Teacher Training and Entrepreneurship Education in Rwanda

Secondary school enrollment in Africa is expected to double by 2030, yet high youth unemployment rates suggest that the existing formal education system is not preparing students to improve their livelihoods through work. Partnering with the Rwandan Education Board and Educate!, researchers examined the impact of a program that trained teachers and supported them in implementing Rwanda’s revised secondary school entrepreneurship curriculum on student academic, economic, and labor market outcomes.

Policy Issue
If current trends continue, secondary school enrollment in Africa will double by 2030. However, high youth unemployment rates in the region suggest that the existing formal education system does not prepare students for the labor market. To address this pressing policy issue, many countries in the region have launched efforts to update their curricula to explicitly focus on developing student skills. In 2016, Rwanda reformed their curriculum to emphasize entrepreneurial skill development by incorporating a focus on practical application and student-centered pedagogy. However, curriculum reforms can only improve student outcomes if teachers adopt the new pedagogical methods prescribed. Little evidence exists on how to effectively train teachers to implement a nationwide curriculum reform, particularly at the secondary level. This study examined the effect of a teacher training and support program on teacher pedagogy and student educational, skill, and labor market outcomes.

Evaluation Context
In Rwanda, 72 percent of employed youth work for family firms or are self-employed, often in the informal sector. Equipping students with business skills is therefore essential to facilitate their transition from school to economic activity. Rwanda introduced entrepreneurship as a required subject in secondary schools in 2009. As part of its 2016 curriculum reform, all secondary school students in Rwanda were required to take a modified entrepreneurship course focused on providing students with skills to succeed in the labor market. The new curriculum included key pedagogical guidance designed to move classrooms away from rote learning and towards the practical application of skills.
The new components included:

1. An explicit focus on active pedagogies through Skills Labs, an 80-minute weekly class period during which teachers employed active pedagogy. The class was structured in a laboratory format and followed a “Build-Practice-Present” arc, enabling students to practice and apply entrepreneurship concepts and skills through hands-on in-class activities, then present their progress to their peers.

2. Student Business Clubs, where students worked in teams to start and run school-based businesses.

The curriculum reform represents a major shift in pedagogy, moving to more interactive, student-centered learning.

**Details of the Intervention**

Working with the Rwandan Education Board and Educate!, researchers examined the impact of a teacher training and support program on teacher pedagogy and student academic, skill, and labor market outcomes. The program was designed to support the roll-out of Rwanda’s revised secondary school entrepreneurship curriculum. Researchers sampled 207 geographically diverse (urban, peri-urban, and rural) schools across 11 districts to participate in the study.

Half of the schools were randomly selected to receive the Educate! Exchange program, an intensive teacher training and support program which included:

1. **Intensive teacher training:** Six multi-day trainings spread over the two years of the intervention. Each of the six sessions was held during holidays between terms. Sessions blended traditional training and practical application. The training emphasized lesson planning, engaging students in classroom discussions, encouraging students to create entrepreneurship portfolios of their work, and assisting student business clubs to form and grow.

2. **Exchange Visits:** beginning in term two of the first year, teachers visited each other’s schools three times per year to observe and provide feedback to their peers.

3. **Outreach and support:** teachers received ongoing support to implement the curriculum by youth leaders hired and trained by Educate!.

The other half of schools served as the comparison group, which received the new entrepreneurship curriculum and a general one-time training. Comparison schools did not receive Educate!’s training delineated above.

Researchers measured the impact of the teacher training and support program on teacher and head teacher perceptions of effective teaching practices, and on teacher pedagogical practices. They also examined impact on student outcomes at the conclusion of the program and after students completed secondary school. Student outcomes include labor market and economic activity, entrepreneurship
knowledge, and non-cognitive skills. Researchers also collected administrative data on teacher training attendance and student exam performance.

**Results and Policy Lessons**

Study ongoing; results forthcoming.

**Sources**