

Integration of Entrepreneurship Education Across the Curriculum in South Africa: A Comparative Analysis with International Best Practices

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Entrepreneurship education empowers individuals, particularly youth, by enhancing their knowledge and skills in entrepreneurship. With South Africa facing a 40.7% youth unemployment rate, such education is seen as a vital tool for job creation and economic growth. However, it is not widely recognized in South African primary schools, unlike in countries like the USA, UK, and Germany, where it has shown positive outcomes. Despite its inclusion, research gaps remain on how to effectively integrate entrepreneurship education into lower-grade curricula. This paper evaluates the integration of entrepreneurship education in South Africa's curriculum, comparing it with international best practices. A systematic literature review, grounded in the Theory of Social Learning, was conducted using articles from 2004 to 2024 from major journals like Scopus, Web of Science, and DOAJ. Findings highlight the importance of entrepreneurship education in developing essential 21st-century skills, fostering innovation, and contributing to economic growth. It can be integrated into subjects such as Science, Technology, and Mathematics and promoted through hands-on experiences, business simulations, and expert-led programs. Recommendations include a curriculum review by the Department of Basic Education to incorporate entrepreneurship education across various subjects and teacher training to ensure effective delivery.

Key words: *Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship Education, Curriculum Integration, Entrepreneurial Intention, Entrepreneurial Mindset*

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Introduction

As South Africa faces enormous socioeconomic issues, including high levels of unemployment, especially among the youth, entrepreneurship has been recognized as a vital engine for economic growth, job creation, and innovation. Integrating entrepreneurship education across the school curriculum has the potential to instill an entrepreneurial mindset from a young age. Infusing entrepreneurship education can provide learners with the required skills and mindset to start their own businesses and contribute to economic growth (National Planning Commission, 2012).

However, the South African curriculum has been criticized for its minimal emphasis on entrepreneurship education (Van der Westhuizen, 2019). While entrepreneurship education is included in the curriculum, it appears infrequently and is isolated within specific subjects, primarily within the Economic Management Sciences curriculum for grades seven to nine. This fragmented approach limits the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in fostering entrepreneurial thinking and practical skills. Additionally, it fails to provide opportunities for developing essential entrepreneurial skills such as financial literacy and marketing (Du Toit, 2016; Du Toit & Kempen, 2018; International Labour Organization, 2018). As a result, many learners are not adequately prepared to pursue entrepreneurship, leading to a lack of awareness, desire, and confidence in entrepreneurial ventures (Maziriri & Chivandi, 2020).

The inadequate integration of entrepreneurship education in South African schools has contributed to the country's high youth unemployment rates, posing a significant threat to economic growth and stability. Without the necessary entrepreneurial skills and mindset, learners may struggle to launch and sustain successful businesses in the future, further escalating the unemployment crisis. Moreover, South Africa risks falling behind in global competitiveness and innovation, which could hinder the country's economic development and social progress (World Economic Forum, 2019).

To address these issues, this paper proposes to evaluate the infusion of entrepreneurship education across the South African school curriculum through best practices from international curricula. This paper aims to provide more comprehensive and structured approaches to infuse entrepreneurship education across the curriculum. Successful implementation will require collaborative efforts from policymakers, teachers, and stakeholders from various sectors to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of entrepreneurship education programs. By infusing entrepreneurship education within the curriculum, South Africa can cultivate a new generation of innovative and resilient entrepreneurs capable of driving economic growth, creating jobs, and contributing to social development.

The following research questions need to be addressed:

1. What is the importance of infusing entrepreneurship education across the school curriculum?
2. What is the status of entrepreneurship education in South African schools in comparison to schools internationally?
3. What are the barriers hindering the infusion of entrepreneurship education across the school curriculum?
4. How can entrepreneurship education be infused across the school curriculum?

Literature review

Importance of Infusing Entrepreneurship Education Across the School Curriculum

Infusing entrepreneurship education across the school curriculum is essential for fostering a generation of innovative, creative, and resilient individuals. Early introduction to entrepreneurial concepts empowers learners with the skills and mindsets needed for entrepreneurial thinking, enabling them to drive positive change in their communities as they grow up (Simarmata&Samosir, 2024). Hands-on initiatives and practical components make education meaningful and memorable, allowing learners to see real-world applications of classroom lessons. This early exposure positively influences their attitudes towards entrepreneurship, increasing their likelihood of engaging in entrepreneurial activities later in life (Moriano et al., 2014; Hattab, 2015). Moreover, teaching entrepreneurship from a young age builds a strong foundation for future entrepreneurial development, equipping learners with problem-solving skills, adaptability, and critical thinking (Udu & Amadi, 2013; Nabi et al., 2013). In secondary schools, entrepreneurship education modernizes business subjects, inspiring learners to develop new ideas and solutions, and providing them with alternatives to traditional employment paths (Seyi et al., 2024; Vimala & Amutha, 2024). This shift from job seekers to job creators is crucial, especially in countries with high youth unemployment rates, contributing to economic diversification and resilience (Oparaji et al., 2024).

Current Status of Entrepreneurship Education in South African Schools in Comparison to Schools Internationally

Despite the integration of entrepreneurship education in some subjects, South African schools lack explicit and comprehensive curriculum content on entrepreneurship education (Du Toit & Gaotlhobogwe, 2018; Nicolaidis, 2011). This gap highlights the need to infuse the curriculum with detailed entrepreneurship content, as current offerings are limited and inconsistent (Dyani, 2017). Presently, entrepreneurship education is primarily included in Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) at the senior phase and in Business Studies (BS) and Consumer Studies at the Further Education and Training (FET) phase (Department of Basic Education, 2011). However, these subjects often focus more on business concepts rather than on fostering entrepreneurial skills (Du Toit, 2016).

Internationally, countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany have made significant strides in integrating entrepreneurship education into their curricula. In the United States, the curriculum integrates both theoretical and practical knowledge, emphasizing the development of critical entrepreneurial skills (Bauman & Lucy, 2021). The United Kingdom focuses on fostering entrepreneurial skills and mindsets across different education levels, using innovative methods such as merging entrepreneurship with mathematics and design thinking (Reason et al., 2021; Palmér& Johansson, 2018). Germany emphasizes early integration of entrepreneurship education, incorporating entrepreneurial concepts across various subjects to foster a culture of innovation (Meroth, 2023; Vollmar & Euler, 2023). Compared to these countries, South Africa's efforts are still in the developmental stages, necessitating more robust integration at the basic education level (Bux & Van Vuuren, 2019; Masedi, 2018).

Barriers Hindering the Infusion of Entrepreneurship Education Across the School Curriculum

Several barriers hinder the effective infusion of entrepreneurship education across the school curriculum. One of the primary barriers is the rigidity of curriculum policies. Integrating entrepreneurship into traditional academic subjects presents significant challenges, and teachers accustomed to conventional teaching methods may be hesitant to adopt entrepreneurship education (Hermann & Bossle, 2020; Lee et al., 2023). Additionally, there is often no clear instruction on what entrepreneurship education should include or how it should be taught, leading to the perception that it is only relevant to business or economics (Sirelkhatim& Gangi, 2015; Lackéus, 2020).

Cultural and societal barriers further complicate the infusion of entrepreneurship education. Diverse cultures influence curriculum content and perceptions of entrepreneurship, with some societies not viewing it as a viable career option (Ratten&Usmanij, 2021; Makina, 2022). Socio-cultural barriers include lack of valuation, negative societal attitudes, and absence of family support, particularly affecting female entrepreneurs (Aliyu et al., 2020).

The lack of resources and inadequate teacher training are significant barriers to the effective implementation of entrepreneurship education (Dyani, 2017). Successful integration requires sufficient resources and comprehensive professional development for teachers to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge (Ergun, 2023). Without these, teachers may feel unprepared to teach entrepreneurial concepts effectively, resulting in limited exposure for learners (Ncube, 2022).

Strategies to Infuse Entrepreneurship Education Across the School Curriculum

To effectively infuse entrepreneurship education across the school curriculum, it is essential to integrate entrepreneurial concepts into existing subjects, introduce these concepts early, utilize differentiated learning approaches, and implement entrepreneurial programs and projects. Integrating entrepreneurship education into subjects like mathematics, science, technology, engineering, and business studies can provide a more holistic approach to learning (Val et al., 2017; Moberg, 2014). The E-STEM model, which combines entrepreneurial practices with STEM education, encourages learners to engage in real-world challenges, fostering a deeper understanding of entrepreneurial concepts (Lin et al., 2023).

Schools can implement challenge-based learning, which combines action-oriented and pedagogical approaches to promote entrepreneurial education (Brush et al., 2014). Experiential approaches, such as business simulations and hands-on learning activities, allow learners to deepen their practical entrepreneurial knowledge (Lackéus, 2020; Woolfolk-Ruiz & Acosta-Alvarado, 2016). These activities enable learners to grasp important aspects of entrepreneurship and enhance their entrepreneurial mindset, skills, and attitudes (Balan et al., 2018).

Entrepreneurial programs and projects across all school levels can cultivate learners' entrepreneurial mindset and skills (Sánchez, 2013). Schools should establish partnerships with businesses to provide learners with real-world exposure (Kolho et al., 2023; Pihkala et al., 2020). Programs like Lifelong Learning Program (LLP) and Youth in Action Program (YAP) in Europe, and the Educational Chain System (ECS) for Entrepreneurship in Spain, demonstrate the effectiveness of integrating entrepreneurship education into the curriculum (European Commission, 2018). Additionally, initiatives like the Oz Girls Entrepreneurship (OGE) program have shown positive impacts on entrepreneurial intentions among female learners (Whittle et al., 2021).

Principals and teachers play a crucial role in the successful implementation of entrepreneurship education. Principals must support and promote entrepreneurship initiatives by providing resources and fostering a culture of innovation (Hämäläinen, 2023). Teachers should be equipped with entrepreneurial knowledge through workshops, seminars, and collaboration opportunities with entrepreneurs (Hardie et al., 2023; Kolho et al., 2023). Professional development programs should focus on teaching methods and strategies that facilitate entrepreneurial learning (Astuti et al., 2020; Sanger, 2020). By adopting learner-centered approaches and collaborating with entrepreneurs, teachers can create a positive learning environment that enhances learners' entrepreneurial skills and attitudes (Kurczewska, 2016; Powell, 2013).

Thus, infusing entrepreneurship education across the school curriculum is essential for fostering a generation of innovative and entrepreneurial thinkers. By addressing the barriers and implementing effective strategies, education stakeholders can ensure that learners are well-prepared for the dynamic challenges of the 21st century.

Methodology

The research design for this paper is a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), a method that systematically identifies, evaluates, and synthesizes relevant studies in a clear, transparent, and repeatable manner throughout all phases of the research (Higgins, 2011). The primary aim of an SLR is to gather findings from previous studies to address a predefined research topic (Samah, 2021). One significant advantage of SLR is its strong focus on transparency, requiring that all terms in the inclusion criteria are clearly defined and justified, while providing valid reasons for excluded items (Greyson et al., 2019). Moreover, SLR emphasizes validity, causality, evidence, and impact, urging researchers to analyze data related to research design, analytical techniques, and causal relationships. This approach ensures the quality of the review by presenting robust evidence (Lockwood et al., 2015; Mallet et al., 2012).

In this paper, the search was conducted using keywords such as entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship education, curriculum integration, and South African school curriculum, derived from the research objectives. The sample included journal articles from 2004 to 2024, considering the formal introduction of entrepreneurship education in the South African curriculum as part of Curriculum 2005 (Marks, 2012). Databases such as SCOPUS, WOS, and DOAJ were selected for their wide coverage (Creswell, 2014). The inclusion and exclusion criteria ensured that relevant articles were included for findings, while excluded articles justified debates in the literature review.

The paper utilized three major databases namely Scopus, Web of Science, and DOAJ to identify relevant journal articles for inclusion and exclusion. From Scopus, 41 articles were included and 31 were excluded, totalling 72 articles. Web of Science contributed 31 included articles and 59 excluded articles, making a total of 90 articles. DOAJ provided 30 included articles and 26 excluded articles, summing up to 56 articles. Overall, the paper reviewed 218 articles, with 102 included and 116 excluded, ensuring a comprehensive and balanced synthesis of the literature. Data was collected from these journal articles and analyzed thematically, a technique for classifying themes in qualitative data (Terry et al., 2017). This thematic analysis allowed the researcher to review, summarize, and interpret data according to the paper's objectives, ensuring a comprehensive and coherent synthesis of the literature.

Findings and Discussion

The Importance of Infusing Entrepreneurship Education across the School Curriculum

The findings of this paper highlight the critical importance of infusing entrepreneurship education across the school curriculum. The literature review identified four major themes. Firstly, understanding and developing entrepreneurial intentions is crucial, as there is a positive relationship between entrepreneurship education and the development of

entrepreneurial intent (Zheng, 2024; Cekule et al., 2023; Papendieck & Hughes, 2022; Zhang & Huang, 2021; Li & Wu, 2019; Strimel et al., 2019; Nabi et al., 2013; Mwasalwiba, 2010). This underscores the significance of understanding learners' personal traits. Secondly, developing an entrepreneurial mindset, knowledge, and skills is essential (Mpuangnan et al., 2024; Gonzalez-Moralez, 2022; Cui et al., 2021; Mittal & Raghuvana, 2021; Rodríguez & Lieber, 2020; Waghid, 2019; Justin et al., 2018; Davis, 2016; Fayolle & Linan, 2014). An entrepreneurial mindset can be nurtured through innovative classroom settings that foster resilience. Thirdly, entrepreneurship promotes innovation and change in education, equipping learners with essential skills such as creativity, problem-solving, and innovation, which are critical for success in the 21st century (Chen et al., 2022; Shabbir, 2022; Saadat et al., 2022; Bolzani & Luppi, 2021; Imam et al., 2021; Gamede & Uleanya, 2017; Dejaeghere & Baxter, 2014; Iwu, 2023). Lastly, entrepreneurship promotes economic growth, social benefits, and job creation, providing learners with alternative career paths and empowering them to create job opportunities and contribute to the economy (Fute et al., 2024; Gomez & Irewole, 2024; Oparaji et al., 2024; Banha et al., 2022; López-Núñez et al., 2020; Maziriri & Chivandi, 2020; Waghid & Oliver, 2017; Lackéus, 2015). Despite its significance, entrepreneurship education is not included in the primary and secondary curriculum in South Africa, indicating a missed opportunity to cultivate entrepreneurial intent, develop an entrepreneurial mindset, and contribute to economic growth. This gap highlights the urgent need for strategies to effectively integrate entrepreneurship education into the school curriculum.

The Current Status of Entrepreneurship Education in South Africa in comparisons with International Curricula

The findings of this paper reveal significant insights into the current status of entrepreneurship education in South African schools compared to international curricula. International perspectives on entrepreneurship education curriculum content highlight a comprehensive integration of theory and practical elements aimed at equipping learners with essential entrepreneurial skills for the 21st century. In the USA, entrepreneurship education is embedded within the curriculum, while in the UK, it is incorporated into subjects like mathematics and design thinking to enhance creativity and problem-solving. Germany starts entrepreneurship education at an early age, focusing on practical projects and interactive teaching to cultivate a strong entrepreneurial culture (Meroth, 2023; Bauman & Lucy, 2021; Pinho, 2021; Reason et al., 2021; Fejes et al., 2019; Audretsch, 2018).

In contrast, the South African curriculum, specifically Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement does not sufficiently emphasize the infusion of entrepreneurship education. Entrepreneurship concepts are only included in a few subjects such as Economic and Management Sciences (EMS), Business Studies, and Consumer Studies, limiting the comprehensive development of entrepreneurial skills among learners (Dick-Segoe et al., 2023; Bux & Van Vuuren, 2019; Du Toit & Gaotlhogwe, 2018; Masedi, 2018; Dyani, 2017). Furthermore, the implementation of entrepreneurship education in South African schools faces significant challenges, including inadequate resources, insufficient teacher training, and inconsistent curriculum integration. These barriers hinder the effective development of entrepreneurial skills and practical experiences, causing South Africa to lag behind countries like the USA, UK, and Germany in fostering a robust entrepreneurial culture (Rankhumise & Letsoalo, 2023; Ncube, 2022; Forcher-Mayr & Mahknecht, 2020; Du Toit & Kempen, 2018). This comparison highlights the urgent need for strategic interventions to enhance the integration and implementation of entrepreneurship education in South African schools, ensuring learners are adequately prepared for the demands of the modern economy.

Barriers hindering the Implementation of Entrepreneurship Education in the school curriculum

The findings from the literature review reveal four major barriers hindering the implementation of entrepreneurship education in school curricula. Firstly, rigid curriculum policies pose significant challenges to integrating entrepreneurial concepts into traditional subjects. These policies lack clear guidelines and standardized structures, leading to inconsistencies in teaching methods and outcomes. Many educators and stakeholders narrowly view entrepreneurship education as relevant only to Business Studies or Economics, further complicating its integration (Hardie et al., 2023; Motta & Galina, 2023; Rudberg, 2023; Ratten & Usmanij, 2021; Lackéus, 2020; Thomassen et al., 2020). Secondly, cultural and social influences affect curriculum content, with socio-cultural barriers such as negative societal attitudes and lack of family support, particularly for women, who may not view entrepreneurship as a viable career option (Bainee, 2022; Makina, 2022; Jadim, 2021; Aliyu et al., 2020; Azizi & Mokhatari, 2018). Thirdly, limited resources hinder the implementation of entrepreneurship education. Schools often face financial constraints and lack the necessary support to develop and implement well-designed entrepreneurial programs (Odeyemi et al., 2024; Gulikers et al., 2022; Igwe et al., 2021; Pihkala et al., 2021; French et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2020). Lastly, the lack of teacher training and professional development prevents teachers from adopting innovative teaching methods, thereby hindering the effective infusion of entrepreneurship across the curriculum (Bosman et al., 2023; Kolho et al., 2023; Thomassen et al., 2020; Otaibe & Al-Ghobaiwi, 2021; San-Martin et al., 2021; Huang, 2020; Wang et al., 2020; Yuang & Wu, 2020; Blaz et al., 2018; Bliemel, 2014; Neck & Green, 2011). Addressing these barriers is crucial for fostering a robust entrepreneurial culture and equipping learners with the skills needed for the modern economy.

Strategies to Infuse Entrepreneurship Education across the School Curriculum

The findings from the literature review identify four major strategies to effectively infuse entrepreneurship education across the school curriculum. The first strategy involves integrating entrepreneurship into existing subjects, particularly at primary and secondary school levels. This approach enhances learners' cognitive and practical abilities by combining entrepreneurial concepts with STEM subjects, thereby fostering critical thinking and creativity (Lin et al., 2023; Rodríguez & Lieber, 2020; Mittal & Raghuvana, 2021; Du Toit & Kempen, 2020; Forawi & Mansour, 2020; Floris & Pillitu, 2019; Palmér & Johansson, 2018; Val et al., 2017; Moberg, 2014). The second strategy emphasizes applying different teaching and learning approaches, such as challenge-based learning, business simulations, and hands-on activities. These methods deepen learners' practical entrepreneurial knowledge, making entrepreneurship education both engaging and effective in preparing students for real-world challenges (Neck et al., 2022; Joensuu-Salo et al., 2021; Lackeus, 2020; Zulfiqar et al., 2019; Blan, 2018; Brush et al., 2014; Moberg, 2014).

The third strategy focuses on the implementation of entrepreneurial programs and projects in schools. Establishing partnerships between schools and businesses is encouraged to provide learners with real-world exposure and practical experience (Meng et al., 2023; Kaya-Capocci et al., 2022; Whittle et al., 2021; Almulia, 2020; Brune & Lutz, 2020; Rusok et al., 2017; Nabi et al., 2013; Sánchez, 2013). Lastly, the fourth strategy highlights the importance of encouraging principal and teacher development to enhance entrepreneurship education. Professional development for teachers and principals is crucial for effectively supporting entrepreneurial learning. Effective leadership and teacher training are essential for promoting a culture of innovation in schools and ensuring that entrepreneurship education is delivered effectively (Hardie et al., 2023; Astuti et al., 2020; Sanger, 2020; Pihkala et al., 2018). These strategies collectively highlight the need for a comprehensive approach to integrate entrepreneurship education into the school curriculum, preparing learners for the demands of the modern economy.

Thus, the findings of this paper emphasise the critical importance of infusing entrepreneurship education across the school curriculum to prepare learners for the demands of the 21st century. By understanding and developing entrepreneurial intentions, fostering an entrepreneurial mindset, and equipping learners with essential skills such as creativity and problem-solving, entrepreneurship education can significantly contribute to economic growth and job creation. However, the status of entrepreneurship education in South Africa reveals significant gaps and challenges, including limited integration within the curriculum, inadequate resources, and insufficient teacher training. These barriers hinder the effective development of entrepreneurial skills and practical experiences among learners.

Comparisons with international curricula highlight the comprehensive and integrated approaches adopted by countries like the USA, UK, and Germany, which serve as valuable benchmarks for South Africa. To bridge the gap, strategic interventions are urgently needed to enhance the integration and implementation of entrepreneurship education in South African schools. This includes revising curriculum policies, providing adequate resources, and ensuring continuous professional development for teachers. Additionally, integrating entrepreneurship into existing subjects, applying diverse teaching approaches, implementing entrepreneurial programs and projects, and encouraging principal and teacher development are essential strategies. By addressing these challenges and implementing these strategies, South Africa can foster a robust entrepreneurial culture, empowering learners to become active participants in promoting innovation, economic growth, and job creation. This paper's findings and recommendations provide a strong foundation for policymakers, teachers, and stakeholders to take decisive action towards integrating entrepreneurship education into the school curriculum, ultimately preparing learners for a dynamic and competitive global economy.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to evaluate the infusion of entrepreneurship education into the South African school curriculum and draw comparisons with best practices from international curricula. Utilizing a mixed-method approach, the paper combined qualitative and quantitative data through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), analysing peer-reviewed journal articles thematically. The findings highlighted the importance of entrepreneurship education as a tool to prepare learners for the 21st century by developing their entrepreneurial intentions, mindset, skills, and attitudes from a young age. Early exposure to entrepreneurship was found to promote innovation and prepare learners to contribute to economic growth and job creation. However, the paper revealed that entrepreneurship education in South Africa is currently limited to isolated subjects, inconsistent, and impractical due to barriers such as rigid curriculum policies, cultural and societal influences, insufficient resources, and limited teacher training.

To address these challenges, the paper recommends that future researchers replicate this study in schools using case studies and qualitative approaches to provide empirical data for solving practical issues. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) should review and redesign the curriculum content to integrate entrepreneurship across subjects from primary school onwards and provide ongoing professional development for teachers. Teachers should implement entrepreneurship education practically using hands-on experiences and business simulations to provide learners with real-world experience. Additionally, parents should encourage their children to participate in entrepreneurial programs implemented in schools, especially in cultures where entrepreneurship is not traditionally viewed as a career option, particularly for women.

While the paper achieved its objectives, it was confined to a systematic literature review, limiting the generalizability of the findings to all South African schools. Despite this limitation, the SLR provided a comprehensive and unbiased

summary of relevant studies, aiding in informed decision-making and reliable conclusions. Further empirical studies are recommended to explore this issue more thoroughly.

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