



# EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUM AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP CULTURE AMONG THE YOUTH: A CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND

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## Abstract:

Youth entrepreneurship is broadly considered as an important factor of economic growth, job creation and poverty alleviation. Lack of education and training pose major challenges for youth participation in entrepreneurship. This study examines the extent to which the educational curriculum fosters an entrepreneurship culture among the youth, with specific reference to the University of Zululand. The mixed method study surveyed three hundred and seventy-four (374) students and interviewed eleven (11) heads of departments from different faculties at the University of Zululand. The key findings indicated that the university educational curriculum does not equip the students with entrepreneurial skills and mindsets that enable them to start their own businesses. More significantly, the entrepreneurship is only taught in business management departments where the focus is biased towards theory rather than the practical aspects of business ventures. The study concluded that the educational curriculum was too theoretical and that universities has not yet recognized the significance of teaching entrepreneurship across all faculties. The main recommendations are the need for a policy shift towards teaching entrepreneurship in all universities faculties and placing emphasis on the practical aspects of venture creation in entrepreneurship studies, as well as developing incubation centres for grooming entrepreneurs at higher learning institutions.

**Keywords:** *Entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education, curriculum, entrepreneurship culture*

## Introduction

There is a growing body of empirical research on the role of entrepreneurship in the economic growth, employment creation and poverty reduction. Youth entrepreneurship is no exception, as it has been recognized by a number of authors as an important tool in economic development (eg., Fatoki and Garwe, 2010, Udu and Amadi, 2013, Nani, 2016, Echezona, 2015, Chimucheka, 2012, Taatila, 2010). Research evidence highlights that youth entrepreneurship can play a significant role in promoting the development of the country's economic growth and job creation, especially in the South African environment where there is a high unemployment rate, specifically among the youth (Varblane and Mets, 2010). The promotion of entrepreneurship education will instil the culture of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial mindsets (Varblane and Mets 2010). Nani (2016) pointed out that the current education system does not lay a good entrepreneurial foundation for students. Udu and Amadi (2013) further argue that learning institutions are still failing to develop the curriculum that equips students with entrepreneurial mindsets. There is little empirical research exploring the extent to which entrepreneurship is taught at universities. This study explores

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the role of curriculum in promoting entrepreneurship and the extent to which entrepreneurship is taught in South African Universities, with specific reference to the University of Zululand.

## **Literature review**

### ***Teaching of entrepreneurship at universities***

Taatila (2010) reported that universities offer modules in entrepreneurship to certain groups of students, and not to all students that are registered at the university. In turn, Varblane and Mets (2010) pointed out that most universities focus on teaching the theory of entrepreneurship to specific student groups, while the practical element is limited. However, the problem of access to entrepreneurship education goes beyond tertiary institutions and starts from the foundation of basic education which are primary and secondary schools. This is echoed by Nani (2016), that entrepreneurship is not taught in government primary and secondary schools, thus students' progress to higher levels of education with no appreciation of entrepreneurship.

Nani (2016) argued that introducing entrepreneurship studies at a tertiary level could be late for students to acquire essential entrepreneurial skills, which are best developed at younger ages, as proposed by entrepreneurial models. Also, those necessary entrepreneurial skills to hone the ability to recognise sustainable business opportunities and using those skills to start sustainable businesses are best taught at an early age. However, entrepreneurship studies in most countries in Europe as well as South Africa, Nigeria and Zimbabwe, are based on an unstable curriculum which fails to achieve the intended learning outcomes (Eurydice Report, 2016). The Report cites challenges with disparate outcomes of entrepreneurship studies, due to a lack of comprehensiveness between education levels, and which are largely fragmented in most European countries. It further states that experiential learning is rare in European schools, as they focus on activities outside the classroom and on active learning. Thus, there is a disconnection between the subject content, teaching methodology and learning for proper and effective delivery of entrepreneurship education. Hoffmann et al. (2015) pointed out that entrepreneurship cannot be taught effectively through traditional education methods and they advocate for practical measurements, student contributions and international benchmarking.

Fatoki and Garwe (2010), Nani (2016) and GEM Report (2016) pointed out that a dearth of education and training is one of the main causes for the high failure rate of SMMEs and for the low level of entrepreneurial activities in South Africa. There is still a gap in teaching young people entrepreneurship in a way that could inspire starting their own businesses and in acquiring entrepreneurial culture, hence the preference for white collar jobs (Varblane and Mets, 2010). Entrepreneurship skills are acquired via hands-on real-life development projects (Taatila, 2010) and learning institutions are failing to expose students to the real business world. Exposure to the real business world, supported by an acquisition of requisite skills, enhances the ability to start and operate business ventures (Gamede and Uleanya, 2017). Varblane and Mets (2010) highlight that offering entrepreneurship studies to every university student, will equip them with entrepreneurial skills and knowledge that they will be able to use in the business world. Further, Gamede and Uleanya (2017) argue that teaching entrepreneurship skills to all university students, will be of great significance to the country. For Varblane and Mets (2010) there is a need to complement the teaching of theory entrepreneurship with practical-oriented training in higher education institutions.

The 2018 Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) Conference reiterated the adverse impact of most universities teaching students entrepreneurship theory than building entrepreneurship culture and the practise of entrepreneurship which exposes them to the real business world. Further, stating that universities are still lagging behind in changing students' mindsets to become employment creators rather than job searchers. The content and teaching methodology fail to expose students to the real business world, as most of them dwell on theoretical aspects of entrepreneurship, rather than practical aspects of entrepreneurship.

### ***Empirical research evidence***

Echezona (2015) reported that entrepreneurship education is a viable tool for the development of entrepreneurial culture and poverty alleviation among university students in South Africa. In turn, the study by Udu and Amadi (2013) explored the prospects for introducing entrepreneurship education at primary school level in Nigeria. The study surveyed sixty (60) entrepreneurs and ninety (90) primary school teachers, and reported that the respondents indicated that teaching entrepreneurship education at primary education would provide a concrete foundation for future participation in entrepreneurship by students.

Nani (2016) explored the introduction of entrepreneurial studies in the school curriculum in Zimbabwe. The study findings showed that entrepreneurship studies were not being offered in government primary and secondary schools. The recommendations were that entrepreneurship education should be introduced at primary and

secondary levels to prepare the mindsets of learners for the successful development and operating of businesses later in life.

Chimucheka (2012) investigated the influence of entrepreneurship studies on the performance of SMMEs in the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality, Eastern Cape Province in South Africa. The quantitative research study reported that entrepreneurship education plays a crucial role in improving the knowledge and entrepreneurial skills of SMMEs owners, and managers positively impacted the performance of the SMMEs. The crucial role of that entrepreneurship education in the formation and survival for SMMEs was highlighted.

Alsharief and El-Gohary (2016) investigated the influence of entrepreneurship education on higher education students, and their employability in the context of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The study mixed method research design used interviews and survey questionnaires to collect data. The key findings showed that the teaching of entrepreneurship and new product development in the Technology and Science degree courses in KSA, influenced students' attitudes towards creating small businesses and new business ventures. Taatila (2010) emphasised that the teaching of entrepreneurship in higher education should include practical real-life development projects.

## Theoretical Framework

### **Human capital theory**

The human capital theory can be traced to the works of Becker (1994) who argued that capital cannot only be measured from entities using direct accounting book values like financial resources and physical infrastructure. The Human Capital Theory postulates that capital includes aspects that increase the well-being and contributory capacity of human beings to their selves, societies and organisations. To this end, Becker identified etiquette, experience, skills, knowledge and health as human capital indicators that increased a human being's value.

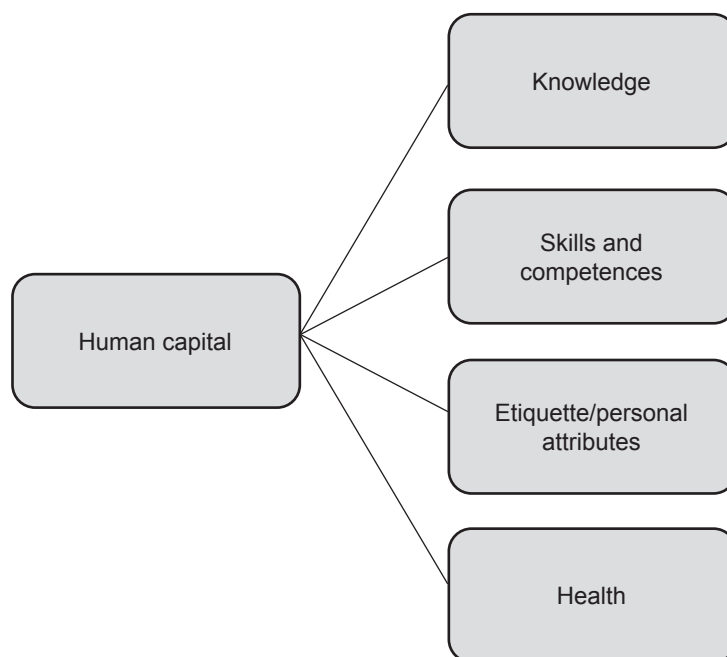


Figure 1: Becker's Human Capital Theory

Source: Becker (1994: PAGE 31)

According to the Human capital theory, education and skills development programmes are indispensable processes in the development of the human capital (Hogendoorn et al. 2019). Becker further argued that like traditional capital, higher capital values were better than lower ones, and different individuals can accumulate different levels of human capital based on factors like opportunity, levels of commitment, and the environment (Becker, 1994 & Martin et al. 2013). Therefore, all factors held constant, individuals with higher levels of education, knowledge and experience are expected to accumulate wealth at a relatively higher rate than those without (Becker, 1994). The Human Capital Theory suggests that education and training promote the productivity of individuals through teaching them important and useful knowledge, ideas, skills and how to keep up with levels of technology in today's changing business environment (Barro, 1991).

Olaniyan and Okemakinde (2008) reported that investment in education has a positive influence on economic growth and development. While the expenditure on training and development should be considered as productive investments similar to investments on physical assets. Martin et al. (2013) pointed out that entrepreneurship education improves students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship and intentions towards starting businesses. In addition to highlighting the relationship between entrepreneurship education and human capital outcomes, such as entrepreneurship-related knowledge and skills, Echezona (2015) suggested that education should be designed in a way that creates and promotes the supply of entrepreneurial enterprises and activities that re-focus the mindsets of students towards becoming entrepreneurs rather than job seekers. Thus, the Human Capital Theory places emphasis on the role of teaching and instilling the spirit of entrepreneurship culture to students through entrepreneurship education.

Notwithstanding, these insights Hogendoorn et al. (2019), argue that the association between human capital and entrepreneurial success as suggested by the theory, is not guaranteed. In their study they found that there was no statistically significant correlation between entrepreneurial success and human capital. Despite such sceptical views about the human capital theory, some researchers have relied on it to justify the positive effects of education on entrepreneurial success (eg., Nahapiet 2011 and Martin et al. 2013).

This study adopts the human capital theory to explicate the relationship between entrepreneurial success and deliberate personal development efforts by individuals within educational systems. The study examines postulates that the development of an entrepreneurial culture by higher education institutions as a unique formation of human capital, which if embraced by the students, have significant benefits for society.

## Methodology

The study adopted the mixed method design to collect qualitative and quantitative data from students and heads of departments from selected faculties at the University of Zululand. The reason to choose this methodology is that mixed methods provides a better understanding of a research problem and it is also chosen because of the strength of drawing on both qualitative and quantitative research, and it minimizes the limitations of both approaches. Questionnaires were used to collect data from students, while interviews were conducted with heads of departments. Associated with mixed methods is the concept of triangulation, which is defined as the use of different methods to test the same theoretical issues (Creswell, 2014 & Ang, 2014).

The randomly selected sample of heads of departments comprised seven (7) heads of department (HoDs) from university departments which did not teach entrepreneurship and four (4) HoDs from departments that teach entrepreneurship. The sampling frame for the student sample was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table to select three hundred and seventy-four (374) candidates. To draw a simple random sample without introducing researcher bias, computerized sampling programs and random number tables are used to impartially select the members of the population to be sampled. The subjects in the population are sampled by a random process, using either a random number generator or a random number table, so that each person remaining in the population has the same probability of being selected for the sample (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970).

Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS while qualitative data was analysed using Atlas.ti 8. In turn, the quantitative analysis was conducted using two approaches, namely Cramer's V correlational analysis and Spearman correlation. These two methods of analysis helped to gauge the strength of the associations among the key variables.

## Results and Discussions

The main study objective was to examine the relationship between educational curriculum and entrepreneurship culture among students at the University of Zululand, South Africa.

Table 1: Cramer's V summary of strengths of associations

Independent variable	Dependent variable (statement)	Cramer's V	Sig.	Strength of Association
Faculty	Practical part of entrepreneurship is important as it helps with real business world exposure	0,21	0,00	Strong
	Your department promotes entrepreneurship	0,25	0,00	Very strong
	Lecturers include practicals in their teachings	0,52	0,00	Very strong
	Entrepreneurship education that you get from this institution changes your mindset to start your own business	0,20	0,04	Strong

Table 1: Cramer's V summary of strengths of associations (Contd.)

Independent variable	Dependent variable (statement)	Cramer's V	Sig.	Strength of Association
Degree level	Lecturers include practicals in their teachings	0,26	0,00	Very strong
	Entrepreneurship education that you get from this institution changes your mindset to start your own business	0,31	0,00	Very strong
Study level (year)	Entrepreneurship education equipped you with entrepreneurial skills	0,06	0,05	Very weak
	Your department promotes entrepreneurship	0,22	0,00	Strong
	Lecturers include practicals in their teachings	0,23	0,05	Strong
Rural/Urban	Entrepreneurship education helps in starting, sustaining and growing business	0,16	0,05	Strong
Public/private school	Entrepreneurship education helps in starting, sustaining and growing business	0,23	0,00	Strong
Do you run a business?	Practical part of entrepreneurship is important as it helps with real business world exposure	0,14	0,00	Moderate
	Your department promotes entrepreneurship	0,11	0,00	Moderate
	Everyone needs entrepreneurship education to sustain and grow their businesses	0,14	0,01	Moderate
Time spent on entrepreneurship studies	Entrepreneurship education equipped you with entrepreneurial skills	0,20	0,05	Strong
	Your department promotes entrepreneurship	0,17	0,00	Strong

Table 2: Cramer's V interpretation table

Phil and Cramer's V	Interpretation
>0.25	Very strong
>0.15	Strong
>0.10	Moderate
>0.05	Weak
>0	No or very weak

## Faculty

Table 1 show that students strongly rated the influence of lecturers who include practical examples in their teaching entrepreneurship (0.52) and university departments that promote entrepreneurship (0.25). A strong rating was attributed to the practical part of entrepreneurship that is important as it helps with real business world exposure (0.21), and sentiments that entrepreneurship education enhances mindsets towards starting your own business (0.20). These findings support Echezona (2015) who highlighted the significance of entrepreneurship education as a viable tool for the development of entrepreneurial culture and poverty alleviation among university students in South Africa.

## Degree level

Table 1 shows that students strongly ranked the influence of entrepreneurship education in changing the mindset to start their own business (0.31). While strong rating was attributed to the influence of lecturers who include practical examples in teaching entrepreneurship (0.26). The findings support Marchad et.al (2015) who stated that entrepreneurship education has a positive effect on the development of critical entrepreneurship skills and linking theory with practice.

## Study level (year)

Table 1 show that students strongly rated the influence of lecturers who include practical examples in teaching entrepreneurship (0.22) and university departments that promote entrepreneurship (0.23). A weak rating was attributed to the influence of entrepreneurship education in equipping students with entrepreneurial skills (0.06). The findings support Udu and Amadi (2013) who argue that learning institutions are still failing to develop a curriculum that equips students with an entrepreneurial mindset. Nani (2016) pointed out that the current education system does not lay a good entrepreneurial foundation for students.

## Rural/Urban

The students strongly rated the influence of entrepreneurship education in starting, sustaining and growing the business (0.16). The findings support Fatoki and Garwe (2010) who have a strong view that entrepreneurship is a viable tool in the development of economic growth in terms of job creation.

## Public/private

The students strongly rated the influence of entrepreneurship education in starting, sustaining and growing businesses (0.16). The findings support Chimucheka (2012) who considers entrepreneurship education as an important tool in the development of entrepreneurship, which is one of the backbones of South Africa's economy, not only because they contribute to the gross domestic product (GDP), but also because they contribute towards job creation.

## Business experience

Table 1 shows that the influence that university departments have that promote entrepreneurship, was rated moderate (0.11). While moderate rating was attributed to the practical part of entrepreneurship, it is important as it helps with real business world exposure (0.14), and sentiments that everyone needs entrepreneurship education to sustain and grow their businesses (0.14). These findings support Varblane and Mets (2010) who stated that entrepreneurship education is important in instilling the culture of entrepreneurship, which helps with entrepreneurial skills to sustain and grow the business. The author further stated that practical elements help in exposing students to the real world of business.

## Time spent on entrepreneurship studies

Table 1 show that the students strongly rated the influence of entrepreneurship education in equipping the students with entrepreneurial skills (0.20), and university departments that promote entrepreneurship (0.17). The findings support the view by Taatila (2010) who highlighted the importance of entrepreneurship education in the development of entrepreneurship skills among students.

## Time spent on entrepreneurship studies

Spearman Correlations asked the question: *What time do you spend on entrepreneurship studies?* As an independent variable, and the various perceptions as dependent variables, produced statistically significant results shown in Table 14 below:

Table 3: Spearman correlation - What time do you spend on entrepreneurship studies?

Statement	Test	Time spent in entrepreneurship studies
Entrepreneurship education equipped you with entrepreneurial skills	Correlation Coefficient	.288**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	156
Practical part of entrepreneurship is important as it helps with real business world exposure	Correlation Coefficient	.242**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002
	N	156
Your department promotes entrepreneurship	Correlation Coefficient	.286**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	156

Table 3: Spearman correlation - What time do you spend on entrepreneurship studies? (Contd.)

Statement	Test	Time spent in entrepreneurship studies
Lecturers include practicals in their teachings	Correlation Coefficient	.213**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008
	N	155
Entrepreneurship education that you get from this institution changes your mindset to start your own business	Correlation Coefficient	.171*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.034
Everyone needs entrepreneurship education to sustain and grow their businesses	Correlation Coefficient	.282**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	156

Statistically significant is Spearman correlations between time spent on entrepreneurship studies, and sample perceptions on entrepreneurship educations that were generally positively weak or very weak as shown above. They ranged from 0.171 ( $p < 0.05$ ) for the statement *Entrepreneurship education that you get from this institution changes your mindset to start your own business*, to  $r = 0.288$ ,  $p < 0.05$  for the statement, *Entrepreneurship education equipped you with entrepreneurial skills*. The time that was spent studying entrepreneurship was therefore not strongly related to the perceptions the sample had on entrepreneurship education.

The research examined whether the curriculum equipped students with entrepreneurship skills and culture. The finding revealed that some students believed that the curriculum equipped young people with entrepreneurial skills. However, it was found that the students who believed that entrepreneurship studies equipped them with entrepreneurship skills, are students who studied the theory and practice of entrepreneurship and therefore benefited from the programs designed by the university in promoting entrepreneurship. The research further revealed that there is a strong belief that the curriculum needs to be improved. It must not only focus on the theory of entrepreneurship, but also on the practical component of entrepreneurship as this will help to expose students to the real business world. Entrepreneurship studies must also be available to all registered students as a choice of selection.

The findings revealed that entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education is very important. For instance, Respondent 8 indicated that

*It is better to train job creators than job hunters, looking to the South African environment there is a serious need for job creators as to reduce the high unemployment rate. [R8]*

Respondent 5 added that entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education were essential for wealth creation. Thus, the major reason why entrepreneurship was perceived to be important was because of job creation, given the high levels of unemployment that graduates from universities face. The study shows that entrepreneurship education is the best way of encouraging entrepreneurship and the best tool in changing students' mindsets to be more entrepreneurial.

There was a general agreement by the participants that entrepreneurship education is important in the economic development of South Africa. In the literature (e.g. Echezona, 2015, Chimucheka, 2012, Taatila, 2010, Nani, 2016 and Udu and Amadi, 2013) though, various reasons were given for promoting entrepreneurship, including the point that participants mainly focused on employment creation as a core reason for promoting entrepreneurship. Generally, participants viewed entrepreneurship as a 'self-employment' option for graduates, due to the currently high unemployment rates in South Africa. Some of the students considered entrepreneurship as an alternative rather than as a main option. Other common reasons why entrepreneurship must be promoted, include its capacity to economically empower students through wealth creation and social empowerment (eg., Mkhize, 2010 & Afriye & Broheme, 2014), as well as for broader economic development and growth (Venter and Urban, 2015). Further entrepreneurship enhances social stability (Nieman and Nieuwenhuizen 2009) as this widens job creation and poverty alleviation.

The findings show that the way entrepreneurship is taught and promoted, needs some improvements. The entrepreneurship curriculum currently taught at universities is mainly theoretical than practical-oriented, thus

leaving students with book knowledge and little exposure to the real business world. In addition, entrepreneurship is taught in particular departments and not in all departments, even though it was found that students from all departments need exposure to entrepreneurship studies, as it is a feasible way of fighting against unemployment and poverty. The findings further highlighted that entrepreneurship studies were mostly taught as theoretical courses rather than effective practical courses. This raised concerns with the respondents in this study as theoretical courses in entrepreneurship were deemed to be inadequate in building the necessary entrepreneurial abilities and capacities in students.

The research also revealed that entrepreneurship studies are limited to a particular group of students, meaning that not all registered students get access to entrepreneurship studies.

Respondent 7 stated that:

*There is a section that deals with promoting entrepreneurship such as business management department, agriculture, consumer sciences, tourism and other departments but I don't think it is enough as they focus more on the theoretical components of entrepreneurship and it is not promoted to the entire university. [R7]*

The respondents agreed that excessive theorisation of entrepreneurship education was not very effective in developing future entrepreneurs. Venter et al. (2015) were among the scholars who emphasized the practical aspect on entrepreneurship education, particularly how it helps to build a stronger culture of entrepreneurship. Hoffmann et al. (2012) also asserted that entrepreneurship education, unlike traditional teaching and learning, cannot be effectively delivered through theory alone. Practical training, as emphasized by some of the participants, was therefore indispensable in creating a stronger entrepreneurial culture.

According to the respondent, this was not enough to fully encourage participation in entrepreneurship and an actual, dedicated entrepreneurship module was needed. The crux of this view was that some departments did not have a curriculum that effectively covered the necessary entrepreneurship modules that capacitated students with adequate skills and knowledge to start and manage their own businesses. Chimucheka (2012) and Zhou and Haixia (2012) stated that universities and tertiary institutions in general did not have curricula that supported entrepreneurship culture. The focus was still on traditional curriculum that developed theoretical knowledge aimed for the job market. Gamede and Uleanya (2017), in their study on the role of entrepreneurship education in secondary schools and further education and training (FET) phases in South Africa, also made similar findings that the curriculum did not effectively promote a culture of entrepreneurship.

The findings show that most of the respondents believed that entrepreneurship studies should start at an early age, as early as primary level, because they believe that this stage is a crucial stage for the children to learn. The findings show that students that have an entrepreneurship background are more likely to believe that entrepreneurship education instils an entrepreneurship culture among students, and that it changes the mindset to be more entrepreneurial.

The low level of entrepreneurship education can also be a result of parents and society that looked down upon entrepreneurship in graduates and valued employment instead.

*We need to start at the earlier age so that they will grow up with the mind-set of being entrepreneurs. So that when they come to the university they have the background of entrepreneurship. [R1]*

This strategy promotes that entrepreneurship education should start at the early stage, so students will grow up with the entrepreneurial mindsets. Udu and Amadi (2013) stated that teaching entrepreneurship education at an early age is important, as it will lay a solid foundation for students to grow up with entrepreneurship mindsets.

## **Conclusions**

The main objective was to establish a relationship between educational curriculum and the entrepreneurship culture among the youth, with reference to the University of Zululand. The findings revealed that the educational curriculum should be improved in terms of entrepreneurship education. The methodology that is used to teach entrepreneurship must be developed in such a way that it will promote self-employment rather than prepare students for white-collar jobs or employment. Each country needs vibrant entrepreneurship to promote the economy, especially in South Africa that has high unemployment rates.

Entrepreneurship studies should start at primary level so that the learners will grow up with an entrepreneurship mindset and entrepreneurship education must be offered to all students. Learning institutions should establish incubators that will help in terms of the practical aspect of entrepreneurship, where learners will put the entrepreneurship theory that they obtained into action. Further, entrepreneurship teachers should be more



entrepreneurial in their teaching and embrace practical examples and experience regarding entrepreneurship. These approaches will go a long way in developing entrepreneurial mindsets and acquiring the necessary skills that will enable students to establish sustainable entrepreneurship businesses.

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