

# Do Teaching Methods Presented by the National Council on Economics Education (USA) Enhance Trainers' Learning Capacity in Economics Education? A South African Perspective

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**ABSTRACT** The National Council on Economic Education (NCEE) is a nationwide network in the United States of America (USA) which spearheads the promotion of economic literacy among students and their teachers. The NCEE's mission is to help students develop the real-life skills they need to succeed: to be able to think and choose responsibly as consumers, savers, investors, citizens, members of the workforce, and effective participants in a global economy. One hundred and eight participants from nine developing countries, mainly lecturers in Economic education, curriculum developers, learning-area managers and subject advisors, participated in this international collaboration initiative programme over a two-year period. As participants representing South Africa at these sessions, we have chosen to provide an overview of the experiences of fourteen South African trainers on teaching methods used by the NCEE through a qualitative approach. In order to arrive at a synthesis of our reflections, the following research question was posed: "Do teaching methods presented by the NCEE enhance trainers' learning capacity in Economics education?" Findings revealed that trainers were indeed engaged in opportunities to construct meaning from their knowledge base in Economics, as well as the subsequent application of their acquired learning endeavours to their sites of delivery. Furthermore, we conclude that these pedagogical methods used by the NCEE impact positively on the enhancement of trainers' learning capacity in South African schools.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The National Council on Economic Education (NCEE) is a nationwide network in the United States of America (USA) that aims at promoting economic literacy among learners and their teachers. The NCEE's mission is to help learners develop the real-life skills they need to succeed: to be able to think and choose responsibly as consumers, savers, investors, citizens, members of the workforce, and effective participants in a global economy (NCEE 1995, 2005). The NCEE *Train-the-Trainers* programme prepares participants to conduct professional development for teachers of economics at school and university level. The *Train-the-Trainers* programme consists of four one-week seminars, each of which focuses on strengthening participants' knowledge and skills of both economic concepts and pedagogy (NCEE 2005).

During the *Train-the-Trainers* seminars, the NCEE training staff applies active participative teaching methods such as Student Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD) for economics quizzes, cooperative learning techniques through simu-

lations of regulated markets and role play activities. The NCEE trainers use these interactive participative teaching methods to bridge the gap between economics in the classroom and economics in real world decision-making processes. Participants are actively involved in decision making and gain new insights into the application of economic concepts and content.

In conceptualising the *Train-the-Trainers* programme and its implication for South African trainee participants, we have outlined the importance of curriculum and teacher-training imperatives for a democratic South African education system. As validation for our study, we have located our study in a constructivist framework to learning and training.

### Curriculum and Teacher Training Imperatives for a Democratic South African Educational System

Since the first democratic elections in 1994, education in South Africa has been characterised by an unprecedented process of transformation. The imperative to transform South African society

by utilising various transformative tools stems from a need to address the legacy of apartheid in all aspects of human activity and in education in particular (National Department of Education (NDE 2003). Furthermore, a resurgence from government, business, organised labour and providers of education and training emphasised the need to redress the educational imbalances which were prevalent in the country's rote learning/traditional schooling system, and that equal educational opportunities be provided for all citizens (NDE 1997a).

These considerations fostered the introduction of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) which currently forms the basis of curricular programmes at school and university level in South Africa. According to Spady and Schlebusch (1999) and Spady and Marshall (1994), OBE as an approach to teaching and learning strives to enhance learners' maximum learning potential by setting the outcomes to be achieved at the end of the learning process. The outcomes of OBE are outlined as critical and developmental within the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) which is South Africa's own unique curriculum response to OBE. The critical outcomes (problem-solving via critical and creative thinking; group-work and co-operative learning; accepting responsibility; research skills; communication skills, technological and environmental literacy and the development of macro vision) and developmental outcomes (learning skills; cultural and aesthetic comprehension; citizenship, professional skills and entrepreneurship) are broad, generic and cross-curricular outcomes in structure. These outcomes are inspired by the South African Constitution and developed through a democratic process (EIC 1996; NDE 1997c, 1998a).

In relation to the latter, the National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa (NDE 2007) and the right to quality education for all is noted as a democratic right without limitation, with schooling being described as a public good in which teachers are the key agents. A profound change in teacher practices is called for, which would entail the establishment of sustainable enabling teaching and learning environments and conditions which promote fundamental and critical engagement in a transformative education system. It is recommended that professional teachers should be regarded as the essential resource of the education system, and that programmes for teacher

education and training should reinforce the professional competencies and commitments of teachers, as stipulated in the Norms and Standards for Educators policy document (NDE 1997). In South Africa, this can be seen as a response to the government's call for a more socially responsive education system. Within this legislation, it is suggested that schools and universities in particular, should be more responsive to local and national needs when addressing social problems such as poverty, unemployment, crime, and the lack of health and associated facilities. The Norms and Standards for Educators use an outcomes-based approach to teacher education and provide detailed descriptions of what a competent teacher can do. The emphasis of the policy is on performance in schools, classrooms, management and in the support services of the schooling system. The new policy will contribute significantly to the implementation of NCS by training and developing educators who have the knowledge, skills and values to make learning in our schools more relevant to the economic and social needs of South Africa. The policy defines seven roles that an educator must be able to perform and describes in detail the knowledge, skills and values that are necessary to perform the roles successfully. The seven roles are: Learning mediator; Interpreter and designer of learning programmes; Leader, administrator and manager; Scholar, researcher and lifelong learner; Assessor; a community, citizenship and pastoral role; and a learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist role. Together, these roles are seen as constituting a picture of the knowledge, skills and values that are the benchmark of a competent and professional teacher. The range of demands placed on teachers, evident in the seven roles set out for them in the Norms and Standards for Educators, is also impressive and is expected to have a significant impact on teacher training and curriculum development initiatives in all school curricula, as well as having relevance to economics education.

Pendlebury (1998) mentions that a viable education system with committed, competent and confident teachers is a primary condition for achieving outcomes within the NCS for South African schools.

Although there are various service providers in South Africa which provide teacher training and development programmes, the demand for specialised economic training programmes is not adequately addressed. Constrained financial

resources in Provincial Education Departments necessitate that other sources of funding be explored. One such support and funding initiative for teacher training in Economics, has emanated from the NCEE-USA.

In 2006 the National Department of Education in South Africa and the NCEE signed an official memorandum of understanding (MOU) to endorse co-operation and partnerships on teacher-training capacity building through the Economics International programme (NDE 2007). In the same year, the NCEE was officially launched through a partnership between the Free State Department of Education (FSDoE) and the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein. After 2007, other provinces, such as the Northern Cape, the Eastern Cape, the Western Cape, the North-west, Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and Kwazulu Natal were also included in the Economics International programme.

From the above it can be deduced that any type of training in Economics teaching presented to a South African audience, should consider and be directed towards enhancing the learning capacity of NCEE trainees within an outcomes-based paradigm. This process demands that the parameters of trainees cognitive- (knowledge and skills), affective- (emotions and feelings) and social- (communication and cooperation) abilities as they relate to economic concepts and content, be explored. Furthermore, Niemi (2002) and Reynolds et al. (1996) view learning as the construction of knowledge emerging from socio-cultural activities and the social interaction with other people. Opportunities for active learning such as co-operative action, collaborative problem-solving, and sharing are tools to be used to achieve better outcomes. The latter implies that any training session such as the NCEEs needs to be internalised by trainees as a forum for participation in discussions, dialogues and mutually shared reflections with others during training sessions. This in turn, may lead to an increase in trainees' learning capacity as Bogler (2000) aptly states: "Learning capacity is defined as the abilities, skills, understandings, attitudes, values, relationships, behaviours, motivations, resources and conditions that enable individuals, organizations, networks/sectors and broader social systems to carry out functions and achieve their development objectives over time".

We therefore locate this study within a constructivist framework as the theoretical

underpinning for the NCEE Train-the-Trainees programme.

### **Constructivism as Theoretical Framework**

Constructivism implies that learners are encouraged to construct their own knowledge in realistic situations with others instead of in de-contextualised, formal situations where they work on their own, such as propagated in traditional textbooks. The central idea behind constructivism is that learners build new knowledge upon the basis of previous learning (Jonassen et al.1999). Cooper (2007) concurs with Jonassen et al. stating that constructivism is based on learners' active participation in problem-solving and critical-thinking abilities in learning activities which they find relevant and engaging. NCEE trainees were exposed to a variety of interactive learning activities during the four seminars and thereafter were engaged in opportunities where they could share ideas and approaches based on their prior knowledges and experiences. Furthermore, trainees demonstrated the application of newly acquired knowledge and skills to new learning situations.

Cooper (2007) and Rovai (2004) ascertain that constructivist pedagogy is needed to develop learning by promoting the virtues of an individual's search for meaning, as much as the knowledge gained from that search. The creation of knowledge from experience and the use of that knowledge to support new learning, represent the fundamental principles of constructivism. Opportunities in which learners can engage in meaning-making processes are of cardinal importance to the enhancement of their learning capacity. Teaching methods are a significant component of the NCEE Train-the-Trainers programme. Participants had the opportunity to practise teaching techniques, prepare a written self-reflection on their own teaching, receive feedback from other participants, and strengthen their ability to use these methods. The Train-the-Trainers programme includes teaching methods such as cooperative learning techniques like STAD, think-pair-and-share, individual improve-ment scores, class presentations, team recognition, economic quizzes, simulations, role play, reflective teaching and collegial conversation (NCEE 1995, 2005).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to investigate whether the teaching methods facilitated by the

NCEE training staff enhanced trainees' learning capacity in Economics education.

## II. METHODOLOGY

**Research Design:** We were interested in exploring the participants' experience regarding the enhancement of their learning capacity via the use of teaching methods by the NCEE training staff. As such, we collected and analysed primary data using an interpretive paradigm, narrative approach. The narrative approach is an interpretive, qualitative method of research. Qualitative research is defined as "the use of qualitative data such interviews, documents and participation observation data to understand and explain social phenomena" (Myers 1997). Moreover, Rubin and Babbie (1989) argue that the qualitative approach as an inductive approach is eminently effective in determining the deeper meaning of the experiences of human beings and in giving a rich description of the specific phenomena being investigated in reality.

In this research, a case study research design was used involving fourteen South African participants. The case study approach helped us to gain insight into the phenomenon (NCEE teaching methods) as it permitted an in-depth search for meanings and reasons. The use of case studies is associated particularly with small-scale research, focusing on one instance (South African participants' learning capacity) of a particular phenomenon with a view to providing an in-depth account of events, relationships, experiences or processes occurring in that particular instance (Babbie 2001). Thus, the case study approach is not a method for collecting data, but rather, a research strategy wherein a variety of research methods such as interviews, observation, and reflective journals can be used. We used purposive sampling, which is a common feature of qualitative research (Brink 1996). The characteristic feature of this kind of sampling is that it is usually more convenient and economical and that it allows the researcher to handpick the sample, based on knowledge of the area and the phenomena being studied. In order to determine the participants' experience regarding the enhancement of their learning capacity via the use of teaching methods by NCEE training staff, a qualitative research design was employed. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding

the meaning people have constructed in making sense of the world and the experiences they have in the world (Merriam 1998), whilst all parts of the phenomenon being studied are seen as interactive and dynamic, with each influencing the other (Gray 2004). Therefore, to understand the current state of affairs with regard to factors inhibiting the learning capacity of trainees, it is essential to heed the context - the learning of newly acquired knowledge and skills in economics teaching against teaching methods and techniques characterised by the previous 'rote learning curriculum' of South Africa.

**Sampling:** Fourteen South African participants from six provinces were randomly selected for the interviews. The composition of purposive sampling (N=14) consists of the following participants: one subject advisor from each of the six participating Provincial Education Departments (PDEs), four specialist Economics teachers from selected provinces and one lecturer from each of the four participating Higher Education Institutions (HEI).

**Data Gathering and Analysis Approach:** A purposive sampling (N=14) was identified and randomly selected for the interviews. An interview schedule (see Appendix A) was designed and used to obtain data. The interviewees accepted the official invitation and 45 minute interview sessions were conducted with them. All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, coded, and themes were identified (Leedy and Ormrod 2001). The transcription process helped the researchers to get closer to the data. We were able to think about what the interviewee was saying and how this was said. We then read each typed transcript several times while listening to the corresponding audio tape to ensure the accuracy of the transcription and to come to a better overall understanding of each participant's experience of the teaching methods demonstrated during the training sessions. We used the 'highlighting' textual analysis approach according to Van Manen (1990) to uncover the thematic aspects of participants' views and experiences regarding the effect of teaching methods on their learning. In this approach, we read the text several times and statements that appeared to be relevant to the phenomenon were highlighted. Themes were identified by highlighting material in the interview transcripts that spoke to the effect of teaching methods on their learning capacity in

Economics education. We then selected each of these highlighted phrases or sentences and attempted to ascertain what meaning was presented in the highlighted material. After identifying the themes, we embarked on the process of recording the themes and describing how they were interrelated. Rewriting continued until we felt that the themes and the relationship between the themes and transcripts were identified as accurately as possible. This process is described by Miles and Huberman (1994: 321-344) as “data reduction,” “data display,” and “conclusion drawing and verification”. In order to establish trustworthiness, the interview transcripts were issued to certain participants who were tasked with verifying the validity and reliability of their responses to specific questions. Coding of the data was done by a research assistant (post-graduate student) who independently verified selected themes. Furthermore, we tasked one of our colleagues (senior researcher) who specialises predominantly in qualitative research designs to act as moderator for the research part of our study.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are encouraging and add to the body of information of other research studies with regard to teaching methods in Economics (e.g., Tsigaris 2008; Alexander and van Wyk 2009; van Wyk 2009 and 2007; Kumar and Lightner 2007; George et al. 2003; Klassen and Willoughby 2003; Cebula and Toma 2002; Brock 1991). Interviews were conducted and recorded and the results of the responses transcribed. The six interview questions as indicated earlier for the purpose of this study were developed to determine the respondents’ views on whether the teaching methods facilitated by the NCEE enhance trainees’ learning capacity in Economics education. The results from the responses (N=14) of the quota sampling were captured and analysed. From the analyses of participants’ responses, the following **six themes** emerged: *Positive and Negative learning experiences; Applicable teaching methods; Cooperative learning exchanges; Alignment of training material; Collaborative interactions and Contextualised training.*

An analysis and discussion of the interviewees’ responses are outlined below:

#### **Theme 1: Positive and Negative Experiences**

##### *Sub-theme: Positive Learning Experiences*

Respondents commented on the NCEE training staffs’ high level of professionalism regarding lesson planning, the facilitation of seminars and the provision of applicable assessment activities. Furthermore, respondents held the view that NCEE lesson plans are well written, designed and structured to give participants ample opportunities to learn through various assessment activities.

Respondents noted:

*“I was really impressed with the way the NCEE training staff executed their roles and responsibilities pertaining to the seminars. They were highly professional in their approach in conducting the sessions. They were knowledgeable, skilled and experienced when they presented their well-structured lessons. We received excellent learning training materials, manuals and applicable activities that were well structured and planned for the sessions.”*

*“Well designed lesson plans with relevant activities were issued to participants after the completion of every seminar- this for me was a sign of good planning and organisation.”*

According to Rieber (1996), interactive and participative teaching methods are linked to enjoyable activities that promote the flowing stage of the student’s learning. Thus, interactive activities have the potential to engross the student in a state of flow and consequently cause better learning through focus and pleasant rewards. Gredler (1996), states that intellectual skills and cognitive strategies are acquired during academic games. Moreover, Subrahmanyam et al. (2001) confirm that games have cognitive developmental effects on visual skills including ‘spatial representation’, ‘iconic skills’ and ‘visual attention’. Reference to this aspect clearly demonstrates the importance of the cognitive domain (knowledge and skills) as outlined in our unpacking of the term ‘learning capacity’. During the games played, participants had the opportunity to use skills previously learned and refine them into marketable skills, such as negotiating on market prices. New business management skills such as business ethics, strategic planning, negotiation and honesty were also learned during the games played. A recent study done in South Africa on Economic education showed the

existence of positive influences in two spheres during in-service training sessions in which trainees were involved: (i) increasing the academic knowledge background of Economics teachers, and (ii) improving the commitment, attitudes and values impacts positively on professional practice (van Wyk 2007 and 2009). Assessment of information shared during teacher-training workshops is one of the most important processes occurring in teaching-learning situations (van Wyk 2007; Killen 2007; Department of Education 1998). Furthermore, Niemi (2002) is of the opinion that learning and the acquisition of competence and skills are the most important tools for achieving individual or organisational goals. All pedagogical arrangements should improve the quality of learning, enhance the quality of opportunities for different learners and help combat social exclusion.

#### ***Sub-theme: Negative Learning Experiences***

Respondents noted the content overload and duration of training sessions as issues affecting their effectiveness and active participation in deliberations.

The NCEE trainers' lack of economic content and examples reflecting the South African context were emphasised by respondents as areas of concern.

*"It was very hard to understand some economic concepts and content because Economics is not my subject. I and other participants had limited background knowledge in dealing with the interpretation of economic data. The content of LTM (resource pack) was more applicable to the USA context, not the SA context. More South African examples on entrepreneurs, our market data and other economic information should be included in the manuals. I believe that we can still use USA economic textbooks as a value-added resource."*

Examples used by teachers during the teaching and learning process need to be applied in the context of learners' experiences and potential (Jonassen et al. 1999). The creation of knowledge from experience and the use of that knowledge to support new learning represent fundamental principles to meaning-making encounters (Cooper 2007).

#### **Theme 2: Applicable Teaching Methods**

Respondents held the view that methods such

as simulations, the think-pair-share method and a cooperative learning technique such as STAD had the most educational value for them as Economics teaching specialists. Two of the respondents commented:

*"I prefer the simulations such as the one on buyers and sellers (determining of market price). It brought the real world experience into the classroom... The 'think-pair-and-share' cooperative learning technique is more applicable to small group/peer learning and brainstorming skills."*

*"I definitely think that the Student Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD) is more applicable to economics quizzes."*

In enhancing 'quality teaching' there is no single teaching strategy that is effective all the time for all learners. Teaching and learning are complex processes that are influenced by many different factors, only some of which are under the teacher's control and none is fully understood (Killen 2007). During the Train-the-Trainers programme, NCEE trainers applied active participative teaching methods such as STAD for the economics quizzes and cooperative learning through simulations of regulated markets. The NCEE training staff used these interactive participative teaching methods to bridge the gap between economics in the classroom and economics in real world decision-making situations. Participants became actively involved in decision-making processes and gained new insights into the application of economic principles. A study conducted by Niemi (2002) indicated the NCEE trainees' ability to learn economics, as well as the programme trainers' (Economic professors) ability to communicate with participants from various cultural and educational environments. Although an element of diversity (differences in backgrounds, language skills, learning styles, motivation to learn, etc.) was noted in trainees' involvement, an improvement in the NCEE programme instruction was enhanced by active participatory learning activities - 'learning by doing'.

#### **Theme 3: Cooperative Learning Exchanges**

Respondents expressed similar sentiments regarding the effectiveness of teaching methods used by the NCEE trainers to enhance their ability to master economic content. A remark expressed in this regard set out the advantages of such methods:

*“It broadens my knowledge base of economic content. We worked in different groups through cooperation and collaboration. The NCEE staff used different approaches so that the information was presented in a relevant, understandable and learner-friendly way. I preferred the STAD, think-pair-and-share-technique, problem solving and economics quizzes because these are effective methods that help me to understand economic concepts and principles.”*

Four participants mentioned that a specific teaching method, namely the small group technique used by NCEE trainers enhanced their learning ability to grasp economic concepts and content positively:

*“The rotation of seats on a daily bases really encourages an atmosphere conducive to learning. It ensured that you had to share your ideas in pairs or small groups. This helped enhance my social skills because you worked with a participant from another country most of the time.”*

Special strategies utilised in constructivist teaching methodology include an emphasis on learners’ constructing their own knowledge and an emphasis on self-directed learning, meaningful contexts and collaboration with others (Ertmer and Newbury 1993). Modern theories on student learning stress that teachers should create a powerful learning environment for students thereby stimulating constructive, self-directed, contextual and collaborative learning (Dolmans et al. 2003).

The above refers to the social domain as encapsulated in our exposition of the term ‘learning capacity’ which emphasises the importance of learning as a social activity. Opportunities for learning engagement during training sessions instilled positive social interactive relations (communication, cooperation, interdependence, face-to-face interaction and individual accountability) amongst participants (Niemi 2002).

#### **Theme 4: Alignment of Training Material**

Respondents alluded to the alignment of training material and curricular content to the South African economic situation as a crucial challenge to be considered in training sessions by the NCEE training staff. Some of the key extracts of participant responses pertaining to future challenges are the following:

*“I am well skilled; I know now how to write*

*a lesson plan. I am able to redesign the NCEE materials for our context. I believe that the LTM (resource pack) of the NCEE could be re-aligned with the NCS Economics policy document. I believe that teachers will use these NCEE materials as a value-added resource.”*

*“The contextual realities of the NCS curriculum and time allocation for training sessions need to be given priority in our different districts, regarding teachers. I will definitely use the training material given to us. We must adapt the material of the NCEE to our context. The schooling system necessitates that the materials be translated into Afrikaans<sup>1</sup> for my school districts.”*

Learning is not only the transmission of knowledge; it is an internal process of interpretation. Learners create interpretations of the world based on their past experiences and their interactions with the world (Antherton 2005a). Knowledge is constructed by the individual through his/her interactions with the context in which he/she functions; meaning that individuals gradually build their own understanding of the world through experience, maturation and interaction with their context. Learners are thus viewed as active processors of information (Rovai 2004).

#### **Theme 5: Collaborative Interactions**

Respondents expressed their sincere appreciation of the NCEE trainers’ competence in using various methods to forge healthy cooperative interactions and social relations amongst trainees.

They were highly impressed with the ‘muddy points’ method used by trainers to reflect on and clarify the misconceptions about economic concepts and content that had been presented the previous day.

Responses to the above statement are as follows:

*“I involve lead/champion teachers to train with me. This gives them an opportunity to experience, apply and gain skills in these methods. I am really confident to be able to re-align the NCEE materials to the NCS Economics content and context.”*

*“After each training session with my educators, I reflect on the teaching method used. This provides me with an opportunity to interrogate my strengths and identify areas for improvement.”*

*"I liked the reflective teaching part and the identification of 'muddy points' during the seminars. I thought about the sessions of the previous day. Now that I understand why some teachers do not frequently use this tool for effective teaching, I will definitely encourage my teachers to use reflective teaching often in their classes, especially because it is part of their daily classroom teaching practices."*

Participative teaching methods lead to productive interaction between the teacher and learners and among learners (Jacobs et al. 2004). Teaching methods are a significant component of the NCEE Train-the-Trainers programme. Participants had the opportunity to practice pedagogical techniques, prepare a written self-reflection on their own teaching, receive feedback from other participants and strengthen their ability to use different teaching methods. According to Ertmer and Newbury (1996) reflection plays an important role in the teaching and learning process. The Train-the-Trainers programme included teaching methods such as cooperative learning techniques such as STAD, think-pair-and-share, individual improvement scores, class presentations, team recognition, economics quizzes, reflective teaching and collegial conversation (NCEE 1995, 2005).

#### **Theme 6: Contextualized Training**

Respondents noted that training facilitated by the NCEE trainers needs to be contextualized; it needs to relate to the realities of the South African situation. They also identified screening criteria such as extensive teaching experience in Economics, subject-related background knowledge and qualifications in Economics, as criteria to be considered by the NCEE recruitment staff when identifying possible candidates for training.

Some key statements by participants holding the above view are as follows:

*"I propose fewer sessions per seminar and the NCEE–USA needs to be more selective in choosing or screening candidates' applications for Train-the-Trainers programme."*

*"The examples used in the NCEE training manual need to be representative of participating countries. I refer to the economic data of my country."*

The effectiveness of a training programme for teachers in South Africa is dependent on participants' ability to conceptualize new concepts and content within their frame of reference, and

then apply the knowledge and skills they have acquired to relevant and applicable situations which add value to their learning experiences (Alexander 2004). Kivedo (2006) also suggests that Economics teachers with the relevant interest, background knowledge and subject qualification be earmarked to participate in training sessions facilitated by Provincial Education Departments. This could ensure a high degree of enthusiasm and active participation from trainees during training workshops.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

This paper presented evidence on the benefits that accrued to participants' learning capacity as a result of running different teaching methods in Economics education seminars. Most of the literature reviews attempt to measure the effect of experiential learning that accrues only to student learning in terms of academic performances. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, there has been only one study conducted in 2008 outside South Africa that examines the benefits that accrue to student learning and motivation as a result of introducing classroom experimental games in an introductory Economics course. In order for experiential and interactive teaching methods to be an effective teaching strategy, a necessary condition for success is the enhancement of the lecturer's teaching style, which in turn impacts on the students' motivation to study and perform better academically than when using the lecture method. NCEE teaching methods increased the knowledge, praxis, social and reflective skills of South African participants. It would seem that these participative teaching methods enhanced the learning capacity of those who participated in the seminars. Despite the positive results these teaching methods or other active learning methods yield, only a few studies exist which address teaching Economics education at universities of faculties of education (van Wyk 2009).

Teaching methods facilitated by the NCEE training staff positively enhanced trainers' learning capacity in Economics education. The majority of respondents indicated that they were assisted in conducting constructive teaching and learning experiences. Respondents viewed the Train-the-Trainers programme as a value-added capacity-building exercise that expanded their existing knowledge and skills based on Econo-



mics teaching. This implies that the teaching methods were effectively applied during the training seminars. The alignment of theory and practice was clearly demonstrated in this regard. NCEE trainers applied active participative teaching methods such as STAD, quizzes, cooperative learning techniques and simulations of regulated markets. These interactive teaching methods bridged the gap between economics in the classroom and economics in real-world decision-making scenarios. Trainees indicated that they were confident about implementing and conducting training workshops in their respective provincial education departments and universities. The NCEE Train-the-Trainers programme has the resource capacity to develop and strengthen the current South African educator corps training in Economics teaching, through the 'multiplier effect'. The 'multi effect' could be used as a model to roll out training to the remaining three provinces and other South African universities which did not participate in the initial training programme. We further conclude that trainers of initial or in-service teacher training programmes, whether at provincial or university level, need to be exposed to alternative teaching methods in Economics. This is pivotal to the understanding of economic concepts and content within the South African education context.

The knowledge base and skills repertoire of participants regarding Economics education and financial literacy increased, thus enhancing the learning capacity of those individuals who participated in the NCEE Train-the-Trainers programme.

## V. RECOMMENDATIONS

As measures to strengthen the delivery of the NCEE Train-the-Trainers programme, we propose the following recommendations:

- α Accreditation for the Train-the-Trainers programme to be endorsed by the National Department of Education – it can form part of the professional development points (PDP) system needed for career pathing (DoE 2007). The duration and notional hours spent on this particular Train-the-Trainers programme for human-resource development (training capacity building) was one-hundred-and-eighty hours in Economics education, which was equivalent to a 16 credit module for first-year university level Economics.

- α NCEE-USA needs to be more selective in choosing or screening candidates' applications for the Train-the-Trainers programme. Some of the participants lacked adequate knowledge and skills in economic literacy which hindered their full participation in the seminars. The examples and economic data used in the NCEE training manual need to be representative of participating countries.
- α Fewer sessions per training seminar should be considered by NCEE-USA. The session overload per seminar compromises the quality and delivery of the training presented by the NCEE training staff.
- α Examples and economic data used in the NCEE training manuals need to be representative of the participating country. The applicability and relevance of learning material need to be adapted to the South African economic and school curricular context.

## NOTES

1. Afrikaans is one of South Africa's nine official languages

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