



The Consequence Of Overcrowded Classrooms In The Teaching And Learning Of Entrepreneurial Subjects In Secondary Schools

Khutso Pitso Mankgele¹

¹Department of Social science education and Economic management education, University of Limpopo, Polokwane, South Africa

Abstract

Over the past decade, the issue of overcrowded classrooms has become a growing concern in secondary schools across South Africa. In recent years, secondary schools have witnessed a significant increase in learner enrolment, leading to overcrowded classrooms. This issue has particularly impacted the teaching and learning of entrepreneurial subjects, which are crucial for equipping learners with the necessary skills and knowledge for future business ventures. Overcrowded classrooms have several consequences that hinder effective education in entrepreneurial subjects. The purpose of this study is to provide views of both teachers and learners on overcrowded classrooms and how it affects teaching and learning in secondary schools of the Sekhukhune East District. The study employed a survey design; the population consisting of teachers and learners in secondary schools. The total populations of twenty (20) teachers were used for the sample, while two hundred and thirty (230) learners were randomly selected. The research instruments used in data collection were questionnaire. The findings of this study revealed that overcrowded classrooms have negative implications on the effectiveness of teaching and learning of entrepreneurial subjects in secondary schools. The relationship between overcrowded classrooms, effective teaching and learning is very low. The author recommends among other things, that management should employ more teachers for the teaching of entrepreneurial subjects in secondary schools if they want to admit large number of learners because of income, also the DBE should make extra effort to provide more resources and facilities to promote effective teaching and learning of entrepreneurial subjects.

Keywords: Overcrowded Classrooms, Entrepreneurial Subjects, Teaching and Learning, Hope Theory, Secondary Schools





1. INTRODUCTION

Despite concerted efforts to improve the quality of education by cutting down class sizes, it seems large classes are still a thing in the 21st century (Bold et al. 2018; Marais, 2016). Jacob et al. (2016) observe that “across the globe, trends in education have reflected significant increase in student enrolment”. Consequently, class sizes have gone up, eroding some of the gains made in class size reduction in the second half of the 20th century. The maximum recommended learner-educator ratio for South African primary schools is 40:1 and for secondary schools 35:1 (Motshekga, 2012). However, there are schools in South Africa that have a greater number learners in one classroom than recommended. Overcrowded classrooms are unfortunately a part of South African education and will remain a part for the immediate future and perhaps even for the long-term future. Large class sizes can be an overwhelming experience for newly appointed teachers if they lacked exposure to teaching in overcrowded classrooms during their training years (Opoku-Asare et al., 2014). Overcrowded classrooms are noticeable in many public secondary schools of South Africa. These have been attributed to different factors such as managing discipline, academic achievement, time management, learners’ attention span, learners’ motivation, teachers’ stress and burnout, to say the very least (Imtiaz, 2014; Bayat et al., 2014; Mustafa et al., 2014; Qasim & Arif, 2014; Opoku-Asare et al., 2014).

The teaching and learning environment in secondary schools plays a crucial role in learners' academic success and overall development (West & Meier, 2020). One factor that significantly impacts this environment is the class size. Class size refers to the number of learners enrolled in a particular class, and it varies across educational institutions and countries. Large class sizes have been a growing concern globally due to their implications for effective teaching and learning (Jepsen, 2015). Over the past decade, there has been a steady increase in learner enrolment in secondary schools, leading to larger class sizes (Lowenthal et al., 2019). This trend is expected to continue in the coming years, which raises concerns about the quality of business education in these settings (Duflo et al. 2012; Lowenthal et al., 2019).

Overcrowded classrooms in South African secondary schools have a significant impact on the teaching and learning of entrepreneurial subjects. According to a study conducted by Chimbi and Jita (2021), overcrowding in classrooms leads to reduced individual attention in learners, resulting in a decline in academic performance. In these large classrooms, teachers find it challenging to cater to the diverse needs of each learner, limiting their ability to provide personalized instruction and support. Additionally, the





limited physical space in overcrowded classrooms hampers effective teaching methods, such as group work and practical demonstrations, which are crucial for teaching entrepreneurial subjects. This makes it difficult for learners to gain the necessary skills and knowledge required for entrepreneurship (Muzenda, 2013). Therefore, overcrowded classrooms have a noteworthy consequence for the teaching and learning of entrepreneurial subjects in South African secondary schools. Hence, it is imperative to explore the implications of overcrowded classrooms on the teaching and learning of entrepreneurial subjects in secondary schools.

Overcrowded classrooms have detrimental effects on the teaching and learning of entrepreneurial subjects in secondary schools. According to a study conducted by Bahanshal (2013), overcrowding hinders effective teacher-learner interaction, preventing personalized instruction and inhibiting learners' ability to actively participate in classroom discussions and activities. This lack of interaction can result in decreased motivation and engagement, which ultimately affects learners' understanding and retention of entrepreneurial concepts (Marais, 2016). Furthermore, Bahanshal (2013) found that overcrowded classrooms lead to increased behavioural issues, as learners may become frustrated and disruptive due to limited space and resources. This disruption further hampers the learning environment and diminishes the quality of education provided. Therefore, addressing the issue of overcrowding in secondary school classrooms is crucial to improve quality of the teaching and learning experience in entrepreneurial subjects.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is founded on the theory of hope, which comes from the field of positive psychology (Kibby et al., 2015). Some scholars define hope as "a cognitive set that is based on a reciprocally derived sense of successful goal-directed determination and planning of ways to meet the goals," (Huen et al., 2015). Hope theory is based on the salutogenic paradigm, which focuses on people's coping mechanisms (Idan & Margalit, 2013). These authors go on to say that the principle is about maintaining a cheerful attitude regardless of one's current circumstances. Trzebiski and Zieba (2004) define basic hope as the acceptance of order, significance, and positivity. The foregoing explanations emphasise that giving up should never be an option. It is about being hopeful in the face of hopelessness. This message is important for commercial teachers in South Africa since they are dealing with a complicated and perhaps a more disheartening environment. This is exacerbated by the reality of a huge number of learners in the classroom.



2.1 Consequences of overcrowded classrooms on teaching

a. *Lack of individual attention and personalized instruction*

A major consequence of overcrowded classrooms is the lack of individual attention and personalized instruction (Opoku-Asare et al., 2014). Research has shown that large class sizes hinder the ability of teachers to provide individualized attention to learners (Shemshack & Spector, 2020). In overcrowded classrooms, teachers are often overwhelmed with the high learner-to-teacher ratio, resulting in limited interaction with each learner (Lockspeiser & Kaul, 2016). This lack of individual attention can negatively impact learners' understanding and retention of entrepreneurial subjects. Personalized instruction, which tailors teaching methods to individual learners' needs and learning styles, is crucial for effective learning (Bahçeci & Gürol, 2016). However, in overcrowded classrooms, it becomes exceedingly difficult for teachers to adapt their teaching strategies to accommodate the diverse needs of each learner (Barrio et al., 2017). As a result, learners may struggle to fully comprehend complex entrepreneurial concepts, hindering their growth and development in this field.

b. *Difficulty in managing classroom dynamics and maintaining discipline*

One consequence of overcrowded classrooms is the difficulty in managing classroom dynamics and maintaining discipline (Niculescu, 2016). With a large number of learners in one class, it becomes challenging for teachers to establish and maintain control over the learning environment (Borup et al., 2020). The limited physical space and resources makes it harder to implement effective management strategies (Kourkoutas & Wolhuter, 2013). Additionally, overcrowding can create a sense of anonymity among learners, leading to a decrease in individual accountability and motivation (Borup et al., 2020). The noise level in an overcrowded classroom can also be disruptive, making it harder for teachers to deliver instruction and for learners to concentrate (Franklin & Harrington, 2019). Consequently, teachers spend valuable instructional time addressing behavioural issues instead of focusing on teaching (Niculescu, 2016). These challenges can negatively impact the quality of education and hinder the learning outcomes in entrepreneurial subjects (Borup et al., 2020).

c. *Limited time for interactive and engaging teaching methods*

Overcrowded classrooms in secondary schools have significant consequences for the teaching and learning of entrepreneurial subjects. With limited space and resources, teachers find it challenging to provide individual attention and tailor instruction to the



diverse needs of learners (Kutbiddinova, 2014). As a result, learners may struggle to fully grasp key concepts and apply them practically (Exeter et al., 2010). Furthermore, overcrowding can hinder learner engagement and participation, as a larger learner-to-teacher ratio may create an impersonal and less interactive learning environment (Letseka, 2022). Research has shown that learners in overcrowded classrooms are more likely to experience higher levels of anxiety and stress, which can negatively impact their motivation and overall academic performance (West & Meier, 2020). Ultimately, the consequences of overcrowded classrooms in the context of teaching entrepreneurial subjects hinder the development of critical thinking skills, collaboration, and creative problem-solving abilities, all of which are vital for success in the business world (Matsepe et al., 2019).

2.2 Consequences of overcrowded classrooms on learning

a. *Reduced learner engagement and participation*

Overcrowded classrooms have been shown to have significant consequences on learner engagement and participation in educational settings (Bandiera et al., 2010; Matta et al., 2015; Kogl et al., 2016). Learners in overcrowded classes are more likely to feel disconnected from the learning process and less motivated to actively participate in class discussions and activities (Marais, 2016). This lack of engagement can result in reduced learning outcomes and hinder the development of important skills required for success in entrepreneurial subjects (Matta et al., 2015). Additionally, overcrowding can lead to a decrease in individual attention from the teacher, making it more challenging for learners to receive timely feedback and support (West & Meier, 2020). Consequently, learners may become disinterested and disengaged from the subject, leading to lower academic performance and a decreased willingness to explore entrepreneurial topics further (Fredricks et al., 2019). Thus, reduced learner engagement and participation are significant consequences of overcrowded classrooms, highlighting the importance of addressing this issue in secondary schools.

b. *Limited opportunities for hands-on learning and practical activities*

Limited opportunities for hands-on learning and practical activities pose a significant consequence of overcrowded classrooms in the teaching and learning of entrepreneurial subjects in secondary schools (West & Meier, 2020). With a high learner-to-teacher ratio, it becomes challenging for educators to provide individual attention and facilitate experiential learning experiences that are crucial for developing entrepreneurial skills (Munna & Kalam,



2021). As a result, the practical component of the curriculum may be compromised, inhibiting learners from acquiring essential skills and knowledge needed for real-world business situations (Mandukwini, 2016). Such limitations hinder learners from gaining first-hand experience in problem-solving, critical thinking, and decision-making processes, all of which are fundamental components of entrepreneurship education. Consequently, this lack of hands-on learning may affect learners' ability to apply theoretical knowledge into practical situations, ultimately diminishing their preparedness for future entrepreneurial endeavours (Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015).

c **Increased stress and anxiety among learners**

Increased stress and anxiety among learners is a significant consequence of overcrowded classrooms (West & Meier, 2020). Research studies have consistently shown a rise in stress levels among learners in crowded learning environments (Marais, 2016; Osai, et al., 2021). The limited physical space in overcrowded classrooms can create discomfort and unease among learners, making it difficult for them to concentrate on their studies (West & Meier, 2020). Furthermore, overcrowded classrooms often lead to increased noise levels and distraction, further exacerbating learners' stress and anxiety levels (Botha, 2022). The pressure to perform academically in such high-stress environments can also result in heightened anxiety among learners (Pascoe et al., 2019). Consequently, overcrowding negatively impacts the mental well-being of learners, hindering their ability to focus and learning effectively.

2.3 Two Null hypotheses was generated:

H01: There is no significant relationship between overcrowded classrooms and effective teaching of entrepreneurial subjects.

H02: There is no significant relationship between overcrowded classrooms and learning entrepreneurial subjects effectively.

3 METHODOLOGY

The study employed survey design. The population consisted of all teachers and learners in secondary schools in Sekhukhune East District. The total populations of twenty (20) teachers were used for the sample, while two hundred and thirty (230) commercial learners were randomly selected. The questionnaire used for data collection was an adapted five-point Likert type which was validated by experts in Business Education. The

questionnaire was tested for reliability using split-half method and its coefficient was 0.85 which implies that the instrument was highly reliable. The data collected were analysed using mean and Pearson Correlation coefficient at 0.05 level of significance.

4 RESULTS

Table 1. shows teacher’s responses on the effect of overcrowded classrooms on the teaching of entrepreneurial subjects. The table revealed that most of the respondents agreed that overcrowded classrooms prevent proper classroom management, give room for learners to cheat during assessments, create a stressed environment for the teacher, prevent proper understanding toward the attitude of the learners and create confusion on the teacher where instructional material are inadequate. These responses indicates that there are negative implications of overcrowded classrooms on effective teaching of entrepreneurial subjects in secondary schools.

Table 1: The consequence of overcrowded classrooms in the teaching of entrepreneurial subjects

<i>S/N</i>	<i>Questionnaire Items</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Decision</i>
1	Overcrowded classrooms prevent proper classroom management by the teacher.	3.44	S agreed
2	Overcrowded classrooms give room for learners’ cheating during assessments therefore creating unfavourable environment for the teachers during supervision	3.48	S agreed
3	Overcrowded classrooms create stress to the teacher.	3.09	S agreed
4	Overcrowded classrooms prevent proper understanding toward the attitude of the learners by the teacher.	3.24	Agreed
5	Overcrowded classrooms create confusion on the teacher where instructional material are inadequate.	3.36	S agreed

Table 2 shows the effect of overcrowded classrooms in the learning of entrepreneurial subjects in secondary schools in Sekhukhune East District. These responses indicated that there is negative effect of overcrowded classrooms on effective learning of entrepreneurial subjects in secondary schools.

Table 2: The consequence of overcrowded classrooms in the learning of entrepreneurial subjects

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Mean	Decision
1	Information from the teacher will not be properly disseminated.	3.32	S agreed
2	Opportunity for learners to exhibit unruly behaviour due to inability of teacher to control learners.	3.33	Agreed
3	Learners are less attentive in overcrowded classrooms.	3.16	Agreed
4	Facilities to enhance learning are not available in an overcrowded classroom.	3.70	S agreed
5	No motivation to attend classes	3.00	S agreed

Test of Hypotheses

H01: There is no significant relationship between overcrowded classrooms and effective teaching of entrepreneurial subjects.

Table 3. Relationship between overcrowded classrooms and effective teaching of entrepreneurial subjects

Variables		Overcrowded classrooms	Teaching of entrepreneurial subjects
Overcrowded classrooms	Pearson Correlation	1	0.225
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.310
	N	20	20
Teaching of entrepreneurial subjects	Pearson Correlation	0.225	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.310	
	N	20	20

The result presented in table 3 showed that the correlation coefficient for overcrowded classrooms and teaching of entrepreneurial subjects was 0.225. This value was



less than the level of significance (0.310). Hence, the null hypothesis one was not rejected. This means that there is no significant relationship between overcrowded classrooms and effective teaching of entrepreneurial subjects in secondary schools.

Table: 4 Relationship between overcrowded classrooms and learning of entrepreneurial subjects

Variables		Overcrowded classrooms	Learning of entrepreneurial subjects
Overcrowded classrooms	Pearson Correlation	1	0.393
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.442
	N	230	230
Learning of entrepreneurial subjects	Pearson Correlation	0.393	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.442	
	N	230	230

The result presented in table 4 showed that the correlation coefficient for overcrowded classrooms and learning of entrepreneurial subjects was 0.393. This value was less than the level of significance (0.442). Hence, the null hypothesis two was not rejected. This means that there is no significant relationship between overcrowded classrooms and learning of entrepreneurial subjects in secondary school.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that overcrowded classrooms have a negative implication on effective teaching of entrepreneurial subjects in secondary schools in Sekhukhune East District. It was revealed in the test of hypothesis that very low relationship exist between overcrowded and effective teaching of entrepreneurial subjects. This is in line with the findings of Chimbi and Jita (2021) found that overcrowded classrooms in secondary schools have a significant impact on teaching and learning outcomes. Overcrowded classrooms increase teacher’s workload, making it difficult for educators to provide individualized attention to learners (Osai et al., 2021). Furthermore, a study by Gray et al. (2016) reveal that lack of personalized instruction can hinder learner comprehension and



engagement. Furthermore, the study also revealed that effective learning becomes difficult in an overcrowded classroom. The hypothesis indicates that there was no relationship between overcrowded classrooms and effective learning. This implies that overcrowded classrooms do not encourage effective learning of entrepreneurial subjects.

6 CONCLUSION

Addressing the issue of overcrowded classrooms in South African secondary schools is of paramount importance for the future of education in the country. Overcrowding negatively impacts the teaching and learning process, particularly in entrepreneurial subjects. Failing to address this issue effectively will result in a generation of learners ill-prepared to contribute to the economic growth and development of South Africa. Thus, urgent intervention is required to create conducive learning environments with smaller class sizes, enabling learners to receive the attention and support necessary to excel in entrepreneurial subjects. Policymakers, educators, and stakeholders must prioritize reducing class sizes and improving the quality of education in these schools. By allocating sufficient resources and funding to hire more teachers and construct additional classrooms, policymakers can effectively reduce class sizes. In addition, teachers must be provided with continuous professional development opportunities to enhance their instructional skills and pedagogical approaches. Furthermore, stakeholders, such as parents and community members, should actively participate in advocating for improved education policies and support initiatives aimed at reducing class sizes. Through collaborative efforts, South African secondary schools can create conducive learning environments that encourage entrepreneurship and foster the development of a skilled and innovative workforce.

REFERENCES

- Bahanshal, D.A. (2013). The Effect of Large Classes on English Teaching and Learning in Saudi Secondary Schools. *English Language Teaching*, 6(11):49:59
- Bahçeci, F., & Gürol, M. (2016). The effect of individualized instruction system on the academic achievement scores of students. *Education Research International*, 6(2):1–9
- Bandiera, O., Larcinese, V & Rasul, I. (2010) Heterogeneous class size effects: New evidence from a panel of university students. *Economic Journal*, 120(549): 1365–1398





- Barrio, B. L., Miller, D., Hsiao, Y. J., Dunn, M., Petersen, S., Hollingshead, A., & Banks, S. (2017). Designing culturally responsive and relevant individualized educational programs. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 53(2), 114–119
- Bold, T., Filmer, D., Martin, G., Molina, E., Rockmore, C., Stacy, B., Svensson, J. & Wane. W. (2018). What do teachers know and do? Does it matter? Evidence from primary schools in Africa. Policy Research Working Paper 7956, World Bank Group, 1–35.
- Borup, J., Jensen, M., Archambault, L., Short, C. R., & Graham, C. R. (2020). Supporting Pupils During COVID-19: Developing and Leveraging Academic Communities of Engagement in a Time of Crisis. *Journal of Technology and Teacher Education*, 28(2), 161-169.
- Chimbi, G. T. & Jita, L. C. 2021. Resurgence of Large Class Sizes and Pedagogical Reform in 21st Century Secondary School History Classrooms. *Research in Social Sciences and Technology*, 6(3):45-63
- Duflo, E., Dupas, P., & Kremer, M. (2012). School governance, teacher incentives, and pupil-teacher ratios: Experimental evidence from Kenyan schools. National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper Series, 1–44.
- Exeter, D.J., Ameratunga, S., Ratima, M., Morton, S., Dickson, M., Hsu, D. & Jackson, R. (2010). Student engagement in very large classes: the teachers' perspective. *Studies in Higher Education*, 35(7), 761–775.
- Franklin, H & Harrington, I. (2019). A Review into Effective Classroom Management and Strategies for Student Engagement: Teacher and Student Roles in Today's Classrooms. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 7(12):1-12
- Fredricks, J. A., Parr, A. K., Amemiya, J. L., Wang, M.T., & Brauer, S. (2019). What Matters for Urban Adolescents' Engagement and Disengagement in School: A Mixed-Methods Study. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 34(5), 491-527
- Huen, J.M.Y., Ip, B.Y.T., Ho, S.M.Y & Yip, P.S.F. (2015). Hope and Hopelessness: The Role of Hope in Buffering the Impact of Hopelessness on Suicidal Ideation. *PLoS ONE*, 10(6):1-18
- Idan, O. & Margalit, M. (2013) Hope Theory in Education Systems. In: Katsaros, G.M., Ed., *Psychology of Hope*, Nova, New York, 139-160.
- Jacob, O.A., Oluwuyi, B.O., & Jacob, A.J. (2016). Relationship between class size and discipline of secondary school students in Yagba West of Kogi State, Nigeria. *Sky Journal of Educational Research*, 4(1):8-13.





- Kibby, M.Y., Dyer, S.M., Vadnais, S.A., Jagger, A.C., Casher, G.A & Stacy, M. (2015). Visual processing in reading disorders and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and its contribution to basic reading ability. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6:1635
- Kourkoutas, E.E. & Wolhuter, C.C., (2013). Handling learner discipline problems: A psychosocial whole school approach Koers. *Bulletin for Christian Scholarship*, 78(3):1-8
- Kutbiddinova, R.A., (2015). Activation of educational activity of students through interactive methods. *Bulletin of the University*, 3(2):210-214.
- Lockspeiser, T. M., & Kaul, P. (2016). Using individualized learning plans to facilitate learner-centered teaching. *Journal of Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology*, 29(3):214–217
- Lowenthal, P.R., Nyland, R, Jung, F, Dunlap, J. C. & Kepka, J. (2019). Does Class Size Matter? An exploration into faculty perceptions of teaching high-enrolment online courses. *American Journal of Distance Education*, 33(3):152-168
- Marais, P. (2016). We can't believe what we see: Overcrowded classrooms through the eyes of student teachers. *South African Journal of Education*, 36(2), 1–10.
- Matta, B.N., Guzman, J.M & Stockly S.K. (2015). Class size effects on student performance in a Hispanic-serving institution. *The Review of Black Political Economy*, 42(4): 443–457.
- Molise, H. (2021). Pathways to mitigate challenges of learner academic performance in a Grade 10 economics class in South Africa. *Research in Social Sciences and Technology*, 6(1):83-101.
- Munna, A. S., & Kalam, M. A. (2021). Search Teaching and search learning process to enhance search teaching effectiveness: a literature review. *International Journal of Humanities and Innovation*, 4(1):1–4.
- Mupa, P & Chinooneka, T.I. (2015). Factors contributing to ineffective teaching and learning in primary schools: Why are schools in decadence?. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(19):125-132.
- Niculescu, M. (2016). Pupil class management. University course of lectures (in original in Romanian). Cluj University Press.
- Opoku-Asare, N.A., Agbenatoe, W.G & DeGraft-Johnson, K.G. (2014). Instructional strategies, institutional support and student achievement in general knowledge in art: Implications for visual arts education in Ghana. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 5(21):121-134
- Osai, J. A., Amponsah, K. D., Ampadu, E., & Commey-Mintah, P. (2021). Teachers' experiences with overcrowded classrooms in a basic school in Ghana. *International Online Journal of Primary Education*, 10(1), 73-88.





- Pascoe, M.C.; Hetrick, S.E & Parker, A.G. (2019). The impact of stress on students in secondary school and higher education. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 25(1), 1–9.
- Shemshack, A & Spector, J.M. (2020). A systematic literature review of personalized learning terms. *Smart Learning Environments*, 7(1):1-20.
- Trzebinski, J. & Zieba, M. 2004. Basic hope as a world-view: An outline of a concept. *Polish Psychological Bulletin*, 35(3):173-182.
- West, J. & Meier, C. (2020). Overcrowded classrooms – The Achilles heel of South African education?. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 10(1):1-10.

