



The Role of Business Education in Entrepreneurship Development Among School Leavers in Mbala District of Northern Province, Zambia

Siluonde Anthony Burton

DMI-St. Eugene University-Lusaka, Zambia

Abstract – This study investigated the role of business education in entrepreneurship development among school leavers in Mbala District of Northern Province, Zambia. The study was motivated by increasing youth unemployment levels and the need for entrepreneurship skills among young people. The objectives of the study were to examine the contribution of business education to entrepreneurship development, identify entrepreneurial skills acquired by school leavers, examine challenges faced by school leavers in starting businesses, and propose strategies for improving entrepreneurship education. The study employed a mixed-methods research design involving questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, and document review. Data were collected from school leavers, educators, and educational administrators in Mbala District. Findings revealed that business education equips learners with theoretical knowledge in accounting, marketing, business planning, and financial literacy. However, practical entrepreneurial exposure, mentorship opportunities, startup capital, and industry collaboration remained inadequate. The study concluded that business education has the potential to promote entrepreneurship among school leavers if practical entrepreneurship activities are strengthened. The study recommended curriculum reforms, mentorship programs, school-industry partnerships, and increased support for youth entrepreneurship initiatives.

Keywords – Business Education, Entrepreneurship, School Leavers, Youth Empowerment, Zambia.

I. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship plays a significant role in economic development through job creation, innovation, and poverty reduction. In developing countries such as Zambia, entrepreneurship has become an important strategy for addressing unemployment among youths and school leavers. Many young people complete secondary or vocational education every year but fail to secure formal employment due to limited job opportunities.

Business education was introduced into educational institutions to equip learners with entrepreneurial knowledge, practical skills, and positive attitudes necessary for self-employment and business creation. Through business education, learners are expected to acquire competencies in accounting, marketing, communication, leadership, business planning, and financial management.

Despite the introduction of business education in schools, many school leavers still struggle to establish and manage successful businesses. Most learners possess theoretical knowledge but lack practical entrepreneurial skills and exposure to real business environments. This situation raises concerns regarding the effectiveness of business education in preparing learners for entrepreneurship.

Mbala District in Northern Province presents a suitable setting for examining this issue because the district experiences high youth unemployment despite having opportunities in agriculture, retail trade, fishing, and small-scale enterprises.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Zambian economy continues to face challenges such as unemployment, poverty, and low industrial development. Youths constitute a large percentage of the country's population, and many school leavers enter the labor market annually without adequate employment opportunities. Entrepreneurship has therefore become an important strategy for economic survival and development.

Business education aims at preparing learners with skills and competencies necessary for employment and self-employment. Subjects such as commerce, entrepreneurship, bookkeeping, and business studies are expected to equip learners with entrepreneurial abilities. However, many graduates remain unemployed due to lack of practical experience, mentorship, and startup resources.

Research conducted in Zambia indicates that entrepreneurship education positively influences entrepreneurial intentions among youths. However, challenges such as outdated curricula, inadequate teaching materials, insufficient practical exposure, and poor school-industry collaboration continue to hinder the effectiveness of business education.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To examine the role of business education in preparing school leavers for entrepreneurship.
2. To identify entrepreneurial skills acquired through business education.
3. To examine challenges faced by school leavers in starting businesses.



ISSN:3048-7722

- To propose strategies for improving business education in promoting entrepreneurship.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Business education refers to educational programs designed to provide learners with knowledge, attitudes, and skills related to business activities and entrepreneurship. According to Hisrich and Peters (2002), business education equips individuals with competencies necessary for managing and operating businesses effectively.

Entrepreneurship education is a component of business education that focuses specifically on developing entrepreneurial mindsets, creativity, innovation, and leadership. UNESCO (2015) states that entrepreneurship education empowers youths to become self-reliant and capable of identifying business opportunities.

Zimba (2019) found that entrepreneurship education contributes positively to youth empowerment by improving self-confidence and encouraging youths to become job creators rather than job seekers. Similarly, Chabala and Mwale (2018) observed that business education enhances problem-solving abilities and financial literacy among learners.

Despite these benefits, several barriers affect entrepreneurship among school leavers. Lack of startup capital is one of the major challenges. Many youths fail to access loans and financial support required for business startup. Inadequate mentorship also affects entrepreneurial success among school leavers.

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a mixed-methods research design involving both quantitative and qualitative approaches. This design enabled the researcher to gather comprehensive information regarding business education and entrepreneurship development.

The target population included school leavers, educators, and educational administrators in Mbala District. A sample of 50 school leavers, 10 educators, and 5 administrators participated in the study.

Data collection methods included:

- Questionnaires
- Interviews
- Focus group discussions
- Document review

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages, while qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, confidentiality was maintained, and participation was voluntary.

VI. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	28	56
Female	22	44
Total	50	100

The findings show a relatively balanced representation of male and female respondents.

Table 2: Participation in Practical Business Activities

Participation Status	Frequency	Total
Participated	15	50
Did Not Participate	35	50

The majority of school leavers reported limited exposure to practical entrepreneurial activities.

Table 3: Financial Literacy and Business Planning Skills

Skills Acquired	Percentage Gained (%)	Percentage Not Gained (%)
Financial Management & Business Planning	80	25

The findings indicate that business education contributed positively to financial literacy and business planning knowledge.

Table 4: Challenges Faced by School Leavers

Challenges	Percentage (%)
Lack of Capital	70
Lack of Mentorship	65
Lack of Practical Experience	50

Lack of startup capital emerged as the major challenge faced by school leavers.

VII. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings indicate that business education contributes significantly to entrepreneurship development by providing learners with foundational business knowledge and entrepreneurial awareness. Learners acquired skills in financial management, marketing, and business planning.

However, business education remains heavily theoretical. Most learners lacked practical entrepreneurial exposure such as internships, business simulations, and school-based enterprises. This limits their ability to apply classroom knowledge in real business situations.

The lack of mentorship and startup capital further limits entrepreneurial success among school leavers. Many youths



ISSN:3048-7722

complete school without guidance on accessing business financing or managing business risks.

The study therefore highlights the need for curriculum reforms and stronger collaboration between schools, industries, and government institutions.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that business education plays an important role in entrepreneurship development among school leavers in Mbala District. Business education equips learners with theoretical business knowledge and entrepreneurial awareness necessary for self-employment. However, the effectiveness of business education is limited by lack of practical training, inadequate mentorship, insufficient startup capital, and weak school-industry partnerships.

The study therefore concludes that strengthening practical entrepreneurship education can significantly improve entrepreneurship outcomes among school leavers in Zambia.

Recommendations

1. The business education curriculum should include practical entrepreneurship activities such as internships, school enterprises, and business simulations.
2. Schools should establish partnerships with local businesses to provide mentorship and industrial exposure.
3. Government institutions and financial organizations should create youth-friendly funding programs for young entrepreneurs.
4. Teachers should receive continuous professional development in entrepreneurship education.
5. Schools should establish entrepreneurship clubs and innovation hubs to promote creativity and business development among learners.

REFERENCES

1. Chabala, J., & Mwale, P. (2018). Youth Enterprise Promotion through Education. Lusaka: Zambia Education Research Forum.
2. Drucker, P. F. (1985). Innovation and Entrepreneurship. Harper & Row.
3. Hisrich, R. D., & Peters, M. P. (2002). Entrepreneurship. McGraw-Hill.
4. Kawimbe, T. (2024). Educational Strategies and Informal Sector Growth. University of Zambia Press.
5. Musonda, N. (2025). Perceptions of Business Curriculum in Rural Zambia. Mbala Research Centre.
6. Tan, S. (2017). Singapore's Model of Secondary School Entrepreneurship. Asia Education Reports.
7. UNESCO. (2015). Entrepreneurship Education for the 21st Century. Paris: UNESCO.
8. World Bank. (2021). Zambia Education Sector Review.

9. Zimba, M. (2019). "The Role of Education in Entrepreneurship Development in Zambia." Zambia Journal of Business Studies.