

Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Skills Development: A Case Study of the University of Zambia

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Abstract—Zambia has been characterised by high unemployment rate, low total early entrepreneurial activity rate, low university entrepreneurial activities and high small enterprises failure rate. The effective entrepreneurship education aiming at imparting appropriate entrepreneurial skills in students is considered to be one of the solutions of reducing unemployment, especially among university graduates and other stakeholders. A study to analyse the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in developing students' entrepreneurial skills was conducted at Institute of Distance Education (IDE) of the University of Zambia. A convergent parallel mixed method research design was used a sample size of 248 postgraduate Master of Business Administration (MBA) students and 12 academic members of staff. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and semi structured interviews. Data were then analysed using simple linear regression analysis, content and thematic analysis. The analysis was supported by IBM SPSS version 26, which assisted in generating, tables, charts, graphs and executing simple linear regression analysis. The findings indicated that entrepreneurship education was able to impart financial and marketing skills but not investment opportunities identifications and innovation and creativity skills. This was evidenced by 70.2% of the respondents who disclosed that they did not acquire all the necessary entrepreneurial skills necessary to impart an entrepreneurial attitude change. The effectiveness of entrepreneurship education to impart investment opportunities identification skills showed a negative correlation coefficient of 0.653 and a p-value of 0.11. This indicated that EE was not effective enough to impart investment opportunities identification skills in postgraduate students. The effectiveness of EE to impart innovation and creativity skills indicated a very low positive correlation coefficient of 0.214 with p-value of 0.0046. This shows that EE is not effective enough to impart fully innovative and creativity skills in postgraduate students. However, there was strong positive relationship between EE and financial and marketing skills of 0.971 and 0.956 for financial and marketing respectively.

Keywords— Entrepreneurship Education, Entrepreneurial Skills Development, Postgraduate University Students.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Government of the Republic of Zambia has encouraged universities to introduce entrepreneurship education to enable graduates have alternative means of creating employment. Entrepreneurship education has also been considered as a source of creativity and innovation which may assist graduates manage existing companies profitably. The University of Zambia (UNZA) have therefore, introduced entrepreneurship education programmes in the expectations that it will provide university graduates with proficiency required to become

entrepreneurs. This entails graduates becoming job creators rather than job seekers (Zamberi Ahmed, 2013). University graduates with entrepreneurial education background are now joining societies with the expectation that they may use their entrepreneurial skills to be self-employed. However, most of the university graduates prefer to be formally employed and the majority have remained unemployed. According to MNDP, 2017 and ZGF, 2017, Zambia's youth unemployment is currently at 10.5% which is higher than national average rate of 7.5 percent. Graduates formally employed have not yet exhibited self-determination and self-efficacy to improve products, processes and management of companies in the competitive environment. The expectation is that university graduates are supposed to use their entrepreneurial skills to create jobs and manage existing companies profitably which has not been the case. (ZGF (2017). Therefore, this shows that the relationship between entrepreneurship education and students entrepreneurial development needs to be evaluated. This is more critical because despite a national interest in entrepreneurship education aimed at equipping university students with entrepreneurial intentions and actions, high profile efforts have not yet been rigorously evaluated, hence this investigation.

This study intends to evaluate the impact of entrepreneurship education on the enhancement of entrepreneurial skills in university students. The document is organized in this manner. Initially, it offers a context for the implementation of game-based learning within entrepreneurship education and the development of entrepreneurial skills; next, it examines the main characteristics of gifted and talented students in entrepreneurship education, which is succeeded by a description of the methodological framework of the research; and, ultimately, it reveals the findings and deliberates on potential avenues for future investigation. To fulfill the main goal of the research, the subsequent sub-objectives were investigated.

- i. What are the entrepreneurial skills imparted through entrepreneurship education programmes of the University of Zambia?
- ii. What are the entrepreneurship education techniques used to impart entrepreneurial skills among students at UNZA?

- iii. How relevant are entrepreneurial skills imparted through entrepreneurship education in developing entrepreneurial intentions among students

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study sought to examine the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education on developing entrepreneurial skills among university students. Therefore, the guiding theory for this research is the Human Capital Theory According to Becker, G. S. (1964). who commented that Human Capital theory, developed by Nobel laureate economist Gary Becker in the 1960s, posits that individuals can increase their productivity and earning potential through investments in their knowledge, skills, and abilities. The theory suggests that individuals are like “human capital” assets that can generate economic returns through education, training, and other forms of human capital development. It emphasizes the importance of investing in education and training to enhance an individual’s skills and knowledge. This investment is seen as similar to investing in physical capital, such as machinery or equipment, which can generate economic output and profits.

Becker (1975), explained that human capital entrepreneurship theory derives its premise primarily on two factors namely; education and experience. The theory states that knowledge acquired from education and experience is regarded as a resource that is diversely disseminated across individuals and forms the basis for understanding the disparities in identification and exploration of opportunities (Shane and Vankataraman, 2000). Davidson and Honig (2003) and Anderson and Miller (2003) affirmed that human capital factors have a positive impact on the emergence of nascent entrepreneurs. This implies that human capital theory of entrepreneurship creates a foundation for the place of education regarding entrepreneurial development which makes it relevant to the context of entrepreneurship education (Chandler and Hanks, 1998).

Entrepreneurship education is not just about formal education but also about practical experiences, personal characteristics, and skills unique to entrepreneurship. By using the above approach, the broader and quantitative aspects of human capital in my research was captured.

III. BRIEF REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Key literature in the area of entrepreneurship education and its effectiveness on students’ entrepreneurial skills development was considered from various scholars.

3.1 Entrepreneurship Education

Many developed countries have considered entrepreneurship as a key element of stimulating or spearheading economic growth and development providing support to employment opportunities (Ossai and Nwalado 2012, Ryumashiu 2019). Valerio, Parto and Robb (2014) support this by observing the growing interest in the role of entrepreneurship. According to Valerio, Parto and Robb, entrepreneurship is a catalyst to achieve social and economic development objectives, including growth, innovation, employment and equity. The interest in entrepreneurship roles

worldwide is as a result of challenges faced by youths especially in higher education. According to Brown (2003) and Khan et al (2017), suitable employment opportunities of university graduates have become a major national crisis, especially in the developing countries. It is now observed that some of the traditional degrees offered by universities fail to create market demand and job opportunities for graduates. Entrepreneurship has been considered as solution to this challenge as it is presumed to be the combined act of drive, initiative, perseverance, commitment, organised and creative efforts to perform productive activities (ACs et al, 2008). It is therefore imperative that these entrepreneurship acts are impact in university students through education before they graduate. Murthy et al (2017) affirms this by saying education focuses on entrepreneurship as a matter of culture/state cover features that focus on beliefs, values and attitudes associated with entrepreneurship. McIntyre and Roche (1999) define entrepreneurship education as the process of passing the necessary skills and concepts to individuals to identify new business opportunities and to reach high level of self-confidence to benefit from such opportunities. This entails that entrepreneurship education is expected to develop skills and competences in an individual, necessary for generating abilities suitable for benefiting from profitable ventures in the environment. Maritz et al (2015) also are of the view that entrepreneurship education programs are any educational programs or process of education for entrepreneurial manners and skills which help in developing personal qualities. According to Valerio et al (2014), entrepreneurship education programs tend to focus on building knowledge and skills about or for the purpose of entrepreneurship or with a view of stimulating entrepreneurship.

3.2 Entrepreneurship Education and Entrepreneurial Skills Development

Edokpolor and Somorin (2017) noted that EE spans all academic fields, aiming to provide learners with the capabilities to innovate or enhance existing products to address issues and uncover business prospects. Dogan (2015) stated that EE is a vital tool for promoting entrepreneurial activities since education provides the abilities that learners will apply to establish a business. Sulaiman and Wan-Fauziah (2013) regarded EE as education aimed at altering students’ mindsets by equipping them with the tools to start a business. This indicates that EE is crucial in preparing university undergraduates with the competencies to establish a business after graduation. EE offers a practical avenue for university undergraduates to cultivate entrepreneurial skills in a demanding educational setting.

The core of EE is to cultivate entrepreneurial abilities in individuals to effectively initiate a business (Chhabra et al., 2020). In aggregate, EE cultivates the skills that allow individuals to engage meaningfully in various life aspects, generate something of value, and achieve financial independence, personal satisfaction, or both (Steenekamp, 2013). A fundamental belief of EE is that entrepreneurial abilities can be nurtured among individuals (Sirelkhatim and Gangi, 2015) through a hands-on learning setting. To support

this assertion, a prior study by Sanchez (2011) discovered that students who took part in EE are more inclined to establish a business after graduation because of the high level of entrepreneurial skills these students possess.

3.3 Entrepreneurship Education in Universities

Ahmad and Buchanan (2015) revealed that students showed a preference for salaried jobs after graduation rather than setting up their own businesses, despite participating in entrepreneurship classes and programmes. Radipere (2012) discovered that South African universities adhere to the use of traditional way of teaching entrepreneurship and that entrepreneurship is still at its early stage. There was also little attention being exerted to improve entrepreneurship education. The present entrepreneurship curriculum educates students about entrepreneurship instead of education them to be entrepreneurs. It was concluded that entrepreneurship education in these universities was thereby “false” in the sense that it could never fulfil its own claims but its short comings. Kawimbe (2024) underscored the importance of contextual relevance, supportive ecosystems, and practical skill integration in maximizing the impact of entrepreneurship education. Windu Katoka and Austin Mwange (2024) also revealed challenges faced in provision of EE in Zambia including lack of supporting policies, inadequate funding, lack of staff, inadequate infrastructure and poor entrepreneurial culture. The research recommended the need for effective institutional interventions to support EE in Zambia.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Research Approach and Design

The study adopted the use of mixed methods design specifically the concurrent mixed method design. Mixed methods research is broadly accepted to refer to research that integrates both qualitative and quantitative data within a single study (Wisdom et al, 2012, Creswell and Piano Clark, 2011). A qualitative and quantitative study were conducted in order to investigate the perception, beliefs and attitudes of university learners on the current entrepreneurship education curriculum, types of entrepreneurship education, in equipping and motivating them to start up, successfully run their own businesses and contribute to improving performance of existing businesses. The qualitative approach allowed the researcher to gain insight on the implementation of entrepreneurship education IDE MBA students. It also assisted the researcher to discover any challenges that existed within the current entrepreneurship education programme. In contrast, quantitative research focused on facts, figures and measurements and is objective rather than subjective in approach. Andrew and Haicomb (2012), Simons and Lathelean (2010), justifies the use of mixed methods research in situations of diversify views and perceptions. They assert that research problems that are best suited to mixed methods design are those in which multiple perspectives of the research problem will provide a more detailed understanding than could be gleaned from a single perspective.

Convergent Parallel design as the type of the mixed method research design was used in this research. Collection

of quantitative and qualitative data were done simultaneously analysing the data collected separately, and then merging the results for interpretation. The researcher then discussed areas of convergence or divergence between quantitative and qualitative results. Key aspects of this design included giving equal priority to both types of data, collecting them concurrently, and comparing the separate analyses to determine if the results supported or contradicted each other. This design combined the strengths of each type of data to provide a more complete picture.

Sampling and Data Collection

This study employed multi-stage sampling techniques which comprised purposive sampling, stratified random sampling and simple random sampling techniques. The first stage involved purposive sampling which was used to select the lecturing staff for this study. The second stage involved stratified sampling technique which was used to categorise the study population (MBA students) in two categories from selected IDE at the University of Zambia. Then sub-groups were identified from the strata as these enhanced the identification of sub-groups within the study population, therefore, creating samples that are representative. The last stage involved the use of simple random sampling which was carried out firstly by assigning a conservative number from 1 to the population for each university, secondly from the list of students in each field of study and a sample was drawn using random number tables. Finally, a total of 248 students was chosen from the selected university as sample size for this study.

Trustworthiness and Data Analysis

Although there are arguments to accept the trustworthiness of qualitative findings, criteria for ensuring rigour in this form have been in existence for many years including credibility, transferability and confirmability (Munsaka, 2001; Shenton, 2004; Munsaka, 2009). Morrow (2005) suggested that since specific information is maximised in relation to the context in which the data collection occurs, it was therefore prudent to use multi-stage sampling in order to ensure transferability of the research findings in similar contexts. Shenton (2004) defined confirmability as a degree of neutrality in the research findings. In other words, this means that the findings should be based on the participants’ responses and not on any potential bias or personal motivations of the researchers. This also involved making sure that the researchers’ bias did not skew the interpretations of what the research participants’ views were (Munsaka and Kalinde, 2017). In order to address conformity in this study, member checking was applied by asking the interviewees to clarify some responses which could have seemed too ambiguous to the researchers. Additionally, credibility was addressed by prolonged engagement with participants and triangulation was also employed by collecting data of the same aspects of the study from different participants as suggested by Manion and Morrison (2007). Data was analysed thematically. As Kombo and Tromp (2006) guided, thematic analysis involved coding and then grouping the coded information into similar groups according to themes.

Analysis of data, however, began whilst in the field as soon as data collection commenced. At the end of data collection, all collected data was categorized for the purpose of orderly examination and to refine differences in the emerging and grounded concepts.

V. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this section, findings are presented and discussed based on the effectiveness of the entrepreneurship education in shaping up the entrepreneurial skills which should influence students in becoming job creators and successful business individuals. The majority of respondents representing 70.2% of the respondents disclosed that they have not acquired any suitable and appropriate entrepreneurial skills from the current EE. It was further discussed that the entrepreneurial skills acquired by postgraduate students are financial, marketing, writing of business plans, and customer management skills. 90% of the students interviewed disclosed that the current EE does not impart entrepreneurial skills such as innovative and creativity, and investment opportunities identification skills. The students further claim that the teaching methodology employed in EE, is the traditional teaching approach used for other courses too. Then 15.32% of the respondents are aware that, in some cases, other methodologies such as visiting selected entrepreneurs and developing a workable business proposal, are used, 8.06% of the respondents claim that successful entrepreneurship model, in which a successful entrepreneur is invited, to provide a lecture on entrepreneurship. However, about 4.84% of the respondents claim that in some cases, a business model is used in which selected businesses are used to expose students to entrepreneurial activities during their studies. Students were of the view that restructuring of the content of the current EE to include contents that may arouse innovative and creativity and investment opportunities skills is necessary, 31.45% of the respondents also opine that effective EE is supported by practical and workable business models that are developed and managed by students at the university. 15.73% of the respondents claim that EE should be tailored towards establishing business ventures that attract funding and provide solutions to society problems, and then 16.94% of the respondents are of the view that other techniques such as using successful entrepreneurs, success Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and where possible society representatives to develop EE curriculum and methodologies are vital for successful EE in the university.

VI. CONCLUSION

The effectiveness of EE in imparting entrepreneurial skills was highly representative in this study in terms of demographic characteristics. The participation of 60.1% male and 39.9% female is an indication of gender balance, biasness and high gender sensitivity. The study in this case, was biased towards a specific gender, meeting one of the ethical requirements. The use of participants above the age of a minor, provided mature responses that increased the confidence levels of data analysed. This was due to the fact that responses were from a maturity level perspective. The

drawing of respondents from diverse MBA categories such as MBA (General, Business and Finance, Business and Management, Human Resource Management, Strategic Management, Corporate Governance, and Project Management), assisted in obtaining results that were representative of postgraduate MBA students. This was also supported by use of participants from various stages of their studies. This means that the effectiveness of EE on imparting entrepreneurial skills was analyzed from a broader perspective. The entrepreneurial skills necessary to influence students' entrepreneurial attitudes are diverse and broad. The entrepreneurial skills of financial and marketing imparted by EE at IDE lack the capability to change entrepreneurial mind set, intention and attitude of postgraduate students at IDE. The failure of EE to impart investment opportunities identification and innovation and creativity, led to failure to address students' entrepreneurial deficiencies such as lack of innovative and creativity skills, lack of investment opportunities identification skills, poor business proposals and plans preparations, etc. This also means the current EE lacks the desired content to impart investment opportunities identification and innovation and creativity skills. The traditional teaching methodology used in EE has proved to be in effective in imparting suitable entrepreneurial skills for competitive environments. Therefore, the current traditional teaching methodology is not effective enough to prepare postgraduate students to the world of entrepreneurship. There is need to address the deficiencies of the current EE and traditional teaching methodology through restructuring of EE content, use of successful entrepreneurs, approach, preparation of attractive business proposals and plans.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the findings, discussion and conclusions of this study, the following are recommendations are made:

- i. Management and academic staff should ensure to restructure EE content to align it with establishing entrepreneurial skills such as investment opportunities identification, innovation and creativity skills, effective marketing and financial skills etc.
- ii. UNZA should establish business models that should be used as practical exposures and for training postgraduate students in investment opportunities and innovation and creativity techniques
- iii. Traditional teaching methodology should be enhanced with approaches such as using successful entrepreneurs, preparation of business proposals or plans that have ability to attract funding etc.
- iv. Postgraduate students should be trained how to prepare business proposals or plans that could attract potential investors or financiers, and government funding.
- v. Postgraduate should establish enterprises using funds attracted by business proposals or plans before completion of MBA programme.
- vi. Further studies should be undertaking to analyse the effectiveness of teaching techniques such as business model approach, use of successful entrepreneurs'

approach, business plans in EE, on developing of student's entrepreneurial skills

Conflict of Interest

The author declare that no conflicting interests exists.

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Data availability statement

The data used to support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

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