
***CAN STORYTELLING ENHANCE THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT OF
DISADVANTAGED YOUTH? A COMPARATIVE STUDY – ROMANIA AND SOUTH
AFRICA***

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Abstract: Education is the cornerstone of individual and community success. All youth deserve the chance to grow into healthy, educated and productive members of society no matter where or when they are born. Introducing young people to entrepreneurship develops their initiative and helps them to be more creative and self-confident in whatever they undertake and to act in a socially responsible way. But with almost half of the world's youth not completing or not having access to education it is hard even to think about developing their creative skills. We believe that storytelling - the conveying of events in words, and images, often by improvisation, can help youth in developing and trusting their own abilities and turning their ideas into action.

In our paper we try to analyze the way storytelling can enhance the entrepreneurial spirit of disadvantaged youth, in a comparative approach – Romania and South Africa.

Keywords: education, disadvantaged youth, storytelling, entrepreneurial spirit.

1. Introduction

Education is the cornerstone of individual and community success. All youth deserve the chance to grow into healthy, educated and productive members of society no matter where or when they are born. Education is more than just a teacher or a classroom. In order for youth to receive a quality education, it takes the focus and resources of the entire community to create learning-rich environments where dreams are fuelled and opportunities are delivered to those who need them. Introducing young people to entrepreneurship develops their initiative and helps them to be more creative and self-confident in whatever they undertake and to act in a socially responsible way.

As attitudes and cultural references take shape at an early age, education can play an important role in successfully addressing the challenge of entrepreneurship. Therefore, education should develop awareness of entrepreneurship from an early age.

However, the benefits of entrepreneurship education are not limited to more start-ups, but developing a skill that is also useful in both personal and social aspects of daily life. Softer skills, such as independent problem solving, the ability to take initiative and action orientation are often not harnessed and sufficiently developed. These skills could contribute to the success of an organization but many teachers or trainers in entrepreneurship have limited experience in the entrepreneurial process. This results in their teaching-offering being of an extremely theoretical nature.

But with almost half of the world's youth not completing or not having access to education it is hard even to think about developing their creative skills. We believe that storytelling - the conveying of events in words, and images, often by improvisation, can help youth in developing and trusting their own abilities and turning their ideas into action,

especially for those who are disadvantaged as it is less theoretical and more practical-oriented and appeals to their imagination and visualization.

2. Storytelling

Mainly, *storytelling is the art of using language, vocalization, and/or physical movement and gesture to reveal the elements and images of a story to a specific, live audience.* A central, unique aspect of storytelling is its reliance on the audience to develop specific visual imagery and detail to complete and co-create the story (http://www.eldrbarry.net/roos/st_defn.htm).

Most dictionaries define a story as *a narrative account of a real or imagined event or events.* Within the storytelling community, a story is more generally agreed to be a specific structure of narrative with a specific style and set of characters and which includes a sense of completeness. Through this sharing of experience we use stories to pass on accumulated wisdom, beliefs, and values. Through stories we explain how things are, why they are, and our role and purpose. Stories are the building blocks of knowledge, the foundation of memory and learning. Stories connect us with our humanness and link past, present, and future by teaching us to anticipate the possible consequences of our actions (http://www.eldrbarry.net/roos/st_defn.htm).

Stories are an incredibly powerful way to get our message across. Stories are a prime vehicle for assessing and interpreting events, experiences, and concepts from minor moments of daily life to the grand nature of the human condition. It is an intrinsic and basic form of human communication. More than any other form of communication, the telling of stories is an integral and essential part of the human experience.

Storytelling is an experience shared between teller and listener, and it helps youth develop the skills of listening and encourages them to visualize the story in their imaginations and fantasize safely. As entrepreneurs are like artists who dream, create and inspire beginning with a blank canvas, storytelling can help youth in visualize and create their dreams first in their mind and then putting it in practice in real life.

3. Entrepreneurship and Education

Early GEM research (*GEM South African Report, 2005 and 2010*) indicated that there is a strong relationship between population groups and entrepreneurial activity. Whites and Indians were more likely to start a business than were coloureds and black Africans. However, subsequent research (*GEM South African Report, 2008*) showed that this difference did not exist when all races had received post-secondary education. This clearly illustrates the importance of both good secondary and, in particular, tertiary education. With more than sixty percent of the youth already not completing matric, this perception with respect to the lack of importance of education, knowledge and skills is concerning.

South Africa's poor quality of education (*Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, 2013 South African Report, p. 23*) is disguised by the country's increasing matric pass rate (70% in 2011, 74% in 2012, and 78.2% in 2013). The increasing pass rate fails to take into account the number of learners who are dropping out of the system. 1 261 827 pupils started Grade One in 2002 – of these, 562 112 pupils wrote the matric exams in 2013. This means that although

439 572 young people passed matric – 78.2% of the students writing the matric exam – only 35% of young people that started their schooling in 2002 passed matric. While government policy on education has focused on increasing the quantity of education, the high dropout and failure rates within schools means that only a small percentage of South Africa's youth obtain a National Senior Certificate (matric).

Education is a predictor of individuals who believe they have the skills to start a business. The GEM report has found that individuals who are confident that they possess the skills to start a business are four to six times more likely to be involved in entrepreneurial activity. GEM research has shown that people with matric are 1.7 times and those with a tertiary education 2.9 times more likely to start a business than individuals without a matric. Having a tertiary education also significantly increases the likelihood that the business will survive beyond the start-up phase (*GEM, 2013 South African Report, p. 23*).

The Education and Training entrepreneurial framework condition relates to the extent to which entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial qualities receive attention in all phases of the educational and training system (Xavier et al., 2013, p. 36). In Romania, the scores in case of primary and secondary education are lower than in case of post school education. The primary and secondary education was one of the three most frequently negatively indicated framework condition by national experts in Romania.

The Cultural and Social Norms refers to the extent to which existing social and cultural norms encourage, or do not discourage, individual actions that might lead to new ways of conducting business or economic activities which might, in turn, lead to greater dispersion in personal wealth and income (Xavier et al., 2013, p. 35). This EFC was given an unfavourable mean score by the experts, indicating that South Africa's culture does not make entrepreneurship a highly desirable career choice for its population. This will have a negative impact on the size of the country's pool of intentional entrepreneurs. The quality of South African education is being affected by internal factors such as the quality and management of teachers and resources, and external factors such as gang violence and other socio-economic issues (*GEM, 2013 South African Report, p. 23*).

In Romania in opinion of the national experts the cultural and social norms should better support individual success through own personal efforts, creativity, innovativeness, entrepreneurial risk-taking, should emphasize more self-sufficiency, autonomy and personal initiative.

Only 28.66% of women in Romania believe that they have the required knowledge and skills to start a business and almost 50% of them have the fear of failure this preventing them from starting a business (*Entrepreneurship in Romania. Country Report 2012*).

Poor quality of education, high dropout and failure rates within schools, youth's reduced access to education due to financial factors, besides other external factors both in Romania and South Africa, make the development of youth's skills, creativity, initiative and self-confidence even more difficult.

Because disadvantaged youth is even more sensitive to these negative aspects, and self-confidence is even lower than to advantaged youth, storytelling could encourage them to express themselves, develop their confidence, imagination and creativity. As storytelling emerges from the interaction and cooperative, coordinated efforts of teller and audience,

disadvantaged youth and not only could learn to materialize their imagination and ideas. Children can use simple props to help themselves and develop their story and they do not need a proper stage for that. Storytelling can be developed within schools by trainers with a reduced budget as well.

Storytelling can enhance also intercultural understanding and communication with children. It can help them not only to explore their own cultural roots but also to develop an understanding, respect and appreciation for other cultures. It can promote a positive attitude towards people from different lands, races and religions. South Africa is more liable to introduce and use this kind of technique as it is part of the African heritage

The Department of Information Science of University of South Africa (UNISA) decided in 2009 to organize an annual storytelling festival, in conjunction with its annual children's reading conference. Through the years this Festival became a standard item on the calendar of the Faculty of Humanities. Initially it was only presented in Pretoria but in 2011 the decision was taken to take the Festival also to different regions: in 2011 in Polokwane, Limpopo Province in cooperation with the UNISA Regional Office; in 2012 in Phokeng, North West Province in cooperation with Royal Bafokeng and in 2013 in Bloemfontein, Free State in cooperation with the UNISA Regional Office.

Research is also done on the value of storytelling as far as intercultural communication and understanding are concerned - how international stories can help children to experience diverse cultures as well as to explore their own cultural roots. After the storytelling sessions focus group discussions are held with the children and storytellers on issues related to intercultural communication and understanding.

In 2014 the Festival took on a new format and research played a more important role. This time the Festival was taken to KwaZulu-Natal, and more specifically to the area near Mtubatuba. The theme of the Festival was the environment and climate change and a decision was made to bring only one international storyteller to the Festival, a storyteller and social science researcher from Vietnam who specifically works on climate change and other societal issues with young people. The session at Masibonisane High School (see Figure 1 and Figure 2) dealt with rhino poaching and involved a representative of Ezemvelo Wildlife of KwaZulu-Natal.



Figure 1 Storytelling Festival on Environment and climate change – September 2014, South Africa



Figure 2 Storytelling Festival on Environment and climate change – September 2014, South Africa

4. Comparative study – Entrepreneurship training in Romania and South Africa

The European Commission devotes special attention to entrepreneurship training from primary school to university, in order to encourage young Europeans to become entrepreneurs of the future. The South African government has also recognized the importance of entrepreneurship training and therefore has the goal of establishing South Africa as an entrepreneurial nation that rewards and recognizes entrepreneurship (*GEM, 2013 South African Report*).

Even though these two countries differ in many aspects (different continents, size, number of population, etc) there are many similarities when it comes to entrepreneurship, education and disadvantaged youth.

Regarding the phases of entrepreneurial activity in 2013 (Table 1), Romania and South Africa have almost the same rates. The only difference is recorded about the established business ownership rate where Romania recorded almost double the South African rate, suggesting that even though entrepreneurship is popular in South Africa, the activities have limited sustainability over time.

Table 1 Phases of entrepreneurial activity in 2013 in Romania and South Africa

Economies / Phases of entrepreneurial activity	Romania	South Africa
Nascent entrepreneurship rate	6.2	6.6
New business ownership rate	4.2	4
Early-stage entrepreneurial activity (TEA) = nascent + new rates	10.1	10.6
Established business ownership rate	5.3	2.9
Discontinuation of businesses	4.3	4.9
Necessity-driven (% of TEA)	31.6	30.3
Improvement-driven opportunity (% of TEA)	31.6	31.5

Regarding the gender distribution of early-stage entrepreneurs (Table 2) there are many similarities between Romania and South Africa. The only differences are recorded regarding the necessity of setting up a business. More females in South Africa are necessity-oriented and less males compared to Romania where men are more necessity-oriented than women. And more males in South Africa consider establishing a company an opportunity compared to Romania.

Table 2 Gender Distribution of early-stage entrepreneurs (TEA) and Necessity vs Opportunity Entrepreneurship, 2013

	Romania	South Africa
MALE TEA (% of adult male population)	12%	12%
FEMALE TEA (% of adult female population)	8%	9%
MALE TEA Opportunity (% of TEA males)	67%	72%
FEMALE TEA Opportunity (% of TEA females)	67%	65%
MALE TEA Necessity (% of TEA males)	33%	27%
FEMALE TEA Necessity (% of TEA females)	30%	35%

When it comes to entrepreneurial attitudes and perceptions in Romania and South Africa (Table 3) there are some differences. More South Africans (37.9%) perceive opportunities in setting up a business but have less intentions in doing that (12.8%), even though, fear of failure is less perceived by South Africans (27.3%) than the Romanians. Regarding media attention for entrepreneurship, it is more developed in South Africa than in Romania.

Table 3 Entrepreneurial attitudes and perceptions in 2013 in Romania and South Africa (% of population aged 18-64)

Economies	Attitudes/Perceptions	Romania	South Africa
Stage 2: Efficiency driven (includes transition to phase 3)	Perceived opportunities	28.9	37.9
	Perceived capabilities	45.9	42.7
	Fear of failure	37.3	27.3
	Entrepreneurial intentions	23.7	12.8
	Entrepreneurship as a good career choice	73.6	74.0
	High status to successful entrepreneurs	72.6	74.7
	Media attention for entrepreneurship	61.3	78.4

In South Africa more people expect to create at least 5 jobs in the early-stage entrepreneurship activity compared to Romania (3.4%), but less when it comes to more jobs. The creation of 0-5 jobs characterises the self-employed entrepreneurs, who do not aim at creating workplaces and a low job expectation entrepreneurial activity (modest job creators, often employ people from their own personal network). The rates recorded in Romania are more balanced than those recorded in South Africa. It means that the South Africans have more expectations and hopes at the beginning and less during the process of job growth.

Table 4 Job growth expectations for early-stage entrepreneurship activity, 2013

Job growth/Economies	Romania	South Africa
0 - 5 jobs (% adult population)	3.4	6.4

5 - 19 jobs (% adult population)	2.7	1.8
20 or more jobs (% adult population)	1.8	1.1

Table 5 Average expert ratings on education and training for entrepreneurship in South Africa, 2010 & 2013

Educational Entrepreneurship Framework Condition	Mean score 2010	Mean score 2013
Primary and secondary education encourages creativity, self-sufficiency and personal initiative	1.75	1.96
Primary and secondary education provides adequate instruction in market economic principles	1.67	1.63
Primary and secondary education provides adequate attention to entrepreneurship and new firm creation	1.83	1.75
Colleges and universities provide good and adequate preparation for starting up and growing new firms	2.33	2.33
Business and management education provides adequate preparation for starting up and growing new firms	2.60	2.50
Vocational, professional and continuing education provides good and adequate preparation for starting and grow new firms	2.32	2.13

A more in-depth look at the perceptions of the Key Informant Experts shows that their ratings for different aspects of education and training are well below average. This would seem to indicate that the current schooling continues to provide almost no grounding in the preparation for starting up and growing a new business

According to GEM, Adult Population Survey, Romania, 2007 – 2012, the intentional entrepreneurs with some secondary degree represented 36.1% in 2012, although their share in 2007 was only 2.7%. On the other hand, the share of those who obtained university degree decreased from 41.1% in 2007 to 4.4% in 2012 (*Entrepreneurship in Romania. Country Report 2012, p.17-19*).

Conclusions

Societies benefit from people who are able to recognise valuable business opportunities and who perceive they have the required skills to exploit them.

13.1% of the male youth and 8.9% of the South African female youth are involved in nascent or new businesses. Young men are therefore 1.5 times more likely to be entrepreneurial than young women. In terms of the profile of intentional entrepreneurs, males in South Africa are more likely to have entrepreneurial intentions than females (16% versus 12%). Black Africans have the highest rate of entrepreneurial intentions (16%) of the four race groups. A positive correlation was found between entrepreneurial intentions and level of education attained. Societal attitudes towards entrepreneurship are favourable in South Africa, and are higher than the averages for efficiency-driven economies.

More than half of the intentional entrepreneurs in Romania are aged between 18-34 years, while less than one quarter are older than 45 years. The early-stage entrepreneurial activity increased in case of younger entrepreneurs in 2012 and it remained higher among males than among females. The highest share of established entrepreneurs by education level categories can be identified among those who have a university degree, although this share decreased from 7.91% in 2011 to 6.9% in 2012. The highest early-stage entrepreneurial activity rate is registered among those 18-64 year olds who graduated a university, 29.31% from adult population with graduate experience was involved in early-stage entrepreneurial activity in 2012.

Based on our comparative study we can mention that there is a need of improved education in order to develop the entrepreneurial skills and abilities among young people both in Romania and South Africa. Besides poor quality of education, high dropout, failure rates within schools and youth's reduced access to education due to financial factors make the development of youth's skills, creativity, initiative and self-confidence even more difficult.

This study is only a preliminary one, intended to find out if there are similarities between the two analysed countries in order to implement storytelling in developing the entrepreneurial spirit of youth, especially for the disadvantaged one. We intend to develop a joint community project in which all the findings and hypotheses are to be tested and put in practice.

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