

## A decade of entrepreneurship education in South Africa

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To realise the ideal of a better life for all South Africans, the entrepreneurial energies of all our people (including children) should be harnessed to ensure that the country's full potential for economic growth is unleashed. This article describes some initiatives taken by roleplayers in both the private sector and the educational sector to engage in entrepreneurship education in South Africa over the past 10 years. Special emphasis is placed on a research project in Gauteng schools on the implementation of a pilot core syllabus for entrepreneurship and economic education for pupils in the intermediate school phase. This programme entailed the training of teachers, and the modification of the pilot syllabus. The perceptions of pupils who have recently been exposed to entrepreneurship education in Curriculum 2005 are also offered.

### Introduction

The term entrepreneurship means different things to different people. Peter Drucker, an authority on management theory, noted that although the term has been used for more than 200 years, "... there has been total confusion over the definition" (Lambing & Kuehl, 2000: 14). Van Aardt and Van Aardt (1997:4) refer to the Oxford English Dictionary which defines an entrepreneur as one "... who organises, manages, and assumes the risks of a business enterprise". Various other authors agree, however, that there are some common aspects which define the nature of entrepreneurship, namely risk taking, creativity, independence, and rewards (Hisrich & Peters, 1998; Kroon, 1998; Dollinger, 1995). According to Hisrich and Peters (1998:24), these commonalities will continue to be the driving force behind the notion of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education in the future.

The establishment, promotion and cultivation of a culture of entrepreneurship among the youth is a topic that has received considerable attention recently. Various centres, foundations and after-school classes in entrepreneurship for children have been established in countries such as the United States and Japan (Brown, 2000; Suvendrini, 2001; Edmond, 1995). Kellner (2000:180-182) refers to the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE), a nonprofit organisation that teaches inner-city children how to become entrepreneurs. Thirty-six percent of 31 000 children who have gone through the programme went on to start their own businesses, ranging in annual revenues from \$500 to \$500 000. Publications such as *KidpreneursNews* (for children ages eight to twelve) and *Black Enterprise for Teens* (ages thirteen to eighteen) are examples of publications in the United States created to teach entrepreneurship skills to children (Smith, 1999). As could be expected, initiatives to utilise modern technology to teach entrepreneurship competencies to children are already under way. The *Financial NetNews* (1998:3) reports on the landing of an interactive educational Website called *Fleet Kids* by Fleet Bank which has been designed to teach children responsible financial planning and entrepreneurship.

Much has been said, written and done in South Africa over the past 10 years to establish mechanisms whereby children can actively become involved in entrepreneurial activities, and which could nurture their entrepreneurial spirit. The main aim of the various formal and informal programmes in entrepreneurship education is to teach children to become creative and constructive members of their communities, and to develop their entrepreneurial skills. In the words of Moloi (1995:1), young entrepreneurs must become "... masters of their own destinies".

Unfortunately, the state of the South African economy at present is a cause for concern for the future adults of our country. They are confronted with problems such as crime, corruption, mismanagement and unemployment. The unemployment problem in South Africa is causing anxiety not only to the government or roleplayers in the private sector, but also to the younger generation. It is estimated that

more than 8 million people will be unemployed in South Africa by 2010 (Gouws, 1997:143). It is assumed that the effects of HIV/AIDS have not been taken into account in this estimate. The world of work has changed dramatically over the past few decades, and it can be expected to change even more rapidly in the new millennium. According to Sunter (Van Schoor, 2000:41), the picture becomes even gloomier because the South African schools "... are brilliant at educating children for the 1950s". This statement may be questioned, however, considering that valuable work is currently being done by teachers who are committed to making a positive contribution to the education of our youth.

For young people to escape from the vicious circle caused by failings in the system, active intervention will be necessary. There is therefore an urgent need for young people to be educated and trained in the field of entrepreneurship. In order for them to become job-creators rather than job-seekers, children should learn, from an early age, to be knowledgeable consumers, develop the right attitude towards work, and develop the skills needed to identify viable business opportunities and eventually start their own business undertakings. Entrepreneurship education will therefore contribute to the ideal of empowering as many people as possible in order to unleash the previously stifled human potential of all South Africans (Hanekom, 1995). Esterhuizen (1996) is of the opinion that this ideal will be better accomplished when parents also become actively involved in entrepreneurship education for their children at home.

The nature and scope, as well as the current implementation of Curriculum 2005, have been subjected to much debate and scrutiny (Rogan, 2000:118). It is, however, not the intention of this article to engage in this debate. Rather, this article will focus on initiatives by some roleplayers which have taken place over the past 10 years in both the private sector and the educational sector as regards engagement in entrepreneurship education in South Africa. The views and perceptions of children who have been exposed to the Curriculum 2005 entrepreneurship education programme will also be highlighted.

The plea for the advancement of entrepreneurship and also for the establishment of mechanisms to include it in the formal school curriculum has come from various sources, including the formal educational sector, the private sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

### Initiatives in the private sector

Apart from the unemployment problem, Maré and Crous (1995) and Gouws (1997:143; 145) refer to other reasons why roleplayers in the private sector should actively get involved in the promotion of entrepreneurial activities among young people:

- the substantial "labour force imbalance", with an endemic and worsening shortage of skilled labour
- the much lower percentage of South Africa's economically active population that are presently self-employed compared with the percentage in other countries

- the high population growth rate in South Africa
- the high rate of illiteracy in the country
- the non-relevance of the education system and the fact that too many black matriculants opt to take subjects such as History and Biblical Studies.

Although the private sector and other concerned roleplayers might confess that they have neglected this area in the past, various projects have been launched and valuable contributions made by roleplayers from the private sector over the past decade. Listed below are examples of a few roleplayers in the private sector who engaged in the advancement of entrepreneurship at school level prior to the official introduction of entrepreneurship in the Curriculum 2005 programme. It falls outside the scope of this article to discuss the valuable contributions made by organisations that have developed outcomes-based entrepreneurship programmes for the Economic and Management Science (EMS) Learning Area.

#### Junior Achievement (JA)

JA Southern Africa is a nation-wide, autonomous, non-profit association which offers experiential business skills programmes to young people. It operates in consultation with the Centre for Developing Business of the University of the Witwatersrand, other local universities and 120 private sector and foreign investors. At the heart of JA's operations are a range of experiential business education programmes that bring business people and the youth together for their mutual benefit. JA was brought to South Africa in the late 1970s and refined to meet local needs and the particular nature of South African society (Junior Achievement, 1994).

#### The Education with Enterprise Trust (EWET)

The process that led to the establishment of EWET and the initiation of the Youth Enterprise Society (YES) began in 1989. A number of young people and teachers expressed the need for the development of skills appropriate to the "world of work" and more specifically for skills directed towards the option of self-employment. The planning of the YES pilot programme was finalised in 1993 and the programme was initiated in 1994. YES is a national club movement that serves as a laboratory for developing entrepreneurs among the South African youth. Various business competencies are developed through a process of learning-by-doing. Members participate by joining a team that meets once a week. They compete against other teams on topics such as how to start and run a business and how to earn money to help their communities (EWET, 1995).

#### Entrepreneurship Education Initiative (EEI)

According to Blacklaws (1997), the EEI was formed under the auspices of Richards Bay Minerals. The aims of this initiative are to provide a platform for increasing the number of business start-ups, and to provide opportunities for schoolchildren to take part in competitions that will contribute to their understanding of and engagement in entrepreneurial activities. One of EEI's major achievements was gaining recognition for the importance of entrepreneurship training from the government, with particular emphasis on influencing the structure and content of Curriculum 2005.

#### Other roleplayers and initiatives

Other roleplayers and initiatives that promote entrepreneurship include: The ABSA Top Entrepreneur Competition 2001, which caters for school children and university students, Cash for Schools (CFS) which is a concept designed to assist South African schools with fundraising ventures (CFS partners include Ackermans, Nestlé, Simba, Liqui-Fruit and First National Bank), the Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut, the Small Business Development Corporation, various chambers of commerce, Expo for Young Scientists and tertiary institutions.

A study by Gouws (1997:144) found that almost 44% of the 60 respondents who are actively involved in promoting entrepreneurship indicated that they are involved in entrepreneurship education at

schools. Two of the many prominent South African personalities who also share the vision of entrepreneurship education for young people are Clem Sunter, a scenario planner for Anglo American, and Lawrence Mavundla, the President of ACHIB (African Council of Hawkers and Informal Business).

#### Entrepreneurship education in South Africa: a brief historical overview

According to Maré and Crous (1995), many people blame the school system for the lack of entrepreneurial excellence in South African. Many school leavers who have not received tuition in subjects such as Business Economics or Economics are sent into the working world almost as "economic illiterates". It is believed that the objectives or learning outcomes as described by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) will hopefully bring relief in this regard.

Education and curriculum experts have been involved since 1990 in various projects and programmes for introducing entrepreneurship into the school curriculum. One of the first questions to be answered was whether learners at primary schools were capable of understanding matters related to economic activities, and if so, to what extent (Davies, 1991). In an effort to answer these and many other questions, the Superintendent-General of the former Department of Education and Culture: House of Assembly, appointed a committee in 1991 to investigate the feasibility of the inclusion of entrepreneurship as a possible future school subject.

#### Concept core syllabus for Economic Education

Unfortunately, at the time when the abovementioned committee began its operations, roleplayers from all the education departments were unable, for a variety of reasons, to participate in the project. The sample therefore included Grade 1 to Grade 7 learners from six Model C schools in the Pretoria region.

A thorough literature study and a situation analysis were carried out prior to the execution of the project. This resulted firstly in the realisation that there is indeed a need and place for entrepreneurship to be included in the school curriculum. Secondly, it became clear that entrepreneurship should not be offered as a subject on its own. Rather, it should be approached in a holistic manner as part of "the big picture". This big picture focuses on the economic reality which learners (even in Grade 1) are involved in daily. A working document, which served as a draft core syllabus, was compiled. For practical reasons this "new subject" was called Economic Education. The overall objectives of the proposed new subject were described as follows:

"The knowledge and skills pupils obtain must be of such a nature that they should realise and discover that they:

- are participants or roleplayers in the economy;
- should become skillful consumers;
- must manage their own money matters in a responsible way;
- should develop a positive attitude towards productive work; and
- can become successful entrepreneurs who could engage in entrepreneurial activities" (Department of Education and Culture: House of Assembly, 1992:1).

The syllabus contains the following modules: basic economic concepts and processes, consumer skills, productivity and entrepreneurship. Learners in the senior primary phase (Grades 6 and 7) were also briefly introduced to very basic accounting and aspects relating to business law.

#### Pilot study

The research team, which comprised three curriculum researchers in the field of economic sciences, embarked on a pilot study that was conducted in primary schools in the Pretoria region. Approximately 20 teachers from the six schools were exposed to an in-service training programme for 6 weeks in 1992. The pilot core syllabus was introduced and tested in the six schools during 1993. When required, guidance and further training for teachers was offered. After evaluation

of the syllabus by teachers at the end of 1993, certain amendments were made. The process (guiding teachers and modifying the syllabus) was repeated in 1994. The document was then finalised and submitted to the Department of National Education as a working document for use in the curriculum renewal process by the new government.

### Entrepreneurship in the Curriculum 2005 programme

In many instances the development and implementation of a new curriculum is a rather difficult and costly exercise, and it is often not a very popular activity. Many problems or pitfalls may hamper the successful implementation of the Curriculum 2005 programme. The following serve as examples: Firstly, schools in South Africa differ from one another in many respects, for example the professional backgrounds and educational levels of teachers in rural, township and urban areas are not the same (Rogan, 2000:118). And secondly, the cultural background and differences of learners in the school system (Gouws, 1997:146), as well as the conversion of the curriculum content from being Eurocentric to being Afrocentric (Jeevanantham, 1999: 49), present many challenges for both curriculum developers and the schools that have to implement the curriculum.

### Entrepreneurship as a critical outcome

The Curriculum 2005 programme of the Department of Education identifies 12 critical outcomes. These critical outcomes are the broad, generic cross-curricular outcomes which underpin the Constitution, and which have been adopted by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). These outcomes will ensure that learners gain the skills, knowledge and values that will allow them to contribute to their own success as well as the success of their families, and the nation as a whole. SAQA proposes an outcome with the specific intention of enabling individuals to identify and engage in entrepreneurial opportunities (The National Qualifications Framework, 2000:23).

A study of all the relevant documents disclosed that entrepreneurship is listed as one of six phase organisers identified to facilitate the planning, organisation and assessment of the curriculum development process. This should ensure that children are given opportunities to develop as active citizens capable of contributing to the building of a democratic society (Policy Document of the Department of Education, 1997:20). Teachers are therefore not specifically trained to be entrepreneurial. Entrepreneurship as a field of study falls under the Learning Area: Economic and Management Sciences (EMS). In the foundation phase (Grades 1 to 3) the Life Skills programme makes provision for entrepreneurship. The following four modules are prescribed for the teaching of entrepreneurship in the foundation phase:

- Needs in society
- Characteristics of an entrepreneur
- Starting one's own business
- Productivity

Listed below are those Specific Outcomes, Assessment Criteria and Range Statements for EMS in the Foundation Phase as contained in the Policy Document of the Department of Education (EMS, 1997: 5-19) that were included in the original working document (syllabus) for Economic Education (Department of Education and Culture: House of Assembly, 1994:1-6) which was submitted to the Department of National Education in 1994:

- SO1: Engage in entrepreneurial activities: Needs in society, characteristics of entrepreneurs, starting a business, business plan, productivity
- SO2: Demonstrate personal role in economic environment: Rights of the consumer
- SO3: Demonstrate the principles of supply and demand and the practices of production: Factors of production, exchange of goods and services
- SO4: Demonstrate managerial expertise and administration proficiency: Planning and organising
- SO6: Evaluate different economic systems: Types of ownership, profit motive

### Informal training of teachers

Personal interviews with headmasters and teachers of the six schools who were involved in the pilot study in 1992, as well as discussions with teachers involved in a recent study, confirmed that very few teachers in the intermediate school phase have had formal training in the economic sciences. Prior to the implementation of Curriculum 2005, pro-active initiatives entailed the training and in-service training of teachers to prepare them for the implementation of the new entrepreneurship programme in schools. More than 20 000 pupils, teachers and parents have been exposed to the programme over the past 5 years. Initially only schools in the Pretoria region were included in the programme. Fortunately, the programme has recently been expanded to make provision for schools in the Mpumalanga province where an Honours graduate in Marketing was trained to take responsibility for the running of courses in Middelburg. Plans are now under way to start training programmes in the rural areas, the most recent programme being (March 2000) run in an ex-model C school where 30 pupils from previously disadvantaged communities participated.

The content of the entrepreneurship programme makes provision for the following modules:

- A broad overview of the nature and scope of entrepreneurship. Basic business and economic concepts are explained and related to the role of entrepreneurs in the production and delivery of goods and services.
- Discovering one's potential as a future entrepreneur. Characteristics of an entrepreneur and case studies of successful young South African entrepreneurs are discussed.
- Identifying viable business opportunities. Learners are challenged to identify needs in their local communities and propose solutions as to how they can be involved in meeting those needs.
- Drawing up business and marketing plans. The learners are requested to do "research" and draw up a simple business and marketing plan for a future business undertaking they would like to be involved in.
- Starting and managing one's own business. Learners are taught the basics of business management.
- Develop the right attitude towards money.

Schools are also encouraged to include a "market" or "entrepreneurship" day in the programme. On these occasions learners are given the opportunity for hands-on-experience of entrepreneurship. They bring their products to school and sell them to fellow students during breaks. Prior to this specific day, learners are guided on the drawing up of a business plan. Younger learners are encouraged to include the following in their business plans:

- What they want to sell (business idea)
- How the product will be made (production)
- How much it will cost (price)
- How they will inform other pupils about the product (advertising)

### Pupils' perceptions of entrepreneurship education

Traditional curriculum theory states that scientific curriculum development hinges on three basic determinants, namely, societal needs, the content of the subject matter (subject integrity), and the needs and wants of the learners. What do learners feel and think of the entrepreneurship education they have been exposed to since entrepreneurship was introduced in the syllabus?

A questionnaire was distributed at 3 schools, to 150 pupils, in the intermediate school phase (Grades 7 and 8) in September 2000. Care was taken to ensure that the EMS in Curriculum 2005 has been implemented in the schools that were selected. The non-probability sample consisted of 80 boys and 70 girls. A 5-point Likert scale was used as the research instrument to determine the pupils' perceptions regarding entrepreneurship education. They were asked to indicate whether entrepreneurship education (EE) should be included in the broad curriculum, and to what extent EE can contribute towards the development of skills such as problem-solving, working with others in a group, and becoming more aware of the customs and needs of other

cultural groups. The responses were grouped into three categories, namely positive attitudes, neutral attitudes and negative attitudes. The results are discussed below.

The information in Table 1 indicates that the boys in the sample were more positive about the inclusion of EE in the curriculum than girls. More than 80% of the pupils considered it important to include practical activities such as "market days" in the programme. Boys were also more positive than girls about the role or value of EE in contributing to their ability to solve problems and work together in groups. Sixty percent of the boys and 54% of the girls responded in a neutral or negative manner to questions on the contribution of EE to cultural sensitivity. An interesting finding of the survey was that 84% of the 30 black respondents (boys and girls) think that EE helps them to be more sensitive towards other cultural groups.

**Table 1** Perceptions of pupils toward entrepreneurship education

Criteria	Boys			Girls		
	Positive (%)	Neutral (%)	Negative (%)	Positive (%)	Neutral (%)	Negative (%)
EE in the curriculum	63	24	13	41	39	20
Exposure to practical activities	84	7	9	87	10	3
Identify and solve problems*	69	22	9	55	31	14
Group work*	77	12	11	65	21	14
Cultural sensitivity*	40	43	17	46	34	20

\* Questions based on three critical outcomes identified by SAQA

## Conclusions and recommendations

A well-planned and effective team effort is required to put the South African economy on the road to victory. The improvement of economic growth and the creation of wealth for all South Africans will only be achieved if all the possible roleplayers are engaged in this "battle". Even children at primary school level should be included. In this regard, even before entrepreneurship education was an issue in South Africa, Dr Anton Rupert (1985:3) said that "... at home, at school and university, and at every level of society" we will have to search for the new entrepreneurs, train them, and inspire them.

The numerous initiatives and efforts of various role-players who have taken an interest in promoting the education and growth of entrepreneurship in South Africa over the past decade, as well as the overall positive feedback from pupils such as those who completed the questionnaire for this study, indicate that the "searching, training and inspiring" of young entrepreneurs in South Africa is indeed on the right track. A conclusion can be drawn that Curriculum 2005, and specifically the education of entrepreneurship, is based on sound pedagogical principles. The teaching of entrepreneurship should, in the long run, undoubtedly contribute to the full development of learners and the social wellbeing of the nation at large. It can, however, be expected that the implementation of the new curriculum will be a problem for some years to come. Care should be taken to ensure that entrepreneurship education does not become another activity where learners acquire predominantly theoretical knowledge. Future research could focus on ways to ensure that the practical and

"fun" element (Gouws, 1997:144) will be an integral part of the programme. Consideration should be given to mentorship programmes where older learners can for example be recruited for an internship at a company. Research is also necessary to determine how teachers can assume ownership "... both of the curriculum itself and the implementation process" (Rogan, 2000:121). Further empirical research is needed to determine teachers' perceptions of the content and implementation of entrepreneurship in Curriculum 2005.

The many success stories about young entrepreneurs in South Africa (North, 1995), and the story of Michelle Baard (1995) who acts as a spokesperson for many other young entrepreneurs, confirm that entrepreneurship education in South Africa over the past 10 years has been a worthwhile exercise:

"In these days, for us young people, it is hard to make money. Many of us either do chores around the house, or sacrifice our weekends and holidays doing work — some of us get no money! Well, we've had enough! We've decided to be  
ENTREPRENEURS!

Entrepreneurs are people that put their talents to use, and so they make money. Every Friday, during our second break, we have a flea-market. We sell ice-cream, sweets, chocolates, books, etc. We all make so much money it's unbelievable! Well, there you have it. So be an entrepreneur today!"

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