




*Research Paper*

## Challenges of and Barriers to Entrepreneurship Education for Children of Labor: A Phenomenological Study

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### Abstract

**Aim:** The aim of the present study was to explore educators' lived experiences about the challenges of entrepreneurship education to children of labor. This qualitative research was performed using descriptive phenomenological approach. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews. For this purpose, 15 educators experienced in teaching children of labor were interviewed, and the obtained data were analyzed by Strabert and Carpenter (2002) method. The analysis of the interviews led to the emergence of five main themes, namely personal and environmental challenges, content and procedural challenges, structural challenges, methodological challenges, and economic challenges and 25 subthemes including attitude change, peer influence, lack of attention to psychological characteristics, mistreatment of children of labor, parents' resistance, lack of equipment, educators' lack of familiarity with the life of children of labor, imaginative educational programs, failure to attend to children's needs, short-term outlook on entrepreneurship education, invisible achievements of entrepreneurship education, placement problems, lack of attention to experienced educators, poor planning, mass

education, legal and regulatory conflicts, weakness of tools related to teaching entrepreneurship to children of labor, failure to attend to the age of children of labor, lack of practical training, excessive emphasis on educator, lack of attention to participatory methods, lack of budget, severe financial needs of children of labor for daily wages, lack of social-financial support and short-term economic outlook.

**Keywords:** *Lived experiences, educators, child of labor, entrepreneurship.*

## **Introduction**

Child of labor is a major issue in many developing countries (Ahad et al., 2021). According to the International Labor Organization, there are approximately 122 million children of labor between the ages of 5 and 14 in Asia who are struggling to survive (International Labor Organization, 2019). According to the 2016 census, there were about 765,000 children of labor aged 10-19 years in cities and villages of Iran (Statistics Center of Iran, 2016). The growing trend of children of labor has led researchers to seek basic solutions to this phenomenon. Education is an essential factor in combating the phenomenon of child of labor, as informal education has proved effective in the rehabilitation of these children (Sevinç et al., 2020). Most children of labor (58.2%) are deprived of school education in the early years of school (International Labor Organization, 2018). Such deprivation is sometimes due to lack of educational facilities, and some of these children fail to complete school and enter the labor market before completing elementary school. However, some of these children simultaneously work and go to school (Hosseini, 2005). Meanwhile, these children need educational resources that can be used to acquire knowledge and skills to meet individual needs in their current living conditions (Kargozar, 2012). Education that changes the mentality of children of labor with regard to work such as entrepreneurship education is a basic need for them (Tong and Zhu, 2020). Furthermore, according to studies, children of labor should learn what a suitable job and profession is in order to avoid false jobs and to be able to cover their own and their family members' expenses with dignity through a permanent job. However, a suitable job needs specialty skills and a relevant degree, which is not possible for children of labor. Hence, it appears they should be their own employer and start their own (home) job, and that means the best option to achieve this goal is entrepreneurship education (Bai & Wang, 2020). Entrepreneurship education for children of labor is a set of activities that aim to empower these children, develop knowledge, skills, values in them to promote entrepreneurship. Through such education, children of labor can start their own business (Mohammad Kazemi et al., 2016). Since these children have an unfavorable life and most of them do not

have parents and family, their special and unfavorable living conditions can motivate them to become entrepreneurs. Given the current statistical information and situation, children of labor can help Iran's economy through entrepreneurship education, but this solution has its own challenges and obstacles. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore these challenges and obstacles.

## **Methodology**

The present research used a qualitative and phenomenological (descriptive) approach. The study participants included educators (n=15) who were in close contact with children of labor. A total of 15 interviews were conducted. Research participants were selected through snowball purposive sampling. Data collection continued until data saturation. Research questions were modified and approved by four professors in the relevant field who confirmed the validity of the interviews. All interviews were audio recorded, and transcribed verbatim by the researcher himself. Then the transcripts were validated through member check, that is, the transcripts were sent to the participants to confirm the accuracy of the content or to correct the content if necessary. Data analysis was based on Strabert and Carpenter (2003) method. Lincoln and Guba (1985) criteria were used to validate the research.

## **Results**

After conducting a total of 15 interviews with research samples (educators who were in close contact with children of labor) and reviewing the interviews several times, five main themes emerged including personal and environmental challenges, content and procedural challenges, structural challenges, methodological challenges, economic challenges and 25 subthemes including attitude change, peer influence, lack of attention to psychological characteristics, mistreatment of children of labor, parents' resistance, lack of equipment, educators' lack of familiarity with the life of children of labor, imaginative educational programs, failure to attend to child needs, short-term outlook on entrepreneurship education, invisible achievements of entrepreneurship education, placement problems, lack of attention to experienced educators, poor planning, mass education, legal and regulatory conflicts, weakness of tools related to teaching entrepreneurship to children of labor, failure to attend to the age of children of labor, lack of practical training, excessive emphasis on educator, lack of attention to participatory methods, lack of budget, severe financial needs of children of labor for daily wage, lack of social-financial support and short-term economic outlook.

## Discussion and conclusion

There are several challenges facing entrepreneurship education for children of labor, some of which were addressed in this article, such as failure to attend to the child's age, failure to attend to an efficient educator, poor planning, and poor budget. One of the challenges mentioned in the present study was personal and environmental challenges. Individual characteristics of children of labor and environmental issues, including children of labor's families, play an important role in their education. In line with these results, Balagopalan (2019) believes that these children and their families only try to survive, which has become a major challenge in educating children of labor. Another important barrier to entrepreneurship education for children of labor is administrative and structural issues. Unfortunately, conflicting laws and regulations have led to many problems in teaching entrepreneurship to children of labor. In this regard, the International Labor Organization (2018) refers to non-bureaucratic administrative rules for teaching and training effective entrepreneurship. Another challenge was ignoring the efficiency of educators who teach entrepreneurship to children of labor. Entrepreneurship education currently covers both theoretical and practical aspects in the world, but Iran's educational system uses only theoretical and lecture-based method (Kordanij and Zali, 2008). It is clear that our educational system faces many economic, personal, environmental, pedagogical and structural challenges for this purpose. If the educational system fails to be flexible, social harms will spread throughout the society. Based on the above results, the following solutions are suggested:

- 1- The content provided for entrepreneurship education to children of labor should be prepared and localized for each geographical area.
- 2- Economic problems of teaching entrepreneurship to children of labor call for fund-raising from both private and public entities; for example, by holding conferences or workshops to brief public and private sector stakeholders.
- 3- Training workshops should be held for teachers to familiarize them with entrepreneurship and shift their mentality from knowledge-based and traditional educational methods to skill-oriented and practical training.

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