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among University Graduates: A Case of ZCAS University**



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Entrepreneurship Education as Panacea to Job Creation among University Graduates: A Case of ZCAS University



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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to explore the impact that entrepreneurship education can have on entrepreneurial outcomes by the graduates from ZCAS University. The author aimed to investigate the perceived influence that various entrepreneurship education courses have had on a cohort of 76 graduates from the University's School of Business that were pursuing Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, Bachelor's degree in Entrepreneurship, bachelor's degree in Economics and Finance, bachelor's degree in Accountaning.

Methodology: A questionnaire with semi-structured, in-depth interviews was administered to 75 respondents via google forms. Findings and results indicate that entrepreneurship education is slowly having an impact on graduate entrepreneurship intentions as a progressive number of graduates accounting for 33% engaged themselves in entrepreneurship which ultimately has the potential to create jobs and and have a positive impact on economic development.

Findings: The findings provide valuable insights for educators, policy makers and graduate entrepreneurs. Stakeholders such as government, local authorities and sponsors/parents could use this study to make better choices in relation to the education of future graduate entrepreneurs. The study therefore recommends among others inclusion of significant course content on entrepreneurship and investment in non-business and management related programmes of study.

Unique Contribution to theory, practice and policy: This study provides an empirically rigorous insight into a relatively neglected area of entrepreneurship education research. It provides valuable data for stakeholders involved in both the supply and the demand side of the entrepreneurship education process.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship Education, Economic Development, Unemployment*



Introduction

Entrepreneurship education has emerged as a pivotal strategy in addressing the persistent issue of unemployment among university graduates globally. The importance of equipping students with entrepreneurial skills has gained prominence due to the changing dynamics of the job market and the increasing emphasis on self-employment and innovation (Ahiawodzi & Du, 2023). Institutions of higher learning, such as ZCAS University, have recognized the necessity of integrating entrepreneurship education into their curricula to prepare students for the challenges of the contemporary economy. This proactive approach not only aims to foster a spirit of innovation but also to empower graduates to create their own employment opportunities (Amit & Muller, 2022). In recent years, Zambia, like many other developing countries, has faced a growing youth unemployment crisis, highlighting the urgency for effective interventions such as entrepreneurship education (Chabala & Siame, 2023). ZCAS University, located in Lusaka, has embarked on initiatives to embed entrepreneurship education across its disciplines, aiming to nurture a generation of job creators rather than job seekers. This case study explores the impact of ZCAS University's entrepreneurship education programs on its graduates' ability to start and sustain businesses in Zambia's competitive market landscape (Kabwe & Makombe, 2023).

The effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in fostering entrepreneurial intentions and actions among university graduates is a topic of increasing research interest globally (Oosterbeek et al., 2022). By examining the experiences and outcomes of ZCAS University graduates who have participated in entrepreneurship education, this study seeks to contribute empirical evidence to the ongoing discourse on the role of education in promoting economic development and reducing unemployment (Schwartz et al., 2023). This introduction sets the stage for a detailed exploration of how entrepreneurship education at ZCAS University serves as a potential panacea to job creation challenges faced by university graduates in Zambia.

Literature Review

Entrepreneurship education has been taunted to be the developing of the students' ability to create social, cultural and economic value. Enabling for the thinking critically and creatively, undertake complex problem solving, negotiate, communicate and lead which can all contribute to developing a student's mindset. Previous research found that entrepreneurship education has an influence on students' entrepreneurship interest and entrepreneurship skills (Shinnar et al., 2009; Faulina et al., 2021; Srianggareni et al., 2020; Abdi et al., 2021).

Other studies found that entrepreneurship education has a significant impact on students' entrepreneurial motivations and indirectly influences their entrepreneurial intention (Mónico et al., 2021). In addition, entrepreneurship education has an effect on intention (Anjum et al., 2022). Moreover, teaching entrepreneurship is associated with higher levels of interest in starting businesses among students because it equips them with necessary knowledge and abilities, inspiring them to pursue entrepreneurial paths (Boldureanu et al., 2020). Additionally, entrepreneurship education has both direct and indirect impacts on entrepreneurial intentions, with business motivation serving as a mediator (Lelliezza et al., 2019). However, an earlier

investigation examining the effectiveness of a prominent entrepreneurship education program on college students revealed disappointing results: it had minimal influence on students' perceived entrepreneurial competencies and even led to a decrease in their desire to become entrepreneurs (Oosterbeek et al., 2010). Furthermore, another study indicated that the inclination towards entrepreneurship remains unaffected by achievement motivation (Adrianto et al., 2019).

Various recommendations have been proposed for institutions offering entrepreneurship courses to enhance the quality and delivery methods of the instructional materials (Ramadhani and Nurnida, 2017). In other countries such as Kenya, entrepreneurship education covers the teaching of knowledge and skills that enable individual students to plan and start their own businesses in the formal or informal sector. It forms part of the national education integrated in other subjects such as Business Studies, Commerce and Principles of Accounts. According to Bwisa (2011), entrepreneurship has been a compulsory and examinable subject at all levels of school bases Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET). In the Zambian context, Shata and Kabubi (2020) have posited that in the quest to promote enhancement of entrepreneurship education in the country, the Zambian education system has been revised to include entrepreneurship education in both public and private universities, of which the TEVET Policy serves as a platform for the integration of entrepreneurship education in their curriculum (Curriculum Development Centre 2013). To a larger extent, all this is meant to promote development of entrepreneurship knowledge in young minds in the country. Indeed, the Zambian economy today is faced with numerous challenges and problems especially with unemployment.

They assert that despite the efforts made by government in addressing this problem of youth unemployment, the issue still remains to be one of the biggest social and economic challenges in Zambia. Further, according to the Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP), the youth unemployment rate is currently at 17.1 percent in 2021 as compared to 14.7 percent in 2005. However, the government has endeavored to create employment through various interventions such as Youth Empowerment Fund (YEF), Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and Citizen's Economic Empowerment Commission (CEEC) for the youths in order to address the issue although this has been a very difficult venture because various political and historical challenges.

Methodology

In this study, the approach adopted by the author is qualitative because of the qualitative nature of the data that was collected. Respondents were asked what vocation they were involved in three (3) years after graduating. They were also asked the nature of business they were involved in, in the case of those that had engaged themselves in business. They were also asked their annual turnover in the case of those that were engaged in commerce or any other source of livelihood that emanates from entrepreneurship. They were also asked what challenges they faced for not venturing into entrepreneurship. The study considered graduates in four learning programmes that completed their studies in 2021 in the programmes of study as shown in table 3.1 below:

Table 1: Programme of Study

SN	Name of Study Programme	Year of graduation	Number of graduates
1	Bachelor Degree in Accounting (BACC)	2021	14
2	Bachelor Degree in Accounting and Finance (BAF)	2021	34
3	Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA)	2021	14
4	Bachelor of Entrepreneurship (BE)	2021	2
5	Bachelor of Economics and Finance (BEF)	2021	12
	Total		76

Scope

The study was confined to ZCAS University and centred around the five (5) programmes of study as these are the study programmes where entrepreneurship features as a course. Further, the researcher picked a single graduation cohort (the 2021 graduates), since the researcher had contact details for all the population and sample having been Dean in the School of Business at the time of graduation (2021). This limitation may have negative impact on the findings as the population and the sample size appear small and the spread in graduation cohort of 2021 only may also pose some challenges as the behaviour of a cohort may not necessarily be pervasive to represent the graduate behaviour

Characteristics of the population/Sample

Graduates from the four (4) programmes of study were purposely selected because these were the programmes where students learnt business courses and were all from the School of Business. Further, in terms of gender distribution, the population was well distributed with 46 females and 30 males.

Sampling Frame

From the 76 population, the researcher settled for the 100% sample since the graduates were all reachable via email and phone contacts as the author was Dean in the School of Business when the students graduated and hence has close contacts with the graduates. An online questionnaire was set through google scholar and electronically administered to the respondents. All the 76 respondents responded to the questionnaire and the researcher was able to obtain a 100 % response rate.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data was analysed using thematic analysis where common themes, topics and patterns of meaning within a set of texts were considered. This method of analysis helped uncover underlying meaning by analysing patterns and themes.

Gender distribution

Out of the 76 respondents, 46 were females while the remaining 30 were males. This disparity in gender distribution may be attributed to the inherent desire for females to pursue business related courses as opposed to males that mostly prefer computational programmes. The gender distribution is shown in figure 4.1 below:

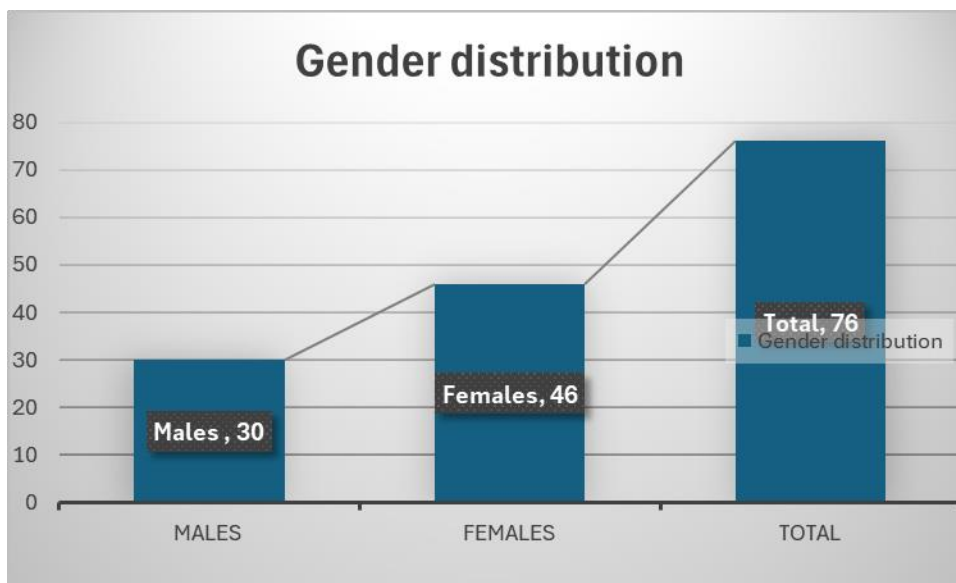


Figure 1: Gender distribution

Programme of Study

The researcher set out to establish the impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurship intentions and assess if entrepreneurship can be a panacea to job creation and ultimately national economic development. Business related programmes of study where entrepreneurship education features prominently were selected as shown in Figure 1. It is worth noting that Bachelor of Accounting and Finance (BAF) stands out to be the most popular programme at 45% followed by bachelor's of Business Administration (BBA) and bachelor's of Accountancy (BACC) at 15%, bachelor's of Economics (BE) at 16% with bachelor's of Entrepreneurship at 3%.

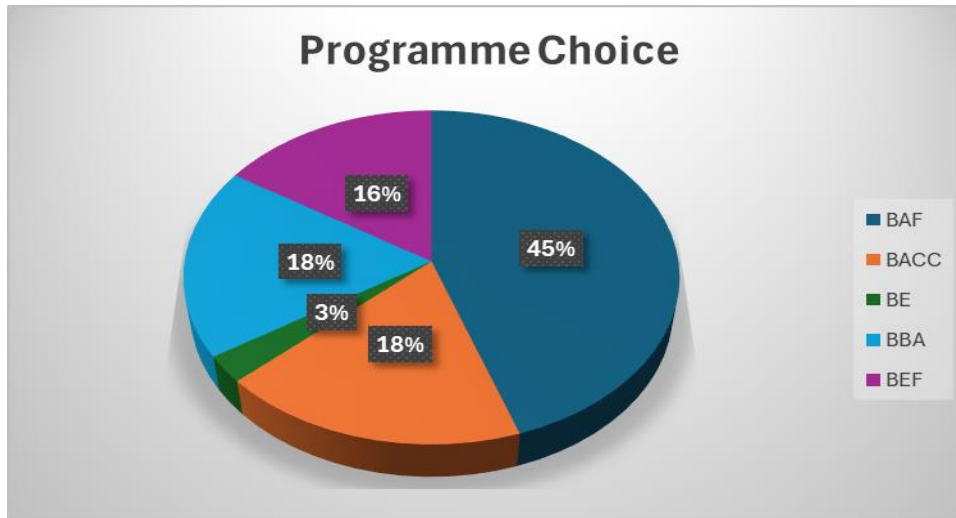


Figure 2: Programme of study

Vocation involved in

When asked what economic activity or income generating activity they were involved in, 67% reported that they were formally employed in government or private sector organisations mainly in accounts, marketing, or as junior economists. 33% of the respondents reported that they had engaged themselves in small businesses mainly in information technology, retail trading and or manufacturing. They also reported that they were not keen to look for formal employment as they were satisfied with what they were doing as they were their “own” bosses who have even employed some employees. This scenario is consistent with most literature reviewed which saw lower numbers of graduates involved in entrepreneurship, although the number has been steadily rising from the precolonial eras. With availability of jobs getting more and more uncertain, entrepreneurship training being entrenched in most learning programmes, it is envisaged that the numbers of graduates venturing into entrepreneurship will keep rising.

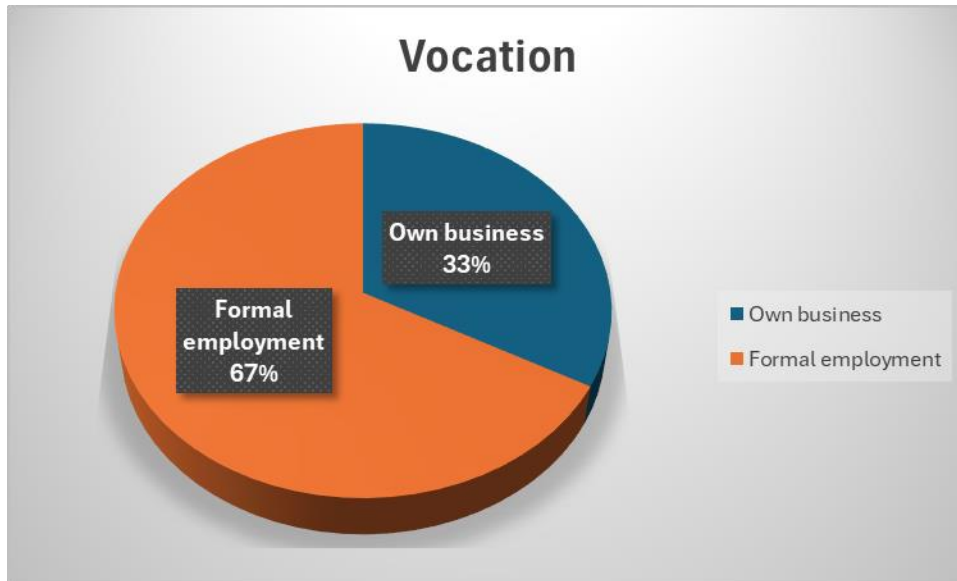
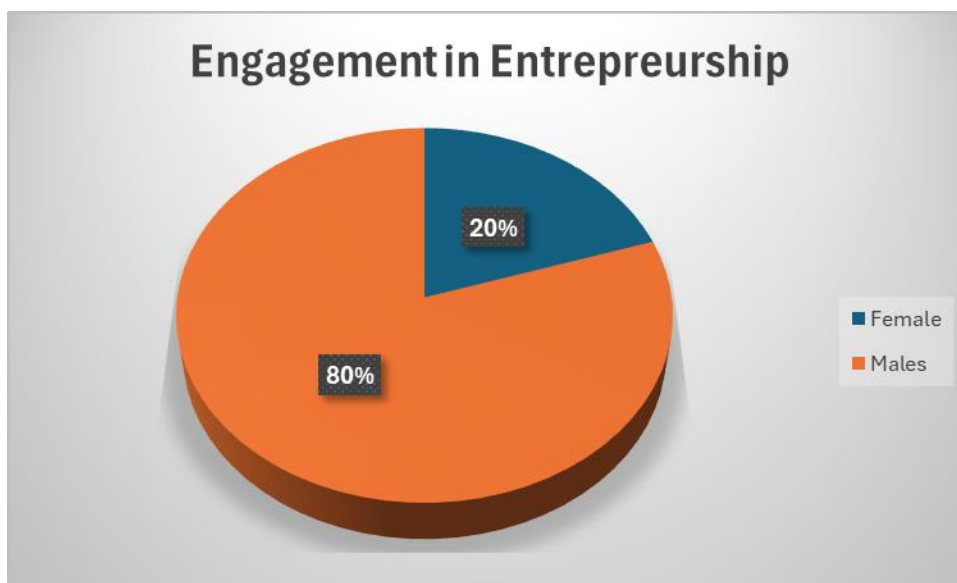


Figure 3: Vocation involvement

Gender involvement in Entrepreneurship

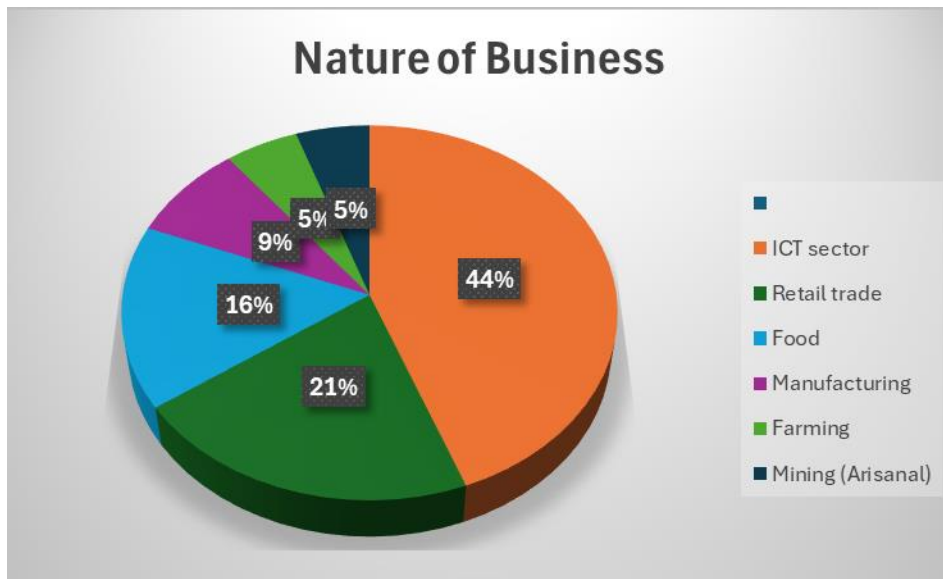
On ascertainment of the gender involvement in entrepreneurship, out of the 33 percent or twenty-Five (25) that were involved in entrepreneurship exploits, 20 or 80 percent were males while 5 or 20 percent were females. This may partly be explained by the traditional risk averse nature of women while men are likely risk takers.

Further, traditionally, women have long been tradinally not allowed by culture and society to venture into public life, worse even owning businesses. Figure No 4 below may indicate the risk averse nature of females as compared to males as regards entrepreneurship



*Figure 4 Engagement in Entrepreneurship***Nature of Business**

33 percent or the 25 respondents who are females are involved in entrepreneurship exploits. Key sectors that they invested in were at the apex ICT sector. This sector is the favourite of Generation Z (born mid-1990s to 2010). They have set up internet cafes, business centres for downloading music and movies and generally all IT requirements. They constitute 44% of the small businesses started. Second in the hierarchy is farming at 21 percent. This is understandable considering the current government is encouraging farming and has put up incentives for youth and women that want to venture into farming. Closely following farming is the food industry at 16 percent. This industry has low entry barriers and graduates find it easy to venture into. The respondents that have ventured into this sector have reported creating jobs. This is followed by 9 percent in manufacturing. The sector has also received incentives from the government and is becoming attractive to graduates. After manufacturing is farming and mining. These two sectors have traditionally been attributed to big companies and peasantry respectively. Figure 5 below shows the distributions

*Figure 5: Nature of Business***Conclusions**

In conclusion, the integration of entrepreneurship education at ZCAS University has demonstrated promising results in equipping graduates with the skills and mindset necessary to navigate Zambia's challenging job market landscape. By fostering innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit, ZCAS University has positioned its graduates as proactive job creators rather than passive job seekers. The initiatives undertaken by the university to embed entrepreneurship across various disciplines have contributed significantly to addressing the unemployment crisis among university graduates in Zambia. Furthermore, this case study

underscores the broader potential of entrepreneurship education as a transformative tool for economic development in developing countries. By empowering graduates to identify and capitalize on business opportunities, ZCAS University not only enhances individual employability but also contributes to the overall socio-economic growth of Zambia. Moving forward, continued research and evaluation of the outcomes of entrepreneurship education programs will be crucial in refining strategies and ensuring sustained impact in fostering a culture of entrepreneurship among university graduates across the nation.

Recommendations

Based on the empirical evidence presented above, the following recommendations are henceforth made:

Expand Interdisciplinary Collaboration: ZCAS University should foster greater collaboration between departments to enhance the interdisciplinary nature of entrepreneurship education. This approach can expose students to diverse perspectives and skills essential for innovative business ventures.

Strengthen Practical Learning Opportunities: Increasing hands-on experience through internships, incubators, and mentorship programs can significantly enhance students' entrepreneurial capabilities. ZCAS should prioritize partnerships with industry and local businesses to provide real-world learning environments.

Enhance Access to Funding and Resources: Facilitating access to seed funding, grants, and resources for entrepreneurial ventures can empower ZCAS graduates to translate their ideas into viable businesses. Establishing a dedicated entrepreneurship support center could centralize these efforts.

Integrate Technology and Digital Skills: Given the evolving digital landscape, integrating courses on digital marketing, e-commerce, and emerging technologies into the curriculum can better prepare students for contemporary entrepreneurial challenges.

Evaluate and Adjust Curriculum Regularly: Continuous evaluation of entrepreneurship courses based on industry trends and feedback from alumni and employers can ensure relevance and effectiveness. ZCAS should prioritize flexibility in curriculum updates to remain responsive to changing market dynamics.

Implementing these recommendations can further strengthen ZCAS University's entrepreneurship education initiatives, thereby nurturing a new generation of innovative entrepreneurs equipped to tackle Zambia's unemployment challenges.

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