AUTHORS:
Dr C.G. America[1] (ID)
P. Mallon[1]

AFFILIATION:
[1]Curriculum Studies Department, Faculty of Education, Stellenbosch University

"CONNECTEDNESS" IN BUSINESS STUDIES PEDAGOGY: IS A TRANSITION YEAR ALLURING?

ABSTRACT

The continuously changing business world demands that students entering the world of work have an adaptable skill set. The acquisition of appropriate exit-level knowledge, skills and competencies also holds true for young school learners and early school leavers. At school level the engagement and connectedness with the outside world and the development of subject-specific practical competencies could be structured through an experiential education approach that will allow learners to become self-regulating and active in their learning. This kind of active learning could involve an education that also facilitates a "real-life" experience in the workplace. This article argues for a workplace-based learning approach for Business Studies teaching by reflecting on the "connectedness" dimension of the productive pedagogies framework. In doing so, the authors deliberate on a unique Irish model called the "transition year" (TY), its orientation of "real-life" learning, the background to the development of the TY, its implementation and its viability within a South African school context.

Keywords: *Experiential learning, Business Studies, enterprise education, entrepreneurship, productive pedagogies, connectedness, transition year, workplace-based learning.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Businesses are constantly exposed to changing environments and fast-paced technological advancement, which demand employees with an adaptable skill set. This ever-changing business environment has implications for promoting an education that is expected to be responsive to the needs of the country (Alexander & Khabanyane, 2013). The education system therefore has an impact on the acquisition of knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes on which future career choices are based (Birdthistle, Hynes, Flemming, 2007) as well as on the ability to perform optimally in this dynamic environment.

Business education specifically needs to continuously evolve to take into account the fundamental re-ordering of the way that businesses are structured and managed (Hytti & O'Gorman, 2004). However, there is still a limited

understanding of how best to achieve these objectives. Exit-level outcomes at the end of schooling do not necessarily prepare learners for entry-level skills needed for industry coupled with an "urgent need for tailor-made entrepreneurship training programme in South African secondary schools" with regard to entrepreneurial attitudes in particular (Steenekamp, Van der Merwe & Athayde, 2011:328). Horwitz (2013) argues that teacher commitment to entrepreneurship education is necessary, especially for topics such as business ventures, enterprise dynamics, financial literacy and hands-on planning skills, which are in turn a function of materials and resource availability.

Recent statistics in South Africa show that the unemployment rate was 27,7 per cent and the youth unemployment rate was 38,6 per cent at the end of the third quarter of 2017. This finding indicates that the majority of youths are unskilled (World Bank, 2018). In the late 1990s, the technical colleges in South Africa were restructured into the Technical and Vocational Training (TVET) colleges which are mostly known for its workplace-based learning where the apprenticeship-type training was broadened to include all business sectors (Van der Bijl & Taylor, 2018). The formation of the sector education and training authorities (SETA) as an imperative to redress the inequalities of the country's apartheid past, provided collaborative learnerships between employers and TVET colleges so as to integrate practice (on-the-job training) and theory (offered by TVET lecturers). However, the TVET colleges face challenging times as a result of a combination of factors; lack of demand for apprenticeships, the introduction of learnerships, the national certificate (vocational) (NCV) curriculum in 2007 and other structural changes (Van der Bijl & Taylor, 2018). The NCV were offered in 11 economic sectors ranging from engineering, business, information and communications technology, agriculture, tourism and hospitality. The decline in the workplace-based learning at TVET colleges is also because of the extent and quality in the learnerships that tended to be the responsibility of the employer. Furthermore, programmes are structured in such a way that the workplace-based component became optional, coupled with many lecturers who do not have any workplace experience (Van der Bijl & Taylor, 2018). The practical learning component is also a compulsory part of teacher education programmes at higher education institutions (see DHET, 2011), where student teachers do their practical teaching and learning at schools for a specific period(s) during their year(s) of study.

Experiential learning can expose young people to the world of work and help them to understand the importance of skills efficiency in contributing to building a strong economy (Jones & Iredale, 2010).The basic premise behind experiential learning is that "learning is a continuous process grounded in experience" (Kolb, 1984:41). In order to gain such experience(s), learners should engage with the community/business to learn from and experience the "real world" (Alexander & Khabanyane, 2013). Jones and Iredale further aver that employers should be encouraged to deepen their links to schools and universities in addressing the skills gap. However, unlike practical learning for the TVET colleges and teacher education that are part of an existing programme or qualification, the establishment of education-business networks with the intention to integrate more practically oriented teaching and learning is not common within the South African *school* context.

This conceptual paper explores the integration of an experiential action-learning orientation by using the productive pedagogies framework (PPF) within the context of Business Studies teaching and learning at school level. The PPF is a balanced theoretical framework that incorporates school organisational capacity, the pervasive practice of pedagogies and external support from various systemic levels to encourage a particular professional learning

community of teachers (Lingard, Hayes & Mills, 2003) as well as the impact on the learners. In reflecting on the PPF, and more particularly its "connectedness" dimension, the authors also deliberate on a unique Irish model of active "real-life" learning through the implementation of a "transition year".

> The Transition Year (TY) is an optional, one-year, stand-alone, full-time programme offered by schools in the Republic of Ireland. It is taken by 15- to 16-year-olds on completion of a three-year Junior Certificate (JC) programme and prior to a two-year Leaving Certificate (LC) programme. (Jeffers, 2010:469)

The aim of this paper is to add to the ongoing debate about the meaning, nature and purpose of an experiential action-learning component within a business-oriented curriculum by using connectedness as a theoretical lens. This paper focuses on the following question: How relevant could a TY as an experiential active-learning approach be within the South African school system? We argue that the TY could be a productive opportunity for young leaners to explore a yearlong real-life business experience within a structured school programme.

This paper is presented from the perspective of the two authors: one a South African and the other Irish. The latter completed his school and university education in Ireland and obtained his Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) at a university in South Africa with the Business Studies Teaching (BST) module as his specialisation subject. But he did not opt to do the TY during his own schooling in Ireland, an option that he estimates in retrospect he should have considered doing then. Throughout the yearlong PGCE course, he actively engaged in class discussions and brought his experiences of the workplace and education in Ireland into class discussions. The South African author has extensive experience as a Business Education lecturer and Business Studies teacher educator, witnessing and continuously reflecting on the pervasive inequality of the South African post-apartheid education system and making sense of alternatives to systemic gaps that hinder educational outcomes, from a schooling and teacher education perspective. It was the juxtaposition of the respective situations in Ireland and South Africa during these discussions that prompted the writing of this article. Whilst the two countries are diverse in terms of population, culture, education system and so forth, it is worth exploring this unique addition to the Irish schooling system, namely the TY, with reference to the South African context.

In this article we will focus on the following features. First, we make distinctions between terminology that is often conflated and used interchangeably in business education. Second, we provide an overview of BST and "connectedness" within the PPF. The third aspect focuses on the transition year programme (TYP) as part of Ireland's education system. This is followed by a discussion on the viability of the incorporation of an experiential learning component such as a TYP into the South African school context. We conclude with some summative comments.

2. CONFLATION OF TERMINOLOGY

There appears to be differences in terminology related to enterprise education and entrepreneurship education (Jones & Iredale, 2010). Whilst these terms are closely linked, their meanings are not the same but they are often used interchangeably and/or directed at a specific school or university context. The same conflation, albeit to a lesser extent, is evident in business education and business studies. The latter two concepts are also explained. Teasing out the differences and similarities between concepts helps to better understand them, but

more importantly it indicates how an experiential component resonates within the respective subjects (Jones & Iredale, 2010).

2.1 Enterprise education and entrepreneurship education

The focus on education-industry collaboration signals a change in the preparation for the world of work (Iredale, 2002). Enterprise education is geared towards this focus. The scope and practice of enterprise education should not be equated solely with business needs, as it is a broader, deeper and richer concept (Jones & Iredale, 2010). They argue that the different strands of pedagogy, entrepreneurship, citizenship and civic responsibility could form part of enterprise education. Enterprise education could be more multidisciplinary, where the pedagogy is not subject specific, but can be introduced and applied across the curriculum (Iredale, 2002). The pedagogical approach to enterprise education advocates actions, experiential learning styles and taking seriously the broad notions of citizenship, civic responsibilities and more importantly work-related learning. Enterprise education focuses on the development of transferable attributes, skills and behaviours to enable learners to act in innovative ways in a variety of contexts (Bridge, Hegarty & Porter, 2010).

Entrepreneurship education is concerned with promoting awareness of and a greater orientation towards setting up a new venture or business (Jones & Iredale, 2010). The World Economic Forum and the Global Agenda Council, which promotes entrepreneurship, recognise entrepreneurship education as a global concept (Arthur, Hisrich & Cabrera, 2012). The 2016/2017 report of the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) South Africa (SA) acknowledges the causal relationship between entrepreneurship development, employment and economic growth (Herrington, Kew & Mwanga, 2017). Table 1 illustrates the differences between enterprise education and entrepreneurship education.

Table 1:   Enterprise education and entrepreneurship education (Coiffait, Dawkins, Kirwan & Mann, 2012:9; Jones & Iredale, 2010:10)

Enterprise education	Entrepreneurship education
Holistic and broad	A clear, narrow and discrete area of focus
Multidisciplinary – a mindset – self-employment is only a small part	Education for self-employment and business
Broad work and life skills	Specific business and start-up skills
Focus on "soft" skills, behaviours, competencies	Focus on "hard" skills and knowledge
Emphasise personal, community, social impact	Emphasise economic impact and money
Emphasise collaboration	Emphasise competition
Younger learners	Older learners
A more complex story	A simple story
Few role models in the media	Media role models common

The pedagogical approach(es) of entrepreneurship and enterprise education are divergent. Entrepreneurship education normally (but not exclusively) uses traditional approaches to the teaching and learning of generating business ideas, business planning and the process of creating new ventures creation process, whereas enterprise education has an active-learning pedagogy (Jones & Iredale, 2006). Globally, school-level entrepreneurship education does

not function effectively and many entrepreneurial frameworks are weak (Herrington *et al.,* 2017). According to the GEM report, South Africa's low score for entrepreneurship education and training in primary and secondary schools is therefore not unusual. However, the greater concern is the decline in post-school entrepreneurship training since 2015 and a low propensity for entrepreneurial activity among the youth in South Africa (Herrington *et al.,* 2017:9).

2.2 Business education and business studies teaching

Business studies teaching normally takes place within the schooling system and initial teacher education institutions, with the focus on the teaching and learning of Business Studies at high school level. The disciplinary knowledge is mostly theoretical and deals with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that are critical for productive, ethical and responsible participation in the formal and informal business/economic sectors. The subject encompasses the business principles, theories and practices that underpin the development of entrepreneurial initiatives, sustainable enterprises and economic growth (see DBE, 2011). Business studies education also includes creating awareness and encouraging enterprising behaviour, skills and competency development. The responsibility of creating this kind of awareness normally rests on the teacher, who – with the support of the school – is critical in the development of learners' enterprise attributes (Leffler & Näsström, 2014; Matlay, 2011).

Business education is an overarching (international) term to refer to the teaching and learning of business, economics, finance and commerce-related subjects, more common (but not exclusive) in the higher education sector. McHann and Frost (2010) state that the purpose of business education is to prepare learners and professionals for successful performance in businesses. Business education refers to a broad field, which includes stand-alone subjects such as business management, marketing, economics and accounting. Sub-learning areas, for example, enterprise education and entrepreneurship education may be found within these subjects.

The terms enterprise education and business education are not commonly used in the South African school policy documents and the school environment. Economic and Management Sciences is the subject in the senior phase (Grades 7 to 9) that deals with introductory content for economic literacy, entrepreneurship and financial literacy (see DBE, 2011a). Within the school FET phase (Grades 10–12), Business Studies is the most relevant subject to foster entrepreneurship *and* enterprise education in South African secondary schools. However, Meintjes, Henrico and Kroon (2015:9) suggest that the Business Studies curriculum should be adapted to cater for an emphasis on "active learning in a business-simulated set-up". Meintjes *et al.* (2015) argue that the lack of practical exposure to a real-world business context is problematic in the South African education system. Even at the higher education level there is a gap between knowledge and practice (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000), where graduates of leading business schools *know* a lot more than they are able to *do* (McHann & Frost, 2010:1). Similarly, business teachers frequently acknowledge the prominence of theory over application in their pedagogy (Wren, Halbesleben & Buckley, 2007). However, Hayes, Mills, Christie and Lingard (2006) argue that pedagogies that connect the classroom with reality enable and motivate learners to engage in the learning process more effectively.

3. TEACHING BUSINESS STUDIES AND "CONNECTEDNESS"

Productive pedagogies put forward a multidimensional model for teaching and learning, it consists of four dimensions, namely intellectual quality, connectedness, supportive classroom

environment and recognition of difference (Lingard, Hayes & Mills, 2003; Zyngier, 2007). There are twenty-one elements across the four dimensions (see Linguard *et al.,* 2003), but the PPF model does not suggest that each of the elements should be present in every assigned activity. The PPF can be used to provide a comprehensive conceptual plan for the construction and acquisition of knowledge and in developing effective teaching (Education Queensland, 2001; Hayes *et al.,* 2006; Lingard, 2003, 2007; Suhendra & Nurlaela, 2018). For the purposes of this article, our reflection was specifically based on the "Connectedness" dimension of the PPF, which was designed to ensure that learners engage with real, practical or hypothetical problems that connect to the world beyond the classroom (Education Queensland, 2001; Hayes *et al.,* 2006). The other three dimensions therefore fall outside the scope of this article.

The PPF underpins capacity-building and change (Lingard *et al.,* 2003). Connectedness to real-life experiences could present a glimpse into an alternative future for some learners. Table 2 shows the features of the connectedness dimension and poses some questions for reflection.

Table 2:   Productive pedagogies "Connectedness" dimension (adapted from Lingard *et al.,* 2003:410)

Features of connectedness	Questions for reflection
Background knowledge	Is there an attempt to connect with learners' background knowledge?
Connectedness to the world	Does the activity and/or assigned work have any resemblance to or connection with real-life contexts?
Problem-based curriculum	Is there a focus on identifying and solving intellectual and/or real-world problems?
Knowledge integration	Does the activity and/or assigned work range across diverse fields?

A "connected" education in this sense can be intellectually challenging (problem-based), relevant (resemblance to different contexts), cater for differences (diverse backgrounds), be socially supportive and it is an education in which knowledge is integrated (Lingard *et al.,* 2003; Zyngier, 2003).

A connection between theory and practice by means of workplace-learning has been promoted as a valuable pedagogical strategy since the early twentieth century by progressive educators (Zyngier, 2003), and also as an imperative for TVET colleges in South Africa. In enterprise education such a connection can be multi-disciplinary and where broad life skills can be learnt, for example to demonstrate responsibility, punctuality, a willingness to learn, positivity and ability to work in teams. Even more relevant to workplace-learning is entrepreneurship education and Business Studies where the theory learnt in class can be put into practice at the workplace. However, Apple (in Zyngier, 2003:43) warns that a curriculum that is superficially connected to the "world of work" is not enough. Instead, it should focus on improving quality in terms of creating opportunities to connect theory and practice, giving proper guidance, and improving communication and collaboration between schools and workplaces (Onstenk, 2013). In order to illustrate the "connectedness" of the PPF to the workplace-based learning it requires a pedagogy which:

a) illustrates a deliberate linking of skills, curriculum content and qualification pathways with the realities of the labour market. An economic system is inextricably connected to how an education system functions to meet the needs of the economy and society. If this connection is clearly made, we can begin to conceptualise what we might call a

"skills ecosystem" (Osman, 2013) and such outcomes can be stipulated in the curriculum. Connectedness to real-life job experience is not new, for example it has been a fundamental part of how TVET colleges used to integrate experiential learning. Connectedness to the real world included learning the skills, values and attitudes the employer espouses, while learners from diverse backgrounds, learning on-the-job through solving problems and understanding the relevance of integrating theory with practice. Unfortunately, with the current challenges in TVET colleges, the extent of the connectedness to the real-world is undermined by industry's (un)intentional scepticism of the NCV curriculum and breakdown in communication and collaboration (Buthelezi, 2018).

(b) The practical part must be integrated with the critical (problem-solving) and theoretical. Many young people leave school early, not simply because they need to find work, but because they fail to see the relevance of school to them and their wellbeing (Zyngier, 2008). Learners become disengaged, disconnected and bored. Darling-Hammond (1997:107) cautions that experiential learning aimed at genuine understanding begins with the disciplinary knowledge (subject content knowledge). The activities should therefore not be whimsical and detached from core subject matter, but rather should integrate the disciplines as factors that are alive and not inert. Learners can become curious, think critically, produce new ideas and perform better if they are exposed to deep understanding in worthwhile and meaningful contexts. This kind of learning develops collaborative learning (tacit as well as codified), subject knowledge and work process knowledge (Onstenk, 2013) which holds true for enterprise education, entrepreneurship education and Business studies at school and TVET levels.

(c) Access to workplace learning and experience can be integrated across various subjects and programmes, for example the skills and knowledge acquired can be transposed to further studies, self-employment, technical competency or self-development. These competencies can be specific to or integrated across enterprise education, entrepreneurship education or Business Studies pathways.

(d) Connectedness could be evident in the acknowledgement of learners' biographies, their previous knowledge and the connection to the world in which learners currently learn and play (Lingard & Mills, 2003). Zyngier (2008:1773) argues for a CORE pedagogy that envisages an engagement that *connects* learners to their cultural knowledge, one in which learners *own* what they learn, *responding* actively and consciously to their experiences, and lastly where learners are *empowered* with the belief that they can make a difference in their own lives.

The premise of the PPF is that authentic teaching and learning are fundamental. Apart from the construction of knowledge and the cognitive work of learning involved in disciplinary inquiry, the PPF also explores the relationship between other aspects of classroom practice and improved student performance outcomes from different groups (Lingard *et al.,* 2003). So these "other aspects" can be useful experiences and have personal value for learners beyond school. However, in a study by Lingard and Mills (2003) the research team was surprised how unconnected the pedagogies were (most of the time) to the learners' lives and communities. They discovered that the teachers' practice was decontextualised. Lingard (2007) refers to non-connectedness as a pedagogy that is actually indifferent to social justice, reminding us of Bourdieu's account of the reproduction of inequality and that middle-class learners possessing the requisite cultural capital are better positioned to handle this decontextualised school knowledge.

It is thus anticipated that learners will be motivated and engaged in the learning process by pedagogies that connect classroom learning with the real world. Hayes *et al.* (2006) argue that

this link is often absent when the curriculum is divorced from the lives of learners, thereby giving further credence to the notion that "connectedness" links new knowledge with the learners' background knowledge and the world outside of the classroom. By having an experiential action-learning approach the learners can integrate tacit skills and competencies (background knowledge), the actual real-life experience (practice) and what they have learnt (theory). Real-life experiences can allow learners to see beyond the classroom and conventional textbook knowledge to the way that businesses confront and solve problems (problem-based learning). The TY is an example of "real-life" experience as part of a structured school programme.

4. THE TRANSITION YEAR (TY) IN IRELAND

The TY is an optional, independent, full-time programme that runs over one school year in approximately 80% of secondary schools and is approved by the Irish Department of Education (Clerkin, 2013). The TY is undertaken after the Junior Certificate (JC) and just before a two-year Leaving Certificate (LC) programme (after Grade 10 in the South African school context). The LC is the equivalent of grades 11 and 12 in South Africa. Thus, the bulk of TY learners are between 15 and 16 years old (Jeffers, 2011). The aim of the TY is to develop important life skills in a real-world environment for a full year in the absence of examination pressure, as opposed to short (ad hoc) summer exchange programmes, as in the United States or programmes outside of formal school time (Clerkin, 2013).

The TY was first introduced as a pilot scheme in three schools in 1974 and has since, after rectifying some initial teething problems, become something unique to Ireland's education system (Clerkin, 2013). The uniqueness of the TY is that there are no other similar programmes comparable with it anywhere else in the world (Moynihan, 2015). In recent years research into the TY has gained momentum (Smyth, Byrne & Hannan, 2004; Jeffers, 2007, 2010, 2011; Clerkin, 2012, 2013), but has received little international attention (Clerkin, 2013).

Jeffers (2007) reminds us of the view of Richard Burke, the Minister for Education responsible for introducing the transition year in 1974:

> Because of the growing pressures on learners for high grades and competitive success, educational systems are becoming, increasingly, academic treadmills. Increasingly, too, because of these pressures the school is losing contact with life outside and the student has little or no opportunity "to stand and stare", to discover the kind of person he is, the kind of society he will be living in and, in due course, contributing to, its shortcomings and its good points. The suggestion was made that perhaps somewhere in the middle of the course we might stop the treadmill and release the learners from the educational pressures for one year so that they could devote time to personal development and community service (Burke, 1974, cited in Jeffers, 2007:1).

The "stopping of the treadmill" morphed into what is now known as the TY and what Burke envisaged as "a way of creating a more holistic schooling experience" (Clerkin, 2013:5). To have an experiential learning encounter devoted to personal and social development in the absence of examination pressure is generally viewed as a positive occurrence, equivalent to a "gap" year (Clerkin, 2012).

Clerkin (2013) avers that the extra year between two high-stakes examination cycles may be seen as providing an opportunity to explore familiar subjects in novel ways and to introduce learners to new areas of study. The Irish education system is highly focused and influenced by the outcomes of a "high-stakes" national examination that signals the end of schooling,

namely the LC. The TY is seen as part of a holistic approach to self-development and self-regulated learning as preparation for the LC. Moreover, schools have a significant amount of freedom to create their own TY curriculum (Jeffers 2011) and at some schools it is even compulsory.

Jeffers (2011) is of the view that the challenge for schools is to develop a comprehensive learning experience that enhances greater personal responsibility and maturity in learners for the sake of their own learning and decision-making. Jeffers (2011) further asserts that the TY can be beneficial for promoting active citizenship. The TY programme goals entail a heightened social awareness and competence with "education through experience of adult and working life" (Jeffers, 2011:3), and the structure of the TY is dependent on individual teachers' school leadership (Clerkin, 2013).

Schools have the liberty to decide which specific subjects to offer and which modules to develop, depending on the skills of the teaching staff, the resources of the school and the access it has to outside expertise in the community (Moynihan, 2015). Figure 1 illustrates the four key layers of the TY and the content of each specific layer.

Core Subjects Layer	Subject Sampling Layer
English Mathematics Irish Language Religious Studies Physical Education Information Technology	History Geography Science Subjects Business Studies Modern Languages Environmental Studies

TRANSITION YEAR

TY Specific Layer	Calendar Layer
Mental Health Matters Young Enterprise Psychology Social Innovation Photography Tourism Philosophy	Work Experience Foreign Travel Field Trips Guest Speakers Musical Theatre Drama Production Social Outreach Projects

Figure 1: Suggested areas of study for the Transition Year (Moynihan, 2015:203)

In terms of Business Studies as a subject at secondary level in Ireland, there is a belief that in order to teach resourcefulness in any enterprise, an alternative pedagogical strategy such as experiential learning as opposed to traditional teaching is necessary (Birdthistle *et al.,* 2007). For many learners, there is little formal interaction between their school life and the working world around them (Clerkin, 2013:6). During TY some schools may adopt "the mini-company programme", which creates learning situations for learners aimed at promoting the know-how

and core competencies to start their own business. The mini-company programme gives learners a platform to experience the highs and lows of a business enterprise by simulating a real-world experience, from setting up the business to its liquidation (Birdthistle *et al.,* 2007). Apart from the mini-company option, the attractive and central feature of the TY is the work experience component that entails performing tasks as directed under the supervision of their employer. A common arrangement is placing learners in two different workplace settings over the course of the school year (Clerkin, 2013).

Some of the positive findings of TY research suggests that learners who choose to extend their schooling by an extra year to do the TY are, on average, younger than those who do not, they have higher educational aspirations, and they tend to come from more socioeconomically advantaged backgrounds (Smyth *et al.,* 2004). Furthermore, learners who participate in a TY tend to have an advantage over peers in applying for high-demand options at post-secondary level (Millar & Kelly, 1999, in Clerkin, 2013). However, these advantages are more pronounced in schools where the TY is offered on a voluntary basis compared to the negative views expressed about the TY programme in schools where it is obligatory. A concern from the learners and parents of learners choosing the TY option is that they will become laid back or lazy and fall out of the habit of studying. This disposition could have detrimental effects in the preparation for the Leaving Certificate (Jeffers, 2007).

5.   CAN A TRANSITION YEAR WORK IN SOUTH AFRICA?

In the South African school system, there is no such thing as a structured year-long practical learning through a work experience programme such as the TY. Research has shown that the TY successes outweigh the challenges (Moynihan, 2015). For many learners to make sense of what they learn in the classroom, such a programme will be highly beneficial; they will understand and comprehend much faster and better by doing the work themselves (Clerkin, 2012; Moynihan, 2015). However, will such an option (for example a TY after grade 10) work in the South African school system? As explained earlier, there are obvious differences between South Africa and Ireland. Ireland has a significantly smaller population (4.8 million), with an unemployment rate of 5.7% of economically active people in 2018 (Euro Monitor, 2018) whereas South Africa has a population of 57.7 million (Stats SA, 2018) with an unemployment rate of 27.7% in the third quarter of 2017 (World Bank, 2018). Ireland has two official languages and South Africa has eleven. One of Ireland's competitive advantages when it comes to the workforce is that the nation has historically enjoyed a strong international reputation for the calibre of its educational system and its generally high standards of education (Birdthistle *et al.,* 2007). South Africa is a diverse, multicultural country with an apartheid history, the legacy of which is still troubling its school system today. South Africa is also a relatively young democracy and the curriculum restructuring that has occurred since the political transformation is still exploratory, with recurring teething problems that involved five restructuring phases over the last 25 years. The income inequality wage gap is evident on many levels of South African society, coupled with high unemployment rates, especially amongst the youth (World Bank, 2018). One would assume that parents want to have their children complete school in the shortest time possible and do not have the "luxury" of an extra year within the school system. So, is it fair to consider a programme such as the TY for the South African school system?

Our contention is that the TY model could provide an opportunity for all young learners to engage and connect with the "real world" within the structures and with the support of a school

system. Given that it is a choice that learners exercise, there will not be so much pressure on the school system compared to the pressure experienced by the school in a normal school year. In the context of growing inequality, especially in schools located in disadvantaged communities, a more equitable distribution of cultural capital and the creation of networks could support bridging the divide between theory and practice.

As discussed above, the "connectedness to the world" component of the PPF resonates with what a TY can offer within the structure and confines of a schooling system. Some of the areas where business can get involved are: business start-up simulations, work placements, mock interviews, career talks, generation of viable business ideas, research and consultancy projects, mentoring, business planning, preparation of curriculum vitae, presentations and job applications related to the field of the employers (Jones & Iredale, 2010). The problems in a business are mostly solved by working in teams. During the TY the learner will learn how to work effectively with other people. Wyn (2009:52) states that "learners preparing for life and work could do no better than to have the opportunity of working, within the structure of school, as a precursor to other work-based structures, such as they will later experience". Linking this point directly to the disciplinary content in Business Studies, during this period the student experiences the "softer" skills applicable to the human resources function, such as self-management skills (e.g. time management), working with others, team work and other job-specific skills (see DBE, 2011).

According to the GEM report, young people represent a high proportion of the total population in South Africa, with almost 50% of the South African population under the age of 24. However, the majority of school leavers do not pursue tertiary studies and will therefore form part of the potential labour force immediately after leaving school. Many of these young learners unfortunately become implicated in social problems because of the high levels of un- and under-employment among the youth (World Bank, 2018). Moreover, some of the entry-level skills required for the FET-phase in Business Studies require competencies such as creativity, critical thinking, decision-making, reasoning, problem-solving, doing research, working in teams, collaboration and presentation skills (Umalusi, 2019). The study of Economic and Management Sciences in the senior phase offers the learner basic foundational knowledge to pursue Business Studies in the FET, however there are challenges to the teaching and learning of EMS (see van der Bijl & Schreuder, 2019) which impede the acquisition of the required entry level skills for Business Studies. Introducing the TY can advance the acquisition of these skills and bring some respite to the many socio-economic challenges the youth faces today. A TY programme for Business Studies could be a visionary experiential active learning approach in South Africa to teach young learners about self-directed and self-regulated learning within the realm of the business sector and the school system. For many learners this will be their first taste of the workplace and the TY can offer enlightening exposure to potential future careers. Learners could also realise that their perception of a certain job is not what they envisaged and they may develop new interests during their TY. Smyth and Calvert (2011) state that some learners have reported that their experiences had a positive effect on their attitude towards work and school and had helped them to make more informed choices after leaving school.

The following are key elements from the Irish TY (Moynihan, 2015:204) that resonate with the South African context:

- a desire to bridge the gap between school and working life by linking the local business community as an incubator to help learners develop a positive work ethic;

- promoting the transition between school and linking the core academic curriculum with the world of work to increase student understanding of an enterprise and working life;

- the TY is optional and learners can exercise their choice: those who do not take up the TY will continue their schooling as normal;

- TY learners could find themselves immersed in an alternative learning environment where the focus is no longer on rote learning, but on more socio-cultural and experiential learning styles;

- young people in TY have the opportunity to participate in various mutual arrangements where they have much to learn from experienced people in the workplace;

- learners can also share their tacit knowledge during TY with older people in the workplace, for example, the use of social media and some information communication technologies;

- it promotes the school-to-career transition for learners that will help learners to make better informed decisions about their future;

- assist learners in the development of attitudes, skills and habits conducive to job success and personal development, for example, increase learners' confidence levels, leadership skills, personal responsibility and creativity;

- help learners acquire or refine work-related skills and job performance in a real work environment.

6. CONCLUSION

It is common to suggest the use of a broad array of active learning methods and approaches for the teaching of Business Studies (see DBE, 2011). However, not all active learning approaches provide a heightened social awareness or the competencies and "work experience" that young people can acquire while still part of a structured school programme. We argue for a unique programme within the South African schooling system, such as Ireland's TY, to integrate an experiential workplace-based learning approach, which emphasises real-life experience of the business world, coupled with personal and social development and education for active citizenship. It is hard to believe, given the positive research on, and the phenomenal success of the TY, that this model or a similar programme has not appeared in any other educational system (Moynihan, 2015). Through a TY, the teaching and learning of Business Studies would ideally be supported through self-directed learning and a connectedness to the real world. Initiating education-industry links could help to align the employability skills of young people with the context of changing industries and the fourth industrial revolution.

REFERENCES

Alexander, G. & Khabanyane, M. 2013. Service learning as a response to community/school engagement: Towards a pedagogy of engagement. *Perspectives in Education*, 31(2): 102–113.

Arthur, S.J., Hisrich, R.D. & Cabrera, A. 2012. The importance of education in the entrepreneurial process: a world view. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 19(3): 500–514. https://doi.org/10.1108/14626001211250180.

Birdthistle, N., Hynes, B. & Fleming, P. 2007. Enterprise education programmes in secondary schools in Ireland: A multi-stakeholder perspective. *Education & Training*, 49(4): 265–276. https://doi.org/10.1108/00400910710754426.

Bridge, S., Hegarty, C. & Porter, S. 2010. Rediscovering enterprise: developing appropriate university entrepreneurship education, *Education & Training*, 52(8/9): 722–734. https://doi.org/10.1108/00400911011089015.

Buthelezi, Z. 2018. Lecturer experiences of TVET College challenges in the post-apartheid era: a case of unintended consequences of educational reform in South Africa. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training,* 70(3): 364–383. https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2018.1437062.

Clerkin, A. 2012. Personal development in secondary education: The Irish Transition Year. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 20 (38)*. http://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/1061 [22 February 2018]. https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v20n38.2012.

Clerkin, A. 2013. Growth of the Transition Year programme nationally and in schools serving disadvantaged learners, 1992–2011. *Irish Educational Studies*, 32(2): 197–215. https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2013.770663.

Coiffait, L., Dawkins, J., Kirwan, R. & Mann, A. 2012. *Enterprise Education: Value and Direction – an interim report*. London: Education and Employers Taskforce and Pearson Think Tank.

Darling-Hammond, L. 1997. *The right to learn: A blueprint for creating schools that work.* San Francisco Jossey Bass.

Department of Basic Education (DBE) 2011. *Curriculum and assessment policy statement grades 10–12 – business studies*. Pretoria, South Africa: DBE.

Department of Basic Education (DBE) 2011a. *Curriculum and assessment policy statement grades 7–9 – Economic & management sciences*. Pretoria, South Africa: DBE.

Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) – South Africa. 2011. National qualifications framework Act 67 of 2008. Policy on the minimum requirements for teacher education qualifications. *Government Gazette,* 34467(583): 1–64.

Education Queensland. 2001. *Queensland school reform longitudinal study*. Brisbane: Queensland Government.

Euromonitor. 2018. *Ireland country fact file*. Available at https://www.euromonitor.com/ireland/country-factfile [Accessed 24 March 2019]

Hayes, D., Mills, M., Christie, P. & Lingard, B. 2006. *Teachers and schooling making a difference: Productive pedagogies, assessment and performance*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.

Herrington, M., Kew, P. & Mwanga, A. 2017. *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor South Africa Report 2016/2017*.

Horwitz, F.M. 2013. An analysis of skills development in a transitional economy – the case of the South African labour market. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 24(12): 2435–2451. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2013.781438.

Hytti, U. & O'Gorman, C. 2004. What is enterprise education? An analysis of the objectives and methods of enterprise education programmes in four European countries. *Education & Training*, 46(1): 11–23. https://doi.org/10.1108/00400910410518188.

Iredale, N. 2002. Enterprise and entrepreneurship in higher education: Building bridges and creating networks. *Citizenship, Social and Economics Education*, 5(2): 101–114. https://doi.org/10.2304/csee.2002.5.2.101.

Jeffers, G., 2007. *Attitudes to transition year: A report to the Department of Education and Science*. Maymooth: Education Department.

Jeffers, G. 2010. The role of school leadership in the implementation of the transition year programme in Ireland. *School of Leadership and Management*, 30(5): 469–486. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2010.513179.

Jeffers, G. 2011. The transition year programme in Ireland. Embracing and resisting a curriculum innovation. *The Curriculum Journal*, 22(1): 81–76. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2011.550788.

Jones, B. & Iredale, N. 2006. Developing an entrepreneurial life skills summer school. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 43(3): 233–244. https://doi.org/10.1080/14703290600618522.

Jones, B. & Iredale, N. 2010. Enterprise education as pedagogy. *Education & Training*, 52(1): 7–19. https://doi.org/10.1108/00400911011017654.

Kolb, D.A. 1984. *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Engelwood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Leffler, E. & Näsström, G. 2014. Entrepreneurial learning and school improvement: a Swedish case. *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education*, 1(11): 243–254.

Lingard, B. 2007. Pedagogies of indifference. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 11(3): 245–266. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603110701237498.

Lingard, B. & Mills, M. 2003. Teachers and school reform: Working with productive pedagogies and productive assessment. *Melbourne Studies in Education*, 44(2): 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/17508487.2003.9558596.

Lingard, B., Hayes, D. & Mills, M. 2003. Teachers and Productive Pedagogies: contextualising, conceptualising, utilising. *Pedagogy, Culture & Society*, 11(3): 399–424. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681360300200181.

Matlay, H. 2011. The influence of stakeholders on developing enterprising graduates in UK HEIs. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 17(2): 166–182. https://doi.org/10.1108/13552551111114923.

McHann, J.C. & Frost, L.A. 2010. Integrating Experiential Learning Into Business Courses: Using Learning Journals to create living case studies. *American Journal of Business Education*, 3(8): 1–12. https://doi.org/10.19030/ajbe.v3i8.464.

Meintjes, A., Henrico, A. & Kroon J. 2015. Teaching problem solving competency in Business Studies at secondary school level. *South African Journal of Education*, 35(3). https://doi.org/10.15700/saje.v35n3a1102.

Moynihan, J.A. 2015. The Transition Year: A unique programme in Irish Education bridging the gap between school and the workplace. *International Electronic Journal of Elementary Education*, 8(2): 199–210.

Onstenk, J. 2013. Improving the quality of apprenticeships as learning environment. In S. Akoojee, P. Gonon, U. Hauschildt, C. Hofmann (Eds.). *Apprenticeship in a globalised world: Premises, promises and pitfalls* (pp.87–90). London: INAP.

Osman, 2013. Introduction Address. In S. Akoojee, P. Gonon, U. Hauschildt, C. Hofmann (Eds.). *Apprenticeship in a globalised world: Premises, promises and pitfalls* (pp. 14–16). LIT Verlag Münster.

Pfeffer, J. & Sutton, R.I. 2000. *The knowing-doing gap: How smart companies turn knowledge into action*. Harvard business press.

Smyth, E., Byrne, D & Hannan, C. 2004. *The Transition Year programme: An assessment*. Dublin: Liffey Press/ESRI.

Smyth, E. & Calvert, E. 2011. *Choices and challenges: Moving from junior cycle to senior cycle education*. Dublin: Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI).

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA). 2018. *Mid-year population estimates 2018*. Available at http://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=11341 [Accessed 24 March 2019]

Steenekamp, A.G., van der Merwe, S.P. & Athayde, R. 2011. Application of the attitude toward enterprise (ATE) Test on secondary school learners in South Africa. *South African Journal of Economic and Management Sciences NS*, 14(3): 314–332. https://doi.org/10.4102/sajems.v14i3.18.

Suhendra, M. & Nurlaela, E. 2018, Revitalization of mathematical education through applying productive pedagogies framework. In *University of Muhammadiyah Malang's 1st International Conference of Mathematics Education (INCOMED 2017)*. Atlantis Press. https://doi.org/10.2991/incomed-17.2018.39.

Umalusi. 2019. *Passing the baton: Investigating the transitions between the four NCS phases – Economic and Management Sciences. A longitudinal study of the inferred CAPS Entry-Level Requirements and Exit-Level Outcomes across phases: ECD – FET*. Pretoria: Umalusi Press.

Van der Bijl, A. & Schreuder, G. 2019. Initial challenges when introducing business subjects into the South African school curriculum. *Academic Conferences International Limited, Kidmore End. https://doi.org/10.5367/ihe.2016.0297.*

Van der Bijl, A & Taylor, V. 2016. Nature and dynamics of industry-based workplace learning for South African TVET lecturers. *Industry & Higher Education*, 30(2): 98–108. doi: 10.5367/ihe.2016.0297

World Bank. 2018. *Overcoming poverty and inequality in South Africa*. Washington, DC: World Bank Group. Available at http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/530481521735906534/Overcoming-Poverty-and-Inequality-in-South-Africa-An-Assessment-of-Drivers-Constraints-and-Opportunities [Accessed 13 July 2018]

Wren, D.A., Halbesleben, J.R. & Buckley, M.R. 2007. The theory-application balance in management pedagogy: A longitudinal update. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 6(4): 484–492. https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2007.27694948.

Wyn, J. 2009. *Touching the future: Building skills for life and work*. Victoria: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Zyngier, D. 2003. Connectedness – isn't it time that education came out from behind the classroom door and rediscovered social justice. *Social alternatives*, 22(3): 41–49.

Zyngier, D. 2007. Productive pedagogies: Seeking a common vocabulary and framework for talking about pedagogy for pre-service teachers. In T. Townsend & R. Bates (Eds). *Handbook for Teacher Education* (pp. 205–218). Dordrecht: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-4773-8_14.

Zyngier. D. 2008. (Re)conceptualizing student engagement: Doing education not doing time. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 24(7): 1765–1776. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2007.09.004.