact on one’s ability to exercise one’s responsibilities. A potentially responsible person who has been denied a basic education is largely denied the freedom to do various things for him/herself and for others. One could also say that without the substantive freedom and capability to do something, a person could not be responsible for doing it. Such determinants to freedom may be regarded as “capabilities” (discussed below) when social arrangements become social powers due to the advantage of good health, or when a person benefits from basic education. Consequently, the author suggests that there is a connection between capabilities and development, which are sustained by substantive freedoms.

### **Capabilities and deprivations**

When physical chemist Charles Percy Snow (1965: 42) made the following statement around 50 years ago, he was convinced that the rate of social change, until then slow, would accelerate.

This disparity between the rich and the poor has been noticed. It has been noticed, most acutely and not unnaturally, by the poor. Just because they have noticed it, it won’t last for long. Whatever else in the world we know survives to the year 2000, that won’t. Once the trick of getting rich is known, as it now is, the world can’t survive half rich and half poor. It’s just not on.

Snow held the disparities between the scientists and “non-scientists” of industrialised countries accountable for failure to expedite change and suggested that the combined benefits of the scientific and industrial revolutions would result in prosperity for the under-privileged in an unprecedented way. It is evident today that social and economic development is not the simple “quick fix” that Snow had optimistically anticipated would take less than one human generation

to effect. Not only have the poor remained intrinsically poor, but science and technology have not necessarily impacted on the capabilities of the lives of the poor to effect significant change.

Lack of income, or income poverty, is certainly part of capability inadequacy because income is such an important means to gain capabilities. And since enhanced capabilities tend to enhance productivity and earning power it seems indisputable that capabilities lead to earning power, just as income predisposes for capability enhancement (Sen 1999: 90). It follows that capability improvement must be a definite if not indispensable remedy for income poverty. When studying poverty, one might thus start with the distribution of income, but end with other factors – such as the actual standard of living, and ultimately the quality of life that people manage to achieve. These are inextricably intertwined with capabilities.

### ***Capabilities***

In framing a desirable social environment in which self-help craft initiatives might reside (and flourish), it is helpful to focus on how the “Capability Approach” acts as a means to evaluate welfare and as an analysis of a variety of social issues. Political scientist Ingrid Robeyns (2000: 3-4) refers to social issues such as well-being and poverty, liberty and freedom, development, gender bias and inequalities, justice and social ethics. Philosopher John Rawls, in his revolutionary work *A Theory of Justice* (1971), defined society’s well-being as one in which social welfare is said to be equal to the well-being of society’s least well-off member. Thus, Rawls aggregated social well-being across individuals.<sup>7</sup> Sen and philosopher Martha Nussbaum are together accredited with the origination of the capability approach to human well-being, which is based on Rawlsian philosophy. Robeyns (2000: 2) refers to Rawls as acknowledging that the idea of basic capabilities is important, but criticising it as a liberal conception of justice. As did Aristotle, Sen and Nussbaum shifted the focus away from what a person *has* to what a person *can do*.<sup>8</sup> Clearly a strong case can be made for judging individual advantage in terms of the capabilities that a person has.

Sen (1999: 74-5) describes capabilities as firstly, the freedom to choose a life one has reason to value. If the object is to focus on the individual’s real opportunity to pursue his or her objectives, then one should consider not only the primary goods the person holds (such as income), but what is required in order to convert primary goods into the person’s ability to promote his or her ends. Secondly, capabilities identify the relevant personal characteristics that govern the conversion of primary goods the person holds, into the person’s ability to promote his or her ends. For example, a healthy person who is illiterate is often compelled to a life of manual labour and will battle with drafting an income statement or understanding quality control; an older person is more disadvantaged in a generally accepted sense even with a larger bundle of primary goods. And thirdly, capabilities are the alternative combinations of “various things a person may value doing or being”, that are feasible to achieve. (These may vary from being adequately nourished to owning a business).

Having capabilities is a good start in framing a desirable social environment. Sen (1999: 75-6) suggests commensurate measurement of capabilities by the *realized functionings*, which can be seen as “being and doing” – being sufficiently educated and skilled and thus potentially employable; having craft skills which might convert into products. In other words, by what a person is actually able to do – a functioning can thus be viewed as an achievement, whereas a capability is the ability to achieve (Sen 1987: 36). In addition, measurement of capabilities can be assessed by the *capability set of alternatives*. In other words, by real opportunities available,

or by being able to utilise such opportunities. For example, even though craft prototypes are often produced after a period of training, it may not be feasible to convert those into saleable product ranges if appropriate markets are not found. Even if appropriate markets are found, pricing structures need to be appropriate and form part of a longer-term marketing and branding strategy.

Sen declines listing capabilities or functionings due to what he refers to as a democratic process to formulate such a list, whereas Nussbaum (2011: 33-4) lists various capabilities: 1) life; 2) bodily health; 3) bodily integrity; 4) senses, imagination and thought; 5) emotions; 6) practical reasoning; 7) affiliation; 8) other species; 9) play; and 10) control over one's environment.<sup>9</sup> By Nussbaum's own admission, for most countries her list of capabilities (as a whole) is unachievable – certainly for South Africa this remains a rather utopian threshold.

As well as being concerned with how well people are doing, the capability approach is used to examine the relationship between people and commodities. Some underlying determinants for capability failures, are, according to Sen (1999: 70-2):

1. Personal heterogeneities: Disparate physical idiosyncrasies (such as disability, illness, age or gender) give rise to diverse individual needs so that people do not necessarily achieve the same functionings from the same level of income;
2. Local environmental diversities: These include factors such as climate and proximity which may affect how far a person may stretch a certain income. For example, it is far more difficult for enterprises in remote rural areas to acquire materials or supply markets, or to produce crafts where electricity or running water is lacking;
3. Variations in social conditions: These refer to the provision of public services (education and security) and the nature of community relationships (class, ethnicity). An example is that often craft enterprises rely on affluent clients but due to a variety of reasons they have very little idea what affluent clients want or how to find relevant outlets for products;
4. Differences in relational perspectives: These refer to conventions and customs. For example, donor funds for female craft initiatives are often allocated to male community leaders who do not pass on the funds to those intended;
5. Distribution within the family: Incomes earned by one or more members of the family are usually shared by all, regardless of whether the beneficiary is an earner or not. A crucial parametric variable is thus intrafamily distribution of incomes, as there is a link between individual achievements and opportunities with the overall level of family income.

Having looked at capabilities and capability failures, we turn to deprivations, where deprivation can have different meanings.

### ***Deprivations***

Social scientist Claudia Haarmann (2000: 72) refers to a deprivation index, where housing, health, employment opportunities and monthly expenditure are scored to determine the level of appropriate social assistance for South African households. Indicators of deprivation are generally considered to be premature mortality, significant undernourishment (especially of children), persistent disproportionate morbidity, widespread illiteracy and other failures. Typically, deprivations are evident from low income or lack of income; inability to convert

income into functionings; illiteracy; innumeracy; lack of skills; lack of knowledge; hunger; premature mortality; subjugation of women; and neglect of children. It seems obvious that the identification of deprivations should lead to redressing these, but that is not always the case. Since income deprivation is central to other deprivations, let us focus on poverty, or low (or lack of) income.

### ***Poverty as capability inadequacy or lowness of income***

The capability approach shifts primary attention away from means (such as income) to ends that people have reason to pursue, and, correspondingly, to the freedoms to be able to satisfy such ends. This has a direct bearing on sustainability when considering craft projects intended to contribute towards overcoming poverty. Sen (1999: 90) avers:

While it is important to distinguish conceptually the notion of poverty as capability inadequacy from that of poverty as lowness of income, the two perspectives cannot but be related, since income is such an important means to capabilities. And since enhanced capabilities in leading a life would tend, typically, to expand a person's ability to be more productive and earn a higher income, we would also expect a connection going from capability improvement to greater earning power and not only the other way around.

Poverty is a deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely lowness of incomes for various reasons. Sen (1999: 87-110) suggests that there are deprivations that are intrinsically important, such as poor health (unlike low income, which is only instrumentally significant).<sup>10</sup> In addition, there are influences on capability deprivation – and on real poverty – other than lowness of income (such as old age or illiteracy) – income is not the only instrument in generating capabilities).

Low income and low capability are related, however, the instrumental relation between them is variable between different communities and even between different families and different individuals (thus, the impact of income on capabilities is contingent and conditional). This is important in considering and evaluating public action aimed at reducing inequality or poverty.

### **Observations**

Germane to the author's pro bono involvement with craft self-help enterprises in the capacity of advisor, strategic planner, trainer, or mentor, was the reduction of poverty. But moreover, she was invited by groups to assist in transferring appropriate craft and business skills with the aim to establish successful, competitive enterprises that could function independently after a negotiated period of time. Many enterprises produced crafts for which she found markets locally and abroad, but many were unable to sustain customer relationships without assistance. In some instances, deprivations such as illiteracy and innumeracy stacked the odds against success to a massive degree and craft initiatives remained in the survivalist category. Sadly, independence became an illusion. Her research stretched over many years and revealed some interesting and possibly helpful observations and findings, which are discussed below (alphabetically).

- Aftercare: The ongoing involvement of a skilled practitioner is highly recommended in some instances but critical in others to ensure eventual independence;
- Benefit to the community: The capabilities acquired from craft technology training may eventually transcend the directly relevant skills, knowledge and experience associated with the training and also include capabilities that benefit the community as a whole.



- Craft technology training: Whether such training is expanded to include design ability or entrepreneurship, these are not sufficient to create an enterprise. Prototyping, product development and marketing are required to sustain a manufacturing enterprise in the long term;
- Existing craft skills: This puts some groups at an advantage, however, South Africa does not boast an abundance of indigenous or existing crafts;
- Expertise: Trainees do not automatically evolve into designers or entrepreneurs. Apprenticeships or mentorships are essential;
- Historical damage: Rural communities have often been historically damaged. A further breakdown of rural communities needs to be halted. There is reason to create employment in such communities, where people can shape their own destinies;
- Homogeneity: A sense of community, which may be attributable to homogeneity, seems to be a necessary component for a group to succeed as an enterprise. This does not exclude the possibility that various ethnic groups could constitute an enterprise, but perhaps smaller homogenous units can cooperate more efficiently within an enterprise;
- Individuality: There is often resistance to assume individual responsibility, thus participants feel more comfortable with group responsibility, resulting in a commensurate suppression of initiatives in leadership and decision making;
- Instability: A stable and safe environment is essential for self-employment and small-business management – often crime is rife in rural areas, and stable environments are few;
- Marginalisation: Poverty levels are exacerbated by marginalization in rural areas which results in lack of infrastructure, poor accessibility and large distances from larger, economically active centres;
- Meritocracy: Reluctance within some groups to distribute tasks apropos ability or preference and rather to divide tasks equally, demotivated some members and affected efficiency;
- Ownership: A sense of ownership is required if a group is to be sufficiently motivated to succeed. Values and goals need to be articulated at the outset and reviewed from time to time.

### **Where to now?**

It is clear from the above that societal values have a direct bearing on the decisions that people make and the actions that shape their lives. Decisions and actions are largely governed by the range of choices available to people and these, in turn, depend on capabilities. When training programmes are considered in rural areas, communities need to determine their specific societal values. For example, if equality of income or equality of responsibility is regarded as a preferred value, then strategies can be employed that do not require a high level of innovation or entrepreneurship, but do require efficiency and good management. Again, if independence is regarded as a preferred value, then the concepts of innovation, entrepreneurship, marketing and competition should form part of the strategic plan for craft enterprises.

The causes of poverty and deprivation can be determined against checklists of what advances the general capability of a person. Community development, which is a social work intervention, can be combined with arts and crafts with a view to enhancing capabilities and achieving sustainable development.

Funders and managers of self-help projects often erroneously refer to craft technology candidates who have acquired technical skills as designers, and expect them to have mastered the necessary skills to design and produce product ranges within a short space of time. Such expectations are unrealistic and create unnecessary tension between funders/managers and trainers and trainees. As borne out in many conversations the author had with trainers and trainees, it takes time to know how to design and what to design, sometimes requiring apprenticeships that take years to complete. Academic and innovation advisor John Kao (1996: 163) aptly states, "It's not enough to be creative if you cannot execute. It's not enough to execute if what you make is something that people don't want. It's not enough to execute and be creative if you don't have the structures and culture to be viable long-term".

Research needs to be done to identify what can make an environment more conducive to entrepreneurship and competition in South Africa. Further research is required to determine the success or failure factors of craft initiatives. Factors to consider may include demographics, markets, training, products and marketing. Comprehensive documentation is required and could supplement existing craft databases.

## **Conclusion**

Many people who leave rural communities in search of employment will not identify themselves with the product or service around which most places of employment are organized, with the result that they will experience a transitory element as the dominant characteristic of their work environment. On the other hand, if viable enterprises can be established in rural areas, such entities effectively become a community within a community. Intellectual property expert John Howkins (2001:12) states that creative products depend on technical skills, physical resources and environmental factors. Even in creative work, pleasure depends upon the conditions under which it is done. The importance of favourable conditions should not be underestimated in rural craft production, and everything possible needs to be done to encourage its success and promote creativity.

Howkins (2001: 94) refers to crafts flourishing in two separate markets: the art market, where crafts are regularly exhibited in galleries or sold on auction, and also in the tourism and leisure markets. Indeed, South African crafts tend to fit this description. Regardless of how a craft article is described, design and applied art critic Peter Dormer (1991: 124) reminds that this is an age in which things that are made for the masses are made well. Crafts therefore also need to be made well, even though they are exposed to the risk – not only in the making process, but perhaps in the end product too – of being made beautifully and yet not being sold. In this sense crafts represent the ability of the buyer to purchase unnecessary labour and it is the crafter's responsibility to reduce the margin of risk to him or herself by creating articles that are either so beautiful that they become virtually irresistible to potential buyers, or, within the parameters of their uniqueness, become coveted because they serve some kind of utilitarian or practical purpose. That implies that they should be well designed and well made.

Crafts can enable people to overcome the effects of capability deprivation, such as poverty and lack of skills, and thus proceed towards and attain a life of choice. Furthermore, the way towards a life of choice includes tried and true methods by which people can be empowered to have a say in what they do and how they do it. Individual capabilities invariably benefit the capabilities of groups or communities as a whole. Benefits could range widely from the conceptual (for example questioning one’s personal values in order to benefit the group as a whole), to the physical, such as endeavouring to expand human capacity by passing on a thriving enterprise for the next generation. This could be an arrangement which can outlive its original members, and which can offer them the transcendent bond and security of membership. More importantly, capabilities can be passed on in this manner and expanded upon, leading to a life of choice.

## Notes

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| 1 | Retrieved from <a href="http://www.politicsweb.co.za/politics/unemployment-rises-to-277-in-1st-qr-2017--statssa.html">www.politicsweb.co.za/politics/unemployment-rises-to-277-in-1st-qr-2017--statssa.html</a> .   | 8  | In his <i>Nicomachian Ethics</i> , Aristotle set out a definition of human happiness that is centred on what it means to live a good life – a life representing human excellence. From these writings the eudaimonic tradition of wellbeing studies was derived (see Ryan, Huta and Deci 2008).   |
| 2 | Retrieved from <a href="http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/south-africa-population/">http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/south-africa-population/</a> .  |    |   |
| 3 | Retrieved from Stats SA presentation on skills and unemployment_16 September.pdf/.  | 9  | Nussbaum focused her understanding of capabilities on human dignity, unlike Sen’s focus on freedoms. In her list, governments and international institutions should strive to offer individuals capabilities at least to a threshold of “sufficientarianism” that specifies minimum requirements of justice.  |
| 4 | Royden Harrison (1927 – 2002), whose thinking was deeply influenced by Karl Marx, was an academic writer and labour historian.  |    |   |
| 5 | Rapid growth in the economy, for example due to goods that are produced unethically (say through child labour), or perhaps due to the sale of unethical goods (such as harmful drugs) do not necessarily indicate that society is better off. Drèze and Sen (2002: 72) refer to “unaided opulence” which may result from an indiscriminate pursuit of economic expansion whilst widespread poverty, illiteracy, ill health, child labour, crime and starvation prevail. | 10 | An illustration of how instrumental capabilities other than income are in poverty reduction can be found in Japan in the mid 19th century. Japan had a higher literacy rate than Europe, when industrialisation had been occurring in Europe but not in Japan. East Asian economies, beginning with Japan in the Meiji Era (1868-1911), started with a massive expansion of education and later of health care, before breaking the constraints of poverty. Sen (2006: 111) avers that Japan’s entire experience of economic development was driven by human-capability formation. This included the role of education and training, supported and promoted by public policy and by a cultural climate. |
| 6 | In the 2017 IMD World Competitiveness Ranking, South Africa was placed 53rd lowest out of 63 economies – outperformed by fifty other countries, inclusive of Hungary, Slovak Republic and Romania; South Africa itself narrowly outperformed Colombia (IMD 2017).   |    |   |
| 7 | Retrieved from The Human Development Index_A History.pdf.   |    |   |

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