



EXPLORING THE PERCEIVED ROLE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION AMONG LEARNERS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study examines how South African Further Education and Training (FET) Business Studies learners view the role of entrepreneurship education in their decision-making process when choosing a career. However, its precise influence on the career decisions of FET Business Studies learners as a vital portion of the future labour force remains unstudied mainly, especially in South Africa.

Design/ Methodology/ Approach: This study used a qualitative case study research design to explore the views of FET Business Studies learners on entrepreneurship education and how it affects their choice of employment. Rich, in-depth insights were obtained through focus group discussions with a purposefully selected sample of 30 FET learners enrolled in Business Studies from three distinct South African secondary schools. The focus group discussions comprised six learners per group from each grade (Grades 10, 11, and 12).

Research Limitation: While focus groups allow for rich discussion, the breadth of topics covered in each session may have been limited by time constraints. As a result, some aspects of the learners' experiences and perspectives may not have been fully explored.

Findings: The results of this study provide insight into how entrepreneurship education influences career goals, attitudes towards self-employment as opposed to official employment, and how Business Studies help learners develop their entrepreneurial abilities. Additionally, it investigates the impact of contextual elements on incorporating entrepreneurial education into FET Business Studies learners' career decision-making processes, including socioeconomic background, cultural norms, and institutional support.

Practical Implications: Early introduction of Business Studies in the General Education and Training (GET) phase (Grades 8 and 9) will facilitate the easy transition of learners from the economic and Management Science (EMS) subject to Business Studies and encourage their interest in entrepreneurship.

Social Implications: To foster learners' interest in entrepreneurship, policymakers would need to support economic development in South Africa, where unemployment is extremely high, and recognise entrepreneurship as a crucial component for aspiring entrepreneurs.

Originality and Value: This study added to the understanding of how Business Studies learners' intentions to pursue entrepreneurship may be influenced by their entrepreneurship education.

Keywords: *Business studies. career choice. decision making. entrepreneurship education. South Africa*



INTRODUCTION

Counsellors and personnel psychologists place a high value on the decisions made by learners regarding their careers because these decisions influence their future career choices (America & Skelly, 2021). There is a dearth of research on the needs of learners for career assistance while making career decisions, but what is known is that career guidance received in school impacts how well learners make career decisions in post-secondary settings (Dabbous & Boustani, 2023).

Apartheid policies and practices have shaped the social and economic practices of South African society. According to Govender et al. (2023 p.19), the impact of "race, wealth and demographics from the time of apartheid constitutes particular patterns today" has determined opportunities and limitations in South African society. According to Ditlopo (2021), there is currently a divide in earning ability in South Africa because of the macroeconomic policies that have contributed to the "persistence of economic disparities between races" (Ditlopo, 2021, p. 817). An affluent upper elite focused on investments stands in stark contrast to the majority of Black people, who are poor and lack access to healthcare, education, and employment prospects. They also face unemployment and have a 52-year life expectancy (Iwu et al., 2021; Govender, 2018). The majority of black South Africans still live in poverty, remote from cities, and have limited access to resources and services, making the displacement of blacks from the heart of economic activity and growth during apartheid uncorrected. Lack of funds to pay for transport to receive necessary treatment exacerbates this scenario (Le Hanie, 2021; Kumar et al., 2019). Five percent of South Africa's population owns 80 percent of the country's wealth (Gangiah, 2024).

Although there is a severe skills shortage in South Africa, the majority of Black people are impoverished and jobless (Malawu, 2022; Matsheke, 2022). This predicament is worsened by barriers to accessing career guidance services and high-quality education (Mbonambi et al., 2023). Furthermore, because of the poor economic growth, the unemployed are not absorbed into the economy, leading to an annual increase in unemployment as post-secondary students add to the already high unemployment rate (Mbonambi et al., 2023; Ntare & Ojwang, 2021). An estimated 300,000 unemployed persons have higher education credentials, although 55% lack the skills necessary for employment because they did not finish Grade 12 (Oke & Fernandes, 2020; Matoetoe, 2017). This state of affairs results from a lack of work experience and a mismatch between the labour market's demand and supply of skills (Oke & Fernandes, 2020; Gangiah, 2024; Ditlopo, 2021). High unemployment rates, a dearth of trained labour, an excess of low- and unskilled labour, and a sizable black rural population characterise South Africa (Mlaba, 2014; Modiba et al., 2023).

In Further Education and Training, providing excellent instruction is crucial because it enables learners to choose their major subjects with knowledge and confidence. This can, therefore, significantly affect their chances of securing employment in postsecondary institutions. Okae-Adjei (2017) states that a key pedagogy component is assessing learners' learning. According to them, educators ought to give precedence to measures that aid in evaluation, like building trusting and transparent connections with learners. Given that learners in vocational programs, particularly those in business studies, will eventually operate as business owners, instructors

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must provide them with the necessary knowledge and abilities. Consequently, educators tasked with imparting these vital subjects to learners must be well qualified and have prior experience teaching them at the Further Education and Training (FET) stage, especially in Grade 12.

According to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for Business Studies, the Department of Education aims to provide students with entrepreneurial knowledge and skills to become independent and responsible citizens. Teachers need to take a focused approach when delivering teaching, according to Warui (2015). Research on pedagogy has shown that well-defined learning objectives can help learners comprehend the goals of a lesson or intervention, maintain focus during the process, and ultimately increase the effectiveness of the learning process, especially when faced with challenging content. According to Zwane (2023) viewpoint, a teacher's ability to teach a subject is dependent on their subject-matter expertise. In order to effectively coach pedagogy, educators need to have a solid grasp of the subject. Proficiency in the subject topic is an essential prerequisite for successful teaching. Teachers who lack sufficient knowledge can seriously hinder their students' academic advancement. According to Mbonambi (2023), one of the most important aspects of good teaching is being passionate, committed, and skilled when it comes to getting people interested in learning.

The General Education and Training (GET) Economics and Management Sciences curriculum level in South Africa includes Entrepreneurship Education. This was introduced primarily for students in Grades 8 and 9. The goal is to help young students develop an entrepreneurial mindset. During the Further Education and Training (FET) phase, especially in Grades 10, 11, and 12, the combination of Business Studies, Accounting, and Economics contributes to developing entrepreneurial competencies. Ajayi (2021) states that the Department of Basic Education (DBE) recognised on page 15 of its 2014 report that Business Studies encourages learners to learn about entrepreneurship. Business Studies includes acquiring knowledge, skills, perspectives, and values essential for competent, efficient, ethical, and responsible participation in organised and unorganised business environments. This field of study focuses on the fundamental ideas, theoretical structures, and practical applications that support the establishment of commercial firms, the development of entrepreneurial ventures, and the promotion of economic growth. (DBE, 2018).

Because Business Studies has a solid body of proven content knowledge, it is considered a theoretical subject. Bray et al. (2023) define subject matter content knowledge as "powerful (specialised) knowledge," which is dependable and ought to be given priority in the curriculum. Gaining strong knowledge gives students the chance to succeed in areas outside of their daily lives. According to Kapolo (2023), the pedagogical task is to make powerful knowledge applicable to all students, regardless of background. Although this opinion is less common in South Africa, business studies also have a vocational component because it is seen as a means of preparing learners for careers in the industry. There are times when pedagogical adjustments are required, which include modifying the learning environment to accommodate a diverse range of learners. As a result, various knowledge domains are needed for the teaching and learning process, including information about pedagogy and the curriculum, knowledge about the learners and their settings, and practical knowledge (Govender, 2018).



The Malaysian Examination Council (1998) created a Business Studies curriculum, according to research by Kumar et al. (2019), to give students the fundamental skills they need to seek higher education in business management and entrepreneurship. The author elaborates on the need for students to have basic entrepreneurial skills to reach a decent degree of competence in entrepreneurship. According to Kimotho (2016), the pedagogical process involves helping people acquire new ideas, skills, attitudes, or information. The method comprises teachers and students working together, with the teacher acting as a facilitator and taking responsibility for the learner's planned behaviour change.

Today, entrepreneurship education is a fast-expanding field in education across the globe (Kimotho, 2016), demonstrating that an economy cannot grow significantly in the absence of entrepreneurs. Improving Entrepreneurship Education could encourage more people to choose entrepreneurship, resulting in job possibilities, economic development, and growth (Mdunana, 2011). Numerous academics examined this notion, and evidence supported it (Bray et al., 2023; Dabbous & Boustani, 2023). According to Mbonambi (2023), entrepreneurship is an intrinsic skill that cannot be taught; this contrasts with other professions like law or engineering, which call for specialised education and training.

Numerous academics have demonstrated the importance of Small Micro and Medium Enterprises (SMMEs) as a driver of steady employment and wealth creation (Kimotho, 2016; Dabbous & Boustani, 2023; Modiba et al., 2023). Entrepreneurship is necessary to ensure the growth of SMMEs in South Africa since it offers a dependable response to the growing unemployment problem (Mbonambi et al., 2023). In response to these obstacles, school-based entrepreneurship education significantly equips South African adolescents to engage in economic development (Dabbous & Boustani, 2023). Secondary schools play a crucial role in their career prospects by providing the required training for students to acquire the skills and information they will need in the future (Mlaba, 2014). To help formerly marginalised populations and close the inequality gap, special focus should be paid to vocational training, skill development, and hands-on activities (Le Hanie, 2021; Govender et al., 2023).

South Africa's entrepreneurial environment must be improved to generate sustainable economic growth. Progress within the nation has the potential to significantly lower both the unemployment rate and the degree of poverty (Modiba et al., 2023). Successful entrepreneurship is desperately needed (Matsheke, 2022), and the younger generation, especially recent graduates, must lead the way as future leaders, wealth producers, and entrepreneurs. Kapolo (2023) contends that education in the twenty-first century should occur in a setting that values cooperation and a sense of reciprocity to support vocational learning and skill development. While acquiring information requires critical thinking, creative problem-solving, collaboration, communication, and reading, life skills include adaptability, initiative, social skills, efficiency, and managerial abilities.

Learning that works goes beyond simply imparting knowledge. Comprehensive subject comprehension is necessary for both effective teaching and learning. To succeed, teachers need to comprehend the subject matter. Ahmed (2015) suggests becoming an expert in the field. Instructors need to understand the fundamental ideas, tenets, and connections between their



courses. Students also need to understand how experts in their field apply and conceptualise these ideas. This study investigates how FET Business Studies Learners in South Africa perceive the importance of entrepreneurship education in helping them make career decisions. Well-designed exercises help learners assimilate information methodically (Ahmed, 2015). Good career decision-making requires the use of effective instructional strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although starting a business is an essential component of entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship encompasses more than just that; it also involves the capacity to recognise opportunities, take measured risks, and possess the passion to see an idea through to its mature stage (Gcabashe, 2024). According to Bernadó and Bratzke (2024), entrepreneurship is when a person's originality is a key business component. When examined, entrepreneurship can be thought of as either starting a new business or purchasing an existing one (Bernadó & Bratzke (2024).

Any nation's economy is greatly impacted by education as a source of skilled labour and knowledge output. In South Africa, educational institutions must address school dropouts' employability by creating creative entrepreneurial curricula. Learners must be exposed to entrepreneurship activities in schools in order to foster talented, opportunity-oriented entrepreneurs (Malawu, 2022). The South African economy may be revitalised and unemployment reduced by identifying risk-takers, trailblazers, and creative entrepreneurs (Suguna et al., 2024). Therefore, proper professional and academic preparation to foster entrepreneurial skills is crucial.

Youths must receive entrepreneurship education and training in order to reduce unemployment. This will encourage them to become employers rather than employees after graduating high school (Mahlangu, 2023). It is impossible to overemphasise the importance of having an entrepreneurial spirit in light of the current economic uncertainty; greater entrepreneurial skills and abilities are required. The development of any society and economic progress depends on entrepreneurship education.

Research by Sitaridis and Kitsios (2024) found that those who have taken entrepreneurial courses are more likely to start their businesses than those who have not. This emphasises how crucial entrepreneurial education and training are to establishing and developing businesses. According to Mbonambi (2023), entrepreneurship education is crucial in establishing small businesses and boosting the nation's GDP and economic growth. They suggest that entrepreneurship education should be one of the prerequisites for starting and operating a business. As revealed in research by Mbonambi et al. (2023), entrepreneurs thought that the knowledge and skills they learnt in entrepreneurial courses were beneficial in critical thinking and reflection, mainly when presented with challenging and real-life situations in their enterprises, because it helps entrepreneurs to assess, reflect, learn from important circumstances, and improve their problem-solving skills, theoretical knowledge about entrepreneurship is therefore also crucial.



Since every economy is centred on business, entrepreneurship education has become more prevalent in these areas. Matsheke (2022) defines entrepreneurship education as the systematic transfer of entrepreneurial skills, including the ideas and awareness people employ when starting and running their enterprises. Entrepreneurial education encourages and supports entrepreneurial actions (Matsheke, 2022). According to the World Economic Forum (2013), entrepreneurship education improves the development of the abilities, attitudes, and behaviours required to produce economic growth and jobs.

The history of small and medium-sized business job creation is closely related to significant efforts to encourage entrepreneurship in the United States. The development of entrepreneurship centres and institutions, and eventually the training of entrepreneurs, led directly to the creation of jobs and the fight against unemployment (Al-Omar et al., 2024). There has been a notable shift in school curricula and entrepreneurship education programs. More than 1600 institutions, colleges, and universities in the USA provide entrepreneurship education (He et al., 2024). Despite the tremendous expansion, entrepreneurship education continues to face difficulties. Thus, the factors of entrepreneurship education that correspond with educational experience and competence include attitude, knowledge, and skills (He et al., 2024).

Few people in South Africa grew up in households where entrepreneurship and business endeavours were commonplace (Ditlopo, 2021). Consequently, South Africans view themselves as job searchers rather than entrepreneurs. In contrast to people in other developing nations, South Africans lack the creativity, independence, opportunity, and startup skills necessary to launch a business (Isaacs, Visser, Friedrich, & Brijlal, 2007). Compared to other developed nations, where the ratio is roughly 1:10, South Africa has a relatively low ratio of entrepreneurs to workers, at about 1:52 (Isaacs et al., 2007).

In the past, South Africa's educational system was more teacher-centred than learner-centred or focused on experiential learning, preventing learners from being prepared to think critically or explore opportunities creatively (Mbonambi, 2023). The failure of entrepreneurial activities highlighted the South African school system's shortcomings in imparting entrepreneurship skills (Govender, 2023). Malawu (2022) concurs, stating that in order to foster entrepreneurial attitudes and abilities in learners, the educational system must be enhanced. Fostering an entrepreneurial culture in the educational system should engage all stakeholders (Sitaridis & Kitsios, 2024). Effective entrepreneurship education should concentrate on four areas: first, students' self-confidence in their ability to launch a business; second, their understanding of finance and business management; third, their desire to launch their businesses; and fourth, their desire to continue their education beyond high school (Dabbous & Boustani, 2023).

Entrepreneurship education has been incorporated into school curricula by the South African government. Since 2000, the subjects for Grades 7–9, part of Economics and Management Science (EMS) (Ajayi, 2021), and Grades 10–12, part of Business Studies, have included entrepreneurial education. Entrepreneurship, consumer skills, productivity, and fundamental



economic principles are all included in the EMS subject curriculum for learners in grades seven through nine. All grade levels must take these entrepreneurship subjects, and one of the learning objectives is for learners to obtain entrepreneurial knowledge and abilities (Al-Omar et al., 2024).

Entrepreneurship education was included in the new curriculum 2005 as Business Studies for Grades 10–12. Entrepreneurial endeavours, business concepts, sustainable firms, and economic progress are the topics covered in this subject (The National Curriculum Statement: Business Studies). Business studies focus on the attitudes, abilities, information, and values learners need to develop into productive and responsible citizens (Matsheke, 2022). Through case studies, learners are exposed to entrepreneurial activities and learn about the definition of an entrepreneur, traits of a successful entrepreneur, factors that contribute to business success, and reasons why businesses fail (The Department of Basic Education, 2018).

Like many other emerging nations, South Africa has the issue of an increasing number of people starting enterprises out of necessity rather than because they have identified a suitable market niche. This necessity for entrepreneurship intentions is called need entrepreneurship. It can be compared with opportunity entrepreneurship, in which individuals launch businesses in response to perceived market openings without acquiring the necessary skills to sustain the perceived opportunity (He et al., 2024). These necessity entrepreneurs frequently have incomes below the poverty line since they lack the resources, business expertise, and skills needed for such an enterprise.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Using a qualitative case study research design, this study examined how FET Business Studies learners felt about entrepreneurship education and how it influenced their career decisions (Yin, 2014). The sample comprises individuals who meet the eligibility requirements for the study; in a qualitative case study, this would be the focus group discussions or interviews, and in a quantitative study, it would be the study participants (Creswell, 2014). A representative sample of business studies learners in Grades 10, 11, and 12 at the three selected schools was purposively chosen to achieve the study's aim.

The target population was all South African learners in business studies subjects in Grades 10, 11, and 12. Six learners from each of the three grades participated in the focus group discussions (Grades 10, 11, and 12). To achieve the aim of this study, a representative sample of learners in Grades 10, 11, and 12 from the three chosen schools was specifically selected. For the focus group discussions, 48 learners were chosen, six from each grade of the three schools. Male and female learners were selected for this investigation. The most important kind of non-probability sampling is called purposive sampling (Smith, 2024), which helps researchers collect units of analysis by utilising their creativity, experience, and/or past research findings to enable the sample they obtain to be regarded as representative of the relevant population (Smith, 2024).

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Data collection and analysis

Students studying business studies at the three secondary schools in Gauteng that were chosen for the study participated in the focus group interviews. Six learners from each of the three schools' Grades 10, 11, and 12 were chosen for the focus group interviews. The selection criteria for the learners involved required each to receive an average of 50% or higher on the Business Studies exam. This would provide all participants with a baseline for a passing mark, potentially signifying a rudimentary understanding of entrepreneurship. This study examined how FET Business Studies students in South Africa evaluated the importance of entrepreneurship education in helping them make career decisions.

Given the minor status of the learners participating in this research (Creswell, 2014), the principal of the schools was asked for permission, and learners were given consent and assent letters for learners below the age of 18. Only learners who signed and returned these forms could participate in the focus groups. The duration of the focus group discussion was between forty-five and an hour. Audio recordings were made during the focus group conversations to ensure the data would not be misinterpreted during analysis. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data gathered from the focus group discussions.

RESULTS

This study explored how FET Business Studies learners in South Africa perceived the importance of entrepreneurship education when making career decisions. Some themes emerged from the focus group discussions with business studies learners in Grades 10, 11, and 12, suggesting that learners' propensity for business studies influences their decision-making process when selecting entrepreneurship as their future job. These themes are: Exposure to Business Studies changes learners' perceptions, learners' desire for independence, learners' awareness of the economic climate in the country: skills development and employment creation, and learners' ambition. These themes are discussed in detail with excerpts from learners' focus group discussions.

Exposure to Business Studies changes learners' perceptions

Due to the various entrepreneurship-related topics that business studies learners were exposed to, they were launched into entrepreneurship education through this subject. Learners from the three chosen schools stated that the subject's content made them admire it. According to what the learners said, the topic suggests they may be able to start their businesses. Furthermore, learners disclosed that the principles and advantages of the subject matter hold significance for their future career planning (Participants, 3, 12 and 13).

One of the Grade 10 participants in the focus group discussion mentioned that more exposure to the subject matter could further stimulate the desire to study business studies. Upon studying the subject, the participants discovered the topics fascinating and pertinent. As a result, learners committed themselves to the subject matter with the goal of succeeding in life in mind (Participant 12).



Up to Grade 12, learners who had selected Business Studies as a subject were extraordinarily enthusiastic and delighted with their decision; no student expressed discontent with the course (Participants 4, 9, 14 and 16). A learner in Grade 12 at school B stated that although she initially disliked the topics of business studies, she ultimately decided to pursue it because she realised its potential and because it provided the knowledge needed to start a business venture and be independent (Participant 10). Because she disliked business studies and felt it was too difficult, this student researched the topic independently before deciding on a course combination. The subject combination is a crucial factor for students in grade 10. One participant mentioned that searching for the ideal combination of subjects raised awareness of the benefits of choosing business studies because the right subjects could help students succeed in the long run (Participant 10). The participants (18, 37, 40, and 42) acknowledged the dangers of becoming an entrepreneur and that one should be ready and willing to take measured risks that could lead to their freedom.

In some schools, learners were not allowed to select their subject combinations because the school already offered specific combinations of subjects. Participants expressed their displeasure with the procedure, but they also emphasised that their attitudes had changed as a result of studying the business studies material, as shown in the following excerpt:

“We did not have a choice, that is the first reason, but we ended up loving it; we are now loving it because we learn new things, and it is interesting, and we want to do business somewhere along the line because, interestingly, it is not boring like physical science” (Grade 11 learner, Participant 13).

Learners’ desire for independence

As a result of their increased awareness of the nation's economic circumstances, learners now strongly desire independence. Participants in Grade 11 at School B stated that they do not want to be bound by regulations; therefore, they view owning their enterprises as promoting their independence and taking control of their lives. According to a Grade 12 learner at School B, one of the motivations for starting business endeavours is the desire for independence (Participant 9).

Furthermore, students at school B expressed their satisfaction with an entrepreneurial job, equating it with economic freedom, self-determination, and a fantastic life (P19). Students at the three chosen institutions believe people should behave appropriately and be autonomous. The excerpts that follow make this clear:

“So instead of people depending on the government, they can start something and be independent. People need to start taking responsibility for their actions and own them. People need to be committed, dedicated and focused. Individuals should plan themselves and stop depending on the government, such as starting a sole proprietorship business” (Participant 23).

Another perspective on the desire for independence is expressed in the excerpts below:



“[it] has given me a sense of independence. In terms of business, I want something of my own. I work well by myself. I feel that Business Studies will accommodate me in a way. Being on my own has made me... I have been able to grasp certain skills. Business Studies has a wide career field. It relates to my experience” (Participant 22).

“I chose Business Studies because I want to be an entrepreneur, and having my own business can help me to overcome unemployment and be independent, which makes Business Studies the right subject for me to choose” (Participant 10).

The interview excerpts above indicated business studies' important impact on learners' career decision-making as they pursue independence. Even though some people rely on government assistance to make ends meet, the study participants are adamant that the business studies subject they were exposed to will help them make an informed decision to pursue entrepreneurship as a career choice so they can support themselves and be an employer of labour rather than becoming employees.

Learners' awareness of the economic climate in the country: skills development and employment creation

Learners acknowledged in the focus group interviews that there is unemployment in the community and that other ways exist to create jobs. Learners thought that many people might benefit through entrepreneurship, and unemployment could be reduced (P24). Given the high unemployment rates in South Africa, a Grade 10 learner at School A said that having a steady income from work is a sign of productive employment, which can help fight poverty and lower crime rates (19). "...because of the nation's economic situation, not everyone will be able to find employment; thus, starting a business is the greatest option..." (P 25). Learners imagined themselves as successful businesspeople who could contribute to lowering crime and poverty (P22). Additionally, learners in Grade 10 at School B recognised that poverty levels are significant and predicted that small firms will eventually grow into major corporations. They also believed that business studies would help them understand the scope of the community's poverty (P8).

According to a Grade 11 learner at School A (P35), aspiring to be an entrepreneur can also lead to the enhancement of one's standard of living, the development of one's abilities, and an increase in the status of entrepreneurs. Notably, some learners expressed their aspirations to start their businesses, create jobs, and lessen poverty by raising people's levels of competence in their local areas (Participants 11,19,17,22 and 23). The Grade 10 learners at School A also mentioned South Africa's high unemployment rate and said developing their talents could help mitigate this issue (Participants 2,27,42, 28). Learners in Grade 10 at school A suggested that in order to address the issue of unemployment in the community, people need to do much more than create jobs; they also need to investigate and explore various opportunities in their communities and tailor their skill sets accordingly (Participants 2, 4, 8).

Some learners at schools B and C preferred the business studies course for various reasons, including the ability to make their own decisions and earn money. Furthermore, they think that



studying business studies will enable them to accomplish their objectives and allow them to open doors for the unemployed in their communities (P9, 18, 30). One way to positively impact the community in terms of job creation is to become an entrepreneur, according to a learner in Grade 11 at School B (Participant 33). The participant claimed that Business Studies sparked their desire to start their own business. This Grade 12 learner from School B understands that they cannot "work wonders," but they still think that entrepreneurship offers the chance to "change lives" and better the lives of less fortunate people (Participants 10 & 17).

Learner's ambition

All learners tend to be driven and in pursuit of a happy life. When pursuing a career, an individual always employs efforts, makes financial, time, and energy commitments, or turns down other chances. Therefore, making the wrong choice can alter one's destiny and result in a career change. As a result, before beginning a career, learners must make informed decisions by researching pertinent career-related information.

Ambition may have played a role in the decision to choose Business Studies and Consumer Studies, as one learner from School A pointed out in the excerpt below:

"My main purpose in doing business studies is to envision owning my restaurant to be an entrepreneur and doing consumer studies. I want to be a chef in my restaurant; that is what I dream of...so I want to learn the basics" (Participant 20).

Their knowledge of Business Studies fuelled some of the learners' ambitions. Many learners had aspirations of starting their businesses in the future. These aspirations may have sparked interest in business studies as a subject that offers foundational information for those wishing to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Participants 8, 17, 18; 19).

As a people-person who enjoyed debating, law, and politics, part of the topics covered in Business Studies, a Grade 10 learner at School C chose to major in Business Studies because of his interests (Participant 12, 15, 20). The learner chose Business Studies because they understood it forms the foundation for many other career options (Participant 28). According to a learner in Grade 10 at School B, Business Studies exposes learners to various career possibilities in commerce. As a result, most learners found the subject engaging and relevant to their chosen career route (Participant 20). While many learners have no idea what career path to choose, a different Grade 11 learner at School C said that most Business Studies learners chose a career after choosing the subject based on their interests and aspirations (Participant 13).

Even though some participants mentioned that they struggled with essay writing, a learner in Grade 11 at school B thought the subject was interesting because it had opened their eyes to new things. A participant said it is simpler for learners to make decisions in Grade 10 when they are confident in the subject they want to study (Participant 9). Another Grade 11 learner at School C attested that learners find it easier to choose a career because they already know what field of study and career path they want to take after Grade 12 (Participant 22). This is because learners know the subjects they would like to study. For one learner, mastering the principles of entrepreneurship is essential to achieving success, as they have already founded



a business and attested to their proficiency in running it while using the advantages of being an entrepreneur (Participant 21). Below is the participant's perspective:

“I chose Business Studies because I have excellent management skills, am very business-minded, can communicate well with people, and business is just an effortless thing for me to do. I have a small salon that I manage. I make hair and am very good at it” (Participant 21).

Learners studying Business Studies in Grade 12 have decided whether to pursue entrepreneurship as a career. Two learners at school A affirmed that they would pursue entrepreneurship as a career and that they had selected business studies as their subject to have a basic understanding (Participants 4, 27). The Grade 12 learners at School B chose Business Studies for various reasons, but all six group members stated that they chose the subject because they are passionate and ambitious about business enterprises (Participants 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22).

The Grade 11 learners at School B gave off the impression of being an extraordinarily ambitious and focused set of learners when it came to their future endeavours:

“Because I want to have my own business, and I do not want my children to depend on working for other people. I want the country's poverty level to decrease” (Participant 14).

“I want to do business management and have a passion for business. It is an easy subject and also gives general knowledge. Another reason for choosing Business Studies is to become an entrepreneur. I am already looking into businesses I can venture into and open my own business in the future” (p 18).

The results above show that business studies raised learners' interest in and desire to preserve their communities. Thanks to the business studies curriculum, learners have a strong sense of self-worth and are motivated by their goals. When choosing their study subjects for Grade 10, learners may benefit more from having access to career help and counselling in secondary school. This will enable them to make an informed career selection.

DISCUSSION

The current study examined the Perceived Role of Entrepreneurship Education in Career Choice Decision-Making among FET Business Studies Learners in South Africa. The findings from the study indicate that exposure to business studies changes learners' perceptions, learners' desire for independence, learners' awareness of the economic climate in the country, skills development and employment creation, and learners' ambition were perceived by learners as roles that entrepreneurship education plays in their career choice decision-making. The learners in this study perceived entrepreneurship education and young adults' involvement as a mechanism of a nation's economic development, socio-cultural advancement, employment creation, and poverty alleviation (Ajayi, 2021). The learners believed that exposure to business studies and entrepreneurship education could offer youths more independence, higher returns, and perhaps even more career fulfilment (Kapolo, 2023). Literature has been able to

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demonstrate that choosing entrepreneurship as a career gives learners, particularly those from previously underrepresented groups and poorer socioeconomic backgrounds, a favourable opportunity to accomplish something worthwhile in their lives (Malawu, 2022; Mbonambi et al., 2023; Zwane, 2023). Because Business Studies equips learners with the necessary knowledge to start a business, it also gives them experiences and abilities that they can use to overcome impediments in the future (Modiba, 2023). The findings support the assertions made by (Mbonambi et al., 2023) that entrepreneurship education in South Africa's secondary schools allows learners to apply the theoretical concepts they have learned, including overcoming challenges in business and gaining related knowledge and skills.

Similarly, people possess entrepreneurial behaviour, attributes, and abilities that they could practice with the proper instruction and preparation, which they could receive from learning about entrepreneurship (Dabbous & Boustani, 2023). The findings from the study demonstrated that entrepreneurship could be taught just like any other subject, which makes it necessary to incorporate entrepreneurship education into the secondary school curriculum to address the slow economic growth in South Africa, unemployment, and lack of entrepreneurial firms. An intention to become an entrepreneur may be influenced by entrepreneurship education (Modiba, 2023). According to learners, success in entrepreneurship is not determined by one's background but rather by a behaviour that can be learned and knowledge that can be acquired. The learners in this study demonstrated that entrepreneurship education is a valuable tool for helping them gain the abilities and know-how needed to launch and grow an entrepreneurial business. Participants in this survey stated that entrepreneurship education encompasses a wide range of instructional strategies that teach people how to be dependable, creative, risk-takers, and outcome-oriented.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the perceived role of entrepreneurship education in career choice decision-making among FET business studies learners in South Africa. The entrepreneurship education in Business Studies curriculum supplied the basis for learners to launch small-scale entrepreneurial ventures. This study highlighted that, despite the various obstacles facing South Africa's development, entrepreneurship remains the most effective means of sustaining development in the twenty-first century. Learners should be encouraged to pursue it instead of conventional job creation approaches. It will be easier for learners to switch from the Economic and Management Science (EMS) subject to Business Studies if the subject is introduced early in the General Education and Training (GET) phase (Grades 8 and 9). It will also spark learners' interest in entrepreneurship. Policymakers must identify entrepreneurship as an essential component for aspiring entrepreneurs and assist economic development in South Africa, where unemployment is exceptionally high, to encourage learners' interest in entrepreneurship. Schools and the Department of Education should work to dispel the misconception that business studies are not on the same level as science subjects by promoting and elevating the subject and providing it with a better standing in the curriculum.



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