



Learner Perspectives on Entrepreneurship Skills Development: Insights from Schools in the Blouberg Local Municipality in Limpopo Province

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship training and education are gaining significant attention globally, with many organisations preparing young people for the changing socioeconomic conditions that affect them. The study, therefore, analyses the learners' perspectives on the entrepreneurship training that a youth development organisation provides. This study used a qualitative approach and semi-structured interviews as a data collection technique to elicit insights from learners in selected schools in Blouberg Local Municipality in Limpopo Province. The sample of participants comprised learners from four schools participating in the Enke Make Your Mark Programme for youth development. These data collection processes allowed learners to reflect on their learning journey within the youth development programme on entrepreneurship. The findings revealed that learners gain valuable skills in entrepreneurship. However, they are unable to utilise the skills gained through the program due to a lack of access to resources and support, and mentorship, which also limits the programme to focus on real-world application. These findings inform the need for a more effective programme training design that incorporates practical hands-on activities while providing mentorship and addressing resource limitations. This study provides evidence on how the prevalence of entrepreneurial training in schools can shape learners' career pathways.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Skills, Skills Development, Youth, Youth Development

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INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship education and training continue to gain significant recognition and attention globally as a means for governments and other stakeholders to address unemployment and socioeconomic issues affecting communities. In countries with high rates of youth unemployment, equipping young people with entrepreneurial skills has emerged as a key approach to tackle youth unemployment and empower youth with the knowledge and skills to create employment opportunities for themselves and others in their communities, rather than relying solely on traditional employment.¹ According to Statistics South Africa, South Africa faces high rates of youth unemployment, with 45.1 % of young people who are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET).² Therefore, there is an urgent need for the country to

¹ T. Zwane, "We Need Government That Can Deliver," *Sowetan*, May 7, 2021.

² Statistics South Africa, "Youth Unemployment Rate in South Africa from 1991 to 2024," Statista - Community Survey 2025: Municipal Profile, 2025.

prepare its young people to meet the demands of the current modern economy. Introducing young people to entrepreneurship education is crucial and could be even more beneficial when implemented at the high school level.³ At this stage, it holds the potential to foster an entrepreneurial mindset and enable learners to explore innovative career paths, allowing them to become job creators rather than job seekers.

In line with the need to create future employers, this study explores the perspectives of secondary school learners who are the beneficiaries of a youth development programme that fosters entrepreneurship among young people. This is the case as training and education concerning entrepreneurship have subsequently attracted considerable attention on a global scale as a solution to problems such as unemployment, economic income inequality, and changing socioeconomic conditions.⁴ Recognising the significance of entrepreneurship and the widespread youth unemployment in many countries, educators and policymakers increasingly equip young people with entrepreneurship skills to help them create their own opportunities.

This study therefore evaluates how youth development programmes that promote entrepreneurship impact youth unemployment by exploring the perspectives of secondary school learners who participate in such programmes. The findings of this study aim to inform the design of more responsive entrepreneurship programmes that address the unique socio-economic needs of young people in resource-constrained environments.

Kulmie et al. note that the traditional education system often focuses on preparing learners for formal employment, which seems inadequate in regions facing economic challenges with limited job opportunities.⁵ Consequently, entrepreneurship education has emerged as a viable intervention strategy to equip young people with the knowledge, skills, tools, and mindset to create their business opportunities.⁶ One initiative that fosters entrepreneurship skills among young people is the Enke Make Your Mark Programme, which targets secondary school learners and post-school individuals in South Africa. The Enke Organisation is an NPO/NGO that aims to amplify youth voices through the creation of spaces for young people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds to share and develop life-changing ideas that can be implemented at a personal, family, and community level. The goal of the Organisation is to provide young people with an opportunity to realise their full potential, contribute to the development they seek for themselves, their communities and the country at large, and make their mark. This programme aims to instil an entrepreneurial mindset, alongside leadership and problem-solving skills, in young people. Although these programmes aim to develop young people, challenges like limited access to resources and insufficient mentorship often hinder their effectiveness.

The study took place in the Blouberg Local Municipality in Limpopo Province, South Africa, where residents face widespread socio-economic disparities.⁷ Young people in this selected location face challenges such as limited infrastructure, lack of access to resources, poverty, and high unemployment rates, which exacerbate the socio-economic issues confronting young individuals in the area. Therefore, understanding the perspectives of learners participating in the entrepreneurship programme within this context not only provides a nuanced understanding of their experiences but also creates an opportunity to guide interventions that are both theoretically sound and practically applicable. This study explores the learners' perspectives on entrepreneurship, drawing on their experiences in the Enke Make Your Mark Programme. This exploration focuses on their views regarding the training, the knowledge and skills they have acquired, and the challenges they encounter in applying this knowledge and these skills in real-world scenarios. Through this approach, the study contributes to the broader discourse on youth entrepreneurship, youth development, and how entrepreneurship education promotes economic empowerment among young people.

³ Paul Agu Igwe et al., "Pedagogical Approaches to Responsible Entrepreneurship Education," *Sustainability* 14, no. 15 (August 1, 2022): 9440, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14159440>.

⁴ Loredana Nicoleta Zainea et al., "Combating Unemployment through Social Entrepreneurship in the European Context," *Business Ethics and Leadership* 4, no. 4 (2020): 85–98.

⁵ Dayah Abdi Kulmie et al., "Entrepreneurship Training, Job Creation and Youth Empowerment," *Asian Social Science* 19, no. 6 (November 20, 2023): 111, <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v19n6p111>.

⁶ Enke. "Annual Impact Report 2024/25," *Johannesburg: Enke Make Your Mark*. (2025): <https://www.enke.co.za/impact-report-2025>.

⁷ Mamotshabo Johanna Boloka and Velile Jiyane, "Information Provision to Rural Dwellers: The Case of a Rural Village in Limpopo Province, South Africa," *Innovation: Journal of Appropriate Librarianship and Information Work in Southern Africa* 2022, no. 65 (2022): 44–62.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurship education is gaining significant attention as a cornerstone for modern education systems globally, especially in regions grappling with high unemployment rates and unstable socioeconomic conditions.⁸ As South Africa faces a rapidly rising youth unemployment rate, equipping young people with entrepreneurial skills serves as a practical strategy to empower them to start businesses and drive economic growth. Blouberg Local Municipality faces limited resources and economic opportunities, positioning the region to benefit significantly from entrepreneurship education programmes and opportunities.⁹

Recent research highlights the growing global recognition of entrepreneurship education as a key strategy to empower young people to engage in the formal economy and address the socioeconomic challenges they face, especially unemployment.¹⁰ This paper aimed to contribute meaningfully to ongoing discussions on designing and delivering entrepreneurship education in ways that are contextually relevant, responsive to youth needs, and capable of producing tangible economic and social outcomes. The review is structured in five key themes: the importance of entrepreneurship education, the influence of culture and contextual factors, learner perspectives on skills development, challenges in implementation, and the role of schools in fostering an entrepreneurship mindset in learners. The goal of the review is to provide a nuanced understanding of how entrepreneurship education can be optimised to meet the needs of learners in the Blouberg Local Municipality.

The importance of Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education is becoming an increasingly vital strategy for tackling socioeconomic challenges, particularly in economically disadvantaged regions. According to Ncube and Matlala, entrepreneurship education goes beyond teaching people business skills but extends to fostering creativity, innovation, problem-solving, and resilience, which are the key tools to navigate the complexities of the modern economy.¹¹ Entrepreneurship education is a pathway to economic emancipation and self-reliance due to pervasive unemployment and poverty rates in the country.¹² Therefore, equipping learners or young people with entrepreneurial skills can serve as a strategy to foster creativity, innovation, and alleviate poverty and joblessness, especially in areas such as Blouberg Local Municipality, where employment opportunities are scarce.

The integration of entrepreneurship education into school curricula has been proven to have long-term benefits for the learners.¹³ Baggen et al. revealed that learners who participate in entrepreneurial education programmes are more likely to develop an entrepreneurial mindset characterised by creativity, innovation, problem-solving, and resilience compared to their counterparts who never participated in the programmes.¹⁴ This is because the skills learners acquire through these programmes are not only valuable for launching a business but also essential for overcoming challenges and succeeding in diverse career paths. Despite the potential of entrepreneurship education, its effectiveness depends on how it is implemented, focusing on its viability and impact. According to Bell

⁸ Mitali Sharad Gupta et al., “The Impact of Educational Diversity on Today’s Youth: Shaping Future Leaders and Innovators,” *Future* 5, no. 10 (2025).

⁹ Syndey Elias Seanego, “The Sustainability of Local Economic Development Projects in Kgwale Village in the Blouberg Municipality, Limpopo Province” (2013).

¹⁰ A Cyril Awogbenle and K Chijioko Iwuamadi, “Youth Unemployment: Entrepreneurship Development Programme as an Intervention Mechanism,” *African Journal of Business Management* 4, no. 6 (2010): 831.

¹¹ Thandukwazi Richman Ncube and Mpubane Emanuel Matlala, “The Impact of Entrepreneurship Education on the Entrepreneurial Competences of Students in TVET Colleges in South Africa,” in *Managing Higher Education and Enterprises in Developing Countries Beyond COVID-19: Proceedings of the 9th International Conference on Business and Management Dynamics*, 2024, 197–219.

¹² Oluwatoyin Ayodele Ajani, “Entrepreneurship Education in South Africa’s Higher Education Institutions: In Pursuit of Promoting Self-Reliance in Students,” *International Journal of Management, Knowledge and Learning* 13 (March 23, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.53615/2232-5697.13.29-41>.

¹³ Natalie Brüne and Eva Lutz, “The Effect of Entrepreneurship Education in Schools on Entrepreneurial Outcomes: A Systematic Review,” *Management Review Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (May 15, 2020): 275–305, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-019-00168-3>.

¹⁴ Yvette Baggen, Thomas Lans, and Judith Gulikers, “Making Entrepreneurship Education Available to All: Design Principles for Educational Programs Stimulating an Entrepreneurial Mindset,” *Entrepreneurship Education and Pedagogy* 5, no. 3 (July 26, 2022): 347–74, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2515127420988517>.

and Bell, it is crucial to align entrepreneurship education with the needs and realities facing learners to ensure that the education is relevant, practical, and impactful.¹⁵ Therefore, in areas such as Blouberg Local Municipality, this means that it is crucial for the programmes or organisations offering entrepreneurial education to design programmes that are contextually relevant to address the specific needs of learners, such as limited resources within such an area. When learners address problems that reflect their real-life experiences, they develop solutions that are both logically sound and practically applicable. This relevance boosts engagement, deepens understanding, and equips them with adaptable skills for real-world challenges. The relevance and soundness of the programmes ensure that entrepreneurship education is both grounded in theory and practically relevant to learners' lived experiences and future opportunities. Therefore, this education can serve as a catalyst for youth empowerment and community development in areas where economic opportunities are limited, such as the Blouberg Local Municipality. However, while entrepreneurship education is important in the development of young people in diverse communities, its success often depends on cultural and contextual factors.

Cultural and Contextual Factors influencing Learner Perspectives

Cultural and contextual factors play a vital role in influencing and shaping the learner's or individual's perspective on entrepreneurship.¹⁶ In South Africa, where traditional employment or career paths are given priority, entrepreneurship is often given less attention as an undesirable option. Pervez et al. revealed that in many rural areas, learners often face familial pressure to pursue conventional career paths, such as teaching or nursing, which are perceived as more stable and prestigious.¹⁷ As a result, entrepreneurship is frequently seen as a last resort, a survivalist option rather than a desirable or aspirational pathway. This cultural bias is rooted in historical practices due to the then education system enforcing traditional employment that pushed individuals, especially young people, toward conventional job roles, like office work, teaching, or nursing, rather than encouraging them to pursue alternative paths like entrepreneurship or creative industries. This affected most black people, serving as a hindrance for the development of an entrepreneurship mindset and culture among learners and young people, especially when entrepreneurship is not viewed as a viable and reputable career path.¹⁸

According to Baloyi, learners who come from a rural area may also be influenced by the socio-economic conditions of the area they live in.¹⁹ This may be due to the challenges prevalent in rural areas, such as financial constraints and limited access to resources that limit their ability to pursue business ventures. Abisoye and Akerele assert that rural areas often face such challenges that hinder learners from applying their knowledge and skills to real-world opportunities.²⁰ Access to funding, mentorship, and business networks is often limited, making it difficult for learners to translate their skills into real-world opportunities. Therefore, addressing these barriers requires a collaborative approach involving schools, government, and the private sector to provide learners with the resources and support they need.

Despite these challenges, there are opportunities to leverage cultural and contextual factors to promote entrepreneurship education. For example, schools in Blouberg Local Municipality can draw on local traditions of innovation and resourcefulness, such as sustainable farming, craftsmanship, and communal enterprise, to make entrepreneurship education more relatable and inspiring for learners. By

¹⁵ Robin Bell and Heather Bell, "Applying Educational Theory to Develop a Framework to Support the Delivery of Experiential Entrepreneurship Education," *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development* 27, no. 6 (October 2, 2020): 987–1004, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSBED-01-2020-0012>.

¹⁶ Md Mehedi Hasan Emon and Tahsina Khan, "The Impact of Cultural Norms on Sustainable Entrepreneurship Practices in SMEs of Bangladesh," *Indonesian Journal of Innovation and Applied Sciences (IJIAS)* 3, no. 3 (October 30, 2023): 201–9, <https://doi.org/10.47540/ijias.v3i3.962>.

¹⁷ A K M Pervez et al., "Students' Interest in Agribusiness as a Future Career," *Agricultural and Resource Economics: International Scientific E-Journal* 10, no. 2 (2024): 271–89.

¹⁸ Marina Solesvik, Paul Westhead, and Harry Matlay, "Cultural Factors and Entrepreneurial Intention: The Role of Entrepreneurship Education," *Education+ Training* 56, no. 8/9 (2014): 680–96.

¹⁹ Mapula Emily Baloyi, "An Analysis of How Socioeconomic Issues Affect the Performance of Learners in Rural Schools: A Case Study of Ga-Sekgopo High Schools Grade 8-10 Learners" (University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College, 2020).

²⁰ Ajayi Abisoye and Joshua Idowu Akerele, "A Scalable and Impactful Model for Harnessing Artificial Intelligence and Cybersecurity to Revolutionize Workforce Development and Empower Marginalized Youth," *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation* 3, no. 1 (2022): 714–19.

rooting learning in familiar practices, learners gain confidence to innovate and see entrepreneurship as a viable, even aspirational, path. Therefore, by highlighting the successes of local entrepreneurs and integrating local examples into the curriculum, schools can make entrepreneurship education more relevant and engaging for learners.²¹ This approach not only addresses cultural biases but also reinforces the value of entrepreneurship as a means of community development.

Learner Perspective on Entrepreneurship Skills Development

Most learners in South Africa have a general positive outlook towards entrepreneurship education as they recognise its potential to equip them with practical skills that will enable them to venture into entrepreneurship.²² However, Weng et al. also found that the entrepreneurship education curriculum is too theoretical and does not expose learners to practical opportunities that prepare them to face and overcome real-world entrepreneurship challenges.²³ Therefore, this highlights a persistent gap between theory and practice, as learners struggle to connect the theoretical knowledge from entrepreneurship education with their daily experiences. This disconnect reveals a mismatch between the curriculum and the realities learners face, as they are often taught theory in isolation from practical, real-world application. This disconnect often leads to disengagement and a lack of interest in entrepreneurship as a career among young people. According to Boldureanu et al., learners who are exposed to practical opportunities, such as meeting successful entrepreneurs, are more likely to view entrepreneurship as a viable career path.²⁴ Amofah and Saladrignes also highlight the significance of role models in shaping learners' attitudes towards entrepreneurship.²⁵ In this view, when learners meet successful entrepreneurs, they aspire to be like them and develop an interest in venturing into entrepreneurship. Therefore, in areas such as Blouberg Local Municipality, where entrepreneurship is not viewed as a viable career path than traditional employment, linking learners with successful entrepreneurs who serve as models may play a significant role in shaping their attitudes towards entrepreneurship.

Challenges in Entrepreneurship Education

Despite the growing emphasis on the significance of entrepreneurship education, some challenges hinder its effectiveness. According to Mico and Cungu, one of the major challenges facing entrepreneurship education is a lack of adequately trained educators.²⁶ This is the case as many educators in South African schools did not go through adequate and practical training necessary to facilitate effective entrepreneurship education in schools. According to Hameed and Irfan, socioeconomic conditions also pose significant challenges for learners regardless of their interest in pursuing entrepreneurship as a career path.²⁷ Entrepreneurship education in schools still faces several challenges, including its integration into the school curriculum, despite its significance in the modern economy.²⁸ These programmes aim to address the educational gap by introducing entrepreneurship principles in schools. Their goal is to equip learners with the knowledge and skills necessary to create economic opportunities for themselves and to contribute to the modern economy. This strategy seeks to address high rates of unemployment, poverty, and other socioeconomic issues affecting diverse communities in South

²¹ Samsudin Samsudin, "Entrepreneurship Education Assistance Based on Local Wisdom to Increase Business Interest Among High School Students," *Journal of Community Engagement in Economics* 2, no. 1 (2024): 46–56.

²² Chux Gervase Iwu et al., "Entrepreneurship Education, Curriculum and Lecturer-Competency as Antecedents of Student Entrepreneurial Intention," *The International Journal of Management Education* 19, no. 1 (March 2021): 100295, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2019.03.007>.

²³ Xiaojing Weng et al., "Satisfying Higher Education Students' Psychological Needs through Case-Based Instruction for Fostering Creativity and Entrepreneurship," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 12, no. 1 (2025): 1–12.

²⁴ Gabriela Boldureanu et al., "Entrepreneurship Education through Successful Entrepreneurial Models in Higher Education Institutions," *Sustainability* 12, no. 3 (2020): 1267.

²⁵ Kwaku Amofah and Ramon Saladrignes, "Impact of Attitude towards Entrepreneurship Education and Role Models on Entrepreneurial Intention," *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship* 11, no. 1 (December 19, 2022): 36, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13731-022-00197-5>.

²⁶ Heliona Miço and Jonida Cungu, "Entrepreneurship Education, a Challenging Learning Process towards Entrepreneurial Competence in Education," *Administrative Sciences* 13, no. 1 (2023): 22.

²⁷ Irfan Hameed and Zainab Irfan, "Entrepreneurship Education: A Review of Challenges, Characteristics and Opportunities," *Entrepreneurship Education* 2, no. 3–4 (December 4, 2019): 135–48, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41959-019-00018-z>.

²⁸ Michael W Meyer and Don Norman, "Changing Design Education for the 21st Century," *She Ji: The Journal of Design, Economics, and Innovation* 6, no. 1 (2020): 13–49.

Africa.²⁹ According to Nwosu et al., fostering an entrepreneurial mindset among learners and promoting a culture of entrepreneurship within schools and communities is crucial.³⁰ This approach increases the number of quality entrepreneurs, empowers individuals, enhances community welfare, cultivates positive attitudes and behaviours, and promotes entrepreneurship awareness with a strong entrepreneurial orientation. In most rural areas, learners experience limited access to funding, mentorship, and business networks, making it difficult for them to access the knowledge and skills in real-world opportunities.³¹ Therefore, addressing such barriers requires collaborative efforts from the schools, government, and private sector to provide learners with resources, support, and meaningful opportunities for them to integrate theory into practice.

According to Scott et al. lack of alignment between entrepreneurship education and cultural values also presents challenges for learners.³² In South Africa, traditional career paths such as medicine, law, and engineering are often given priority without taking into consideration that one can become an entrepreneur in medicine, law, or engineering. Ansell et al. indicated that another challenge facing learners is the pressure from their families expecting them to pursue more conventional careers, which will mostly expose them to unemployment in this modern economy.³³ Similarly, these family expectations may also discourage learners from exploring the entrepreneurship career path. This means that families or parents and caregivers need to be exposed to the significance of entrepreneurship education for learners in this modern economy to promote the value of entrepreneurship and its potential to create economic opportunities for learners, families, and communities at large. This challenge is also prevalent in Blouberg Local Municipality, where the study is conducted, as the area is under-resourced. This makes entrepreneurship education a superficial addition to the curriculum rather than a transformative learning experience due to a lack of skilled educators to deliver entrepreneurship education to learners.³⁴

The Role of Schools in fostering the Entrepreneurship Mindset

Schools play a central role in shaping learners' attitudes and outlooks toward entrepreneurship. Porfirio et al., schools that integrate theoretical learning with practical exposure to real-world problems, requiring learners to apply their problem-solving skills in entrepreneurial programmes, succeed in promoting an entrepreneurial mindset among students.³⁵ Rodriguez and Lieber note that schools that partner with local businesses and organisations to offer learners practical entrepreneurial skills and experiences report high levels of student engagement and interest in entrepreneurship.³⁶ In this case, these partners go beyond providing entrepreneurship education, also creating networking opportunities for students.

Hsieh and Maritz, integrating technology into entrepreneurship education could be beneficial for schools to enhance learning outcomes.³⁷ This is the case as technology has been globally viewed as one of the tools that can allow learners to connect with global markets using digital tools and online platforms. However, in areas where access to technology is often limited, introducing digital literacy

²⁹ Andrew Enaifoghe and Makhosazana Faith Vezi-Magigaba, "Re-Thinking the Sustainability of Local Economic Development through Entrepreneurship in South Africa," *Expert Journal of Business and Management* 10, no. 2 (2022).

³⁰ Lilian Ifunanya Nwosu et al., "Determining the Roles of School Management Teams in Fostering Entrepreneurship among Learners," *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research* 22, no. 9 (2023): 478–500.

³¹ Carolyn J Woodley et al., "Technology Mentors: Enablers of ICT Uptake in Australian Small Business," *Education+ Training* 57, no. 6 (2015): 658–72.

³² Jonathan Matthew Scott et al., "Constructive (Mis) Alignment in Team-Based Experiential Entrepreneurship Education," *Education+ Training* 62, no. 2 (2020): 184–98.

³³ Nicola Ansell et al., "Educating 'Surplus Population': Uses and Abuses of Aspiration in the Rural Peripheries of a Globalising World," *Fennia - International Journal of Geography* 198, no. 1–2 (December 4, 2020): 17–38, <https://doi.org/10.11143/fennia.90756>.

³⁴ Paul Agu Igwe et al., "Pedagogical Approaches to Responsible Entrepreneurship Education," *Sustainability* 14, no. 15 (2022): 9440.

³⁵ José António Porfirio et al., "Fostering Entrepreneurship Intentions: The Role of Entrepreneurship Education," *Journal of Small Business Strategy* 32, no. 1 (2022): 1–10.

³⁶ Sophia Rodriguez and Hannah Lieber, "Relationship between Entrepreneurship Education, Entrepreneurial Mindset, and Career Readiness in Secondary Students," *Journal of Experiential Education* 43, no. 3 (2020): 277–98.

³⁷ Hsin-Ming Hsieh and Alex Maritz, "A Study of the Impact of the Application of Digital Technology-Integrated Entrepreneurship Education on Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial Performance," *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (IJET)* 18, no. 20 (October 17, 2023): 126–36, <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijet.v18i20.43907>.

programmes could enhance the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education significantly. Ferrari et al. the digital divide remains a significant barrier, especially in rural areas where access to resources and technology is limited.³⁸ This means the schools have a major role to play in creating supportive environments that encourage creativity, innovation, risk-taking taking and resilience. According to Baggen et al., learners are more likely to entrepreneurial mindset when they feel supported and encouraged to explore new opportunities and ideas.³⁹ However, this needs a shift from traditional or normal school culture, where failure is viewed as a learning opportunity rather than a setback. Creating such an environment can empower learners to own their learning journey and pursue entrepreneurial ventures with confidence.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper was guided by the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), developed by Icek Ajzen in 1985. This theory suggests that behavioural intentions predict one's behaviour, which depends on three key factors: attitude towards the behaviour (positive or negative), subjective norms (perceived social pressures), and perceived behavioural control (perceived ease or difficulty of performing the behaviour).⁴⁰ The theory assumes that favourable attitudes, strong perceived control, and greater social pressure lead to strong intentions, which subsequently increase the likelihood of performing the intended behaviour. Therefore, it provides a framework for understanding how individuals form intentions to engage in specific behaviours, such as entrepreneurship, in the context of this study. In this context, attitudes reflect learners' personal evaluations of entrepreneurship (positive or negative). It focuses on whether these learners perceive entrepreneurship as desirable, rewarding, or risky. Subjective norms refer to perceived pressures from peers, family, or the wider community that influence whether learners feel encouraged or discouraged to pursue entrepreneurship. Perceived behavioural control reflects the confidence learners have in their ability to start and manage a business successfully.⁴¹ However, perceived behavioural control is shaped by learners' access to resources, skills, and support systems available to them. In this context, the TPB is relevant as a framework to analyse how these psychosocial factors interact to influence learners' intentions to engage in entrepreneurship. This theory further enables researchers to explore learners' beliefs and perceptions of entrepreneurship, shaped by education, experiences, and social influence, which affect their intentions to consider entrepreneurship as a viable career option. It offers insights into how entrepreneurship programmes can be tailored to strengthen positive intentions and actual entrepreneurial behaviour among learners.

METHODOLOGY

Study area

The study was conducted in the rural-based Blouberg Local Municipality in the Senwabarwana area of Capricorn District in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. The Capricorn District consists of four local municipalities: Blouberg Local, Lepelle-Nkumpi, Molemole, and Polokwane. Blouberg Local Municipality has a population of approximately 185,518.⁴² The municipality is demarcated into 22 wards, with 186 primary schools and 84 secondary schools, and six circuit offices. The municipality covers an area of about 9,248.44 km². Four schools under the Bahananwa Circuit were selected for inclusion in the study due to the availability of the Enke Make Your Mark Programme at the schools.

Research Approach

³⁸ Alessio Ferrari et al., "Drivers, Barriers and Impacts of Digitalisation in Rural Areas from the Viewpoint of Experts," *Information and Software Technology* 145 (May 2022): 106816, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.infsof.2021.106816>.

³⁹ Baggen, Lans, and Gulikers, "Making Entrepreneurship Education Available to All: Design Principles for Educational Programs Stimulating an Entrepreneurial Mindset."

⁴⁰ Teemu Kautonen, Marco van Gelderen, and Matthias Fink, "Robustness of the Theory of Planned Behavior in Predicting Entrepreneurial Intentions and Actions," *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* 39, no. 3 (May 1, 2015): 655–74, <https://doi.org/10.1111/etap.12056>.

⁴¹ Kautonen, van Gelderen, and Fink, "Robustness of the Theory of Planned Behavior in Predicting Entrepreneurial Intentions and Actions."

⁴² Statistics South Africa, "Youth Unemployment Rate in South Africa from 1991 to 2024."

The study used a qualitative approach to understand learners' perspectives on the entrepreneurship skills development programme they participate in. This approach applies phenomenology to gain insights into the phenomenon being studied. Data was collected from learners at four selected schools in Blouberg Local Municipality, Limpopo Province, South Africa, who took part in the Youth Development Programme (YDP) on entrepreneurship. The study employed semi-structured interviews as a data collection method to engage with the learners. An exploratory research design was used. Semi-structured interviews were used to gather information from the selected participants. Participants were chosen through purposive sampling based on the researchers' knowledge of learners who participated in the Enke Make Your Mark Programme at selected schools. Written informed consent was obtained from the learners and from parents for minors (six). A total of ten learners participated, with interviews lasting between 25-45 minutes.

Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study was a narrative analysis, as this analysis focuses on the structure, content, and meaning of the interview responses. Narrative analysis offers powerful value in qualitative research because it uncovers how individuals make sense of their experiences through storytelling.⁴³In this study, the researcher was able to explore how learners interpret entrepreneurship education concerning their personal and cultural contexts, making the research findings richer and more grounded in real-world meaning. First, the researcher analysed the structure of the responses as learners responded to the interview questions, then examined the content for recurring themes, and then interpreted the meaning of the narratives concerning the research questions.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The introduction of YDPs promoting entrepreneurship among young people has been viewed as a great strategy for developing young people. This has brought with it the interest of young people to consider entrepreneurship as a career option upon completion of high school. Such programs create awareness among young people that formal employment is not the only option available, and with changing economies and saturated job markets, entrepreneurship serves as a better option or alternative to address such issues.

The Enke Make Your Mark Programme, a non-formal entrepreneurial education initiative, strives to equip learners with an entrepreneurial mindset and prepares them to participate in the mainstream economy. The following is the biographical data of the participants:

Table 1: Biographical information of the participants

	Age	Gender Female (F)/Male (M)	School
P1	16	F	Mphengwa Secondary School (Mp SS)
P2	18	F	Mphengwa Secondary School (Mp SS)
P3	17	M	Mphengwa Secondary School (Mp SS)
P4	17	M	Kgalushi High School (KHS)
P5	14	F	Kgalushi High School (KHS)
P6	16	M	Kgalushi High School (KHS)
P7	17	M	Mabea High School (MHS)
P8	17	F	Mabea High School (MHS)
P9	15	M	Ntsose Secondary School (NSS)
P10	16	F	Ntsose Secondary School (NSS)

The following themes emerged from interviews with learners:

Theme 1: Skills acquisition and utilisation

⁴³ Ann Griffin and Vanessa May, "Narrative Analysis and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis," *Researching Society and Culture* 3 (2012): 441–58.

Understanding the role of the YDP in equipping learners with entrepreneurial skills and the capacity to utilise the requirements to understand the goals of the programme. This provides a nuanced understanding of the learner’s perspective and experiences in the YDP promoting youth entrepreneurship. While learners revealed that they gained significant skills in the YDP on entrepreneurship, they also narrated their inability to translate the knowledge and skills into practical work due to a lack of real-world experience. The following are the assertions by learners:

“Before attending the event, I always thought business was a waste of time. I never saw myself starting one, but I thought otherwise after joining the youth development organisation. It could be a second option if the career plan fails, or it could be a side job. So that’s how my perspective changed.” (P1, F, 16, Mp SS)

Yes, because after joining this programme, I realised I am good at gardening. Enke improved my skills and thoughts/mindset of business.” (P6, M, 16, KHS)

The above findings reveal that the programme enabled learners to develop an entrepreneurial mindset while also equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to aspire to venture into businesses. However, their aspiration positions entrepreneurship as a second option or even a last resort should their esteemed aspiration paths fail. According to Lorenz, effective YDPs can equip young people with the knowledge and skills needed for them to take charge of their lives and contribute to the development and aspire for themselves and their communities.⁴⁴ In the participants' assertion, the Enke programme enabled them to gain critical skills such as gardening, as indicated by participant 6. This highlights the critical role played by the YDP in the lives of young people in diverse communities. Participant 8 adds:

“Yes, because as I explained at our school, we started a gardening project, which was easy to implement, so this created that urge inside me to start my own gardening business at home because I knew it was simple to start it, and it needed a minimal amount of money because it was already there at school. The workshop I attended was not for entrepreneurship but was about the project we were implementing at school and in our community. From them, I learned that I could seek equipment and capital to start my business since I did not know there were those kinds of things that a person or a business could help me with” (P8, F, 17, MHS)

The findings indicate that learners gained valuable skills related to understanding the role of YPD in promoting entrepreneurship among young people in South African schools. While Ogamba highlights the significance of YDPs in the lives of young people, empowering them to take charge of their lives, the programmes promoting youth entrepreneurship strictly focus on youth participation in economic opportunities to foster economic growth and social stability.⁴⁵ Learners' assertions affirm that they developed a significant entrepreneurial mindset through their participation in the YDP. The programme enabled some learners to hone their skills in gardening, illustrating the programme's critical role in the lives of young people. This underscores the importance of an entrepreneurial focus on youth entrepreneurship, as different YDPs address various aspects of youth development beyond financial growth, and where financial development is included in the programme, it is rarely emphasised.⁴⁶ This, therefore, highlights the importance and urgency of such programmes. It also points to the need for the holistic development of young people, ensuring that the programme empowers them while also providing access to economic opportunities. Aljuwaiber notes that young people often face challenges in venturing into entrepreneurship due to factors such as limited access to resources, lack of awareness,

⁴⁴ Usue Lorenz, “Enhancing Young People’s Individual Skills and Knowledge. The Case of Vulnerable Youth Participating in Co-Creative Policymaking in Housing in the City of Barakaldo,” *Frontiers in Sustainable Cities* 5 (March 8, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.3389/frsc.2023.1098313>.

⁴⁵ Ikedinachi K Ogamba, “Millennials Empowerment: Youth Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Development,” *World Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management and Sustainable Development* 15, no. 3 (2019): 267–78.

⁴⁶ John E. Lindsay et al., “Integrating Positive Youth Development: Insights From International Youth Development Programming,” *Journal of Youth Development* 16, no. 2–3 (July 14, 2021): 55–73, <https://doi.org/10.5195/jyd.2021.1037>.

and cultural attitudes toward entrepreneurship.⁴⁷ These factors often restrict young people's potential and courage to pursue entrepreneurship, as the barriers create an environment that is not conducive to entrepreneurial endeavours.

Theme 2: Lack of practical exposure

The learner's ability to translate the acquired skills in business ventures is prohibited by the lack of practical activities in the program. Learners affirmed that, regardless of gaining significant skills, the program failed to link them with role models and real-world opportunities. This is seen in the assertions from learners:

“No, I am not passionate about starting my restaurant, but it could be one day. I am still thinking about the good and bad of it. These people do not tell us all the information, so it is difficult to think of starting my own business.” (P1, F, 16, Mp SS)

“No, I do not think business is my thing or something I could start.” (P5, F, 14, KHS)

“No, because I cannot start my own business, and I don't have any money to start one.” (P10, F, 16, NSS)

The participants indicated that a lack of exposure to practical experience posed a barrier, despite the benefits they gained through participation in the programme. Additionally, it was noted that a lack of proper information regarding entrepreneurship prevents learners from developing an interest in this field. Therefore, this highlights a gap in the program, which may also be seen as one of the hindrances preventing the effectiveness of the program. This may be seen in the ability of the learners to start up business ventures even after completion of the program. The lack of practical exposure also affects learners' ability to develop an interest in entrepreneurship, as participant 1 narrates... *“No, I am not passionate about starting my restaurant, but it could be one day.* This may be due to a lack of exposure to practical activities or successful businesses in their areas where they can draw motivation from, nurture their ideas, and translate them into an entrepreneurial venture, no interest. The findings further echo similar sentiments to those of Weis and Nikolić, who assert that the lack of access to any form of resources presents challenges for potential entrepreneurs in kickstarting their businesses.⁴⁸ The narratives from the learners in this study affirm the findings from Fernandes et al. that YDPs need to utilise internal and external developmental assets to access the necessary resources required for young people to reach their full potential.⁴⁹ This is crucial, as youth development is a multifaceted approach that necessitates organisations and individuals interested in developing young people to create supportive spaces for them. However, the development process is not without its challenges.

Theme 3: Mentorship and support

The findings from the study revealed that learners often fail to translate the knowledge gained from the program due to a lack of sufficient support and mentorship in the program. This is prevalent in the narrations from learners that they are unable to utilise the skills gained from the YDP due to a lack of sufficient support and mentorship that could enable them to develop and refine their business ideas and turn them into business ventures. This is further asserted in the quotations from learners stating:

“I think they can increase facilitators and support systems. This will help us understand the program better and benefit more. I will increase the teaching and supporting system” (P 4, M, 17, KHS)

⁴⁷ Abobakr Aljuwaiber, “Entrepreneurship Research in the Middle East and North Africa: Trends, Challenges, and Sustainability Issues,” *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies* 13, no. 3 (July 17, 2021): 380–426, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JEEE-08-2019-0123>.

⁴⁸ Lidija Weis and Gordana Nikolić, “Discussing the Role of Innovation in Green Entrepreneurship and Development,” in *Entrepreneurship and Development for a Green Resilient Economy* (Emerald Publishing Limited, 2024), 1–21.

⁴⁹ Danielle Fernandes et al., “Global Overview of Youth Development: Comparison of the 5 Cs and Developmental Assets Across Six Countries,” *Frontiers in Psychology* 12 (July 23, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.685316>.

The learner revealed a lack of sufficient support and mentorship in the program. This presents challenges for learners to translate the knowledge gained into tangible business ventures. The findings are in line with the assertions by Kacou et al. that a lack of capacity building within programmes often leads to ineffectiveness of the development programmes.⁵⁰ This is evident in the scholar's assertion of a need to provide capacity building and support for the programmes to be effective in developing young people.⁵¹ In this view, lack of capacity building and support in the program prevents learners from effectively starting their entrepreneurship journey, utilising the knowledge and skills learned through their participation in the program. This highlights the significance of the provision of support systems in YDPs to ensure continuous development and mentorship as young people transition between different stages of life, while also ensuring they are supported in activities they embark on, such as entrepreneurship.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends the inclusion of hands-on activities that bridge the gap between theory and practice, such as pop-up markets and mock business pitches. The study also suggests pairing learners with local entrepreneurs to provide guidance, mentorship and emotional support. Lastly, the study recommends the use of training materials that reflect the socio-economic conditions of the realities of rural communities where learners are based, including a low capital business model for relevance and practicability.

CONCLUSION

Youth development through entrepreneurship skills development has been proposed as a solution for reducing youth unemployment and joblessness among young people in various communities in South Africa and other developing countries. This has led to initiatives by government agencies and private organisations aimed at equipping young people with the necessary knowledge and skills to foster an entrepreneurial mindset and successfully launch their businesses. Such initiatives require proper planning and access to resources to ensure the comprehensive development of young people and the effectiveness of these programmes. The significance of these programmes is reflected in the stories of the participants in this empirical study, where they describe the skills they gained from their involvement. The participants' responses indicated a need for the programme to address the challenges that prevent learners from fully translating the acquired knowledge and skills into business ventures. This is evident in the responses from learners who face inadequate support and mentorship, along with a lack of practical exposure to the programme. This presents an opportunity to investigate the challenges and shortcomings of the Enke Make Your Mark Programme in equipping learners with entrepreneurial skills, as well as other Youth Development Programmes (YDPs) aimed at promoting youth entrepreneurship. The narrative in this study facilitates discussion on the role of YDPs in promoting entrepreneurship among young people and the importance of entrepreneurship education in secondary schools, particularly in rural communities. Consequently, this enables the researchers to conduct research that seeks to address the challenges faced by YDPs promoting entrepreneurship among young people in secondary schools.

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⁵⁰ Kablan P. Kacou, Lavagnon A. Ika, and Lauchlan T. Munro, "Fifty Years of Capacity Building: Taking Stock and Moving Research Forward ¹," *Public Administration and Development* 42, no. 4 (October 5, 2022): 215–32, <https://doi.org/10.1002/pad.1993>.

⁵¹ Andrew Simmons and Andree-Ann Simmons, "Capacity-Building at the International Level: Stories from the Field," in *Building Institutions for Resilience: Combatting Climate Change* (Springer, 2023), 115–66.

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