

Reimagining Entrepreneurship Education for Sustainable Futures: A South African Schooling Perspective

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship Education (EE) is experiencing growth at both primary and secondary educational levels worldwide, including in South Africa. It is increasingly advocated as a strategy for sustainable development. Nevertheless, the pedagogical foundation of EE for sustainable development in schools remains in the nascent stages of development. This paper examines the necessity of developing a more comprehensive vision of school-based EE, critiquing the growth- and human capital-oriented perspectives on sustainable development within EE. Considering the life-worlds of learners in South African communities—representative of broader contexts within the Global South—this paper proposes an approach to EE for sustainable futures grounded in the capability approach (CA). Building on this foundation, it advocates for a transformative model aligned with the principles of social and ecological justice, decolonisation and critical pedagogy. The proposed model introduces critical inquiry into 'spaces of unfreedoms' as a pedagogical starting point for the praxis of teaching in South African classrooms. It links EE with the ideas of capability expansion and sustainable development. The model supports an entrepreneurial learning process aimed at transformative action toward more equitable and sustainable futures. Its relevance extends to curriculum development, pre-service and in-service teacher education.

Keywords: entrepreneurship education, South Africa, sustainable development, school, decoloniality, SDGs, pedagogy, transformation, teacher education

Introduction

In the past decade, entrepreneurship education (EE) has gained increasing prominence within educational institutions, extending to primary education (Jardim et al., 2021). From a pedagogical perspective, EE has evolved beyond the narrow focus on economic value creation for business ventures (Bacigalupo et al., 2016). Simultaneously, education for sustainable development (ESD) has emerged as a significant rationale for EE pedagogy. However, EE in schools remains an underexplored area of scholarly inquiry (Liguori et al., 2019), particularly in the Global South. This paper critically

examines the proposition that EE supports sustainable development for both the economy and society (Lindner, 2018; Strachan, 2018), with a specific focus on the Global South and more specifically South Africa. It argues that EE for sustainable development must transcend the prevailing Agenda 2030 perspective as a framework for further developing EE pedagogy. Moreover, sustainable development as a normative framework for EE necessitates further development of the concept of entrepreneurship, understood as a societal phenomenon (Berglund et al., 2020; Johannisson, 2010). This includes a stronger emphasis on the emancipatory perspective on EE. The premises of this paper have global validity; however, it draws on the example of South Africa and its efforts to integrate EE into the public school system as a measure of development. It builds on previous work by revisiting and further developing a didactical model of societal EE for primary and secondary school settings (Forcher-Mayr & Mahlke, 2020a; Forcher-Mayr & Mahlke, 2020b). This model was developed based on an EE project in public schools in the South African provinces of the Eastern Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal since 2018 (Forcher-Mayr & Mahlke, 2023) and has been adapted to the context of Austrian school education (Forcher-Mayr, 2022a; Forcher-Mayr, 2022b). These earlier contributions provide the conceptual foundation upon which the present argument is expanded and contextualised, with a particular focus on EE in South African schools.

The global adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has strengthened the political endorsement of EE as a developmental measure. EE is referenced in the targets of Goals 4 and 8 and is acknowledged as a means of fostering job creation and economic growth (United Nations, 2015). Consequently, the SDGs have garnered significant attention as a normative framework for EE both within educational settings and in interdisciplinary academic discourse (Talukder et al., 2024; Rashid, 2019; Lindner, 2018; Strachan, 2018). The SDGs are largely praised as a positive symbolic measure to reinforce the objectives of economic, social and ecological sustainability from global to local levels. Given their importance as a global multilateral policy document, the SDGs and their concept of sustainable development have also been subject to critical examination (Adelman, 2018; Swain, 2018; Spaiser et al., 2017). The utilisation of the SDGs to advocate for EE as a measure of sustainable development often overlooks academic critiques of Agenda 2030. While South Africa is a signatory to Agenda 2030, the guiding principles of development are articulated in the National Development Plan 2030 (NDP) (The Presidency, 2012). The NDP acknowledges the historical impacts of colonialism and apartheid and provides a framework for transformation, aimed at eradicating and rectifying past and present manifestations of racial discrimination and achieving social justice. The further development of EE in schools must critically examine its understanding of 'sustainable development' beyond policy guidelines such as the SDGs or the NDP. Insights can be drawn from the field of ESD (Forcher-Mayr, 2025).

Despite advancements, the educational system in South Africa continues to be significantly influenced by the remnants of apartheid (Spaull, 2019; Van Der Berg & Gustafsson, 2019). Within the dichotomy of advantaged and disadvantaged schools, most learners are educated in the latter. The challenges faced include inadequate infrastructure, teacher proficiency, governance issues, and suboptimal learning outcomes. Since 1994, several curriculum reforms have been implemented to address these challenges from an educational perspective (Hoadley, 2017). In post-apartheid

South Africa, EE is perceived as a sectoral response to the country's developmental challenges. Discourses on EE in South African schools, whether situated within the political sphere, media or educational system, often regard EE as a vehicle for economic development, job creation, and, at times, survival (Ramaphosa, 2017). The emphasis on EE in schools is frequently justified by the observation that South Africans either lack entrepreneurial skills and attitudes or are deterred by perceived structural barriers (Chigunta, 2017; Fatoki & Chindoga, 2011).

Efforts to integrate EE into the South African educational system date back to the early 1990s (North, 2002). The current national Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) incorporates EE across various subjects, commencing in grade 7 (DBE, 2011). Although EE content is present throughout the curriculum up to grade 12, it is often sporadic and "isolated" (Du Toit & Kempen, 2020, p. 42). In addition to the curriculum, EE is further integrated through the sector plan for EE, which was introduced by the National Department of Basic Education (DBE) in 2018. It is currently being implemented through the E3 initiative. The plan informs the curriculum-based implementation of EE in schools through teacher training in pilot schools and the provision of educational materials. The E3 initiative integrates project-based learning with the concept of 21st-century skills (Bialik et al., 2015) and aspires to cultivate learners with an entrepreneurial mindset who are "opportunity seeking" and aim to create value for themselves and society at large (Department of Basic Education - DBE, 2020, p. 10).

This paper examines EE within the context of general education at the primary and secondary school levels. General and vocational education at the school level pursue distinct objectives: the former embraces a more humanistic approach, whereas the latter is characterised by a more instrumental orientation. In South Africa, the curriculum includes subjects with a vocational orientation; however, these are taught within a general educational framework. Vocational education is positioned within the post-school sector (Department of Higher Education and Training - DHET, 2013).

Orthodox Entrepreneurship Education: Contradictions to Sustainable Development

Globally, EE in schools is largely perceived as an instrumental approach to learning, aimed at supporting economic development by fostering entrepreneurship and enhancing employability. It encompasses the concept of the 'entrepreneurial citizen', who assumes a transferred responsibility from the state (Dahlstedt & Fejes, 2019; DeJaeghere, 2017; Peters, 2016). Consequently, the conventional understanding of EE for development is aligned with a neoliberal and growth-oriented agenda, which stands in opposition to a critical, human-centered, and decolonial learning approach. In South Africa, the CAPS curriculum, in conjunction with E3 concepts, indicates that EE in schools is predominantly understood in narrow economic terms, with its rationale being to support economic growth and job development, thereby fostering societal development. In South Africa, the concept of 'entrepreneurial citizens' is embedded in the political agendas of human capital development and the imperative to stimulate economic growth (Forcher-Mayr, 2020b).

A narrow framing of entrepreneurship for development, focused solely on employment or community advancement, risks individualising developmental challenges and neglecting social and ecological justice issues within the context of South Africa's pronounced inequality (Forcher-Mayr & Mahlkecht, 2022b; Francis & Webster, 2019). It contributes to the reinforcement of coloniality, understood as the enduring structures of colonial power that persist beyond the formal end of colonialism. As a "pattern of power" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243), coloniality is embedded in society, including curricula and educational practices. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015, p. 489) distinguishes between the coloniality of "power," "knowledge," and "being." Structures rooted in colonialism continue to influence the distribution of power, the production of knowledge, and human subjectivities. Decoloniality seeks to challenge Western epistemologies and historical narratives, posing new questions about humanity and human freedom (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015).

In South Africa, a dominant skills discourse encourages learners to strive towards a skills benchmark through 'hard work,' which is presented as a pathway to entering the formal labor market amidst pervasive youth unemployment. This has been critiqued as an individualisation of developmental challenges and a manifestation of neoliberalism in education (Forcher-Mayr & Mahlkecht, 2020b; Klees, 2020; Ngcwangu, 2015). The narrative of skills development through EE is an example of coloniality as it frames national development as well as finding work as individual responsibility and undertaking. A powerful western narrative of individual effort in the persona of the 'entrepreneurial citizen' overshadows political factors influencing the performance of economy, labour market, social support and education system. The emphasis on developing 'entrepreneurial competences' influences the 'being' of the learners. Coloniality manifests when learners are presented with an interpretation of development that emphasises individual effort, regardless of access to resources or the presence of supportive and risk-mitigating structures, which are often scarce in marginalised areas (Forcher-Mayr & Mahlkecht, 2022b).

The conceptual linkage between education and economic development rests on human capital theory (HCT) (Becker, 1993). In HCT, education is perceived as an investment in human capital, understood as a set of skills or competences intended to lead to increased productivity. From this viewpoint, EE contributes to sustainable development through investments in human capital, which is a prerequisite for economic growth and human development. HCT has been widely criticised as an embodiment of neoliberalism. The neoliberal subject is oriented towards the continuous enhancement of skills pertinent to the labor market and engages in self-optimisation in various life domains, including physical and mental health, as well as community involvement. Foucault (2006) characterised neoliberalism as a governance practice and mode of control that seeks to foster more self-regulated and responsible individuals and citizens, thereby transferring greater responsibility from the state to the individual (Peters, 2016). Further critiques argue that education should fulfill a broader purpose than merely equipping learners to navigate the ever-evolving demands and challenges of their professional, personal, community, and civic lives (e.g. Deuel, 2022; Mehta et al., 2020; Adelman, 2018; Savage, 2017; Peters, 2016; DeJaeghere & Baxter, 2014; Rutkowski, 2007).

From an emancipatory standpoint, EE must critically examine its foundational understanding of sustainable development. Key criticisms of the conventional

understanding of sustainable development, as embodied in the SDGs, pertain to Western universalism, a neoliberal economic framework, and the assumption that economic growth is essential for sustainable development (Arora-Jonsson, 2023). Kopnina (2020) critiques the Sustainable Development Goals - based ESD for endorsing the oxymoronic notion of 'sustainable growth', which underpins a hegemonic concept of development. An emancipatory perspective on ESD advocates for the necessity of profound transformative changes within both the economic and societal spheres. It draws from critical pedagogy and challenges the dominant notion of development by highlighting non-Western, decolonised knowledge and engaging in discussions on alternative economic models such as degrowth and circularity (Tikly, 2023). Mbembe (2023, p. 1) underscores that a decolonised epistemic approach can affect people's relationship with the natural world, advocating for the integration of "planetary consciousness" when learning about sustainable futures. This perspective highlights the interconnectedness between human life and the planet and the necessity to decolonise global knowledge systems to enable the transformation and expansion of human imaginaries of sustainable futures.

Societal Entrepreneurship Education for Learning about Sustainable Futures

This section advocates for a societal approach to EE (Berglund & Johannisson, 2012). Such an approach enables a move beyond the orthodox perspective on EE and supports the integration of humanist, critical, and decolonial approaches. This shift in perspective is a crucial prerequisite for achieving an emancipatory understanding of EE that can contribute to sustainable futures. Framing EE in this way aligns with a broader, humanist purpose of education. In the contemporary context of the Global North, the foundational ideas of humanist and emancipatory education trace back to philosophers and educational theorists such as Kant and Humboldt (Kergel, 2020; Sorkin, 1983). In the 20th century, these ideas were further examined and institutionalised as core concepts of critical pedagogy. Humboldt opposed the instrumentalisation of education, emphasising it as a process of individual humanisation through personal effort. An educated citizen is thus perceived as a free, moral subject capable of contributing to societal well-being (Lederer, 2014). Humanist education has faced criticism for its Eurocentric origins and its lack of a perspective that can critically examine its own ideological underpinnings, as well as power dynamics in society. Influenced by postcolonial studies and critical education, universal and critical perspectives on humanism have evolved (Engelmann, 2023; Soudien, 2019; Lederer, 2014; Mbembe & Posel, 2005). Critical pedagogy has developed under the influence of critical theory, cultural studies, and postcolonial studies (Bernhard et al., 2018; Dewey, 2008; Freire, 2005; Schneider-Bertan, 2024). It critically examines societal myths, hegemonic narratives, and the power structures that seek to instrumentalise, control and dehumanise learners. For instance, Freire (2005) conceptualises education as an emancipatory process aimed at critically questioning and deconstructing instrumentalising myths as a means of humanising learners.

An orthodox understanding of EE is rooted in its historical development. Entrepreneurship and EE have been institutionalised within the domain of business schools. Concurrently, multidisciplinary discourse emphasises the political, social, cultural and spatial dimensions of entrepreneurship within society. Bill et al. (2010, pp. 162-163) identify two predominant perspectives for framing entrepreneurship. The

managerial perspective emphasises the exploitation of opportunities and is driven by economic discourse. Entrepreneurship, understood as "social creativity," denotes a discourse that situates the phenomenon of entrepreneurship within societal and business contexts. It does not perceive entrepreneurship as an economic concept per se but is interested in the manifestations of entrepreneurship as a human phenomenon, viewing it as a societal force and, thus, an overarching dynamic. Following this, the paper posits that entrepreneurship is a human phenomenon observable across various domains of life. In the South African context, this encompasses non-profit organisations, formal business ventures, street vendors selling goods or artists performing at traffic intersections, politicians establishing new parties with innovative narratives, and instances of "dark" entrepreneurship (Verduyn et al., 2017, p. 38), where criminals exploit innovative illegal concepts.

While societal EE has been proposed as an alternative framework to the traditional understanding of EE and has been explored in other works (see, for example, Forcher-Mayr, 2025; Forcher-Mayr, 2022b; Holmgren, 2012), the dominant influence of the latter within academic and pedagogical discourse necessitates a thorough clarification in the following section. Derived from the French term 'entreprendre', entrepreneurship refers to the human act of 'undertaking' purposeful action. This perspective pertains to an outcome-oriented process through which value is created. According to Steyaert and Katz (2004), entrepreneurship is a socially constructed concept. It has been described as "societal", as a human phenomenon, activity, process, project (Forcher-Mayr, 2022a; Berglund & Johannisson, 2012, p. 1; Steyaert, 2007; Steyaert & Katz, 2004), or method (Sarasvathy & Venkataraman, 2011). The phenomenon of human undertaking, coined and theorised as 'entrepreneurship,' is open to interpretation and further development from a multidisciplinary perspective. For instance, Johannisson (2010) offers a view of entrepreneurship that is already visible in children's play, exhibiting the properties of curiosity and experimentation. Steyaert (2007, p. 453) suggests the concept of "entrepreneurship" to understand and describe the entrepreneurship process. Similarly, Sarasvathy and Venkataraman (2011, p. 30) describe entrepreneurship as a "method of human action" concerned with addressing human problems or challenges. In advancing the notion of entrepreneurship as a human phenomenon, Steyaert and Katz (2004, p. 179) propose viewing entrepreneurship as a "societal rather than an economic phenomenon." Therefore, acts of entrepreneurship occur throughout society and extend beyond the realm of economic entrepreneurship. In the context of EE at the school level, both a narrow and a broad approach can be distinguished (Lackéus, 2015). The narrow approach is primarily concerned with generating financial value within a business framework. In contrast, the broad approach encompasses value creation for society at large, incorporating financial value but extending beyond it to include social, cultural, civic, political and ecological processes or artifacts that generate societal value. This broader perspective enables a conceptualisation of entrepreneurship as a societal phenomenon. However, it is imperative that this broad approach transcends mere instrumental objectives in order to avoid what Forcher-Mayr (2022b, p. 9) terms a "narrow widening" – namely, the economization of non-economic spheres of human undertaking. By conceptualising entrepreneurship as a societal rather than purely economic phenomenon, one can recognise existing conceptual limitations and explore new perspectives and opportunities for advancing EE in schools, particularly in the context of sustainable development.

Ideas for Sustainable Futures: Focusing on the Expansion of Freedoms

This paper aims to present an emancipatory perspective on sustainable development within the context of EE. The 'Futures of Education' report, commissioned by UNESCO (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2021), serves as a key policy document from a multilateral organisation, outlining the fundamental attributes of ESD for the 21st century. The report's interpretation of sustainable development offers valuable insights that can advance societal EE towards achieving sustainable futures in both South Africa and globally (Forcher-Mayr, 2025). The UNESCO report transcends the traditional view of sustainability as a normative framework, addressing the vulnerability of humanity and the planet in light of contemporary global challenges such as COVID-19, climate change impacts, digitalisation, the rise of authoritarianism, and increasing global political polarisation, which it describes as a "historical juncture" necessitating a reevaluation of the purpose of education (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2021, p. 3). In this context, a reimagined concept of education is proposed, aiming for "sustainable futures" (p. 1) and grounded in the "principles of cooperation, collaboration and solidarity" (p. 4). The call to envision and implement sustainable futures through a revised educational paradigm critically examines the conventional understanding of sustainable development, as embodied by the SDGs. This involves a dual framing of social justice. By referencing "reparative futures" (Sriprakash et al., 2020, p. 1), the report highlights social justice as a fundamental aspect of sustainable futures, necessitating the acknowledgment of historical injustices and their influence on current and future social justice outcomes. The emphasis on "epistemic justice" addresses the predominance of the Global North in knowledge production and utilisation (Walker, 2019, p. 161). It builds on critiques from postcolonial studies and decolonisation movements (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020; Childs & Williams, 2014) and advocates for the incorporation of "global knowledge commons" (p. 65) to dismantle epistemic injustice and facilitate a diverse representation of human perspectives and experiences.

In reference to UNESCO's initiative, Tikly et al. (2020) propose a conceptualization of ESD that is grounded in the capability approach (CA) and integrates human rights-oriented, environmental, and decolonizing perspectives on development. A rights-based perspective encompasses the right to learn, learning about rights, and rights within education. The inclusion of environmental justice extends the CA perspective beyond the mere expansion of human freedoms, facilitating the incorporation of ecological justice and the autonomy of ecosystems. The decolonisation perspective emphasises the capability to integrate and expand diverse epistemologies in understanding the development of both human and natural worlds. The CA, initially introduced by Amartya Sen (2001), serves as a normative and evaluative framework focused on human well-being, development, and social justice (Robeyns, 2017). The CA places people at the center of development and views the expansion of human freedoms — defined as capabilities — as the key measure of development. (Fukuda-Parr & Cid-Martinez, 2019). Over the past three decades, the CA has gained significant attention within development discourse, shifting the focus from narrow economic metrics, such as GDP, to a broader, human-centered perspective (Nussbaum, 2011). The CA conceptualizes development as "the expansion of the 'capabilities' of persons to lead the kind of lives they value – and have reason to value" (Sen, 2001, p. 18). According to Sen, human capabilities are derived from individuals' resources and the contextual

factors affecting their utilisation. Concurrently, capabilities can shape human agency and choices to realize specific capabilities or freedoms. Nussbaum (2011, p. 32) posits that the CA enables the assessment of individuals' freedom to pursue their identities, highlighting the concept of a "threshold level" of capabilities or freedoms necessary for a life of human dignity. This "list" of basic capabilities encompasses fundamental rights, including the freedom to live, think, feel, and participate in society. In the context of education, the CA can be employed to evaluate both access to and the quality of education from a social justice perspective. Several studies have explored its application in EE, particularly focusing on Sub-Saharan Africa (DeJaeghere & Baxter, 2014) and the South African context (Forcher-Mayr, 2022a; Forcher-Mayr & Mahlke, 2020a; Forcher-Mayr & Mahlke, 2020b).

Drawing on the UNESCO report, the work of Tikly et al. (2020), and the CA, the following foundational elements of EE, intended to promote sustainable futures within the South African context and beyond, can be identified: (1) the realisation of sustainable futures is predicated on the principles of solidarity, cooperation and social justice, as opposed to the exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities; (2) 'futures' are conceptualised as plural and must interrogate their epistemic foundations; (3) the concept of justice encompasses social, ecological, epistemic and reparative dimensions; (4) development is conceived as a project of expanding freedoms in both the human and natural world; (5) finally, value creation includes an emancipatory aspect that expands human freedoms.

Entrepreneurship Education for Sustainable Futures: What Praxis in South African Classrooms?

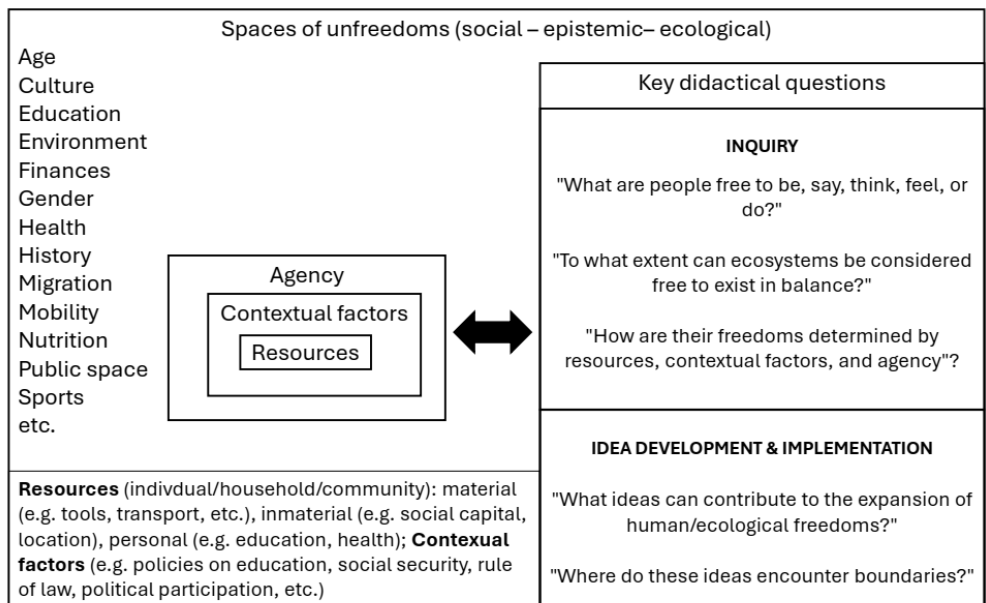
In the South African context, educational experiences in under-resourced schools located in marginalised communities often contribute to the intergenerational perpetuation of poverty (Muller & Hoadley, 2019; Spaull, 2019; Maarman & Lamont-Mbawuli, 2017; Spaull, 2015). South African learners encounter national developmental challenges, such as inequality, food insecurity, pollution, crime, public transportation, housing and education, in their private lives and within the school environment. Consequently, unfreedoms permeate all aspects of learners' lives.

EE, understood as critical educational praxis, is called upon to interrogate the historical, political, social, and epistemic roots of human unfreedoms. Critical inquiry aimed at expanding human freedoms can be linked to the concept of decoloniality. From the perspective of learners in under-resourced schools, this inquiry can be articulated as: *"What am I free to feel, think, understand, say, do, and be?"* And: *"Where do these unfreedoms come from, how can we act upon them and what are the obstacles we are facing in doing so?"* From this perspective, development is not an economic phenomenon nor is development based on economic growth. Rather, there is a multitude of unfreedoms in all facets of human life that can be the object of inquiry by learners. They occur in 'spaces of unfreedoms' (Forcher-Mayr, 2025). They denote societal domains where developmental challenges are evident. These spaces serve as the initial point for inquiry-based learning and the subsequent generation of ideas (see Fig. 1; Tab. 2).

Every area of human life can be affected by unfreedoms. In poor households, children often lack materials such as paper and pens to playfully enjoy and develop their drawing skills. Equally, poor schools struggle to provide these materials. In the context of this argument, the lack of opportunity to draw is not seen as a limitation of individual skills development, but rather as a form of unfreedom — a restriction on the ability to express oneself creatively through a specific medium and to develop drawing as a basic capability. The use of this example in EE reflects inequality as children in better-off households and schools enjoy the freedom to draw. It can assist learners to grasp how inequality affects every aspect of their lives and how the notion of social justice includes the freedom to practice drawing as a basic capability. Another example concerns how 'age' is associated with the freedom of older individuals to participate in social activities. 'Education' or 'history' can be examined as domains where not all groups or individuals possess the same epistemic freedom to narrate their stories, have their experiences valued, or their understanding appreciated. The freedom of youth in South Africa, particularly young women, to safely navigate public spaces after dark in under-policed and poorly lit neighborhoods can serve as a learning topic in geography or social sciences. The natural world can similarly be a space of inquiry and action. 'Unfreedoms' can be analysed in terms of resources and contextual factors influencing their utilisation. For instance, the freedom of an ecosystem to exist in a polluted river can be understood as a product of available resources to cope with water pollution, as well as the presence of municipal waste management systems, environmental laws, and their enforcement.

Figure 1

Spaces of unfreedoms as a starting point for idea development (based on Forcher-Mayr, 2025)



Unfreedoms can be the starting point of learner-driven projects that aim at value creation. For instance, in a project utilising school gardens as a medium for societal EE, learners investigated food insecurity as a significant challenge to South African households (Van Der Berg et al., 2022; Forcher-Mayr & Mahlke, 2020a). Inquiry into the freedom of households to access a healthy diet allowed for a deeper understanding of the political and socioeconomic factors of food insecurity. Implemented ideas by learners included distributing self-grown produce to food-insecure households, assisting elderly individuals in their home gardens to enhance yield, or aiding households in informal settlements to establish home gardens as a means of subsistence production. Through these efforts, learners gained insight into the unfreedom of food insecurity, the intersections of old age and urban poverty, and the share of food expenses in the budget of impoverished households. Furthermore, the perspective of food justice (Horst et al., 2024) was an integral part of the learning process (Forcher-Mayr & Mahlke, 2023). Throughout the process, learners engaged in the development of entrepreneurial skills.

The perspective of unfreedoms provides a foundation for deconstructing the narrative of the 'entrepreneurial citizen' presented to learners, analyzing the power structures underlying this narrative, and examining its influence on their own being. The popular distinction of learning 'about,' 'for' and 'through' entrepreneurship (Gibb, 2002) can then be re-evaluated from a perspective of critical praxis. Learning about entrepreneurship must encompass African entrepreneurship as well as the discourses and underlying interests that shape EE in schools. Learning for and through entrepreneurship must transcend a narrow approach to EE, which focuses solely on goods and services that generate economic value. A critical societal perspective enables inquiry into all spheres of society and the multifaceted unfreedoms manifesting in South Africa's urban and rural communities—the very spaces where learners' life-worlds are shaped and impacted by coloniality. This approach allows EE to contribute to "de-Westernization," decolonisation, and critical learning aimed at fostering a plurality of futures (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015, p. 492). Regarding the dichotomy of young people's life worlds in South Africa, teaching in affluent schools should adopt a perspective that approaches societal EE from the standpoint of reparative futures. Ideas for reparative futures must begin with an understanding of unfreedoms rooted in past injustices and emphasise solidarity and cooperation as foundational principles of entrepreneurial endeavors.

This perspective pertains to transformative learning, which aims to deconstruct "problematic frames of reference" (Mezirow 2003, p. 58). A focus on community-based unfreedoms supports transformative learning based on "problem-posing education" (Freire, 2005, p. 86), which seeks to interrogate instrumental societal narratives critically. Freire (2005, p. 86) characterises this approach as a "liberating praxis," wherein communities become a learning object for "transforming action". Critical learning is conceptualized not as an instrumental perspective but as a humanising process. In the South African context, this perspective can draw upon a tradition that evolved in resistance to apartheid. The concept of 'people's education', which emerged in the late 1980s, was inspired by Freire's notion of 'conscientisation' in response to white oppression and significantly influenced educational policy ideas (Vally, 2020). However, this tradition has transitioned to a growth- and skills-based educational policy during the negotiated settlement and the ANC's shift towards a neoliberal economic and

developmental policy (Vally, 2020; Bond, 2000; Adelzadeh, 1996; Randall, 1993). This shift informs the curriculum approach to skills and EE for development.

Table 1

Learning About 'Unfreedoms' in the Classroom

'Spaces of unfreedoms': Learning through EE projects at the community level	
Learning steps: Learners...	Learning focus
(1) map unfreedoms in their community	Inquiry and critical analysis
(2) inquire into the roots of unfreedoms	
(3) brainstorm and select ideas for a project that helps to expand freedoms	Creative thinking, idea development, project-based learning
(4) develop a project and implement it	
(5) reflect on outcomes, limitations and connect to wider development issues	Connecting project experiences with societal challenges

The development of entrepreneurial ideas for sustainable futures can be grounded in a transformative learning perspective of 'unfreedoms'. A CA-based definition of societal EE characterizes entrepreneurial 'doing' as the capability to develop and implement ideas based on unfreedoms, thereby creating value for others or society. In this context, value extends beyond a financial perspective and encompasses various forms of value (social, cultural, civic, ecological, political, epistemic, etc.) (Forcher-Mayr, 2022b). The CA can be applied within EE to examine the extent of learners' freedom to pursue entrepreneurial ventures. At the same time, the CA serves as an evaluative framework for assessing economic, social, epistemic and ecological conditions within an inquiry-based learning environment (Forcher-Mayr, 2022a). When investigating challenges or opportunities within a community as a foundation for an EE project, the CA facilitates the identification and comprehensive understanding of these elements from a resource and contextual standpoint (Forcher-Mayr, 2022b). This approach facilitates the identification of political responsibilities, the examination of social justice, and the development and implementation of local initiatives that enhance freedoms. Consequently, learners are exposed to emancipatory learning experiences through entrepreneurship.

Learning about, for, and through EE is not inherently an instrumental concept that primarily serves the interests of economic policy, nor is it the exclusive property of the economic realm. Human undertaking exhibits itself in all spheres of society and is a human condition. It can also be viewed as a fundamental capability that every learner should be allowed to engage in. EE pedagogy is called upon to critically reflect on its economic bias, instrumental view on education, contribution to colonality and relationship to neoliberal framing of education. Acting on these perspectives allows EE to contribute to sustainable futures grounded in solidarity, cooperation, planetary consciousness, and openness to a plurality of ways of knowing, speaking and thinking about the planet and society.

Table 2*Inquiry into Unfreedoms as a Starting Point for Learning Through Societal EE*

Spaces of unfreedoms (examples)	Guiding questions to explore human unfreedoms in learners' everyday lives.	Possible project	Learning areas	Didactical comment
1. Education	How accessible are quiet, well-insulated spaces for young people to do their homework or study for exams, allowing them to focus on their studies?	Petition and arrangement of learning spaces at school	Analysis of unfreedoms Proposal development Project management Budgeting Fundraising (Campaigning) Presentation Reflection and connection to national and global developmental challenges	Learner-centered projects do not aim to 'solve' developmental challenges, but rather to learn about them by engaging in activities that focus on value creation. Example - 3. Sports: A project that expands the freedom to learn and enjoy swimming might involve fundraising and establishing a swimming club that provides transport to, and lessons at, the nearest public pool. From a social justice perspective, engaging with this topic invites discussion on the availability of swimming pools and related in marginalized areas, as well as the challenges of mobility required to access such facilities.
2. Environment	How free are river ecosystems to exist in balance if the river is used as a waste dump?	Cleaning campaign, petition to municipal waste collection, and awareness raising amongst community members		
3. Sports	How accessible are swimming lessons and public pools for young people?	Fundraising for and founding of a swimming club		
4. Nutrition	How free are consumers to purchase fresh, organic and affordable vegetables close to their homes?	Establishment of 'entrepreneurship learning garden' (Forcher-Mayr & Mahlknecht, 2023) at school. Market research, production and sale of vegetables through pop-up markets		The 'freedom to swim' can be analyzed as a product of resources (e.g., knowledge, financial means, location), contextual factors (e.g., the provision of leisure facilities in post-apartheid urban and social planning), and agency, which is itself influenced by both resources and contextual factors.

The implementation of such a version of EE in South African classrooms builds on several premises. The curriculum must allow for the implementation of a wider notion of EE as is currently stated. The inquiry- and project-based nature of societal EE requires time within a curriculum that teachers often perceive as overly dense (Du Plessis & Letshwene, 2020). Subject advisors monitoring curricular progress must allow deviations and delays that come with the nature of the learning process. Teacher education must integrate this concept in its own curriculum and foster a constructivist understanding of learning amongst teachers. When engaging in the discovery of unfreedoms, resources for inquiry including the opportunity to do research out of school must be provided. Lastly, overcrowded classrooms impact any meaningful learning interaction, including EE (West & Meier, 2020). Learning groups in EE must allow for project-based learning.

Conclusions

EE for sustainable futures must advance its conceptual framework, objectives and epistemic foundations of development to further its impact as a learning approach that can foster transformative change. Societal EE, which views entrepreneurship as a human phenomenon, facilitates a perspective on value creation that extends the learning paradigm beyond purely economic considerations. A capability-based approach to sustainable futures offers a freedom-oriented perspective on development, aligning with the vision articulated in the 'Futures of Education' report (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2021). This approach supplants a growth-centric and human capital-focused notion of development, allowing for a comprehensive perspective on human and ecological well-being, with economic development as one of its facets. The South African context serves as an example that a decolonisation perspective must be part of EE. It directs attention to unfreedoms embedded in dominant and powerful narratives, which manifest in economic, social, or spatial structures—thereby forming an important basis for inquiry and critical examination of social reality. The history of the South African struggle underscores the pivotal role of entrepreneurial skills in organising protests that drive social change and foster a more equitable future. On the continent, the Arab Spring (Jamshidi, 2014) and the Rhodes Must Fall movement (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018), which originated at South African universities, serve as recent examples of critical consciousness that resulted in civic, political, and epistemic value creation. EE in schools, emphasising inquiry-based learning projects that promote human well-being and address social, epistemic, and ecological justice, can offer new emancipatory perspectives for transformative education in South African schools and beyond.

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