Entrepreneurial orientation and practice: three case examples of historically disadvantaged primary schools

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Historically disadvantaged schools are mostly in a position where they cannot easily practise entrepreneurial customs like innovation, proactiveness and risk-taking. However, some of these schools perform well under similar circumstances and show strong entrepreneurial inclinations. In fact, in research conducted in 2006, Lebusa and Xaba found that there were very strong prospects of fostering entrepreneurial customs at historically disadvantaged schools. It was found that schools were already practising innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking, albeit unintentionally. We report on the practice of innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking at historically disadvantaged schools. Case examples of three successful entrepreneurial historically disadvantaged primary schools are presented. Results indicate novel and innovative ventures undertaken at these schools and clearly indicate that some historically disadvantaged schools are indeed entrepreneurially oriented.

Introduction and background

Historically disadvantaged schools in South Africa often face enormous challenges relating to resource acquisition to ensure effective education delivery. This is because these schools are located mostly in poverty-stricken areas, mostly townships, rural and farm areas. These areas are historical settlements designated for blacks and are characterised by poor socio-economic conditions and poor educational infrastructure and resources. In this regard, Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) (2002/2003) states:

> … 90% of learners are still in schools that are in townships … They are receiving an education that few can be proud of. They are faced with trying conditions and are faced with barriers to learning, which include limited curriculum offerings, inadequate teaching and learning resources and a host of other constraints.

As implied by Kamper (2008:2), historically disadvantaged schools are basically poor schools and are typified by, among other features, school environments that are typically characterised by unkempt premises, rundown buildings, damaged and inadequate furniture, poor waste management facilities, substandard toilet and sanitation facilities and physical danger areas. While these features are all too common in many historically disadvantaged schools, the challenge is in addressing them. To meet these challenges, historically disadvantaged schools need to devise innovative and creative approaches to overall educational delivery and, specifically, acquire resources they need. This implies an entrepreneurial orientation and a practice of entrepreneurial customs. Indeed, as alluded to earlier, some historically disadvantaged schools already do well in this regard.

The very nature of schools makes it difficult to embark on innovative ventures outside prescribed policy directives and regulation. To this end, Hess (2007:22) points out that schools confront challenges that the education system was not designed to handle. While there have been numerous initiatives aimed at improving education service delivery, the nature of schools has often inhibited the practice of proactiveness, innovativeness and risk-taking as levers for continuous renewal of schools. In elaboration, Davis (2006) raises the following issues regarding why innovation and, by implication, entrepreneurial orientation, is difficult at schools, namely:

- Schools are harmonious systems where people gravitate towards system norms and much attention is devoted to optimising routine activities.
- Pressure for accountability and standardisation inhibit curiosity and the exploration of innovative ideas.
- Scarce and unpredictable fiscal resources discourage innovation and risk-taking.
- Public notions of good schooling are notoriously conservative and rooted in practices of the past.
- The continuously swinging pendulum of reform can become tiresome to veteran educators and, as a result, they seek refuge in their work and become resistant to the diffusion of innovation.
- Sclerotic hierarchies and enduring adherence to principles of scientific rationalism dominate organisation structures at schools and, as a result, there is little room for independent or divergent thinking and there is little tolerance for the non-linearity associated with the creative process.
- Experimenting with and using untested methods and materials on children raise serious ethical issues.

However, many historically disadvantaged schools perform well under challenging circumstances, especially with regard to teaching and learning resources. On whether there are prospects of these schools fostering entrepreneurial customs, Lebusa and Xaba (2007) found that there were indeed strong prospects for fostering entrepreneurial customs at these schools. In fact, Morris and Jones (1999:78) confirm this notion and assert that there have always been elements of innovativeness and entrepreneurship in public sector organisations, including public schools and, in this case, at historically disadvantaged schools. Consequently some historically disadvantaged schools have managed to attract much-needed resources by using novel strategies. In fact, these schools have demonstrated an entrepreneurial orientation by taking well-calculated risks, being innovative and proactive.

In this paper we expand on previous research (Lebusa & Xaba, 2007), which found that historically disadvantaged schools in South Africa have very strong prospects of fostering entrepreneurial customs of innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking. The question focused on is: How do historically disadvantaged schools practise entrepreneurial customs? The question seeks to uncover how these schools practise entrepreneurial customs and which innovative ventures they have undertaken in this regard.

Conceptualisation: entrepreneurial orientation and practice

Eyal and Inbar (2003:224) state that entrepreneurship comprises the primary function of innovation, which refers to the ability to combine resources in a novel way and thus create new commodities and/or methods of production. Nieman, Hough, Nieuwenhuizen (2003:9) assert that entrepreneurship causes changes through innovations of individuals who respond to change opportunities in their environment, while Timmons and Spinelli (2004:47) see entrepreneurship as an opportunity-obsessed, holistic approach and a leadership-balanced way of thinking, reasoning and acting. Echols and Neck (1998:2) see entrepreneurship as a process and indicate that it takes place in different environments and settings which causes changes through innovations brought about by individuals who generate or respond to opportunities that create value for both them and for society.

Entrepreneurship in the school organisational sense implies an entrepreneurial orientation, which relates to seeking out opportunities that improve both the material and instructional conditions. According to Jun and Deschoolmeester (n.d.), an entrepreneurial orientation displays three dimensions namely, innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking. Innovativeness, according to Glor (2001), is the process of implementing and using new ideas. Maas and Fox (1997:64) define innovativeness as a willingness to emphasize novel ways of delivering products and services in a more effective, efficient and responsive way. Thus innovativeness is a spark that keeps organisations and people moving ever onward and upward and, as pointed out by Kotelnikov (2007):

> Without innovation, new products, new services, and new ways of doing business would never emerge, and most organisations would forever be stuck doing the same old things the same old way.

Proactiveness, according to Maas and Fox (1997:64), implies a willingness to be the first to respond to needs for new or better products and services. Burns (2005:28) sees proactiveness as seeking out opportunities, acting quickly and decisively to make the most of an opportunity before somebody else does. In that sense, proactiveness means being restless and being unwilling to wait for others to complete tasks. Therefore proactiveness is related to pioneering and initiative-taking in pursuing new opportunities or entering new markets (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996:148). In this sense, proactiveness signifies aggressive posturing relative to competitors and, as Morris and Kurakto (2002:4) contend, a proactive organisation is inclined to take risks through experimentation and is bold and aggressive in pursuing opportunities, thus attempting to lead rather than to follow competitors.

Risk-taking involves taking a chance or embarking on a venture even though there is no certainty of a positive or intended result. Coulter (2001: 206) describes risk-taking as relating to those conditions in which the decision-maker estimates the likelihood of certain outcomes or assigns probabilities to outcomes. Robbins and DeCenzo (2001:119) contend that risk-taking occurs when knowledge about a problem or venture is inadequate and it

cannot be determined with certainty what the outcome will be. Morris and Sexton (1996:8) posit that risk-taking involves the willingness to commit significant resources to opportunities having a reasonable chance of costly failure and that the risks are typically calculated and manageable.

It therefore seems that for (historically disadvantaged) schools to be entrepreneurial and to promote innovativeness, their principals need to be bold and lead schools towards tackling resource challenges they face. Levy (2005) asserts that principals are expected to be entrepreneurial in order to obtain necessary resources, funding and contacts for their learners' success and must forge significant partnerships with community organisations and corporations. Deal and Hentschke (2005:34) contend that among other features, entrepreneurial principals are relentlessness and able to motivate others, which means that they do not get discouraged easily; have unbending ideologies, pragmatic approaches and pride; have tolerance for risk; have ambition, perseverance, decisiveness and communication skills; and have self-motivation.

An entrepreneurial principal should also possess what are, according to Macke (2003:7), qualities of an entrepreneurial spirit, which include visionary leadership, which is key to identifying opportunities; courage and prudent risk-taking, which are necessary for making the opportunities come alive; being a change agent within the school; a diversity of experience and interests, which is required for creating innovation and sponsoring change; and a business sense as a way of thinking. Macke (2003:12), citing Sahlman and Stephenson, provides a most illuminative view of entrepreneurial orientation and practice at schools, that entrepreneurs identify opportunity, assemble required sources, implement a practical action plan and harvest the rewards in a timely, flexible way. We concur with Macke that an entrepreneurial principal should master a basic set of skills that include recognising change and the opportunities and threats it creates, acting proactively rather than reactively, harnessing his/her creative potential, understanding the difference between an idea and an opportunity, developing effective plans, and understanding the difference between forecasts and budgets.

The entrepreneurial orientation and practice of entrepreneurial customs at historically disadvantaged schools can thus be judged in terms of whether opportunities for improvement are proactively identified and acted upon. In particular, and of interest, is the way in which, firstly, to supplement resources, these schools identify sustainable ventures that generate resources. Secondly, whether these schools identify opportunities aimed at the improvement and reinforcement of teaching and learning practice. It is thus crucial that historically disadvantaged schools strive to succeed in identifying opportunities out of existing resources to strengthen their educational endeavours. This is more so in the light of the fact that these schools usually compete for the same resources in their environments. In fact, these schools' survival seems basically to hinge on attracting learners, so as to qualify for more funding in terms of their quintile[1] classification.

Empirical investigation

We used a qualitative approach, which comprised three case examples of entrepreneurial orientation and practice in historically disadvantaged schools. Case examples are regarded as an exploration of a "bounded system", which can be a process, event, activity, programme, individual or multiple individuals (Fouché, 2002:275). In a case example, the exploration and description of the case takes place through data collection methods involving multiple sources of information including documents, archival records, fieldnotes, photographs, personal documents, memos, interview transcripts and observations (Fouché, 2002:275). In this study, observation of schools' environments and telephone interviews with principals and a deputy principal in one school were used.

For data collection, one school was identified from a previous visit (during another study). We were fascinated by the apparent "well-resourcedness" of the school despite being in a poverty-stricken area and mostly serving learners from an informal settlement. Snowball participant identification and selection, which involves collecting data from a few members of the target population that can be located, and seeking information from them to locate other members of that population (Strydom & Delport, 2002:335), was used to identify two more schools for the study. The environments of these schools were then observed for possible observable features indicating entrepreneurial practice. The participants to this study were thus purposely and conveniently selected (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000:103; Strydom & Venter, 2002: 207).

Telephone interviews were preferred for being time-efficient, cheaper than face-to-face interviews, useful for gaining rapid responses and for collecting even awkward, embarrassing or difficult matters (Cohen *et al.*, 2000:291). Telephone interviews also allowed for more detailed acquisition of information than would be collected through a written survey, with respondents speaking freely rather than personally writing down their thoughts, which is both time consuming and prohibitive of obtaining more personal or true opinions (Croucher, Canning & Gawthrope, 2007:9). In securing appointments for the interviews, preliminary conversational discussions were held in preparation for the interviews. Cohen *et al.* (2000:291) point this out as a necessary step for ensuring that telephonic interviews realise their potential. The meaning of the concept, entrepreneurship in terms of three defining customs, namely, innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking, was discussed and expanded on. This was helpful, especially since the interviews were unstructured and guided only by the question: How have you, as a school, practised innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking to acquire additional funding and resources?

The question sought to uncover how the principals of these schools foster entrepreneurial customs through innovative and novel ventures. Prompts and probes were prepared beforehand and related to the schools' clients, the socio-economic status, challenges relating to entrepreneurial ventures and how success was attained. Because tape-recordings were not possible, process

notes of the interviews, which constituted the basis on which data analysis took place, were taken, clarified and elaborated upon after the interviews (Strydom & Venter, 2002:304). Data analysis comprised analysis and process note-taking during interviews, which involved a meticulous ascription of responses to entrepreneurial customs (*cf.* Cohen *et al.*, 2000:283), and involved noting regularities or commonalities and emphases in participants' responses. In this way, trends in entrepreneurial orientation and practice were identified. The final analysis culminated into reporting on:
• Descriptive data on the schools' demographics.
• Entrepreneurial practice and innovative ventures undertaken by the schools.

Findings
Observation of schools' environments
The three schools are located in the townships of Evaton and Sebokeng and consequently share similar socio-economic backgrounds. Common social problems include high levels of poverty and unemployment, orphaned children and child-headed households, low literacy levels and poor parental involvement in schools. The schools themselves are generally characterised by inadequate funding and a struggle for resources. These schools also have high enrolment figures, which is a sought-after "resource" at township schools.

From the observations of their environments, the three schools had resources that could be acquired only through expenditure of large financial resources. At schools A and B, there were combination courts for tennis, netball and basketball. Considering the difficulty of raising funds at historically disadvantaged schools, it was clear that these schools must have exploited opportunities also available to other schools or must have had innovative ways of raising enough funds to erect such amenities. Furthermore, at the three schools, there were neat and obviously productive vegetable gardens. It was also noted that adults worked in these gardens. It became clearer that these were unemployed parents providing a service to the schools and their own families. At school C, a number of parents were also seen working on a section of the school's roof. School A had solar energy panels used for the hot water geyser, which is a facility very few historically disadvantaged schools have, as well as boreholes used for watering the gardens and lawns. There was also a toilet-paper production "business" operated by the one of the general workers at the school. At School B, the school grounds were landscaped as a park, with train benches converted into benches. This presented a calm, aesthetic and relaxing atmosphere, especially since it was a very hot autumn day.

The schools' profiles
School A is located in a township "suburb",[2] west of Evaton, which is inhabited mostly by civil servants and business people. Its location has led to its classification as a quintile four school, which means it is in an affluent

area and thus qualifies for less funding from the Department of Education. However, only a small number of learners (about 30% of the 1,240) come from the "suburb". The principal, Mr A, indicated that "*the school draws most of the learners from low-income areas comprising an informal settlement and the low-cost housing township of Evaton West, consisting of low-cost housing developed by the state*". The school has neat buildings and attractive grounds with vegetable gardens and lawns.

School B is located in the north-eastern area of the Sebokeng township and serves learners mostly in the school's neighbourhood. It is located adjacent to another primary school. This is a factor in the competition for learners. A sizeable number of learners come from areas as far as De Deur, Palm Springs and Evaton, all of which are between three and six kilometres from the school. The enrolment is currently 850 learners. The school is classified as quintile three.

School C is situated in the central area of Evaton, one of the oldest townships in the country (established in 1904), which has not seen any significant infrastructural improvements and thus is still underdeveloped. The grounds and buildings are neat, with a well-designated parking area made of shades for vehicles. The overall enrolment is currently 1,057 learners from Grade R to Grade 7 and is a quintile 1 school. The school serves learners from central Evaton. Interestingly, a significant percentage (±13%) of learners come from areas serviced by other primary schools in Evaton. Some learners come from areas west of Evaton (±20%) and actually pass other primary schools to come to this school.

The following data presentation follows the telephone interviews and focuses on how entrepreneurial customs are practised, and innovative ventures undertaken at the schools.

Entrepreneurial practice and innovative ventures
Findings confirmed the earlier research assertion that historically disadvantaged schools have prospects of being entrepreneurial, and indicated that some schools are already entrepreneurially oriented. These schools have found ways of acquiring resources through exploiting existing opportunities open to all schools. The ensuing discussion indicates creative and innovative ventures used by these schools to attract much-needed resources. Their entrepreneurial practices demonstrate a notable degree of ingenious fusion of proactiveness, innovativeness and risk-taking.

The three schools demonstrate taking advantage of available opportunities to acquire resources, which implies that, as entrepreneurially oriented organisations, the three schools harness or employ existing overlooked and underused tools, ideas or approaches (Hess, 2007:22). These schools spot such opportunities, creatively and innovatively implement strategies to benefit from them and, in the process, take well-calculated risks.

Mr A, the principal of *School A*, indicated that their strength was in networking. He indicated that they always made sure that they were first to explore an opportunity. He stated: "*We want to be pro-active and be at the*

front of opportunity exploitation." He also pointed out that they identified opportunities and explored them with enthusiasm by also networking with community structures. He explained:

> *… faced with the reality of insufficient funds and lack of resources, with the school being classified a quintile 4 school and thus receiving low funding from the Department, we are forever challenged to come up with innovative ways of generating additional funds. … Our strength is rooted in parental support, a committed teaching staff willing to undertake challenges and the community. Once a venture is initiated, everyone throws their weight behind it. There are no tasks reserved for learners or for parents. We all participate. If empty cans are to be collected, all of us — parents, learners, educators participate.*

Mr A stated that they spotted opportunities that other schools were not utilising and creatively found ways to turn them to their advantage. An example is the "Collect-A-Can" competition, which invited schools to collect used cans. The school collecting the most cans would win a prize. School A exploited that opportunity to its advantage and benefited immensely. Mr A indicated that this was an example of their proactive and innovative strategies and explained:

> *An example is with our first project, the 'Collect-A-Can' competition. The competition was open to all schools. We thought of ways of collecting cans in such a way that we would collect the most cans. Our strategy targeted picnic spots, festivals, arranging with taverns, restaurants, supermarkets, "spaza"[3] shops and taxi ranks to leave bags for them to throw beverage cans in and inform us to pick them up once they were full. From this competition alone, we managed to collect in excess of R180,000 over a four year period.*

Another venture in School A involved identifying the need to generate income in a sustainable manner. Mr A explained:

> *With proceeds from the Collect A Can competition, we bought a toilet paper making-machine and started manufacturing toilet paper which we are selling to other schools and the general public. This project caught the attention of the Department of Agriculture in Gauteng and we were entered for the Botle-Ke-Botho competition for clean schools and wards and have been winning prizes amounting to thousands of rands annually. This enabled us to spend money on boreholes and a solar energy panel to save on water and electricity consumption.*

The success at *School B* seems to be located in doings things right and persistence and not getting discouraged in the face of failure. Ms B, the deputy principal indicated that they compiled well-prepared business plans because they targeted big business in most instances. She emphasised:

> *Persistence is our weapon. The companies we approach raise many issues like 'we are in the middle of the financial year'. We note that, and as soon as the financial year is about to begin, we are there. This way we demonstrate seriousness. This persistence really helps. For instance, schools have the Gauteng online computer centres. Most do not work. In our case, we*

persisted until the authorities got used to us. Now, every time we have a problem in our centre, we report and get assistance almost immediately.
Ms B also indicated that they exploit opportunities presented by community members and parents who know correct channels to be followed in these big companies. "*That way we approach the right people and save time and frustration of being sent from pillar to post.*"

Due to the school's proactive identification of opportunities and venturing, they got assistance from three large companies (a world's largest diversified resources company, a major rail company and the national lottery operator). The school acquired an intercom system, combination courts for netball, basket ball and tennis, train seats set up as benches on the school grounds which are used by learners during breaks and for relaxation. The school has also acquired a bus, which is used for transporting learners who stay in areas that are far. The bus driver is a parent. Ms B indicated that they realised that of the unemployed parents, some possessed useful skills and these were seen as opportunities to save money which would have been used to pay for outsourcing some functions. The parents see this as a way of contributing to the school, especially since they are unemployed and cannot contribute financially.

Mr C, the principal of *School C* located the school's success in being proactive and taking well-calculated risks. He explained:

There was a time when our enrolment was around 740, and we were facing a threat of losing good and talented educators to other schools through redeployment. Then, because we are at a poverty-stricken area, we qualified for a substantial Section 21 financial allocation. I realised that generally, more than 80% of the parents could not afford the school fees we requested, which was, in itself very little in terms of our needs. I decided then that this school would be a 'no-fee-paying school' — long before it became departmental policy and by the way, the Section 21 allocation also increased.

This decision resulted in the school's enrolment increasing to the current 1,054. Mr C indicated that this was a risky undertaking, since they did not know what the reaction would be. As it turned out, he stated: "*We attracted learners from the area and beyond, such that as we speak, learners come as far as Sebokeng (5 km away) and there are organised taxis that transport them*".

The school also takes advantage of opportunities presented by unemployed parents. Mr C stated:

We have a strong parent forum. Unemployed parents and community members participate in school ventures. For instance, they do gardening, repairs and maintenance, painting and plumbing work. This has helped the school to redirect funds to curriculum matters as these parents only charge small fees. But this has also created a spirit of school ownership in that they (parents) guard the school jealously against damage and burglary. In fact we have created a 'Friends of the School' movement, consisting mainly of community members who assist the school in various ways and also

alert us to opportunities existing in the community.

It seems that these schools have succeeded, as pointed out by Hess (2007:50), in "squeezing" into local markets or competition, and then enabling themselves to operate in them. They have identified areas of weakness in terms of funding as being related to learner enrolment. Thus their ventures seem to focus on influencing parental school choice so as to increase their enrolment figures. Thus, the resources they acquire are aimed at improving their teaching and learning practice, which in turn serves as a pull-factor in terms of parental school choice. Mr A explained that their focus was on creative teaching and integrating projects undertaken into their instructional offerings. He commented:

> *We were always looking for opportunities to improve the teaching practice by encouraging creative teaching. Thus educators are allowed free venturing and the use of novel teaching approaches. You see, we take teaching very seriously. Teaching is the best opportunity that can be explored. The innovativeness of our teaching practice is evidenced in educators' creative teaching. For instance, the Collect-A-Can and Botle-Ke-Botho projects were incorporated into the curriculum. We developed an active learning model which focussed on recycling and environmental waste management. These were integrated into Language Literacy and Life Orientation and linked to critical outcomes involving working effectively with others as members of a team, organising and managing activities responsibly and effectively, and developing entrepreneurial opportunities.*

Ms B emphasised that their best opportunity was in effective teaching and learning, hence the increase in enrolment figures. She emphasised:

> *We take teaching as our core function. An area of weakness we identified as an opportunity related to learners who could not read or write. We made sure that our remedial practice is effective and thus, the word spread. As it is, we get many learners from other schools, who struggle to learn. We identify their problems and place them in our remedial programme. We make sure that when they leave the school at the end of Grade 7, they have received effective remediation. Believe me, our enrolment is big, also because of this practice, and as I said, we place great importance on doing things right and persistence in whatever we do.*

Mr C stated:

> *Teaching and learning is our main weapon in terms of innovativeness, which aspect also attracts learners to the school. An innovation introduced at the school addresses reading. We embarked on a 'Drop Everything And Read' project (DEAR). Time is set aside everyday for reading, with educators guiding learners during reading. Colourful books, newspapers, magazines and prescribed works are used during DEAR. This venture has helped learners immensely and they enjoy it very much. This has helped to market the school as a performing school and as you can imagine, learners are attracted to the school as parents take notice of this.*

Discussion

It is clear from the findings that the three schools have features of entrepreneurial orientation and that there is a conscious awareness of proactiveness

in exploiting opportunities. This relates mostly to existing ventures. Examples include the exploitation of the National Lottery, Collect-A-Can and Botle-Ke-Botho competitions and the exploitation of information gleaned through networking with parents and community members.

All the ventures undertaken are indicative of innovativeness in that these were implemented up to their fruition, which indicates entrepreneurial features involving visionary leadership, perseverance and relentlessness, courage and tolerance for risk-taking and developing effective plans (Deal & Hentschke, 2005; Macke, 2003). This concurs with Wickham's (2001:368) assertion of the entrepreneurial practice relating vision to stakeholders through employing a variety of communication channels and forums, which is essentially a call to action as against a mere relaying of information. The 'Friends of the School" movement is particularly a creative and innovative practice in this regard.

It is also clear that these schools are innovative in implementing creative ideas involving identifying opportunities for saving money by utilising the unemployed parent population's skills. This is a feature of entrepreneurship as espoused by Echols and Neck (1998:2) in terms of a holistic and balanced leadership approach. Particularly interesting is the notion that "*once a venture is initiated, everyone throws their weight behind it*", which indicates an entrepreneurial characteristic of the ability to motivate others and self-motivation (Deal & Hentschke, 2005). This is particularly evident in Mr A who emphasised parental and community support and the use of various strategies involving the broader community entities to collect cans.

The three schools also indicate an entrepreneurial orientation in that their focus is not only on acquiring resources, but also exploiting opportunities that attract resources. In this regard, Timmons and Spinelli (2004) point out that entrepreneurship is a way of thinking which is opportunity-obsessed and holistic in approach. For instance, measures aimed at attracting learners to the school benefit these schools via an increase in their quintile classification as well as attracting "friends" who assist the school. This was clear in the increase in the enrolment at School B due to effectively using the remediation programme and using the school bus to transport learners coming from areas far from the school, and at School C due to not charging school fees.

Clearly, ventures undertaken at these schools were not without risk-taking. However, the relentlessness of their pursuits up to the completion of projects undertaken attests to their preparedness for risk-taking. In fact, principal C indicated that at times they would be discouraged by outcomes achieved which, at times, were less than their expectations. This, he indicated, spurred them on instead of discouraging them. He claimed: "*I encourage people at school to look at failure as a learning curve to build on for the future*". Ms B reiterated as much. She emphasised, "*We persist and persist. It pays off at the end. What we get, even if below expectations, is used to the benefit of future attempts*".

It was remarkable that entrepreneurial pursuits are not only focused on getting funding or resources. There is evidence that proactiveness and innova-

tiveness are also pursued in the teaching and learning situation. For instance, teaching and learning were indicated as important opportunities to exploit in attracting resources. The remediation programme (School B), and the integration of the Collect-A-Can and Botle-Ke-Botho projects into the curriculum and the DEAR project are cases in point. In addition, school A integrated their venture into the community as Mr A explained that they networked with stakeholders, which included the SGB members, parents and businesses in the area. This added an impetus to the venture and turned the initiative into a community project dealing with a sustainable environmental project. He stated:

> *We decided to run a sustainable environmental project and educate the community about the negative effects of litter and waste management as a solution to the problem. The active involvement of the community and other stakeholders in the area means exposure of the litter problem and an opportunity for them to learn solutions related to the problem.*

The spin-off in these projects involves attracting parental favour in terms of school choice, such that learner enrolments increase. The attitude of the schools in the face of failure indicates that entrepreneurial pursuits are not without challenges. Firstly, garnering parental support of unknown and risky ventures seems to be a challenge. Mr C indicated that it was initially difficult to convince parent and community members to provide services to the school, since it was like exposing their poverty to the public. Mr A indicated that it was only when initial successes were noticed that there was more and more support from parents and the community.

Secondly, departmental bureaucracy and rules is another challenge. For instance, deviating from normal prescribed departmental procedures was usually a challenge. Thirdly, increasing enrolment implies learners travelling long distances to school, which poses challenges in terms of the parents, mostly unemployed, having to pay for transport.

Finally, most ventures undertaken seem to be more of immediate need gratification than sustainable sources of income and resource generation. Ventures aimed at enhancing teaching and learning and the toilet paper manufacturing project appear to be the only sustainable resource generating strategies, while the success of other ventures in subsequent periods appears to be a function of chance rather than of a certainty.

Concluding remarks

The data collected have indicated that the schools studied do exhibit an entrepreneurial orientation and practice. The outcomes of successful projects have changed the way in which these school provide education and, most importantly, these ventures seem focused on improving education delivery through the acquisition of resources that improve learners' educational lives and well-being, both in class and in the school environment.

An area needing attention is the exploitation of opportunities in such a way that they become sustainable. Schools need to explore ventures that will lead to their being self-sufficient. At the same time, it would be prudent to

guard against entrepreneurial pursuits being an end in themselves. Projects that focus on teaching and learning effectiveness as a way of attracting additional resources should be part of school's entrepreneurial orientation.

The study is limited by the disadvantages inherent in telephone interviews, *inter alia*, the burden of proof and representivity. However, it does provide insight into the entrepreneurial orientation and practice at historically disadvantaged schools. To this end, a further study using a mixed method approach is envisaged.

Notes

1. South African schools are classified into five quintiles of 20% each, which range from the very poor schools to affluent schools and are thus funded on a sliding scale based on the community's relative poverty (Kamper, 2008:2). The lower the quintile, the more funding the school gets. The location of a school determines the poverty index of that school, thus schools in poor community get are funded more than schools in affluent communities.
2. "Suburb" in township language sometimes denotes an affluent settlement. Thus, whites-only settlements were known as suburbs while blacks-only settlements were known as townships. The denotation still applies, with better-off townships being loosely regarded as suburbs. These are populated mostly by civil servants with houses being bigger and structurally different than the traditional similar four-roomed state-built houses for blacks.
3. Spaza shops are small retail enterprises operating from a residential stand or home and engaged in the trading of consumer goods.

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