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Analysis of the Business Inequalities Stimulated by the Fourth Industrial Revolution Between Corporates and Small and Micro Enterprises in South Africa

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Abstract. Most of the authors have discussed how technology could enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the production in various businesses. Yet, there is still a gap in literature, and little has been researched about the business inequalities which are fuelled by the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) between Small and Micro Enterprises (SMEs) and corporates. The aim of this paper is to theoretically analyse the business inequalities instigated by the 4IR between corporates and SMEs. The paper argues that the 4IR is advocated by the corporates to increase their production because they are well-resourced and is a disadvantage to the SMEs due to their poor resources. The inadequate analysis of the business inequalities due to the inception of the 4IR provides a vacuum for further conceptual investigation of the phenomenon. The paper used literature-based methodology to analyze the business inequalities brought by the 4IR between corporates and SMEs. This methodology provided an extensive conceptual review of the literature regarding the subject under investigation. This paper reveals that the critical factor of production in corporates appears to be technology which increases production. In that, the 4IR is beneficial to the corporates and a disadvantage to the SMEs. Therefore, the literature indicated that there is an inevitable huge inequality between corporates and SMEs. The paper concludes that there are great business inequalities between corporates and SMEs brought by the 4IR. Thus, the paper recommends the support structures/organizations to assist the SMEs to respond to the growing technology and attempt to close the business inequalities.

Keywords. Business Inequality; Corporates; Fourth Industrial Revolution; Small and Micro Enterprises

1. Introduction

This paper seeks to demonstrate a conceptual review of the literature on the analysis of the inequalities between SMEs and the corporates as a result of the most spoken and anticipated phenomenon of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). It draws its exuberant and sound argument on the basis that the evolvment of the current technological advancements which is the 4IR is advocated by the corporates to enhance their production. Perhaps, it is significant to allude that one of the rationales behind the endorsement of the 4IR by the corporates is to quench their thirst for profit maximization (Hernandez, Prysner & Ford, 2019). On the contrary, SMEs, due to their poor resources, appear to be the bystanders and do not vigorously partake in shaping

and directing how technology should define their marketing and production strategies (Maloka, 2013). It is incontrovertible to portray that one of the key issues on the establishment of the SMEs is to halt poverty in township and rural areas (Meso & Manamela, 2015). SMEs remain the only tool for local people to practice their livelihood diversification with the possibility of enhancing local economy. At times, the SMEs are ordinarily initiated by the individuals without proper formal qualifications (Ramohale, 2015). This paper acknowledges that despite the positive and benefits of the 4IR in the business sector, its challenges in the realm of the SMEs could not be blindfolded nor put under the bus. It recognises that 4IR meant with great enthusiasm, improving the ease and cost of doing business (Schwab, 2016). It has the potential to change and shape how the society should operate and respond to the changes in technological advancements.

The 4IR provides an opportunity for the businesses to re-think their sales and marketing strategies to increase profits (Rojewski & Hill, 2017). Perhaps, the 4IR is a capitalist strategy that serves the needs of corporates. The strategy could be referred to as a bourgeoisie strategy with a sole aim of exploiting technology for profit maximization (Hernandez et al., 2019). However, scant attention is being given to the SMEs to uplift the local economy through the usage of technology. Inequalities do not only exist amongst the people, but inequalities also exist in the business areas. Hence, the world is dominated by great inequalities ranging from income inequality, material inequality and business inequality *inter alia*. People often know the inequality as the gap between the manager and administrative assistant; the minister, and the janitor, which is significant to know, but not much has changed in that area of occupation. However, given that the literature is replete on the phenomenon of the 4IR, little has been studied in relation to its inequalities it poses in the area of the SMEs. Equally, this paper brings to the attention of the reader that the SMEs at this juncture cannot pursue nor capitalize on advanced tools of marketing and innovation due to their poor financial resources, lack of investment and the absence of skills and knowledge compatible with the 4IR (Maloka, 2013; Ramohale, 2015). Consequently, it is sufficient to portray that due to the crisis that the SMEs encounter, their sustainability remains in question.

The SMEs appears to be under pressure in the current state of technology wherein technologically advanced corporates look down on SMEs. Understanding the significance of the 4IR in achieving the national imperatives, the competition that originates between the corporates and the SMEs is inevitable. This means that the SMEs do not have a competitive advantage to materialize on the 4IR components for their benefits (Maloka, 2013). Subsequently, that competition created as a result of the 4IR could perhaps to a larger extent render the services and products from the SMEs hollow. The technologically performing businesses seem to be doing well apart from the SMEs, which subsequently creates widening business inequalities. The inequalities are not only in terms of the financial resources, and hard skills, but they exist extensively in soft skills at this moment (Shakir, 2009). Soft skills such as being computer literate, being familiar with online communication software remains a vacuum in the SMEs. Most of the successful companies are using such digital technologies to enhance their operations, improve sales and marketing (Parry, 2018). This paper seeks to expose the great business inequalities between SMEs and the corporates brought by the 4IR. Most of the academics and scholars have discussed in length the use of technology and how technology facilitates and enhance production. however, they have circumvented the aspect of “business inequality” that is created between corporates and SMEs as a result of technological developments. Hence, the paper attempts to close such a vacuum in literature. The paper relies on literature review to critique such business inequalities.

2. Research problem

Certainly, the 4IR is a phenomenon which its likelihood of creating businesses' inequalities is predicted to be one of the challenges in the near future (Afolayan, 2014). Without diverting from the purpose of the paper, the advanced technological elements are afforded by the corporates, hence, this questions their counterparts (SMEs) in respect to affording the advanced technological elements. To lengthen the latter point, the low-tech SMEs have a likelihood of being unproductive, uncompetitive, ineffective due to their nature of lacking the financial resources, skills, and knowledge of the 4IR (Maloka, 2013; Mutoko, 2014). This is, perhaps, most of the SMEs are still in the third industrial revolutions and do not comprehensively understand the phenomenon of the 4IR. The thorn in the shoes is that the sustainability of the SMEs in the contemporary period of advanced technology remain in question because the corporates dominate all the aspects of the market environment. For that reason, traditional SMEs find it difficult to innovate because of the setting and experiencing the pitfalls of financial backlogs (Maloka, 2013).

Traditional SMEs refer to those SMEs that still use old technology (low-tech) to run their day-to-day activities (Mutula & Van Brakel, 2006). Hypothetically, mega-corporations will or may render majority of the traditional SMEs extinct if not unsuccessful in the area of mobilizing and using the current technology. This paper highlights that such business inequalities as a result of the inception of the 4IR. Therefore, the mega-corporates are likely to continue and maintain their hegemony position in respect to the use of technology, while SMEs are perpetually becoming less and ineffective in the space of technology. Frik (2016) indicates that one of the rationales of the soaring of the business inequalities is because of Research and Development (R&D) between SMEs and corporates. This means that mega-corporates invest heavily in R&D to expand their activities in relation to technology. On the contrary, SMEs invest less in R&D relating to technology because they have scant and limited resources (Moos & Sambo, 2018.). However, a pessimist may argue that corporates started as small and ultimately grew big. The analogy that SMEs would eventually grow and become big corporates. Then, what is the problem? The paper submit that the problem is poor and inadequate resources that SMEs continue to endure. Accordingly, this would lead to SMEs being left out of the competitive market and thus, the gap of business inequalities between SMEs and corporates would continue to grow as a result.

3. Literature review

The purpose of this section is to discuss and analyse the business inequalities brought by the 4IR between the corporates and the SMEs. This section is a backbone which strengthens the argument of the paper. It identifies the gaps from different scholars and attempts to close such gaps. The findings and discussions of this paper are not necessarily final, however, they could be used by other scholars or academics who wish to further study the same phenomenon.

3.1. Theoretical Framework

The significance of a theoretical framework is to fortify the study by providing clear theoretical assumptions and allows the reader to critically assess them (Charmaz, 2015). A theoretical framework also highlights what key variables influence or affect the phenomenon of interest and assess them from the subject under investigation. Its significance is to condense generalization of a specific phenomenon (Charmaz, 2015). Therefore, this paper is grounded on technological determinism theory to analyse the business inequalities brought by the 4IR between the SMEs and corporates.

• *Technological Determinism Theory*

The theory came into effect from the development of biological science and social development (Drew, 2016). It draws its strength of argument on the historical technological development and the modernity of technology (Drew, 2016; Hauer, 2017). This means that it tracks and traces the development of technology and how technology influence social and economic developments. In that, it is adamant on the stance that social and economic elements should be pertinent to the current status of technology. There are principles that corroborate the technological determinism theory which are described below.

Technological determinism incorporates the technological competence principle. Hauer (2017) indicates that the principle is about controlling and managing the use of digital technology and use computer programs to be competitive. This principle corroborates the ideals of the 4IR which is to ease the workload, enhance efficiency and effectiveness. However, for the purpose of this paper, this principle is predominantly practised in corporates as their strategy to be competitive in the market. In that, SMEs do not have adequate resources to afford such ideals of the principles. Consequently, the widening of business inequalities between SMEs and corporates is inevitable. If the SMEs do not get the support from the government or private sectors, it could mean that the national question of reducing the inequality is hollow.

The theory also includes the internet literacy principle to support the Information Communication Technology (ICT) (Hauer, 2017). This refers to using skills, knowledge, and the capability of the businesses to complement the modern ICT equipment and infrastructure (Drew, 2016). The principle is related and tantamount to information society principle which refer to the progress for a better society and that social challenges will be ameliorated by technology (De Miranda & Kristiansen, 2000). Hypothetically, one deduces a stance that the ICT infrastructure is implemented by the corporate because they have power, influence, financial muscle, skills, and knowledge to maintain their status of technology according to latest technology. Contrary, the SMEs do not have such resources to keep abreast and maintain advanced technology which is the 4IR.

3.2. Succinct History of the Past Technological Industrial Revolutions

It is very imperative to track and trace the history of the past technological revolution so that history is not distorted and obliterated. This could also assist potential and existing scholars who have an interest of studying the phenomenon of the 4IR to deliberate on it. During the antiquity, the world had experienced a huge technological shift. Technological development became a source of economic growth and development particularly in the European and the western countries (Hernandez et al., 2019). Having realized that people were engaged in hard-labour activities, technology became their safety net in an attempt to ease the load of work, perform the work more efficiently and effectively. However, Marxists view technological innovation as a route and a tool to enhance capitalism (Hernandez et al., 2019). Hence, capitalism businesses strive to make profit and get rid of the workers. Marxists further view the technological development as a “war” against the working class (Hernandez et al., 2019). Despite the Marxists assertion, the world has witnessed a massive technological development endorsed by the big businesses amongst others. There are various evolutions in which technological revolutions took place in the past centuries.

In a study conducted by Thuc (2017) and Dimitrieska, Stankovska and Efremova (2018) the first industrial revolution transpired from the era of 1760s and 1800s. Hirschi (2018) and Fomunyan (2019) extend this by indicating that the first industrial revolution encountered the development of steam power, wind, mechanization, rail-roads construction, and the detection

of steam engines. One recognizes that the world is forever changing and there are always new discoveries thereof. For that reason, Dimitrieska et al., (2018) build on the latter point indicating that the second industrial revolution took place in the 1820s which experienced the initiation and expansion of the electricity supply, mass production, and assembly line. Furthermore, Schwab, (2016); Thuc (2017) and Fomunyan (2019) demonstrate that the third industrial revolution in 1900s had witnessed an era of computer revolution wherein, computers were massively used. The current trend which is the 4IR is gaining prominence in the 21st century and widely embraced by the big corporates. Despite different technological innovations in the past, the objectives that could be drawn thereof is that technology is significant in enhancing efficiency, effectiveness, and ease hard-labour workload.

3.3. South Africa's Readiness Towards the Inception of the Fourth Industrial Revolution

First and foremost, South Africa is one of the developing countries which is still experiencing socio-economic dilemmas. Despite South Africa being a big brother to the Southern African Development Community (SADC), it still has its own predicaments that continue to haunt the country. It is, however, significant to point out that South Africa is partially better in respect to technological development in the SADC region. The greatest concern to be taken into cognizance is that South African SMEs experience a shortage of the specific soft skills and knowledge in the ICT infrastructure (Afolayan, 2014). Perhaps, knowledge and skills which are available do not complement the skills needed by the 4IR.

One of the predicaments that exacerbate the current dilemmas is the shortage of knowledge and skills in the ICT infrastructure due to the country's system of education (Rojewski & Hill, 2017; Fomunyan, 2019). South African institutions of higher learning continue to produce graduates who have less knowledge and skills regarding the 4IR. Nonetheless, to ameliorate such conundrums, the government should attempt to prioritize knowledge and skills that could aid in meeting the demand of the 4IR. This could be done by encouraging young students to register for the diplomas and degrees and pursue postgraduate studies in areas that would not easily be automated. Accordingly, this refers to the diplomas and degrees such as law, social work, human resources, and psychology *inter alia* (Shakir, 2009).

The unpalatable socio-economic conditions bear a witness that South Africa is not yet ready for the 4IR. In the light of the above point, the massive triple challenges (unemployment, poverty, and inequality) continue to be a misfortune to the poor and vulnerable people (De Villiers, 2019). The attempts made by the government in remedying such devastating living conditions are rendered hollow by the inception of the 4IR. This means that the 4IR would obliterate some of the employment opportunities through automation and robotics (Wisskirchen, Biacabe, Bormann, Muntz, Niehaus, Soler & Von Brauchitsch, 2017). These are some of the highlights that would be brought to light as a result of the 4IR. Meanwhile, BusinessTech (2020) cements the latter point by indicating that already private firms are already retrenching people due to the use of technology. For instance, Standard Bank South Africa retrenched approximately 2 423, citing that the company is implementing its digital strategy and that they cannot stop the progress of technology (BusinessTech, 2020). This happens in the midst of soaring unemployment and a limping economic development.

3.4. In-Depth Analysis of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and its Associated Elements

Schwab (2016) refers to the 4IR as technological advancements which encompasses the elements such as automation, Artificial Intelligence (AI), additive manufacturing, smart internet, Internet of Things (IoT), Internet of Service (IoS) and Cyber-Physical Systems (CPS). Meanwhile, Morrar, Arman and Mousa (2017) describe the 4IR as “the collection of terms utilized for technologies along with Cyber-Physical Systems, Internet of Services (IoS) and Internet of Things (IoT)”. Therefore, the common factor that emanate from these definitions is that the 4IR is about being more digital in an attempt to ease the workload.

Different symposiums and colloquiums across the globe were held to enthusiastically deliberate on the fascinating phenomenon of the 4IR. In the spotlight of their discussions were the pros and cons of the 4IR in the business sector and social life. Clearly, the 4IR shapes and influences how people live and interact, how businesses should operate, and how education should find means and ways to adapt to new teaching and learning (Kang, 2017). To be precise, the 4IR cuts across all sectors of human life. In that, people and businesses should find ways to respond to the rapid change of technology. According to Kang (2017) Germany is at the forefront of the 4IR with the establishment of high-tech 2020 national strategy to achieve their national imperatives. The author further indicates that Japan has developed a new robot strategy to eliminate the conundrums of aging society and low fertility. This is how the 4IR influences socio-economic conditions of the countries. Hence, these countries are taking precautionary strategies in response to the inception of the 4IR. However, the 4IR include the elements such as CPS, AI, IoT, and additive manufacturing *inter alia*.

•Cyber-Physical Systems and the Internet of Things

The CPS denotes the connection of network among people, objects, products, and machines (Luff, 2017; Wisskirchen et al., 2017). Many people are connected to mobile devices and other software programs to access and exchange knowledge and trade (Kang, 2017). The current technology demands that people use the effectiveness of AI, automation, robotics, biotechnology and computing (Prisecaru, 2016; Schwab, 2016). The primary significance of the CPS is to facilitate and integrate the physical world and the virtual world (Schwab, 2016). To clarify the latter view, the IoT, ICT and sensors are used to connect people who are aloof to share information and trade. Therefore, the usage of big data, ICT, CPS, and IoT cement a great mobility, flexibility, accessibility, and quicker production development (Wisskirchen et al., 2017). The IoT and CPS appears to be one of the most significant aspects of the 4IR which is at times seen to be a “Key Enabling Technology” (KET) (Ciffolilli & Muscio, 2018). This means that the application of the CPS and IoT could be married to ensure that physical realities are connected to digital system. Hence, the IoT is a link to “smart connections” which has the potential of gathering data and organize it through the intelligence for effective proper communication channels (Schwab, 2016).

•Artificial Intelligence

The commencement of the AI is already beginning to gain the spotlight globally with self-driven cars, the use of robotics for different purposes (Prisecaru, 2016; Schwab 2016). The smartness of the AI is being adopted in the big corporates and this trend continue to be one of the significant factors that corporates endorse. In a study conducted by Schwab (2016) the AI is a disruptive process. Perhaps this disruptive process is causing a huge unemployment necessarily because, people are being replaced by the machines, and robots. The victims of this AI would be low-skilled workers without necessary skills and knowledge compatible with the AI (Prisecaru, 2016). Without diverting from the purpose of the paper, Rojewski and Hill (2017)

demonstrate that the AI requires establishment of new digital pedagogy and strategies for the businesses to meet the demands of the AI. Above all, the AI refers to the use of computer programs capable of building smart machines that have the ability to perform the tasks which could be performed by human intelligence (Schwab, 2016). However, the weakness of such computer programs and machines is that they cannot negotiate, think, because they are programmed and perform certain tasks with limitation. Therefore, some of the corporates invest heavily in R&D to invent their own AI to reduce costs and enhance sales (Frik, 2016). Indeed, one of the advantages of using the AI in the business sector is that machines, and robots do not go on strike, take a leave, or even become ill (Prisecaru, 2016). Subsequently, the corporates need only to maintain such machines and they have the ability to do that because they are well-resourced.

- *Automation and Additive Manufacturing*

The 4IR draw its strength on automating machines to perform certain tasks. In that, Wisskirchen et al. (2017:12) indicate that the production of goods is controlled and dominated by fully automated machines. The accuracy of a machine or a computer is always reliable because the results are always objective rather than being subjective (Prisecaru, 2016). This means that the machine or a computer cannot be emotional and take decisions based on subjectivity. Automation could be compared to additive manufacturing because additive manufacturing refers to complete automated manufacturing (Moos & Sambo, 2018). Although some academics view additive manufacturing as a disruptive process, it adds innovative ways of manufacturing and fast track manufacturing process (World Economic Forum, 2017). These elements are given birth by the rise of the 4IR that seek to add an ingredient in the technological environment.

3.5. Technological State of the Small and Micro Enterprises and Corporates

The state of technology in the SMEs and corporates is unequal. The proliferation and soar of the SMEs in South Africa is inevitable. However, the level of technology remains low in comparison to the corporates. The nature of the SMEs in South Africa is predominantly based in township areas (Maloka, 2013; Ramohale, 2015). They are mostly initiated by ordinary people at the grassroot to uplift the spirit of the business environment and grow the local economy. In contrast, the corporates are at the national or international level with the best technology to increase production and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country. Meanwhile, Meso and Manamela, (2015) indicate that due to the current woes that South Africa is experiencing in the level of unemployment, poverty and inequality, the significance of the SMEs becomes an engine and backbone of the economy. Hence, the concerted efforts from the government, philanthropists and private sectors are imperative than ever before if the initial national question of unemployment is to be resolved. The paper does not circumvent efficient and effective production brought by technologically advanced corporates, however, it highlights that the technological gap between SMEs and corporates is rife. Subsequently, the repercussions thereof, would lead to incompetence of the SMEs and render them null and void in the business market. This eliminates the business competition between SMEs and well-resourced corporates (Afolayan, 2014). Afolayan (2014) ascertains the point that major SMEs are low-tech in areas of ICT and depend mostly on old technologies to run their operations. One of the rationales of low-tech businesses that the paper will discuss later on, is due to poor financial muscle to sustain and maintain innovation technology. This paper provides the gist, background, and the challenges of the SMEs in a South African context in relation to the subject under investigation.

3.6. The Challenges Faced by Small and Micro Enterprises in the Midst of the Fourth Industrial Revolution

The SMEs in South Africa are the engines of economic development in township areas with a zeal to enhance the business acumen (Penprase, 2018). These are part of a livelihood diversification for many people in South Africa (Meso & Manamela, 2015; Ramohale, 2015). In contrast with the corporate and drawing from the argument of this paper, the SMEs experience challenges which are a barrier to keep up and maintain the elements of the 4IR. In that, this paper will at a later state provide recommendations on how SMEs could be supported to equally be pertinent in the level of technology. Hence, this current trend of the 4IR requires SMEs in particular to establish new business strategies, and models; re-skill their employees to be at least competitive in the current market (Penprase, 2018). This paper deliberately avoids the challenges experienced by the corporates because they are better as compared to SMEs. However, the challenges which are dominant, include amongst other, lack of finance, lack of skills and knowledge and poor marketing strategies (Gumel, 2019).

•Lack of Finance

Access to finance is the pathway towards the sustainability of the SMEs. Financial availability ensures the smooth running of the businesses. However, access to finance remains a pipedream for the SMEs globally. Without financial muscle, SMEs are likely to run at a loss, which subsequently could not afford the emergence of new technological elements. Chimucheka (2013) depicts that most of the SMEs experience challenges of financial management-and poor expertise in the financial department. However, the dominant source of income in the SMEs appears to be from the owner's pocket, family and friends. Be that as it may, poor financial investment exacerbates the financial status of the SMEs (Yoshino & Taghizadeh Hesary, 2016). Moreover, Burrows (2013) suggests that it is difficult for the SMEs to borrow money from financial service sector because they mostly do not have a business bank account. Therefore, the continuation of financial challenges exacerbates the failure of the SMEs in as far as technology is concerned.

•Inadequate Skills and Knowledge

Skills and knowledge are significant factors in the success of the businesses. These are the foundation of the success and sustainability of the businesses. The SMEs stand a good opportunity to thrive if the skills and knowledge are prioritized and that would ensure the competitiveness of the SMEs (Mutoko, 2014). Eventually, this enables and determines the success of the businesses. However, most of the SMEs are still experiencing shortage of skills and knowledge in respect to the current technological developments (Burrows, 2013). The 4IR demands that the businesses should frequently and consistently update their skills and knowledge to know how to operate certain software, machines, and or equipment (Halverson & Collins, 2009; Penprase, 2018). Be that as it may, the SMEs still face a crisis in financial management and in areas of ICT (Mutula & Van Brakel, 2006). This makes SMEs more vulnerable to failure in comparison to the mega-corporates. Therefore, the business inequality is likely to widen if such challenges faced by the SMEs are not salvaged.

4. Discussion

The study passionately discussed in length the concept of the 4IR and its relationship to the SMEs. The majority of the SMEs in South Africa are not active participants in the economy. Hence, there is a most of the SMEs shut down because of social, economic or even political reasons. Subsequently, this affects poor proliferation of the SMEs in both rural and township areas. However, the big businesses seem to be thriving well in the epoch of the 4IR. From the

literature perused in this paper, it comes to light that the corporates enjoy and have the upper hand when it comes to the modern technologies as their factor of production. It thus, leave out the SMEs in participating and harnessing the 4IR technologies to their advantage because of insufficient resources. Ultimately, this creates and widen the businesses inequality between corporates and SMEs.

5. Methodology

•Research Instrument

This paper profoundly relied on the use of a theoretical literature to critique the subject under investigation. In that, it adopted literature-based methodology which allowed the researchers to search and review the content of literature from different scholars. A theoretical review of the literature ensured the validity and reliability of the paper and has served as the backbone of the paper to cement its argument. This methodology fulfilled the objectives of the paper through critical discussion and debates from different authors.

•Data Collection

This paper collected data through the desktop study. The desktop study refers to collecting data from the literature. Thus, the paper has used and relied on secondary data which was collected through the journal articles, books and reports amongst others.

•Data Analysis

The paper used a thematic analysis. This analysis is a pertinent method to analyse literature data. It thus, allowed the researchers to immerse the content of different articles and develop themes. As a result, the themes were critically developed and conceptually discussed in literature to fulfil the aim of the paper.

6. Significance of the study

As highlighted in the methodology that the paper heavily relied on the conceptual literature to make necessary, but not final inference, the paper is one of the few that seeks to close the gap in literature about the business inequalities because of the introduction of the 4IR. This paper, will therefore, assist and guide the future scholars who wish to study the same phenomenon. This paper conceptually linked the 4IR and how it would lead to business inequalities. Moreover, the owners of the SMEs may benefit greatly from this paper by immersing and soliciting fundamental information regarding the 4IR and enhance their businesses.

6. Conclusion/Recommendations

In the light of the above discussion, it is very clear and vivid that the only way to curtail the widening business inequalities between corporates and SMEs is by supporting and resuscitating the SMEs to be active in the area of technology. The literature indicates that the businesses' inequalities between corporates is expected to increase in the near future if the SMEs' challenges are not ameliorated. Hence, a study done by Agwa-Ejon and Mbohwa (2015) indicate that 75% of the SMEs' owners are not conscious of the financial support organizations. Therefore, the paper recommends support structures to aid SMEs in endorsing and using the current technology. Amongst the recommendations are the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA), and the Department of Small Business Development. The common objectives with all these organizations are to assist the potential and existing SMEs financially (Maloka, 2013). They also offer services such as

drawing up a business plan, business registrations, and provide mentorship and training amongst others. These are very necessary to ensure that SMEs get a breakthrough from their challenges and attempt to invent and innovate in the current space of the 4IR. However, private sector should also come on board in supporting SMEs to thrive and be competitive because this should be concerted efforts to achieve the country's national imperatives. Ultimately, through the assistance offered to SMEs from the government agencies and private sector, the business inequalities could be curtailed and SMEs would be able to afford the luxury of using the 4IR technologies.

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