

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION REQUIRED IN THE FUTURE

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship education is pivotal in producing successful entrepreneurs in any part of the world; however, the way in which it is taught is brought into question. With a new generation entering classrooms and lecture halls, which thrive on a different teaching methodology due to their exposure to technology, we are currently not getting through to them, as we are teaching about entrepreneurship. It is important therefore to consider that the older methods no longer apply, and if we want to achieve the best results- not just when graduating but also in start-ups - we will have to think of teaching differently. The new generation requires experiential learning as they want to figure out for themselves how to solve problems in order to win the contest or task that has been set before them. Business simulation is the answer to teaching for entrepreneurship to learners and students in a way that would contribute to their ability much more than is currently the case. The economic skies await the entrepreneurs entering the business world with their start-ups, and being well equipped to “take to the sky” is important to the survival of these young entrepreneurs.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, Poverty, Job Creation, Business Simulation, Student Entrepreneurs.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship tops most political agendas and therefore entrepreneurship education has become the focal point in many industrially developed countries (Matlay, 2005). Although entrepreneurship ranks high on the policy agendas of many countries, little research is available that assesses the impact of entrepreneurial education, which means that the effects emanating from it are still poorly understood, despite much promotion of the discipline (Von Graevenitz et al., 2010). Most empirical studies show that entrepreneurship can be taught and that education can beneficially ignite and foster entrepreneurship (Kunene, 2009). According to Drucker (1985), Freeman (2000) and Timmons & Spinelli (2007) entrepreneurship can be taught and learnt, which justifies the need for entrepreneurship education as the solution to South Africa's economic and social problems. Herrington & Wood (2003) added that entrepreneurship education is still one of the major factors limiting the growth of the South African economy. Rwigema & Venter (2004) and Wickham (1998) supported this by affirming that entrepreneurship education can affect the entrepreneur's development. The Umsobomvu Youth Fund (2002) recommended the integration of entrepreneurial education in the school curriculum to trigger, build and enhance a strong entrepreneurial culture. Nchu (2015) argued that entrepreneurship programmes which aim to develop entrepreneurship are numerous in South Africa; however, tangible results are difficult to obtain, more so in respect of sustainability.

The creation and development of SMMEs, driven by government, can only be successful and sustainable if entrepreneurs are educated and well equipped to run their businesses, thus

ensuring business growth. Unless proper entrepreneurial education is put into practise in all schools up to Grade 12, South Africa's entrepreneurial activities will continue to lag behind those of developing countries, according to Xavier et al., (2012). Steenekamp et al., (2011) stated that enterprise creation requires the investment of time and capital into entrepreneurship education. Teaching creativeness, innovativeness and how to become responsible citizens, as well as developing entrepreneurial skills in learners, are the focal points of entrepreneurship education (North, 2002). Entrepreneurship education seeks to inculcate and prepare people to be responsible, enterprising individuals who are able to take risks, manage results, and learn from outcomes (Bbenkele & Ndedi, 2010). According to Ibrahim et al., (2004) entrepreneurship education can develop leadership and increase the need for achievement and self-efficacy, influence growth-related entrepreneurial and managerial attitude and perceptions, and alleviate the fear of failure in business. Agupusi (2007) added that there is a historic trend of discouragement of entrepreneurship and a culture that not only supports but encourages working for others, coupled with an absence of entrepreneurship education for young people that would persuade them to enter into new business and acquire a culture of entrepreneurship. Karimi et al., (2010) agreed that entrepreneurship education can play an important and vital role in changing the views of South Africans towards self-employment and obtaining the necessary skills to manage a business. Therefore, South Africa's capacity for the future entrepreneurs depends on how well the country will develop and equip individual citizens to start their own businesses which will provide employment for others (Minniti et al., 2005).

Preparing Future Entrepreneurs to “*Take to the Sky*”

For a moment, imagine that you want to become a pilot. To fly a commercial plane, charter plane, or even just a small plane for the fun of it, it is mandatory to attend a training programme. The training ensures that the pilot is prepared for almost every eventuality, be it weather conditions, mechanical failure, etc. The process of training includes hundreds of hours in a high-tech simulator. After all of that training, you will be ready to take to the skies.

The above analogy will serve for later consideration.

A Brief Look at the Past is required to Provide Context

Education in the history of South Africa, prior to democracy, was one of the pillars of oppression in a strategy in what Jansen (2002) referred to as a state-controlled and maintained education policy which was designed to ill-equip non-white learners. This was further supported by Zungu (1977) who iterated that the greatest desire of the Nationalist Government was to take over every major institution of economy, politics and education to deprive other racial groups and elevate the white population. This became evident in the uprising of 1976 when black learners took to the streets in protest of an oppressive education system. The uprising among students and learners lasted until well into the early 1990s and resulted in many deaths, adding to the struggle to end the apartheid regime of the time. With the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990, the apartheid government realized that the end was near and, in the case of schools; a few changes of their own were made and signed into power. According to Christie and McKinney (2017), Model C schools were introduced by the apartheid government in the 1990s to protect white schools, by passing substantial powers to parent bodies to admit learners from other races under strict conditions, among other things. Model C schools at the time were given all the education that was necessary to be successful in the world of business.

Coupled to this, Co & Mitchell (2006) posited that it was a strategy by the government of the day that universities served the economic structure of South Africa by focusing on producing graduates with a mindset that focused on being employed by big business in the formal sector. The same manner of transferring knowledge to the student or learner was practised for many centuries, whereby the student or learner would be tested on what they had been taught. The “banking” concept of learning and teaching was used in the classroom, which meant that the educator relayed information to the learners who would simply store the information until such time as they needed to recall that information. The more accurately the learner could recall the information, the higher the mark obtained by the learner. Therefore, the mark that was awarded was based on how well the learner remembered the information and regurgitated it. In turn, the learner was deemed ready for progress to the next level within the education system (Freire, 1968).

Following on this brief introduction to the education methodology used in schools and universities in general in South Africa, the focus turns to entrepreneurship education and the introduction thereof into the school education system. It needs to be emphasised that education was used as an oppressive tool by the then apartheid government through a system which is well documented in Paulo Freire’s 1968 book, “*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*”, which philosophically explored the “banking” concept in education, as mentioned earlier. It deserves mention that this basic concept has not changed, as learners and students are still awarded pass or progress marks based on the retention of information and how well it is presented at the time of examination.

With regard to entrepreneurship education, North (2002) mentioned that in 1990, the House of Assembly commissioned education and curriculum experts to introduce entrepreneurship education into the school curriculum in Model C schools. This was the level of education which led to the advancement of societies, affecting every aspect of the recipient’s life and the development of society as a whole. Where did entrepreneurship education as a field of study start?

Economist Joseph Schumpeter (1883-1950), also considered to be the father of entrepreneurship, introduced the concept of the economic benefit of entrepreneurs and conducted many studies to isolate the phenomenon and thus find the formula to replicate the success. Entrepreneurship was identified as the vehicle that would enable economic growth and sustainability in many countries around the world. This step led to the introduction of the first entrepreneurship programme in 1947, at Harvard University, which has since spread and grown rapidly (Kuratko, 2005; Solomon, 2007). The growth in entrepreneurship education programmes reflects an understanding that entrepreneurship education promises to support potential entrepreneurial outcomes (Nabi & Liñán, 2011; Rideout & Gray, 2013). The understanding has often been driven by the belief that education is the best way to provide students with the necessary knowledge and skills required to prosper in the working environment (Adcroft et al., 2005; Kirby, 2003).

Entrepreneurship Education Currently

Entrepreneurship education in schools falls within Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) as a subject, in the senior phase (grades 7-9) (North, 2002). A subject choice is then concluded at the end of Grade 9 where the learner, in consultation with parents and educators, decides whether he or she will continue with Entrepreneurship from Grade 10 until Grade 12, in Business Studies (Shay & Wood, 2004), which will offer subjects such as Development of a

Business Plan, The Market Environment and Business Implementation, to mention a few. Learners in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase are being taught the theory relating to entrepreneurship, which teaches learners about entrepreneurship instead of for entrepreneurship. Laukkanen (2000) identified two distinct areas of entrepreneurship education, namely teaching for and teaching about entrepreneurship. To teach about entrepreneurship is to transfer knowledge regarding the field of entrepreneurship, whereas teaching for entrepreneurship focuses on the learning experience, competencies, skills, aptitudes and values (Postigo & Tamborini, 2002).

Within the university currently, there is no difference as students are being taught about entrepreneurship and not for entrepreneurship, and ultimately it is measured by how well the students can remember and how well they can regurgitate the information back to the lecturer during exams. Another fundamental issue is the inexperience of entrepreneurship lecturers, who do not have the necessary exposure or experience to facilitate entrepreneurship. As Pfannestiel (1998) posited, there are individuals with PhDs who are unable to find work within their own discipline and then take up vacancies within entrepreneurship. Couple with the lack of passion for the field, lack of experience, and a methodology that focuses on information retention and teaching about entrepreneurship, we are then missing the end goal at all possible levels. The answer lies in the misalignment of the entrepreneurship pedagogy to the market reality, which puts our students and learners at a disadvantage.

Current State of Affairs in South Africa

The National Development Plan: A vision for 2030 (RSA, 2012) gives an overview of South Africa's strategic plan for economic sustainability that would eradicate poverty and stimulate economic growth through entrepreneurship (RSA, 2012). At the end of the third quarter of 2019 the unemployment rate was at 29.1% (Stats SA, 2019). Many researchers and authors have argued that acquiring and developing entrepreneurial competencies is more important than the provision of financial resources and consulting support that may be needed by entrepreneurs (Chimucheka, 2014). It is suggested that entrepreneurial and management skills are central to running successful businesses and SMMEs which are developed through entrepreneurship education (Nieman et al., 2009; Robertson, 2003). Entrepreneurial mindsets, behaviours and capabilities in young people are inculcated and developed through entrepreneurial education, which enables them to create and lead new business and social ventures (Herrman et al., 2008).

The Future of Entrepreneurship Education

To Repeat the Earlier Analogy of the Prospective Pilot

For a moment, imagine that you want to become a pilot. To fly a commercial plane, charter plane, or even just a small plane for the fun of it, it is mandatory to attend a training programme. The training ensures that the pilot is prepared for almost every eventuality, be it weather conditions, mechanical failure, etc. The process of training includes hundreds of hours in a high-tech simulator. After all of that training, you will be ready to take to the skies.

Why are we not putting the same foresight and effort into training our entrepreneurs, and preparing them for every eventuality in the business world, thus allowing them to “*take off into the economic skies*”? Education pedagogy has changed very little in the past few decades, with

the same teaching methods currently in use that previous generations experienced throughout their own educational journey. Something needs to change.

We Need to Ask Ourselves a Few Questions

- What does an entrepreneur of the future actually look like?
- What environment will the entrepreneur be faced with?
- How far is that future?
- Who do we currently have in our lectures halls and how will they fulfil this “look” of an entrepreneur in the future?

Gibb (2002) and Jones & English (2004) argued that the best results in entrepreneurship education are achieved when the students are exposed to action-oriented experiential learning that encourages problem solving, creativity and peer evaluation. We are currently working with the Internet Generation (iGen) born between 1995 and 2012, who are comfortable with a variety of technological devices, as exposure during early development made them experiential learners. This generation has a preferred learning style of doing, rather than learning by listening. Williams (2015) iterated that entrepreneurship, as a discipline with experiential learning at its core, lends itself naturally to being taught through methods such as simulations and games. Williams (2015) went on to say that such games should include elements of urgency, complexity, learning by trial and error and scoring points, and also supports active, experiential and problem-based learning.

In the literature, the use of simulations in entrepreneurship education has shown that such studies were written by developers and that the papers evaluated the characters and features of the games and simulators without assessing the benefits to students (Faria & Wellington, 2004; Whiteley & Faria, 1988). Successful entrepreneurship programmes are often based on interactive teamwork and group activities, coupled with guest speakers in classes, business plan competitions and student-run businesses with actual money, which have become very popular (Jones & English, 2004; Wilson, et al., 2009). Therefore, innovative pedagogical approaches such as game- or simulator-based learning, which provides an immersive environment, is especially well suited for entrepreneurship education (Ahn, 2008; Antonaci, et al., 2015; Bellotti et al., 2014). Using games and simulators enables the educator to enhance learning processes and outcomes (Kapp, 2012) and either promotes desired behaviour or in turn corrects undesired behaviour (Clarke, 2009; Lee & Hammer, 2011). La Guardia et al., (2014) and Miller (2013) maintained that comprehensive games and simulators make learning fun by creating an immersive environment which engages the student fully and elevates the student’s motivation levels to achieve and learn inside and outside the classroom - even if the classroom is a virtual classroom, as we are currently experiencing due to the COVID-19 epidemic. This approach allows students to fail safely, to interact with other students and to be rewarded for their hard work. In order to improve their performance as students, they need to practise, experiment, test hypotheses, and conceptualize complex and abstract ideas (Ruben, 1999). Ruben (1999) summarized this by stating that real world experience brings practice and theory together by developing the ability to use acquired knowledge and skill, which is constructed in simulations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created many problems for schools at large across the country as nobody could have foreseen that these institutions of learning would be closed for such a long period of time. Online learning, in the public-school environment, was considered to

be distant thought, taking into account the economic issues of unemployment and poverty being experienced in the country.

As with many disruptions, such as the pandemic we are experiencing, innovation is born, as we need to adapt to the changes that have been forced on us. Entrepreneurship education is no different. With the online platform available for interacting with learners there will have to be a change in the way entrepreneurship education and pedagogy is presented to the learner. Experiential-based learning will be at the center of entrepreneurship education where the learners will be running virtual businesses on a business simulator. The learners will be guided by the educator through interactive sessions where the theory will be shared with the learners. Thereafter, the learner will be learning by trial and error to make the business, on the simulator, a success. The learners will create various groups within their class or grade community in which they can create and exchange various ideas. This is the action-oriented experiential learning, which delivers the best results in entrepreneurship education, which Gibb (2002) and Jones & English (2004) mentioned earlier.

The learning process is further enhanced as the educator acts as the mentor to the learners in guiding them rather than expecting them to follow instruction. While learning and understanding the entrepreneurship process and business start-up, learners will be encouraged to create interactive groups and participate in group activities where they could enter business plan competitions and start running businesses as suggested by Jones and English (2004) and Wilson, et al., (2009). Online business simulators will be able to produce a portfolio of evidence of all the decisions taken during the process of running the business which would allow the learner and the educator to not only step through but see the results of the decisions taken which further enhances learning through experience. This will in turn translate into learner-run business where actual money will be made. This is the future of entrepreneurship education and its effects.

With the future of entrepreneurship education being online and all related activities such as presentations and guest speakers it is no longer a requirement for learners to be physically in a venue as all participants will be connect via the internet. It is the norm that so many meetings are currently taking place using platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Skype to name but a few. This will allow facilitation to take place, in a virtual classroom, which is not hindered or hampered geographically, reaching across provincial, national and international borders and will be all inclusive even to the most remote parts of the country as long as there is internet connections and accessibility to the platforms. In this way entrepreneurship education will be the forerunner in education delivery by delivering a new pedagogy to the school curriculum.

A major impact on entrepreneurship training, in the future, will have to be the teaching of business models. Online businesses have been doing better than traditional businesses where face-to-face interaction is required, as more people have been doing online shopping and purchasing goods and services, due to the current circumstances. Trends towards digital businesses are emerging as businesses are changing its business models, to stay competitive, and to maintain interaction with customers in the online environment. The emergence of customer interaction in an online environment coupled with physical interaction, to a lesser degree, will bring about a blended interaction approach which will be the trend moving into the future. This means learners will have to learn not only doing business in a similar manner but also understand the workings of business models that will make it work.

The South Africa government will be able to support this process firstly by making it part of the curriculum for learners from a young age to be exposed to entrepreneurship and secondly, by ensuring that the private sector facilitates the upgrade of communication technologies

required to make this possible. Many initiatives can be started by government and in collaboration with the private sector to support learners in obtaining access such as free data sites and the distribution of technology of devices across the country, as we have seen in the case of universities over the past few months. No cost would be too great to ensure the role out of such a project when considering the results that can be obtained.

CONCLUSION

The Internet Generation loves experiential learning and finding out things based on their experiences, coupled with being tech-smart and action-oriented in a way that encourages problem-solving, and being creative, which are all the things they developed through gaming. Ironically, this gaming from a young age is often a cause of great concern and frustration for parents.

How do we teach a generation this advanced, which we tend to measure by our experiences and not theirs, using the same methods we were taught with decades ago?

Let's refer back to the pilot in training and we find that the Internet Generation has, through technology, found its proper place in the world.

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