

Pedagogical Challenges Besetting Business Studies Teachers in Secondary Schools: A Botswana Perspective

Burman Musa Sithole¹ and Mutendwahothe Walter Lumadi²

¹*Department of Languages and Social Sciences Education, University of Botswana*

²*Department of Curriculum and instruction, University of South Africa, South Africa*

Telephone: +27 83 736 2231, +27 12 429 8747, Fax: +27 12 429 4909

E-mail: ¹<sitholeb@mopipi.ub.bw>, ²<Lumadmw@unisa.ac.za>

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ABSTRACT This study sought to examine the pedagogical challenges faced by Business Studies teachers in Botswana's junior secondary schools. Respondents' views were recorded using structured interviews. The research revealed that Business Studies teachers in Botswana were facing certain challenges that can be grouped into three main categories: (1) challenges relating to teaching the subject matter and constraints in using entrepreneurial pedagogies and inadequacy of financial resources); (2) challenges relating to the students themselves (students' lack of prior knowledge in the subject, scaffolding tasks in mixed ability classes, immaturity of students in relation to subject content and misconceptions by students that the subject is difficult); and (3) challenges relating to policy such as the inability to implement pedagogies prescribed in the syllabus. These challenges should not be regarded as unique to Business Studies. Collectively, however, they do bring to light some of the principles that could inform the development of a distinctive pedagogy for Business Studies

INTRODUCTION

Business Studies is offered in the Botswana secondary school curriculum at both junior and senior secondary school levels (See Fig. 1 for map of Botswana).

At junior secondary school level, it is offered initially as a single subject in Form 1, followed by two options in Forms 2 and 3; these options are Commerce and Office Procedures, or Commerce and Bookkeeping/Accounting (Republic of Botswana 2008a; Republic of Botswana 2008b). The content in the Business Studies syllabus is such that it incorporates the acquisition of both academic and practical skills that may help the students to fit into post-school working environments. This is why Business Studies is classified as a "practical subject" in Botswana's Revised National Policy on Education of 1994.

In their teaching and support for learners, Business Studies teachers face a number of challenges that emanate from a variety of sources. In their study on the challenges facing business education teachers, Ottewill and Macfarlane (2003) identified three clusters of challenges: (1) the nature of business subject matter; (2) the context in which the teachers teach; and (3) the motivation/expectations and diversity of students.

Challenges relating to the subject matter of Business Studies are based on the need for teachers to keep up to date with developments in the business world. The world of business is constantly changing and it is not at all easy for teachers to stay up-to-date with new developments. This point is supported by McKenzie and Swords (2000: 275), who observed that: "...business educators are faced with the mammoth challenge of remaining up-to-date with the burgeoning quantity of potentially relevant information, whilst evaluating the quality of the new data against an increasingly complex web of known facts". This means that there is pressure on business education teachers to keep up-to-date with new developments in the business world lest they lose credibility with their students.

Closely linked to the challenge of keeping up-to-date is that of injecting a theoretical perspective into the student's learning experience while, at the same time, maintaining a strong "real world" focus. The need to maintain a real world focus in the teaching of Business Studies is necessitated by the fact that the business education curriculum is vocational, practical and training-orientated (Ottewill and Macfarlane 2003; National Business Education Association 2003) and there is need to employ teaching approaches

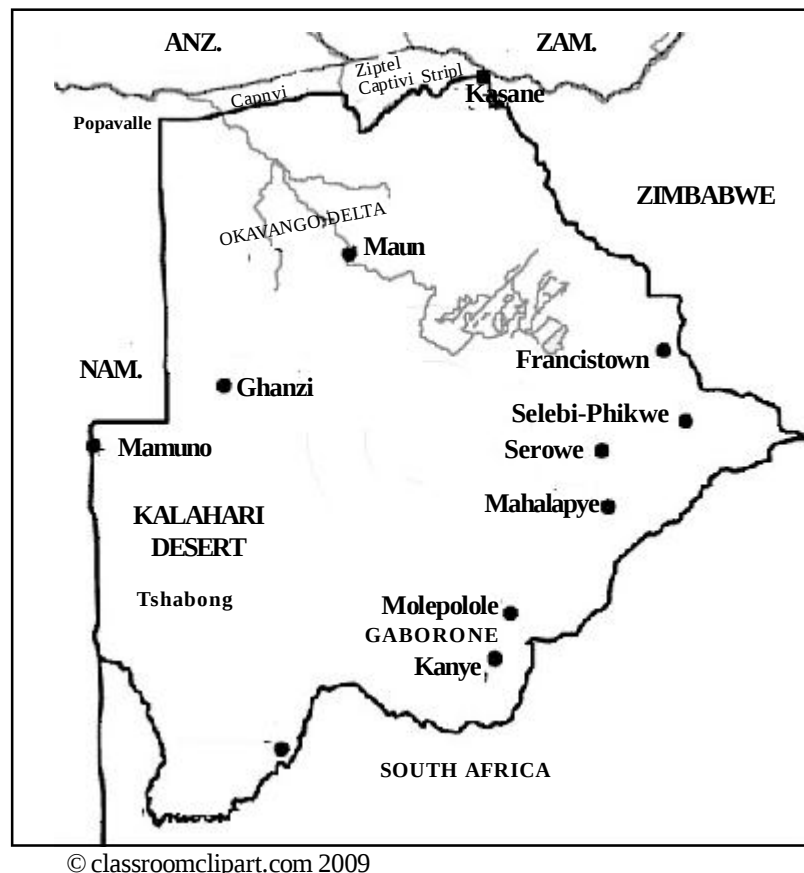


Fig.1. Map of Botswana

that ensure that learning takes place in authentic and real-world contexts. Because of the applied nature of Business Studies, teachers are expected to secure an appropriate balance between theory and practice by using entrepreneurial pedagogies that ensure that any learning that takes place is a combination of theory and experience (Heinonen and Poikkijoki 2006).

Challenges relating to the context in which the teachers teach relate to the adequacy of teaching resources. Since Business Studies is a practical subject, its teaching should obviously include both the theoretical and the practical. The teaching of topics such as keyboard and office skills in Office Procedures or computerised accounting requires students to make use of equipment such as typewriters, photocopiers and computers. The internet, simulation programmes, database and spreadsheet applications enable students to understand the rel-

evance of Business Studies to real life. Although the use of ICT in teaching is fairly common in the teaching of Business Studies in Botswana's junior secondary schools (Sithole 2010), the use of the internet is hampered by the shortage of ICT facilities, particularly the shortage of computer laboratories. Also, and unsurprisingly, internet connections are available in only a limited number of places in many schools (Boitshwarelo 2009).

Student motivation and attitudes towards study is another challenge that Business Studies teachers may face. According to the report published by the UK's Business Education Support Team (2002: 2):

There is a widespread perception... that students today, in Business, Management and Accountancy, present problems for their teachers beyond those that have always been present... there are problems of motivation... and prac-

tioners see an urgent need for more... action on changing students' attitude to learning.

What is being alluded to here is the fact that the primary motivations for studying business subjects are extrinsic rather than intrinsic in that students are motivated more by job prospects and career considerations than by any "love" of these subjects. Teachers may also find that some students are indifferent to the content of the subjects, and that some regard these subjects as difficult and that studying them is simply a necessary evil.

Students' diversity is another challenge facing teachers. According to Ottewell (2003), student diversity relates to a number of characteristics, such as differences between students in terms of the following: their backgrounds and attitudes towards learning, ability in terms of basic skills such as numeracy and literacy, and their baseline knowledge of business practices and current affairs. Teaching such a diverse mix of students can pose formidable challenges to teachers who will be required to employ mixed-ability and/or differentiated instruction methodologies to cater for individual differences among their students.

As far as policy and pedagogy are concerned, some challenges can be identified. It is the official policy of the Ministry of Education in Botswana that teaching and learning should emphasise the use of learner-centred pedagogy. Tabulawa (2009) claims that Botswana's Revised National Policy on Education of 1994 explicitly espouses a learner-centred pedagogy that is based on constructivism. Teachers employing constructivist pedagogies will expect their students to take responsibility for their own learning, to have the attributes of an independent learner, to be able to develop the ability to think critically, to engage with the subject matter and to prepare for, attend and participate in, teaching sessions (Ottewill and Macfarlane 2003). However these expectations may not be met owing to students' reluctance to do extra work inside and outside the classroom. Alternatively, in the case of Botswana, students may exhibit a "teacher knows best" mindset perpetuated by teachers who perceive themselves as the "imparters" and "purveyors" of curriculum knowledge, while students are perceived as the "receptacles" of teachers' knowledge (Tabulawa 2009; Sithole 2010).

Objectives

This study sought to examine teacher-related, student-related and policy-related challenges faced by Business Studies teachers in Botswana's junior secondary schools.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Do Business Studies teachers face challenges relating to teacher and/or subject matter
2. Do Business Studies teachers face challenges relating to students?
3. Do Business Studies teachers face challenges relating to policy?

METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study in which data were collected via structured interviews with Business Studies teachers. The sample for the study consisted of eight junior secondary school Business Studies teachers (T1, T2, T3... and T8) who were selected using the guidelines of purposeful sampling (Saunders et al. 1997). These teachers were also chosen because: (1) they were experienced Business Studies teachers, (2) they agreed to participate in the study, and (3) their close proximity to the researchers' workplace for ease of accessibility. The structured interview guide that was used to collect data from respondents elicited information about the teacher-related, student-related and policy-related challenges these people faced in their work as Business Studies teachers.

Limitations of the Study

There are necessarily limitations inherent in this study. The first limitation is that the study used a relatively small sample of eight Business Studies teachers and this may well limit the generalisability of the findings to the broader population (Sica 2006). Secondly, only one data-collection method was used and this limited the researchers' capacity to carry out methodological triangulation of the data. Methodological triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from more than two data-collection meth-

ods in the study of the same phenomenon (Wiersma 2000). In this study, the credibility of the findings could have been improved if interview data were complemented with observations of teachers' lessons and an analysis of teaching and school documents.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Respondents

Eight teachers were interviewed, three male and five female. All eight teachers held the Diploma in Secondary Education (DSE) qualification with a specialisation in Business Studies. Their teaching experience ranged from 6 to 12 years. It is assumed that the responses that the teachers gave relating to the pedagogy of Business Studies were a result of their experience(s) in teaching this subject.

Theme 1: Challenges Related to Teachers, Subject Matter and Resources

Available literature suggests that challenges relating to the subject matter of Business Studies are based on the need for teachers to keep abreast of developments in the business world vis-à-vis business pedagogy (McKenzie and Swords 2000; Ottewill and Macfarlane 2003). Six respondents in this study agreed that the ever-changing trends in the business world mean that teachers should assess the impact of such changes on their day-to-day professional lives and how they might accommodate such changes in the content they teach. These respondents were of the view that new trends in the business world, such as the advent of e-commerce or e-banking, need to be incorporated into what they teach; however, these same respondents went on to say that busy teachers do not find this easy to do.

Closely linked to the challenge of keeping up to date is the requirement that Business Studies teachers must strive to strike a balance between theory and practice, because the best way of learning business skills is through direct experience and practice and the use of closely simulated contexts. Seven of the teachers who took part in this study indicated that it is difficult to balance theory with practice, simply because the syllabus is too long and they cannot cover it using time-consuming, experiential pedagogies.

Four teachers said the lack of resources such as computers means that they cannot provide their students with concrete experiences of the business concepts and practices used in the real world. Some of them had this to say:

T2: "The content is too much. Balancing theory with practice needs time and if I try using field trips I will not complete the syllabus unless I do extra lessons other than the ones timetabled."

T6: "The time factor is a problem because there is not enough time as well as resources in the form of equipment such as computers."

T7: "My former school was in a rural area. It was not always easy to support theory with practice or to use real world situations such as field trips."

Apart from problems associated with the length of the syllabus, all eight respondents cited the lack of financial resources as a problem that prevents them from using field trips as a way of extending the traditional classroom environment to outdoors, thus enabling learners to observe business settings first-hand (and thus linking theory with practice):

T2: "I have had problems with the administration of the school refusing to release funds to take learners on field trips".

T4: "Due to limited funds it is not easy to undertake field trips".

T5: "Lack of funds and transport means that we cannot ferry students to places of interest, especially if they are a long distance from the school".

T8: "I have never taken students on a field trip because most of the places they can visit are in nearby towns and it is not easy to transport them there".

These findings confirm Sithole's findings (2010) who, in his study on the pedagogical practices relating to the teaching of Business Studies in Botswana, came to the conclusion that teachers rarely used action-oriented teaching methods because they feared sacrificing syllabus coverage in depth at the expense of coverage in breadth. It must be borne in mind, however, that using only traditional methods such as the lecture, question-and-answer and "drill" are not conducive to the development of business ideas, concepts, understandings and attitudes. This is because such methods only help students to learn about the theory of business – they help to teach the fundamentals but not the

application of business theory (Sherman et al. 2008; Brendel and Yengel 1972). Although field trips are known to be expensive in terms of time and money, this should not be a deterrent to the business teacher in an under-resourced school because, in fact, they can conduct inexpensive site visits in their local communities.

Computer-aided learning (CAL) is one of the methods recommended for teaching junior secondary school Business Studies in Botswana, the rationale being that it is now accepted that the integration of modern information and communication technologies (ICT) into the teaching-learning process has a great potential as a tool to support learning. Various information and communication technologies tools, such as business simulations, databases, Excel, blogs and the internet are used in Business Studies. The internet, simulation programmes, database and spreadsheet applications enable students to understand the relevance of Business Studies to real life. Responses in this study indicate that specialist classrooms for teaching Business Studies are available in the schools in the form of Business Studies laboratories and that teachers do use ICT in their teaching. A problem cited by five of the respondents is that, although computers are available in schools, there are not enough to go round and Business Studies teachers are therefore obliged to “fight” over these computers with their colleagues, that is, those who teach Computer Awareness:

T1: “The department has only two computers and that makes us not to use computers more often. We are advised to use computers in the computer lab provided our lessons do not clash with Computer Awareness lessons.”

T3: “There is a computer lab which is always available.”

T4: “There are no computers in our lab unless you request for a slot in the computer lab which is not easy to get since it is used for other things (Computer Awareness).”

T5: “There are few computers in the computer lab which are used during Computer Awareness lessons and in the afternoons they are reserved for teachers to type tests and other reports.”

What is evident here is that the use of computers as a pedagogical tool in Business Studies may be hampered by the shortage of equipment rather than facilities. Another constraint is

that computer laboratories in the schools are used primarily for teaching Computer Studies and usually, therefore, these resources are not readily available to Business Studies teachers and their students.

Theme 2: Challenges Relating to Students

Student motivation and attitudes towards Business Studies is another challenge facing teachers. Some students are inclined to think that Business Studies, especially the Accounting and Bookkeeping component, is confusing or difficult; this is because they are convinced that, to do these subjects, one first has to be proficient in Mathematics. Six interviewees in this study were of the opinion that students perceived Business Studies, especially the Accounting component, to be “difficult” and, as a result, most students opted to do Commerce and Office Procedures rather than Commerce and Bookkeeping/Accounting:

T1: “Most students are willing to opt for Business Studies than other optional subjects but they would not opt for Accounting since they think it is difficult and so they go for Office Procedures.”

T3: “A lot of students are not motivated as they believe that the subject is very difficult and challenging because of terminologies used that is above their level of understanding.”

T7: “Most students like the subject except for a few who have Mathematics phobia and relate the subject with mathematics.”

T8: “At junior secondary school the students are interested in Business Studies but they have a fear of the Accounting option because they associate it with Mathematics.”

The problem of perceiving a subject to be difficult needs to be addressed, because studies have shown that individuals with a low academic self-concept in a particular subject have low commitment to school (Yara 2010). Furthermore, Marsh (1993) found that there was a strong relationship between self-concept in a subject and academic achievement. It is therefore recommended that Business Studies teachers demystify the perceived difficulty of Accounting and that they instil self-confidence in their students.

Another problem cited is that students have problems with Business Studies content, because they only start studying it in secondary school – in other words, they have not had any exposure to the subject in primary school. This presents teachers with the problem of having to teach learners a completely new discipline. Two interviewees also said that the content of Business Studies is too theoretical – to the extent that learners dislike this subject. Only one of the respondents expressed the view that Business Studies is an “easy” subject and that learners have no problem studying this subject. Here are some of the participants’ responses:

T1: “Students do not have prior knowledge of Business Studies from primary school so it becomes a problem to bring them on board.”

T2: “Students lack knowledge of the subject because they are not taught the subject at primary school. Also they have no exposure to business issues that could equip them with business knowledge.”

T6: “Some of the content is too theoretical and it is difficult to make learning meaningful. For example, “International Trade.”

T8: “Learners have a problem in understanding the Business Studies content due to the language used...I mean business jargon.”

While the argument that some of the problems emanate from the fact that Business Studies is not taught in primary school may be valid, one is tempted to be sceptical of the assertion that Business Studies is too theoretical. A cursory look at the syllabus reveals that the subject is indeed vocational, is “alive around us” and is amenable to the use of teaching and learning experiences that are contextualised.

An entrepreneurial pedagogical approach that is used extensively in the Botswana junior secondary school curriculum is the mini-enterprise project. A mini enterprise is a simulated or actual business enterprise conducted within a school. School-based mini enterprises can provide students with a number of varied experiences in that they can offer students opportunities to develop an understanding of the kind of work done in today’s workplace. However, there are those who believe that the methodology of the mini-enterprise is not suitable for students in lower secondary school. A study carried out in Botswana, Kenya and Uganda by Farstad

(2002) revealed that there is widespread reluctance, scepticism and resistance to self-employment by young students for reasons that include students’ age, maturity, autonomy from parents and lack of start-up capital. He also noted that very few students leaving junior secondary school start their own businesses. An item in this study, which sought to elicit teachers’ views on whether students were mature enough to successfully carry out mini enterprise projects, drew mixed responses. Three teachers felt that the students were mature enough for such a project, two teachers thought that students were mature enough but had some reservations, while three thought that it was too early to use this approach:

T1: “Students are not mature enough to do the mini-enterprise. They only show interest if the project concerns preparing food-stuffs which they can eat. They dodge lessons or show no interest if they are required to do projects that don’t produce or sell food items, for example, car wash company.”

T2: “Yes, they are mature enough to do the mini-enterprise project. The problem is the scope or level of coverage that learners at this level are expected to do. The material is too much for them. There is a need to scale down the mini-enterprise to their ability.”

T3: “Students should start from an early age so that they can be sustainable entrepreneurs (sic) in the future.”

T7: “They are not mature enough, since their thinking capacity is only limited to what projects they can do but how to run them is not an easy aspect at their age.”

It may be true that students at junior secondary school level are too young and may find it difficult to come up with meaningful business ideas, do meaningful market research, draw up business plans and so forth. However, the importance of nurturing and cultivating an enterprising culture must be encouraged at an early age. It is never too early to start preparing young people for their futures, because the entrepreneurship spirit consists of behaviours that can be encouraged from an early age (Lievens 2006). What is needed is to define the content of the curriculum and pitch it appropriately, that is, to learners’ cognitive development.

All eight respondents in the study indicated that they had no problems relating to students’

cultural diversity. What they do have problems with is the students' ability levels in terms of basic skills and knowledge of business practices/concepts. Schools in Botswana are expected to group able and less able students together and this explains the mixed ability nature of the average classroom in public schools. It is easy for students to get frustrated in a mixed ability class. Stronger students may feel held back, weaker students may feel pressured, and the teacher might have difficulties finding appropriate teaching materials and resources that fit the needs and interests of all students. Seven respondents indicated that they encounter problems resulting from the mixed ability of their classes. Scaffolding and differentiation of instruction are needed in mixed ability classrooms and this places a burden on teachers who are required to do a great deal of planning in order to provide a variety of materials at different levels to address the needs of all learners in the classroom.

T2: "It is difficult to cater for the needs of all students. Remedial work is required for those who are less able in the subject and fast learners have to be given extra work."

T4: "To a certain extent I encounter problems as there are varied academic abilities in my classes. They are many and it is not easy to take all of them on board."

T8: "It is not easy to teach these mixed ability classes especially when you are given a deadline to complete the syllabus. Much preparation is required for such delivery (differentiated instruction). I do not do it all the time."

What is evident here is that teachers do not find it easy to create classrooms that offer the necessary scaffolds and that also provide meaningful differentiation of instruction. It is not easy for teachers to move from "one size fits all" teaching to using teaching methods that meet the needs of diverse learners while maintaining high standards.

Theme 3: Challenges Relating to Policy

Other challenges faced by teachers concern government policies relating to teaching and learning such as preset education goals, the need to maintain standards and rigorous perfor-

mance assessments. To test this, respondents were asked whether they fully understood the Botswana education system's curricular goals. These include the need for academic subjects to be taught in such a way that they are related to the world of work and the need to use hands-on experiences in teaching, as well as involving people from industry and the community in order to instill, in students, work-related values and attitudes. Five respondents said that they fully understood curricular goals because they were orientated on these and that these goals are emphasised in school meetings and workshops. However, three teachers claimed that they were not familiar with these goals, since they had not received any orientation on them:

T5: "There is no orientation for teachers on school curricular goals and also teachers never read the aims and goals outlined in the syllabus. They just shoot straight (sic) to the topics, scheme and start teaching."

T6: "When teachers join the teaching field they are not oriented enough. They are shown the class and timetable so that teaching can take place and other things will come later."

Five teachers in the sample are aware of curricular goals. A curriculum serves as the guide to teachers, students, the school and parents. It is important to be fully aware of curriculum goals, because these goals in effect hold teachers accountable in terms of the curriculum they are teaching; they also serve as markers on which teachers can base their effectiveness.

Business Studies teachers also indicated that they have problems in complying with the requirement stipulated in the syllabus that they use action-oriented teaching methods such as project work, visits to commercial enterprises, simulations, case studies and class presentations. Five teachers cited the following as the major constraints here: the length of the syllabus, the need to prepare appropriate teaching resources, and the time-consuming nature of using experiential pedagogies. As a follow-up to this, each teacher was asked whether or not the time allocated to the teaching of Business Studies was adequate. Seven teachers agreed that allocating four periods per week of 40 minutes each in a five-day week was not enough:

T1: "The periods allocated are not enough and we have to teach during study time and even on Saturdays in order to complete the syllabus."

T4: "The time allocated for the subject is limited and does not give room for practical experiences."

T5: "No, the time is not enough to cover the content in the syllabus."

T8: "Yes the number of periods is sufficient. There are six periods per week even though it is stated that there should be four."

What is emerging here is that the time allocated to Business Studies on schools' timetables is not adequate. As a practical subject it requires more time on the school timetable. This is further supported by results from a study undertaken by Sithole (2010) on the teaching of Business Studies in Botswana's schools. In this study, respondent teachers clearly insinuated that the Business Studies syllabus is too long and there is no way it can be covered if teachers were to employ learner-centred methodologies (which the teachers perceived to be time-consuming).

Business Studies teachers, like all other teachers, face administration-related challenges in their line of duty. They do administrative duties such as maintaining discipline among the students, preparing schemes of work, planning lessons, giving guidance and counselling to students, keeping and filing records, bulk photocopying for class use, and supervising extracurricular activities (for example, sports and social clubs) in the schools, etc. In this study, six out of the eight respondents insinuated that scheming and planning lessons is neither burdensome nor challenging because this is something expected of teachers the world over. Although no clear pattern emerged, what Business Studies teachers find challenging and/or burdensome are extra responsibilities such as being subject coordinators, attending management meetings, chairing departmental meetings and doing the paperwork connected with the performance management system (PMS) etc.. They claimed that such duties are demanding, involve a lot of paperwork and "waste" their time:

T2: "Administrative duties like chairing departmental meetings, management meetings and challenges representing the school on out of school activities and assessing (other) teachers is a burden."

T4: "There are many duties which take most of our time and we end up failing to prepare

well for lessons, for example, sometimes we are pulled out of lessons to settle disputes between students."

T6: "The administrative duties take most of our time especially in the area of PMS. There are a lot of meetings and documentation to be done. For example review meetings in which we are required to bring documents whereas (sic) exercise books are waiting to be marked."

T8: "There are too many duties...class teacher, subject coordinator, PTA Treasurer, cluster vice chairperson, PMS initiative and many more. When do I get time to teach?"

Although one may argue that teachers should not be routinely required to undertake tasks of a clerical or administrative nature that do not call for the exercise of their professional skills and judgment, and that such tasks should be undertaken by support staff so teachers can focus on teaching, it must be remembered that teachers today are expected to do more than teach. Teachers have to respond to the requirements of each school. Someone once said that "teachers are everything": they are counselors, parents, policemen, judges, social workers, etc. That is the life of a teacher, it is part of being a teacher and it always has been.

CONCLUSION

Teachers have the opportunity to make a huge impact on their students, but with that opportunity comes many challenges. In this study the challenges faced by Business Studies teachers in their day-to-day practices were grouped into three main categories: challenges relating to teaching the subject matter and resources, challenges relating to students, and challenges relating to policy. From the evidence, the challenges relating to teacher, subject matter and resources were mainly concerned with the need for business teachers to keep abreast of developments in the business world, the length of Business Studies syllabus (which made it difficult for teachers ability to use experiential teaching methodologies), and the lack of financial resources (which prevented them from purchasing sufficient instructional resources and/or engaging in educational excursions and other forms of contextualised learning activities).

Four areas associated with teacher challenges relating to students were identified: (1) Business Studies teachers are likely to face problems in

terms of students lack of prior knowledge in business subjects, because they will not have studied related disciplines in primary school; (2) they also face challenges of adjusting their instructional strategies to deal with individual differences in mixed ability classes; (3) respondents also cited junior secondary pupils' immaturity as the reason why they find it difficult to meet the demands of mini-enterprise projects; and (4) the misguided belief held by some students that the Accounting component of Business Studies is "difficult", which means that many students opt to do Commerce and Office Procedures rather than Commerce and Bookkeeping/Accounting.

Finally, the study identified three major policy-related challenges facing Business Studies teachers. Teachers indicated that they have problems in complying with the syllabus requirement that they use action-oriented teaching methods because this approach is time-consuming and the syllabus they have to teach is long. Related to this is the belief, on the part of teachers themselves, that the time allocated to Business Studies on schools' timetables is not adequate. As a practical subject and because of the long syllabus, teachers believe that the subject requires more time on the school timetable. Lastly, teachers believe that they are obliged to undertake tasks of a clerical or administrative nature that do not call for the exercise of their professional skills. They said administrative tasks take a lot of their time which they could use more productively doing their core business, which is teaching.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are put forward to help Business Studies teachers who face a number of challenges in their day-to-day work.

Instructional Materials

Although the shortage of computers in schools is likely to significantly reduce the use of a hands-on approach in the teaching of Business Studies, teachers can still source instructional materials from the local community with a minimum expenditure of time, energy and money. Local magazines or newspapers, business docu-

ments (for example, source documents in Accounting, financial reports, consumer protection pamphlets and many more) can be obtained from the business community for use in developing case studies, problem-based cases and a host of other cooperative classroom activities.

Experiential Pedagogies and Timetabling Issues

Teachers also indicated that they rarely use action-oriented teaching methods prescribed in the syllabus because the Business Studies syllabus is too long; using experiential pedagogies would make it impossible to cover it. This argument is certainly valid, because available literature suggests that most vocational and business subjects are not adequately represented on school timetables. Some respondents in this study indicated that, although the syllabus stipulates that Business Studies be taught in four periods per week of 40-minutes each, their school administrators allocated more time to this subject – in some cases, up to six periods per week. This sort of internal arrangement within the school itself may be one way of resolving the issue.

Differentiated Instruction

The mixed ability nature of classes also posed challenges as far as catering for the needs of all students was concerned. Teachers could meet this challenge by experimenting with the use of differentiated instructional strategies. Differentiated instruction is an approach to teaching and learning for students with different abilities in the same classroom. By using differentiated instruction, teachers can structure learning environments that address the variety of learning styles, interests, and abilities found within a classroom. They can provide appropriate levels of challenge for all students, including those who lag behind, those who are advanced, and those who find themselves somewhere in the middle.

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