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TEACHING OF 'ENTREPRENEURSHIP' AS A SUBJECT IN ZIMBABWEAN SCHOOLS- WHAT ARE THE APPROPRIATE TEACHING METHODS? – A CASE STUDY OF BULAWAYO METROPOLITAN SCHOOLS

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Abstract

The study sought to find out the appropriateness of the teaching methods used in selected Bulawayo Metropolitan schools, to enable learners to be entrepreneurs. The qualitative approach comprising the case study design was employed in this study. Cluster and purposive sampling techniques were used to select 20 government primary school teachers; 30 government high school teachers teaching practical subjects; 20 government high school students doing practical subjects and 10 captains of industry. Semi-structured interviews with respondents split into focus groups were used to collect data from schools, while captains of industry were individually interviewed. The study found out that Entrepreneurship as a 'stand-alone' subject is not taught in government schools. The study revealed that learners are taught practical subjects in a bid to equip them with entrepreneurship skills. The lecture method is mainly used in conjunction with practical sessions for lesson delivery. The study also established that learners are not taught how to convert practical skills they acquire in class into setting up businesses which is what entrepreneurship should ultimately achieve. Learners have no input in the way they are taught. The teacher determines how the lessons are conducted thus rendering the teaching methods not fully appropriate. Furthermore, there is no collaboration with industry when developing these lessons. The study recommends the establishment of entrepreneurial centres to allow learners to identify business ideas, incubate these ideas and implement them into businesses with the mentorship of captains of industry. Such centres will not only equip learners with relevant entrepreneurship skills but also allow for flexibility, creativity and innovation in learning.

Key words: Entrepreneurship, practical subjects, teaching methods, entrepreneurship skills, entrepreneurial centres, captains of industry

1. INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe, like other developing countries is experiencing the phenomenon of shrinking formal job opportunities, hence the adoption of practical subjects in its educational curriculum. This move is based on the premise that practical subjects will equip learners with practical skills to enable them to be entrepreneurs, that is, to set up their own businesses. Nziramasanga (1999); Chaube & Chaube (2005) and Pillai (undated) postulate that the educational system should be relevant to the needs of its economies, citizens and should equip individuals with the skills and attitudes necessary for them to adapt to changing conditions, and for constructive participation in the task of social change.

Statement of the problem

Upon realising that the educational curriculum was too theoretical, the Government of Zimbabwe, through the recommendations of the Nziramasanga Commission, has introduced practical subjects in its educational curriculum. The aim is to produce entrepreneurs who can create jobs for themselves and others and thus contribute to economic growth and development. The adoption of the recommendations by the Nziramasanga Commission means that teachers, whether trained or not have to teach practical subjects in order to equip learners with skills that will make them create their own jobs. The fact that almost all the teachers, one

way or another are involved is a cause for concern as some teachers who have to teach these practical subjects are not experts in those areas. Again, with the brain drain that Zimbabwe experienced during the economic meltdown of the 2008-9 era, many schools remained with semi or unskilled teachers. Taking into cognisance the aforementioned, the question that arises is, "How appropriate are the methodologies used by these teachers in teaching would be entrepreneurs?" This prompted the researcher to investigate whether the methods that are used in teaching practical subjects can indeed create entrepreneurs.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Theories of experiential learning postulated by Kolb (1984) and Dewey (1997) underpin this research study. Justification for selecting these theories is their grounding in experiential learning which forms the base in teaching entrepreneurship. Concepts posited by Rwigema (2004);Nieman, Hough & Nieuwenhuizen (2008) and Co, Groenewald, Mitchell, Nayager, van Zyl & Visser (2007) on entrepreneurship, are made reference to in this study.

Kolb (1984:38) postulated that ''learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. He came up with four stages, namely concrete experience (doing/having an experience such as in field work); reflective observation (reviewing/reflecting on the experiences); abstract conceptualisation (where the learner attempts to conceptualise a theory or model of what is observed) and active experimentation (planning/trying out what you have learnt). He further identified four learning styles under which learners learn better. These styles are:

- Assimilators, who learn better when presented with sound logical theories to consider;
- Convergers, who learn better when provided with practical applications of concepts and theories;
- Accommodators, who learn better when provided with "hands-on experiences" and
- Divergers, who learn better when allowed to observe and collect a wide range of information.

Dewey (1997), another proponent of experiential learning concurs that the role of the teacher is to facilitate and guide the learning process. The teacher should be a partner in the learning process, guiding students to independently discover meaning within the subject area. Dewey further asserts that learners progress fastest in learning, not through being mechanically drilled in prefabricated material, but by doing work, experimenting with things and changing them in purposive ways. Dewey believed that the purpose of education should not revolve round the acquisition of a pre-determined set of skills, but rather the realisation of one's full potential and the ability to use those skills for the greater good of society.

Entrepreneurship, which is what the Zimbabwean educational system is pursuing; is defined by Rwigema (2004:5), as the process of conceptualising, organising, launching and through innovation-nurturing a business opportunity into potentially high growth venture. Nieman, Hough & Nieuwenhuizen (2008:9), also assert that entrepreneurship is the emergence and growth of new businesses. It is the process that causes changes in the economic system through innovations of individuals who respond to opportunities in the markets. In the process, entrepreneurs create value for themselves and society.

In this regard, experiential learning would be ideal in the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship where learners have to be given room to generate business ideas, incubate these ideas and develop them into businesses, in a conducive environment. This requires the use of relevant teaching methods and mentorship by people who have hands–on experience. According to Co

et al., (2007), new entrepreneurs can learn from others who have gone this route.

The implications of the above theories for the teachers are that learners should be given room to discover for themselves, experiment and learn through ''hands on experience'' which is what entrepreneurship is grounded on.

According to Arasti, Falavarjani and Imanipour (2012:4), there is no universal pedagogical recipe to teach entrepreneurship. The choice of techniques and modalities depends mainly on the objectives, contents and constraints imposed by the institutional context. Mwasalwiba cited by Arasti et al. (2012:4) assert that most authors categorise teaching methods into two categories, the traditional and innovative methods. The traditional methods, also called passive methods, comprise normal lectures and these make students become dormant participants. The innovative methods, which are more action based, are appropriate for nurturing entrepreneurial attributes. Bwisa (undated) concurs that the notion of active learning suggests that learners must do more than simply receive information and substantive material via the lecture method. The experiential approach assists the learner to understand the environment within which the business actually operates.

The following questions guided the research study:

1. Is entrepreneurship taught in schools and what are the methods employed?

2. How appropriate are the teaching methods used in enabling learners to become entrepreneurs?

3. What can be done to enhance the teaching of entrepreneurship in schools?

It was envisaged that the results of this study would contribute to the development of appropriate teaching methods that would enhance the teaching and learning of entrepreneurship in schools.

The study adopted the following methodology:

3. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative approach and used a case study design (Cooper and Schindler, 2008). Semi structured- interviews were used to solicit information from teachers on the methods they use to teach learners to be entrepreneurs. A similar instrument was also used to gather data from learners on the methods that their teachers use to impart knowledge and skills. Semi-structured interviews were also held with captains of industry to find out whether they are consulted in the teaching of practical subjects. The qualitative aspect was expected to yield in-depth explanations of respondents' experiences.

Population

A database showing all the government primary and high schools in the Bulawayo Metropolitan Province was obtained from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Schools. The population for the study was fifty nine government primary schools comprising one boys only, one girls only and co-educational schools and thirty one government high schools composed of co-educational, boys only and girls only secondary schools.

Reasons for selecting only government schools were to identify those schools with common characteristics in terms of strengths and challenges in the assessment of the teaching methods. The assumption was that focusing on schools in totality, both government and non-government might give distorted results of the afore-mentioned factors.

Purposive sampling technique was applied to identify only those schools offering practical subjects. Reasons for selecting the

purposive sampling technique were as follows: Firstly, only those schools which the researcher felt would provide relevant data were chosen. Secondly, time and cost constraints influenced this sampling technique, considering the number of schools that would have to be covered. However, validity of the results was taken into consideration. The key informants of the study were primary school teachers who teach all subjects; teachers of practical subjects in high schools; high school learners (Ordinary and Advanced level only) and selected captains of industry. Simple random sampling was then used in selecting respondents who were later split into focus group discussions. Twenty selected government primary school teachers were split into 4 groups; 30 government high school teachers teaching practical subjects into 5 groups and 20 government high school learners doing practical subjects into 4 groups. All the 10 captains of industry were individually interviewed.

The teachers were selected because they are the ones who are expected to implement the prescribed curriculum and learners were considered important too because they are the recipients of the knowledge and skills. The purposively selected captains of industry were entrepreneurs who are now running their own businesses.

Data collection procedure

Permission to carry out the investigation in primary and secondary schools was sought from the Provincial Education Office of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Schools and the respective school heads and respondents. Appointments were made with captains of industry. Ethical considerations also formed a significant part of the study.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of the study was to find out the appropriateness of the teaching methods used, in enabling school leavers to develop entrepreneurship skills. The following codes were used for focus group discussions to hide respondents' identities:

PSTFG was used for primary school teachers' focus groups; HSTFG for high school teachers focus groups; LFG for learners' focus groups and COI for captains of industry.

Views of teachers, learners and captains of industry obtained for each objective of the study are expressed below.

1. Is Entrepreneurship taught in schools and what are the methods employed?

Theme 1 Entrepreneurship is not taught and lecture methods in conjunction with practical sessions are used.

The study revealed that entrepreneurship per se is not taught in the selected schools. Instead, the focus is on teaching practical subjects. Findings from the study also showed that the methods employed in teaching these practical subjects include lectures, giving notes and conducting practical sessions where learners are equipped with practical skills. Teaching methods are mainly teacher centred which contradict Kolb and Dewey's experiential learning alluded to earlier on. Learners are not taught how to convert those practical skills into setting up businesses which Co et al, (2007) and Nieman et al., (2008) allude to. Bwisa (undated:429) concurs that when taught, entrepreneurship is the process by which new knowledge is converted to sustainable value, and that usually involves the creation of a business to do it. Therefore, the fact that entrepreneurship per se is not taught and that the methods used in lesson delivery are teacher centred, deprive learners of creativity and innovation, which are essential elements of entrepreneurship.

Also, captains of industry are not invited to mentor students in these practical sessions which is a contradiction of Co et al., (2007), who asserted; that new entrepreneurs can learn from others who have gone the entrepreneurial route.

The general consensus by all PSTFG was that entrepreneurship is not taught at primary level. Teachers take all practical subjects even if they have very little knowledge of the subject matter. Some of the learners easily get bored and they say lessons are not exciting. Learners always talk about new inventions that they see on television, face book and twitter and the many things that they can do with their smart phones which some of the teachers are not conversant with. Also, PSTFG4 felt that lecture methods are out dated. Learners are more into technology now. Giving them room to use technology in teaching would arouse and sustain their' interest in learning.

All the HSFGs indicated that entrepreneurship as a subject is not taught in government high schools. Learners do practical subjects. HSFGs felt that lecture methods where they still use chalk board are out dated. There is need to use technology and learners need to be involved more in learning. They feel that the concentration span of today's learners can only be sustained where they are actively involved.

In addition to the afore-mentioned, HSFG 3 had this to say, *"You hear students talk about interesting creative and innovative business ideas but the congested time table does not allow that. Moreover, we do not have the infrastructure to develop the ideas they would like to. Besides, we do not even have the technological know-how they will be talking about."*

The views expressed by HSFG are in tandem with assertions by Co et. al, (2007:84) that creativity and innovation are crucial in the development of entrepreneurship. The implication is that learners need to be given room to generate business ideas which is creativity and then convert those ideas into marketable products or services which is innovation.

What the study exposes is that, teaching of entrepreneurship is hampered by congested school time tables and lack of infrastructure. Generally, teachers in both primary and high schools agree that modern methods of teaching should be implemented in schools. The use of technology has to be fully embraced if teachers are to remain relevant. Currently, basic computer lessons are conducted in schools but the computers are inadequate. Teachers' views are in line with Dewey's experiential learning that emphasises the need for learners to be actively involved and not just to be mere recipients.

2. How appropriate are the teaching methods used in enabling leavers to become entrepreneurs?

Theme 2 Teaching methods may not be quite appropriate for teaching entrepreneurship.

When interviewed on the appropriateness of the methods used in enabling learners to be entrepreneurs, the following views were expressed.

All PSTFG and HSTFGs were able to identify two major strengths in the teaching methods; that teachers impart theoretical knowledge and guide learners in conducting practical sessions. The weaknesses highlighted by the study were that the curriculum does not give learners the opportunity to come up with their own ideas. Learners are always taught what to do by their teachers. For example, in agriculture, for a poultry project; it is the teacher who plans on resource mobilisation, costing and deciding on the quantities to be used in the feeds. A situation where a teacher does the entire planning and budgeting means that the practical component which is very vital in entrepreneurship is not fully utilised. Learners are not given chances to set up mini-businesses where they can practise what they are taught. Therefore, such learners upon graduation cannot be expected to run sustainable businesses. This scenario is in contravention with what Arasti et al., (2012:4) propounded; that innovative

methods, which are more action based, are appropriate for nurturing entrepreneurial attributes. The experiential approach postulated by Kolb (1984) and Dewey (1997) assists learners to progress fast in learning, through experimentation.

All the HSFGs admitted that learners are only equipped with practical skills and it ends there. The representative for HSFG 1, had this to say, *"The curriculum we teach is prescribed by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Schools. The time table is packed. There is no time to allow for flexibility in lessons. We have examinations to worry about at the end of the year. Besides, we do not have the resources to allow for students to do trial and error."*

What is revealed by this study is that the teaching of entrepreneurial skills is hampered by congested timetables and lack of suitable infrastructure.

3. What can be done to enhance the teaching of Entrepreneurship in schools?

Theme 3 The need for hands-on experience

The study showed that there is need for hands on experience as a way of assessing whether learners had actually mastered what they had been taught in schools or not. This message was conveyed by COI 3 who said that*, "Learning in the classroom and running a business are two different things. A learner needs hands-on experience. Setting up and running a business is not as easy as listening to the teacher in the classroom. It's tough out there."*

COI 4 contributed by saying, *"Some of us were lucky to have gone through vocational training centres. There was more practice there, unlike in schools where you share one machine among many students. Do you think that practice is enough?''*

HSFGs 2 and 5 also expressed the following views about the transformation of practical skills into running of businesses as a means of enhancing the learning of entrepreneurship in schools.

"We appreciate that learners should be taught how to set up their businesses but we do not have the skills. Some of us have never run businesses. How then can we teach others to run businesses? Maybe with the help of business people we can. What we can do is to impart theoretical knowledge and some skills."

The majority of the captains of industry also felt that it was inadequate to just equip learners with practical skills without teaching these learners how to utilise the skills to set up their own businesses.

In concurrence with the afore-mentioned views by HSFGs 2 and 5, COI 1 had this to say, *"You are simply producing half baked learners. How do you know learners have mastered what you have taught them without these skills being put into practice?''*

CO2 also remarked by saying, "Fine, you have equipped the learners with practical skills. However, it is not all of them who can put those skills into good use by setting up their own businesses. You can only say you have achieved your objective when the businesses are up and running."

Their views concur with Co et al. (2007)'s concept that entrepreneurship is a process. The implication is that learners need to go through the entrepreneurial process of idea generation, idea evaluation, conducting feasibility studies, drawing up business plans, mobilising resources, setting up businesses and then growing those businesses. Only when they have gone through these stages, can one be sure that even if these learners are released into the world, they can set up and run successful businesses.

While it is commendable that schools are equipping learners with practical skills by doing practical subjects, there is need for the

transformation of these practical skills into setting up businesses. These findings show that the teaching of entrepreneurship is not only hampered by inappropriate infrastructure but lack of relevant skills and experience of setting up and running businesses too.

Theme 4 There is need for collaboration with industry

Teachers and captains of industry unanimously agreed on the need for collaboration with industry to enhance the teaching of entrepreneurship in schools. Some of their views are expressed below.

COI 5, 6, 7 and 8 emphasised the importance of partnering up with captains of industry when designing curricula by saying, *"We are the people on the ground, who know what is going on. Involve us and we will tell you what running a business is."*

According to Nieman et al., (2008:260-1), generally 30 and 80 percent of all new businesses fail within the first two years of establishment. To understand failure in a venture requires a thorough understanding of the intricacies of business operations. The implication is that these intricacies can be learnt from people who have experienced them, hence the need for collaboration with industry. Therefore, lack of collaboration with industry means that learners are deprived of interacting with people experienced in setting up, nurturing and running of businesses.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions are drawn from the study.

Entrepreneurship as a 'stand-alone' subject is not taught in schools that were surveyed in the Bulawayo Metropolitan Province. Therefore, learners are equipped with practical instead of entrepreneurship skills. Teachers are more concerned about learners passing practical examinations than transforming these practical skills into setting up businesses. The lecture methods in conjunction with practical sessions are used in teaching practical subjects. However, these lessons are teacher dominated with the teacher doing virtually everything. There is no room for learners' creativity and innovation. Resources are inadequate. Furthermore, there is no collaboration with captains of industry in how these practical lessons are conducted.

Recommendations

What is quite evident from the study is that the methods of teaching are not fully appropriate, given that entrepreneurship is a hands-on subject. Also, there is need for transformation of skills to running of businesses. Furthermore, the need for collaboration with industry cannot be over-emphasized. In this regard, the following recommendations are made.

Policy makers should collaborate with captains of industry in designing the curriculum. Learners need exposure to people with hands-on experience; people who have faced and endured the challenges and succeeded in setting up sustainable businesses. Learners should be made to go through the creative process of identifying their business ideas, incubating those ideas and implementing them into businesses. In this regard, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Schools in collaboration with the industry, could establish entrepreneurial centres as pilot projects, perhaps in primary schools. Once the pilot projects have been successful, then the idea can be adopted throughout Zimbabwe. Learning of entrepreneurship should not end in the classroom. While the scientific aspect of entrepreneurship can be learnt in the classroom, the artistic aspect would be better done in an entrepreneurial centre. Students need to be taught that there is more to businesses than just the acquisition of practical skills.

In light of the aforesaid, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Schools, in conjunction with the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education needs to train and develop teachers and equip them with appropriate methods relevant in the teaching of Entrepreneurship, if the aim of creating self employable citizens is to be achieved. These trained teachers will be armed with relevant entrepreneurship skills to operate in these entrepreneurial centres unlike what is obtaining now where for example, all the primary school teachers are expected to be knowledgeable in all subjects. Entrepreneurship as a 'stand-alone' subject has a lot to offer to Zimbabwean learners, if only relevant content and appropriate teaching methods postulated by Kolb and Dewy are employed.

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