

Examining Challenges Experienced by Pre-service Teachers in Developing Entrepreneurial Skills in Maseru, Lesotho

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Abstract

This study explored the challenges that teachers encounter when developing the entrepreneurial skills demanded in the workplace. The study used 12 teachers who were purposively selected and interviewed using semi-structured questions meant to produce rich and in-depth data on challenges that impede development of entrepreneurial skills in secondary school students. Data were collected and analyzed by organizing them in themes related to challenges alleged to impede teachers in developing entrepreneurial skills. The findings revealed that the challenges that teachers experience when developing these skills in students are influenced by several factors. Firstly, poor teacher preparation. Teachers are not given enough time to practise teaching in schools. Secondly, during teaching practice, cooperative teachers do not allow practising teachers to teach in their teaching subjects (especially in higher grades) and their cooperation was generally unfriendly. Thirdly, teachers struggle with pedagogical content knowledge when teaching as they have to comprehend and understand it for the first time in the field. Finally, the use of pen and pencil examinations prevent teachers from preparing students for the world of work, which is increasingly going digital. Consequently, students are not employed because they do not meet the recent demands of the workplace.

Keywords: Employability skills, teacher preparation, cooperative teachers, pedagogical content knowledge.

Introduction

In the modern world, the most valuable potential of any organization is the human potential. Through the human resource management, organisations try to build human capital by developing strategies that they use in order to find the right people, motivated to increase efficiency at work (Ristovska & Stankovska, 2019). In order to develop this mind set in people, teachers need to adopt competences and skills that reveal entrepreneurship. Acquisition of entrepreneurial skills depend on knowledge, abilities and entrepreneurial skills demonstrated by students. It also depends on the teaching methods that influence entrepreneurial capabilities of the students (Lee et al., 2018a). As the result of the increasing levels of competition for employment, students need to possess knowledge and skills in the field of entrepreneurship for them to meet the requirements of the labour markets. The entrepreneurial skills are competences that students need in order to face the complex challenges of life and make them compete in the world of work. An entrepreneurial culture need to be developed independently in line with the increase in the activities that students have to do in order to acquire entrepreneurial skills (Susilo et al., 2020). The entrepreneurial is a century skill that is full of innovation stemmed from introduction of advanced technology and information in schools. This transformation has influenced ways in which work is done. Hence, students have to possess these skills in order to compete well (Susilo et al., 2020).

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They have to be developed in an informal education context where students have to learn how to apply them in real situations using various strategies.

In Lesotho, a policy has been established that aims at providing basic education with a package of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that enable individual to survive, live and participate fully in the development processes that improve people's lives (Curriculum & Assessment Policy of 2009). These skills are meant to address the emerging issues pertaining to new demands, practices and life challenges of the modern global world. However, it has been found that many students leave secondary schools with inadequate skills demanded in the world of work (Education Sector Plan 2016-2026). The demand is being placed on teachers to find ways to incorporate these identified skills in their lessons so that students have an adequate amount of time to practice and master these skills in the course of their daily routines (Oliver, 2016). Therefore, it is critical that teachers master these competencies for ensuring positive learning outcomes for students. Hence, teachers have to successfully align them with content and pedagogy and developing the ability to creatively use technologies to meet specific learning needs.

Literature Review

Little is known about the challenges that teachers experience in developing entrepreneurial skills in students in Lesotho secondary schools. As such, the study tries to examine those challenges experienced by teachers. As entrepreneurial skills can be developed through formal education, especially by teaching Entrepreneurship Education in schools (Susilo et al., 2020), it cannot be taught through conventional methods. Teachers are bound to use student-oriented methods to develop entrepreneurial culture in students (Tittel & Terzidis, 2020). These methods allow students to put hands-on the activities that encourage development of these skills. In order to make a significant change in students, teachers too need to think entrepreneurially in order to support and promote entrepreneurial learning in their students. Unfortunately, teachers also do not have such entrepreneurial competence to teach and promote these skills. Literature shows that teachers are not able develop the required skills in students because they are not able to identify the pedagogical problems for individual students as the classrooms are crowded (Abdelhak & Ladi, 2019). The crowded classrooms inhibit teachers from assisting students, as they cannot move around the class to identify individual problems. Crowded classrooms are also proven to encouraging teacher-oriented teaching methods as teachers are not able to attend individual students; hence, students become passive and cannot acquire the required skills (Thaanyane, 2021). When individual students cannot be attended to, no specific needs can be met for them. Teachers, therefore fail to develop demanded skills as a result.

Another challenge relates to teacher preparation programmes, which do not prepare teachers for the real task that they must accomplish at the field. Literature revealed that during teacher preparation, programmes are problematic in that they give too much attention to theory at the expense of practical skills that teachers need for teaching (Boakye & Ampiah, 2017). When teachers are not introduced to reality of the workplace, they also will not be able to transfer it to the students. Boakye and Ampiah (2017) further show that sometimes these teachers are taught theories that are irrelevant to what they find in reality. It is contended by Thaanyane (2021) that these teachers are often given assignments that are challenging and work under conditions that little foster their success. This makes teacher preparation poor as it does not focus on adequate training of teachers.

One aspect which illustrates the challenges faced by teachers is that they are often placed in hard-to-staff-schools with insufficient supplies to help in the teaching and learning process

(Boakye & Ampiah, 2017). Placing them in hard to reach areas makes them feel isolated from their colleagues and people who would give them guidance and mentor their teaching. Furthermore, placing teachers in these areas with no resources detaches them from their supervisors too who would offer them support when need arises (Maimela, 2015). Consequently, they fail to use training as a source, because they are not given the opportunity to fully practice the theory they learnt during training in return of skill development. So, this makes them ultimately unable to achieve the aims of the national education policy, that is, to develop the skills that are in demand in the workplace.

Literature further indicates that teachers fail to develop relevant skills because they struggle with both knowledge content and pedagogical content in their teaching (van Wyk, 2017; Qhosola, 2015). When teachers do not know the content that they are going to teach and how it differs from the content of other subject areas, teaching and learning does not take place properly. Emphasis must be placed on teachers' pedagogical content knowledge for effective teaching and learning. It is also stressful for teachers if they struggle with pedagogical content knowledge because they will not identify relevant teaching methods. This is also emphasized by Mulyadi et al. (2020) that pedagogical content knowledge is very significant in helping the students understand the specific subject matter. They further point out that pedagogical content knowledge includes knowledge of organizing and presenting a particular subject content to suit the diverse interests and abilities of students. It is illustrated from literature that challenges that teachers encounter include, among others, inadequate training which leads to confusion and incompetence that further lead to covering too much content within a short space of time (Maimela, 2015). In such manner, teachers prove inadequate training of what they have received which impacts negatively on students. When teachers are incompetent, say in content, it shows that they lack content knowledge. Therefore, when teachers lack this, it becomes difficult for them to develop the skills that would be significant in the workplace.

Lastly, Literature revealed that teachers are not able to develop these skills because they have massive content that they have to teach and complete ahead of examinations. Since they focus on completion of such content in a very short time, they end up using teacher-centred methods which do not allow students to get involved in their own learning (Lee et al., 2018b). Hence, students will not be given tasks and activities related to the skills to be learned or even to identify resources that can aid teaching in this context.

Research Design and Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative approach in which semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from 12 teachers, who were purposively selected from secondary schools located in Maseru, Lesotho. The interviews were to seek in-depth information about the opportunities and challenges that teachers face in developing entrepreneurial skills, which are demanded by employers. In-depth interviews follow a semi-structured manner as they are both guided as well as flexible to interviewees' responses (Leavy, 2017). The face-to-face interviews were carried out in teachers' respective schools and audio-recorded to facilitate the subsequent process of analysis (Leavy, 2017). Each interviews lasted approximately between 40 and 60 minutes depending on the necessary depth of the response. Ethical consideration was taken care of during this session not to reveal participants' names or communicate the objectives of the study in advance (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Interview responses were analyzed following the themes generated earlier and in relation to the reviewed literature.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that time allocated for developing entrepreneurial skills was inadequate for teachers to empower students with skills that are in great demand in the workplace. Teachers feel challenged to develop in students, entrepreneurial skills because they feel pressurized with time to cover the content planned for a certain period. This forces teachers to rush to complete the planned content at the expense of development of skills that are demand in the world outside school. Teachers also complained that they had limited time to teach both the massive theoretical and practical parts of the syllabus. This made it clear that the content was too much to be covered within those two years of study. While trying to rush through the massive content, teachers ignore some parts of the syllabus, for example, areas that deal with skills development and concentrate on teaching theory, using teacher-oriented methods. Ganyaupfu (2013) informed that when students are not introduced thoroughly to the content they have to learn, they end up developing hatred and fear of learning new concepts and sometimes resist the use of learner-centred approaches because they are not ready to become independent. Lack of pedagogical content knowledge challenges teachers during their initial years of teaching. When teachers struggle to comprehend content that they have to teach, most of which is new to them, they will not effectively develop skills in students. As indicated earlier, teachers work hard during their initial training and work under pressure in order to succeed in their studies with irrelevant assignments given and this results in struggling with content of their subjects. Hence, teachers have to be introduced thoroughly to pedagogical content knowledge during training so that they understand the content they are going to teach in future making their students love their subjects. It will also make them ready for the classroom situation.

The findings of the study further revealed that teachers had poor teacher education with short teaching practice, ill-disposed co-operative teachers and denial to teach both subjects during this period. Co-operative teachers are supposed to support and guidance during teaching practice; however, they ill-treat and deny these teachers full rights during teaching practice to teach their teaching subjects. Teacher preparation is not complete without teaching practice, where teachers are given time to prepare for actual lessons and do actual teaching. When teachers are denied this opportunity, their training is considered incomplete. It also does not give them the chance to reflect on the theory taught in class and find out whether they are actually able to deliver in real situations. Consequently, when teachers are actually teaching, they fail to play their roles that include developing skills demanded in the workplace. Teachers further showed that during teacher education, they are taught irrelevant content compared to what they are supposed to be teaching in real classrooms. This concurs with Thaanyane's (2021) findings, that poor teacher education is also verified by giving student teachers irrelevant and difficult assignments that they do under pressure. This kind of training fails to properly transform teachers to what is expected after training. It is therefore the responsibility of the relevant ministry to offer professional development to teachers to improve poor teacher education and to keep them inconsistent with the process of developing the knowledge, skills and abilities that improve quality of work.

It was also revealed that after completion of teacher education, besides poor teacher education there are no follow-up by relevant stakeholders to monitor the progress of these new teachers in field. Follow-ups can be used to assist teachers with the challenges that they may experience especially because they are new in the field. Teachers also revealed that they are placed in areas that are difficult to reach, with no resources. Follow-ups need to done as a means of supporting and further providing guidance; this is called teacher professional development. This may enable these teachers placed in such difficult areas not feel isolated

from people who would help them because they will be resources that teachers may use. This coincides with Boakye and Ampiah's (2017) findings, that when teachers are placed in these areas that are hard-to-staff, they are likely to feel isolated from people who could guide and support them with teaching and resources. This can result in teachers becoming ignorant about their job and the burden will be borne by students who are going to suffer, eventually. Teachers can be supported through professional development carried out at all levels that include school.

As mentioned earlier, crowded classrooms make it very difficult for teachers to move around to help students especially those that are less gifted. The study findings revealed that teachers also failed because of crowded classrooms. This is contended by Thaanyane (2021) that crowded classrooms deter the use of learner-centred methods as teachers are not able to deal with individual students during class. Teachers rush through a great deal of content in each lesson with teacher-oriented methods which enable them to cover all the material of a fact-heavy syllabus when using teacher-oriented methods and because they avoid lagging behind in other classes. This practice has been pointed out by Obiete et al. (2015), who admits that teaching heavy content of the syllabus results in the students having to memorise that content material and reproduce it in the final examinations. Memorization of content proves that students do not know and cannot apply whatever taught in the real situation. This also accords with Abdelhak and Ladi (2019) that crowded classrooms encourage teacher-oriented methods such as lecturing, because such methods are useful for large groups of people. Unfortunately, these methods cannot assist in developing entrepreneurial skills. Inability to identify appropriate teaching methods for individual students within large groups will always remain a challenge to teachers especially in public schools where classes are heavily crowded.

The findings further show that pencil and pen examinations that are adopted in Lesotho, influence the way teachers approach their teaching; that is, drilling students only to pass national examinations. Their claim is that students are not examined on the skills they are expected to have acquired; hence teachers do not bother in developing skills that are not examined. The pen and pencil examinations also encourage students to cheat during examinations for they have to reproduce (memorise) what was taught whether it was understood or not. Consequently, only those students that are good in memorization succeed and pass examinations. The findings also disclosed that the examinations include a very small percentage of practical skills. This is why some teachers decide not to engage the students in practical projects. This concurs with literature reviewed, which has shown that heavy reliance on examinations has made it difficult to teach and assess the affective domain and practical application of concepts and skills in subjects like Entrepreneurship Education, as skills acquired are not assessed.

Conclusion

There are a number of challenges that teachers face while trying to develop entrepreneurial skills among students in schools. These include inadequate time to teach some subjects, which pressurizes teachers to rush through content and ignore development of skills, especially entrepreneurial skills. Sometimes teachers fail to develop these skills because they are not examined. Failure is also subject to poor education to teacher trainees who are taught irrelevant content from what they find in real teaching. This is also accompanied by a very short period of teaching practice, with cooperative teachers ill-treating them during this period. The crowded classes also do not allow teachers to attend to individual students and support those who need more help. These classes force teachers to use teacher-oriented methods of teaching which are believed to discourage participation of students, including

denying them the chance to ask questions during class.

Furthermore, teachers are placed in hard-to-reach areas with no resources that would help in developing entrepreneurial skills. Placing them in these places also isolate them from colleagues and people who could otherwise assist them. Lastly, pen and pencil examinations are found to be a challenge too for teachers. This approach forces them to use teacher-oriented methods and drill students to pass examinations on the expense of skills development.

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