

Empowering Learners Through Entrepreneurial Skills in Senior Secondary Schools in Botswana

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Abstract

This study examined how teachers of business subjects empower learners for entrepreneurial mindset through integrated entrepreneurship education. This endeavor is a major engine for economic growth, job creation, upgrading of new technology increased productivity as well as changing various economic benchmarks which enable development within the economy. For this reason, learners need to be empowered through entrepreneurial skills. In this study, data were purposively collected through interviews and reviewing of documents. The study found out that business subject teachers cited self-employment as being one of the most important aspects for empowering their learners through entrepreneurial skills. Hence in their instruction, teachers familiarize learners with how a business is run, managed and marketed. However, the findings of the study indicate that, inadequate teaching skills of the subject matter and limited time allocated for business subjects seem to hinder teachers to further explore learner-centered methods like simulation, project based and case studies among others.

Keywords: entrepreneurial skills, learners' empowerment, entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial mindset, entrepreneur, self-employment

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurial Education is viewed as being relevant for learners in order to cultivate their innovative inherent talents so that they could venture into and grow businesses effectively (Adedeji, Rahaman, Rahman & Uddin 2017; Akindobe & Chinoye, 2014). As such, entrepreneurial competencies all over the world are fast becoming critical issues for determining who to engage and retain in many job places (Grubor, 2013; Costin, 2012). Smith, Schallenkamp and Eichholz (2007) observe that entrepreneurial skills such as technical, management, entrepreneurship and personal

maturity are considered a necessity in entrepreneurship education. Nevertheless, the appreciation of entrepreneurship as a field of study requires good intentions and mindset as far as learners are concerned. This means that learners need adequate preparation, a certain degree of motivation and a good curricular in order to acquire a relevant entrepreneurial mindset (Adedeji, et al, 2017). In this way, learners would be encouraged to become job creators instead of job seekers once they leave the educational system (Lekoko, Rankhumise & Ras, 2012) since it stresses entrepreneurial competencies including a sense of

self-employment which is coupled with a positive mind-set (Costin, 2012; Laalo & Heinonen, 2016). It is in view of this observation that empowering learners through entrepreneurial skills has been found to be capable of stimulating the economic growth of a country in terms of alleviating poverty as well as enhancing the potential skills of entrepreneurs (Cheung & Chan, 2011; Kumar & Raj, 2019; Rantanen, Pawlak & Toikko, 2015).

2. Background of the Study

The core drive of the Botswana's national development plan 9 (Republic of Botswana, 2009) focused on equipping learners with skills that would enable them to enter into self-employment as well as create an opportunity for lifelong learning that would lead to higher quality of human capacity and productivity, leading to a better-quality life (Republic of Botswana, 2009). It was from the recommendations of the RNPE of 1994 (Republic of Botswana, 1994) that senior secondary curriculum was then diversified to include more practical and business subjects so that learners are exposed to real world issues.

Outside the formal classroom, entrepreneurial programs like Junior Achievement Botswana (JAB) clubs and Know About Business (KAB) were set up by the Ministry of Education (Swartland, 2008) to inculcate into learners, a dynamic entrepreneurship spirit and hence empower learners to succeed in the world of work. Such programs focus on learners' mindset and capabilities with the ultimate aim of helping them stay in school, recognize business opportunities, plan for future employment as well as to learn about general business and financial management (Haynie, Sherdard, Mosakowski & Earley, 2010; Davis, Korovyakovskaya & Ridley, 2017).

In Botswana, entrepreneurship education is integrated in business subjects, and it is intended to prepare learners for the world of work both as employees or employers (Sithole & Lumadi, 2012; Purwati, Hamza & Suhermin, 2020). In order to achieve this, the teaching methods should be learner-centered where teachers are facilitators (Pereira & Sithole, 2020). For example, in the Botswana general certificate of secondary education (BGSE) teaching syllabus the prescribed teaching and learning methods include project work, educational visits, use of business resource persons, business

simulations, group discussions, case studies and the use of school-based mini enterprises run and operated by learners (Republic of Botswana, 2008a; Republic of Botswana, 2008b). Furthermore, as Trim (2004) notes, teaching methods like simulation games help in developing technical, professional and managerial skills. The teaching of Business Studies curriculum is vocational, practical and training-orientated; therefore, it has to focus on what happens outside the classroom, which is the real world, and unfortunately teachers do not use appropriate pedagogies (Ottewil & Macfarlane, 2003).

3. Statement of the Problem

Botswana is a middle-income country which has experienced a stable economic growth over the years (Gaetsewe, 2019), yet still faces sky-rocketing unemployment rates, especially amongst the youth (Mogomotsi & Madigele, 2017). The introduction of the business studies syllabus in senior secondary schools was aimed at equipping learners with entrepreneurial skills for future economic survival. The acquired survival skills would provide knowledge and understanding of the economic, political and technological environment within which the business activity takes place and how the changes in that environment influence the business behavior (Republic of Botswana, 2010).

However, observations made are that learners continue to graduate from senior secondary schools where the assumption is that they are taught entrepreneurial skills for self-reliance and self-employment but fail to apply what they learnt in the classroom in the real world (Gerald, 2013; Daku & Oyekan, 2014; Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2016). It is possible that learners are not fully empowered during their school days on how entrepreneurial skills for the job market or for self-employment are put into practice. It could also be that teachers lack pedagogical knowledge and skills of entrepreneurial skills which they could impart to learners (Sithole, 2012). Therefore, the present study investigated how business studies teachers in senior secondary schools in Botswana use their pedagogical skills and knowledge to empower learners to internalize entrepreneurial skills and the challenges they are facing in their quest to impart such skills.

3.1 Research Questions

- 1) To what extent do business studies

teachers incorporate teacher-centered methods in their classrooms?

- 2) What challenges do teachers face when instilling entrepreneurial skills, self-reliance and self-employment?

4. Literature Review

4.1 Economic Empowerment and Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship Education is critical in promoting entrepreneurial attitudes and behavior, because ultimately entrepreneurial mindset influences behavior necessary in today's world (Gautam, 2015). Therefore, it is crucial to identify and cultivate learners' entrepreneurial skills early in life (Machado, 2016; Wright & Stigliani, 2012). Entrepreneurship mindset further seeks to empower learners as they create real wealth in the economic sector, thereby advancing the cause of development of the nation as a whole (Machado, 2016; Kumar & Raj, 2019). Economic empowerment is about empowering the disadvantaged sections of the population on matters of economic development by enabling them to think beyond immediate daily survival needs since they could exercise greater control over both their resources and life choices (Esiasa, 2014).

Entrepreneurship education can be a key driver to economy and wealth as many jobs are likely to be created by small businesses which will have been started by entrepreneurially minded individuals (Abayomi, Odozi & Ojo, 2014; Davidson, 2015; Direng, 2019) and where the youth could actively participate (Kuratko, 2009; Pittaway & Cope, 2007; Kim, Kim, Lee & Joung, 2020). Nevertheless, Themba and Josiah (2015) note that an economic constraint in some environments is lack of citizen entrepreneurial capacity. In addition, Onuma (2016) notes that entrepreneurship education is universally acknowledged as the vehicle of economic development and empowerment since it could equip learners with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes that would enable them to explore their world.

Learners exposed to entrepreneurship education could be motivated to unleash their productive energies through the application of their entrepreneurial skills, knowledge and a positive mindset to achieve certain goals that could benefit them while adding value to the economic growth of a country. It is therefore important to empower learners through entrepreneurial

education so that they gain competency skills and attitudes which they could use to start their own businesses (Jotia & Sithole, 2016; British Council, 2017; Mbanefo & Eboka, 2017) while benefitting learners from various socio-economic backgrounds. It further fosters a business mindset in learners since because it empowers, instills and nurtures business talents and skills as well as job creation mentality (Autio, Ho & Wong, 2005; Chigora, Tandi & Zvavahera, 2018; van der Zanden, Denesen, Cillessen & Meijer, 2020). In this way, it can also assist the economically disadvantaged to meaningfully participate, contribute and benefit from economic growth processes, hence, such individuals would be accorded respect and dignity since their contributions would be valued and respected (Eyben, Kabeer & Cornwall, 2008). Moreover, business subjects' teachers should emphasize teaching about real world concepts as a way of exposing learners to real life situations.

4.2 Empowering Learners Through Entrepreneurial Skills

Empowering learners through entrepreneurial skills can assist them to develop some entrepreneurial competencies (Duening, 2010; Valerio, Parton & Robb, 2014; Ferrero & Fioro, 2014), that could allow them to create job opportunities. The acquired competencies could assist learners to develop entrepreneurship skills and resilience to hardships especially when taught at upper secondary school level (Zhang, 2017). The empowered learners could later in life, control resources, since they can demonstrate some form of self-efficacy, confidence and resilience in the face of difficulties in the race of life (OECD, 2014; Shamsuddin, Aurome & Aminu, 2018). Moreover, empowering learners through entrepreneurial skills help them to explore their potential creativities for greatness and have an effective approach for achieving citizen economic empowerment (Shamsuddin, Aurome & Aminu, 2018).

Through Entrepreneurship Education learners do not rely on teachers and classroom time for instruction and guidance, since they are empowered to assess their learning styles, strengths, weaknesses, and in that way, they take ownership of their education rather than rely on teachers. Thus, learners become critical thinkers, who are independent, and self-directed (Cloudt, Duysters & Zhang, 2014). Here, learners

have the ability to think independently, present their thoughts in an organized and persuasive manner. It is therefore safe to conclude that, in this context, entrepreneurial skills which are result of entrepreneurship education, employ critical thinking which help the learners to be masters of efficiency while instilling the right mindset which is necessary for self-employment.

4.3 Teaching Strategies for Entrepreneurial Mindset and Skills

There are various teaching methods identified in teaching entrepreneurial skills which mostly emphasise learner-centered methods as opposed to the ones that are teacher-centered (Adediji, 2018; Pereira & Sithole, 2019; Pereira & Sithole 2020; Mwasalwiba, 2010). However, in most classes, there seems to be more rote than discovery learning, where learners memorize concepts with limited or without understanding them; and in this context, there is usually little interaction between the teacher and learners and amongst themselves in the classroom. This kind of teaching and learning often leave learners less attentive and less engaged (Ariosa, 2012). However, there are innovative teaching methods and learning styles that are more engaging.

The use of innovative teaching and learning techniques like games, web based and video clips as well as simulations are valuable teaching methods and are important in entrepreneurship programs (Tasnim, 2012; Maduku, Olusanya & Ziragawa, 2017). For example, Sithole (2012) identifies “mini enterprise” as a form of simulation that is used by business subject teachers in Botswana junior secondary schools to expose learners to the real world of running a business. Games and simulations ensure that there is an effective transfer of learning, in that learners participate more, and in that way, they tend to further internalize their entrepreneurial skills (Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2017; Gold, 2016). Teachers use relevant business simulation games which serve as a representation of the real operations and these are based on actual business scenarios (Zulfiqar, Sarwar, Aziz, Chandia & Khan, 2019). Such strategy is employed in order to enhance learners’ entrepreneurial spirits, creativity to integrate management concepts and various functions of a business, in line with the acceptable business initiatives (Abdullah, Hanafiah & Hashim, 2013; Levant, Coulmont & Sandu, 2016). Furthermore, Trim (2004) observes that simulation games help in developing technical, professional and

managerial skills since they enhance learners’ creativity through entrepreneurial skills as simulation becomes a training ground to practice business skills in a risk-free learning environment. Almuslamani, Mahdi and Nassar (2020) submit that business case studies which is another method, exposes learners to real life situations since it is interdisciplinary and it can be used to highlight connections between specific academic topics and real-world societal issues and how they can be applied (Bonney, 2015). The case study approach which is learner-centered, promotes autonomous learning where learners develop skills and apply their knowledge to real life situations which they might come across once they start venturing into business, while also assisting them to evaluate their own performance through reflection and self-appraisal by bridging the gap between theory and practice (Backx, 2008).

Another approach which is closely related to the case studies method is the project-based learning as espoused by Spencer (2018) which enables learners to own the entire creative process. In that way, it assists learners to think like designers, or entrepreneurs who will apply what they learnt to create jobs for themselves. That is why teachers should give learners authentic projects rooted in a real-world experience hence enabling them become divergent thinkers who develop entrepreneurial skills needed to thrive in a creative economy.

The use of ICT as another approach in entrepreneurial education includes videos and multimedia software that combines sound and images to provide authentic and challenging content that actively engages learners in the learning process (Sangra & Sanmamed, 2016; Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2017). Gold (2016) postulates that, when learners are shown a variety of videos with respect to demands of goods, such scenarios create an enabling environment whereby learners identify for themselves various relationships and concepts using the video. This shows that the use of ICT in teaching business studies subjects facilitates the acquisition important cognitive skills. In light of this context, Sithole (2012) therefore, emphasizes the importance of ICT in business subjects since it provides learners with concepts and practices used in the real-world context.

4.4 Role of Teachers on Entrepreneurial Mindset and Skills

As they guide and support their learners, teachers play an important role in the development of learners' increased future entrepreneurial activities into teaching activities and learning outcomes (Cox, 2018; Saxe, 2013; Heinonen & Poikkijoki, 2006). Solis (2017) observes that through the guidance and the support of teachers, learners could organize mini-company in the same way as real small and micro-enterprises for the purpose of giving them the opportunity to learn how to create and manage a business. In this way, an entrepreneurial culture that allows them to consolidate mini-companies and be self-employed instead of searching for uncompetitive jobs is created (Adegun, 2013).

4.5 Entrepreneurship Education and Subject Matter

There has been a call for an Entrepreneurship Education that employs student-centered methods, something that is presently missing in business studies courses (Mavlutova, Krastiņš, Hermanis & Lešinskis, 2019). This is because teachers of Business Studies are not able to relate the subject matter that is theory and practice with developments in the business world (Heinonen & Poikkijoki, 2006; Sithole & Lumadi, 2012;) since their pedagogical knowledge is limited (Lekoko & Rankhumise & Ras, 2012; Ebewo & Rugimbana, 2017; McKennzie & Swords, 2000). Furthermore, Ajsafe, Bolariwa & Edeh (2015) contend that business subjects are not allocated enough time on the school timetables since they usually compete with other academic subjects, which is a constraint in attempting to realize the objectives of the business education program. For example, in Botswana, teachers complain of a long syllabus while the time allocated to the subject is not adequate (Sithole, 2012) and this affects time spent exposing learners to entrepreneurial skills.

5. Research Methodology

A qualitative methodology was adopted since it provides insights into the problem under study in relation to understanding concepts, opinions and experiences which might generate new ideas through data analysis (Richards & Morse, 2013; Hammarberg, Lacey & Kirkman, 2016). Since this study aimed at exploring the behavior processes of interaction, meanings, values and experiences of participants in their natural settings (Taherdoost, 2016), business studies teachers were purposively sampled. The purposively sampled population was restricted

to business subject teachers from private and public senior secondary schools, since they could provide rich information on the phenomena being studied.

Interviews formed the main part of the data collection process since they offer a complete description and analysis of participants' responses while allowing the researcher to understand the social life of the participants (Alshenqeeti, 2014). For the purposes of this research, semi-structured interview questions were used because they allowed researchers to explore the subjective viewpoints and participants' lived experiences (Flick, 2009) while allowing the interviewer to ask additional questions, if any, on interesting or a new line of enquiry developed in the interview (Mohajan, 2018). Moreover, a qualitative semi-structured interview guide filled the gap left out by written records (Trochim, 2006; Moser & Korstjens, 2017). These face-to-face interviews were found to be ideal to achieve the purpose of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018) since the researchers were able to capture verbal and non-verbal communication such as body language, voice intonation while it also allowed the participant's attitude, and emotions to be expressed (Ismail, 2017).

Documents such as the syllabus, scheme of work, records of work done, and lesson plans were also reviewed and analyzed. The advantage of using documents is that they were created through ongoing day-to-day activities unrelated to the present research while providing a rich variety of information needed by the researchers because the documents were created by people closest to the phenomenon under study. In that way, they provided authentic records that shed light on multiple facets regarding the study since they clarified what could have been missed during interviews (Airasian, Gay & Mills, 2012).

This study used the thematic analysis, which is a form of pattern recognition within data, with emerging themes becoming the categories for analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The process involved a careful, more focused re-reading and review of the data in order to demonstrate rigor in the analysis (James, 2013; Cypress, 2017; Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings & de Eyto, 2018). The action further involved taking a closer look at the selected data's characteristics so as to uncover themes pertinent to the phenomenon under study for the purposes of an

in-depth analytical process (Yazan, 2015).

6. Data Presentation and Analysis

6.1 Importance of Empowering Learners Through Entrepreneurial Skills

Business subject teachers were asked to explain the importance of empowering learners through entrepreneurial skills, and they stated that they would like to see their learners venturing into the business world and employ themselves. For example, Ms. Phesodi said, *"entrepreneurship education exposes learners to a variety of business opportunities, and they also learn how to think critically in the world of business"*. Mr. John added that, *"entrepreneurship education is the foundation of a smart decision-making process that helps learners to be innovative and creative"*.

One of the participants, Ms. Bella who teaches commerce and accounting in a private school said; *"our learners are exposed to business formation; they get the idea of how the business is run, the management skills and marketing techniques in order to empower them with entrepreneurial skills"*. She further added that *"even though we expose our learners to business formation, they do not have enough time for hands-on due to time constraints. We are guided by the syllabus, but it does not recommend enough time for internship"*. Ms. Gibbs from a public school and teaching accounting and commerce said; *"during the commerce class, my students learn more about the market research, business plan and business finance which are powerful tools for enhancing their entrepreneurial skills"*.

6.2 Teaching Strategies Used by Teachers to Develop Entrepreneurial Skills and Attitudes

Business Studies teachers rarely use teaching methods that promote learner-centered learning, yet business subjects are practical subjects that require the use of direct experience and practice. The evidence presented in this research suggests that even though there is a wide range of teaching methods for business subjects like: project based, case studies, lecture, role play, group discussions, business games and simulation teachers opted to use the lecture method.

During the interview, Mr. John said; *"I use the lecture method during my class, the syllabus is too long and I'm trying by all means to cover it well on time"*. When asked to explain further he said; *"even though I use the lecture method as a way of covering the syllabus, the time allocated for the*

subject is still not enough, so, I have to sacrifice my time and sometimes work on weekends. Even though I do that, I still do not have time to experiment with other teaching methods". Ms. Bella said *"I use lecture method because I'm guided by the syllabus. However, as commerce and accounting teacher, I encourage my learners to be in touch with business news in various media, such as newspapers and interne. So, they are involved in researching about business outside the classroom in response to the syllabus in order to give relevance to the real business world"*. However, the syllabus document does not recommend the lecture method, even though teachers largely use it. Furthermore, Ms. Bella said *"I use traditional lecture method"*. When probed further, Ms. Bella said; *"the length of the syllabus forces me to adapt to the traditional lecture method, even though it favors one group of learners, those who learn best by hearing, than those who learn by doing. We are forced to use lecture method in order to cover more content. We cannot use learner-centered method like games due to time constraints"*.

When going through lesson plans, records of work done, scheme of work and syllabus the researchers found out that in the learners' activities column, the most used words were *"listen and take note"*, and under the teacher's column most of the objectives were of a low order cognitive level. We also found out that teachers plan for their lessons in a way that promote rote learning because they do most of the work while learners are expected to listen and take notes of the main points. This explains why the lecture method is heavily over-used and why learner-centered methods that test high order cognitive skills like case studies and mini-projects are seldom used.

6.3 Teaching Entrepreneurial Skills in the Classroom

When interviewed, Ms. Bella commented; *"in my commerce classroom, I cover objectives that include how one can develop some business idea, prepare business market plan and sales about certain products or services"*. Ms. Phesodi added and said; *"during my business studies classroom, I impart to my learners entrepreneurial skills which enable them to start, run and manage their own businesses and become self-employed after completing school"*. Similarly, Mr. John said; *"in my class commerce class I cover topics such as business plan which equips my learners with innovative, managerial and marketing skills needed for self-employment"*.

6.4 Challenges that Teachers Face when Instilling Self-Reliance Mindset in the Learners

Teachers indicated that they faced various challenges when attempting to change the mindset of learners with respect to instilling a sense of self-reliance and independence in their classrooms. Ms. Ghama said: “teaching business subjects is a major challenge because we are expected to secure an appropriate balance between theory and practice by using entrepreneurial inclined pedagogies that ensure that any learning that takes place is a combination of theory and experience, yet we are failing our learners because most of the time we use lecture method in trying to link theory and practice while at the same time working hard to complete the syllabus well on time”. Mr. John held a different view as he noted that he rarely encountered any challenges except that time allocated to business subjects was too limited to engage in practical activities. Lack of resources was also cited by the teachers as another serious challenge in their classrooms.

When reviewing the documents, it was clear that the recommended textbook for business subjects was the only instructional material used in the lesson plans. Ms. Phesodi noted; “we are running out of resources in our school. These are resources like workbooks, real objects and charts that would naturally enhance knowledge of practical subjects”. However, the teachers did not have a solution to the challenges of teaching and learning resources since they said that it was beyond their control.

7. Conclusion

The study concludes that business subjects’ teachers are the driving force to learners’ success in the business world since they have the opportunity to equip and empower the business subject learners with entrepreneurial skills. This will eventually enable them to be self-employed and compete successfully in the business marketplace upon completion of their studies. Furthermore, teachers instill entrepreneurial competencies and skills by covering topics such as business plan that help learners develop creativity, innovation and risk-taking abilities essential for an entrepreneurial mindset. Unfortunately, these efforts by teachers are not fruitful due to time constraint, teachers resort to solely rely on the use of the lecture method.

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