

Entrepreneurship Education and its Impact on Informal Sector Development in Zambia: A Theoretical Perspective

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African Journal of Commercial Studies, 2024, 5(4), 265–272

DOI Link: <https://doi.org/10.59413/ajocs/v5.i.4.8>

Abstract

The research examined entrepreneurship education and its impact on informal sector development in Zambia following a theoretical perspective. The desk research methodology based on integrative literature review was followed. Articles were searched from online databases such as Wiley Online, Springer, Semantic Scholar and Google Scholar. The research revealed that entrepreneurship education plays a significant role in driving informal sector development in Zambia, a developing economy seeking to achieve sustainable economic development. The research concluded that entrepreneurship education represents a significant initiative for sustainable informal sector development in Zambia through its impacts on employment creation and literacy. The research 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. The study also recommended for integration of EE into the Zambia's educational curriculum.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Education, Informal Sector Development, Zambia, Employment Creation, Sustainable Development, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), Technical Education and Vocational Training (TEVET), Policy Interventions, Entrepreneurial Competencies, Educational Curriculum Integration

Article Info

Volume 5, Issue 4

Publication history:

Accepted on 28 November 2024;

Published on 9 December 2024

Article DOI:

[10.59413/ajocs/v5.i.4.8](https://doi.org/10.59413/ajocs/v5.i.4.8)

1. Introduction

Globally, informal sector development has received significant attention in low to middle income countries (LMICs) since its introduction for international usage by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1972 (Muhanga, 2017; van der Hoeven, 2020; Dell'Anno, 2022). The apparent interests and focus on the informal economy in most LMICs are due to a number of reasons including that the informal sector contains the largest share of global workforce (Muhanga, 2017, ILO, 2023). Specifically, ILO (2023) reported that about 2 billion employed people (61.2%) are in the informal sector.

Over the past three decades, Zambia has been grappled with high levels of poverty and unemployment particularly among youths (Finn, 2023; Mileji, Lubungu & Magasu, 2023). In this regard, the Government of Zambia has attached great importance to the informal sector for its contribution to employment and poverty alleviation (Mubita et al., 2017). As noted by Kawimbe and Mulonga (2024) and reported by the Zambia Statistics Agency (ZSA) (2022), the informal sector of Zambia which account for over 70% of economic activities and employment has become a significant driver for economic development in the country.

Informal sector development has been a policy agenda for the Zambian government. As stated in the 8th National Development Plan (NDP) (2022-2026), the Zambia government aims to promote growth and formalisation of the informal sector through promoting enterprise development in order to achieve sustainable economic growth (Government of Zambia, 2022). Informal sector development through promoting growth of micro, small to medium enterprises (MSMEs) has also been considered key towards Zambia attaining the vision of becoming a prosperous middle-income economy and attaining the Agenda for Sustainable Development by 2030 (Mutambo, Mwange & Banda, 2023).

Hence, to promote informal sector development, several initiatives and policy measures have been initiated by the Zambian government (Mubita et al., 2017). For instance, the government of Zambia established the Small Enterprise Development Act in 1996, the MSME Development Policy in 2009, the Ministry of SME Development in 2021 and the revised national MSME Development policy of 2023 with the sole aim of stimulating growth of informal MSMEs (Mubita et al., 2017; Banda & Hapompwe, 2023; Government of Zambia, 2023). In addition, the Government of Zambia in collaboration with the Government of Finland launched the Accelerated Growth for SMEs (AGS) programme in 2018 to promote development of Zambia's MSME sector (Wallenius, 2020). However, most these interventions have been found failing to effectively drive informal sector development. Scholars such as Shamenda (2012) and Mubita et al. (2017) consider most of the initiatives as piecemeal initiatives with limited possibilities to holistically drive informal sector development in Zambia.

In this regard, there have been calls for innovative interventions to drive informal sector development in Zambia. Entrepreneurship education (EE) has been among the innovative government initiatives towards stimulating the informal sector development in Zambia (Mtonga, 2023). Chanda, Chisebe and Ngulube (2024) observed the growing recognition of the significance of EE in Zambia. According to Mubanga et al. (2019), the government of Zambia has been prompted to introduce and support EE by the formal sector failing to create adequate employment opportunities as well as the significant contribution of the informal sector to economic development.

There is evidence that entrepreneurship education significantly contributes to informal sector development. For instance, Sorokin, Povalko and Vyatskaya (2021) underscored the importance of EE in driving informal sector growth in Russia. Okeke and Alonta (2023) found EE to have significant implications informal sector development for Nigeria. Anthony, Oshoke and Sylvester (2017) also regarded EE as a gateway to informal sector development in Nigeria by promoting entrepreneurship. Essien and Adelekan (2021) also found EE to have significant positive impacts on informal sector development by promoting women entrepreneurship in Nigeria. Moreover, Okesiji and Adewunmi (2020) also observed significant role of EE in promoting SME development in Nigeria. Uleanya, Omotosho and Gamede (2021) also support the importance of EE in promoting informal sector development in South Africa by enhancing performance of MSMEs. In the same vein, Muparangi, Makudza and Kandwa (2022) established that EE represents a panacea to informal sector development in Zimbabwe.

However, besides the existing evidence, there tends to be paucity of such empirical evidence with respect to Zambia. This is the gap in literature which this research aims to address. This research would make significant contributions to theory, practice and policy. For instance, the research findings would inform policymaking towards promoting EE and informal sector development in Zambia. The rest of the research is organized as follows: literature review; methodology, findings and discussion and conclusions and implications.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Entrepreneurship education conceptualisation

The origins of the concept “entrepreneurship education” can be tracked back to 1947 where first EE courses were taught in the United States at the Harvard University (Ellis, Aker & Delamarter, 2023). However, Pittaway et al. (2024) argue that history of EE can be traced back to the 1860s where it was in the United Kingdom's business schools. Since then, the concept has attracted a lot of research attention and interests among scholars and authors. However, there is lack of a universally accepted definition for EE as several definitions have been documented. Okesiji and Adewunmi (2020) define EE as specialised training offered to individuals particularly technical and vocational education and training (TVET) students to acquire skills and abilities for business venture creation.

In a different view, Ibecheozor et al. (2021) refer EE to the type of education and training given to individuals to instil in them skills and ideas necessary for evaluating and exploiting business opportunities. According to Krisnaresanti et al. (2020), EE is a form of a training scheme for developing individual to be self-employed or developing capabilities to organise, finance and manage business enterprises. Mohammed and Itopa (2023) define EE as the collection of formalised training and teaching meant to educate and train individuals towards promoting startups or small business development.

The main objectives of EE include equipping individuals with entrepreneurial skills and knowledge towards creation of self-employment through startups or business venture creation (Anthony et al., 2017). According to Kakouris and Liargovas (2021), EE can be categorised into education about entrepreneurship, education for entrepreneurship and education in entrepreneurship. On the other hand, Liñán, Ceresia and Bernal (2018) argue that EE can be divided into four categories namely entrepreneurship awareness education, education for startups, education for entrepreneurial dynamics and continuing training for entrepreneurs.

2.2. Informal sector conceptualisation

Generally, the definition for “informal sector” has been bounded with debate where several authors, institutions and researchers have come up with different definitions. In this regard, there exists terminological controversies in existing literature pertaining the definition of informal sector. Several terms or phrases have been used in the extant literature to describe informal sector. These include underground economy, hidden economy, shadow economy, oxymoron economy, black economy, parallel economy, subterranean economy and unofficial economy (Ruzek, 2014; Muhanga, 2017; Muparangi et al., 2022). All these terminologies refer to unregistered, untaxed and unregulated economic activities. Muhanga (2017) contends that informal sector is defined differently based on the context in which the concept is applied. The debate on IS definitions has brought different schools of thought such as the dualist, neoliberalist, structuralist, legalist and voluntarist schools of thought (Pallangyo, 2021; Dell'Anno, 2022).

Although some attempts have been made to reconcile the various IS definitions, there is still no common definition (Dell'Anno, 2022). The “official” definition was provided by ILO (2023) where IS has been defined as all the economic activities which are in law or in practice but insufficiently or not covered by formal regulatory arrangements. According to Pallangyo (2021), informal sector is characterised by labour-intensive operations, small-scale operations and low-income family businesses largely unprotected or regulated by the government. Zaman et al. (2024) referred the IS to the part of an economy neither regulated, monitored or taxed by the federal government. In a different perspective, Dell'Anno (2022) characterizes the IS as the part of economy with unregulated and illegal economic activities smuggling and drug dealing. However, this research recognises the IS as part of the economy with unregistered or unregulated legal economic activities as propounded by ILO (2023).

2.3. Entrepreneurship education in Zambia

Entrepreneurship education has gained prominence in Zambia over the past few decades (Mubanga et al., 2019; Mtonga, 2023). According to Kawimbe (2024a), entrepreneurship education has become integral towards shaping the economic landscape of Zambia by fostering new generation of business owners, managers and leaders. Several initiatives have been put in place to promote EE in Zambia. For instance, there is the Zambia Educational Curriculum Framework launched in 2013 which underscore the importance of EE in Zambia (Mwamba, Musonda & Daka, 2021). In addition, the Zambian government has made efforts to provide EE through its Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training (TEVET) policy (Kaala, 2022). Since then, Zambia has witnessed an increasing number of TEVET institutions and universities offering EE (Libingi & Bbenkele, 2024).

2.4. Informal sector development in Zambia

The informal sector in Zambia plays a fundamental role in driving socio-economic development (Daka & Toivanen, 2014; Kawimbe & Mulonga, 2024). According to the revised national MSME development policy of Zambia, the informal sector of Zambia is dominated by MSMEs which account for 90% of the informal sector (Government of Zambia, 2023). The Zambia’s informal sector dominated by MSMEs has grown significantly over the three decades driven by reduced formal employment and the economic reforms such as Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) implemented from the early 1990s (Mubita et al., 2017).

As observed by Kawimbe and Mulonga (2024), the informal sector is a significant contributor to Zambia's economic development. Precisely, the informal sector accounts for over 70% of employment in Zambia (Simuchimba et al., 2024; ZSA, 2022). According to Mwango et al. (2019), informal sector development is of great value in Zambia as the informal sector offer crucial opportunities for employment, improved livelihoods and income generation especially for the disadvantaged groups such as women, youths and the less-educated.

2.5. Theoretical Framework

The study is theoretically anchored on the Theory of Entrepreneurial Competency propounded by Bird (1988). This theory emphasises development of explicit competencies which empower individuals to navigate complexities of business venture creation and management (Agbenyegah & Mahohoma, 2020). The theory further states that entrepreneurial competencies are essential characteristics of entrepreneurs which result in establishment of new enterprises (Bird, 2019). As also observed by Pepple and Enuoh (2020), the theory of entrepreneurial competency argue that entrepreneurial competencies must be learned. In supporting the theory, Vasylyk, Varis and Kravchuk (2024) argued that development of entrepreneurial competencies can be driven by education. In this regard, EE provision can promote entrepreneurial competencies among Zambians leading to business creation and ultimately informal sector development. Hence, the Theory of Entrepreneurial Competency was found of great relevance and applicability to this research. However, the theory is criticised for overlooking contextual factors which significantly influence development of entrepreneurial competences (Draksler & Sirec, 2021).

2.6. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the research is illustrated in Figure 1.

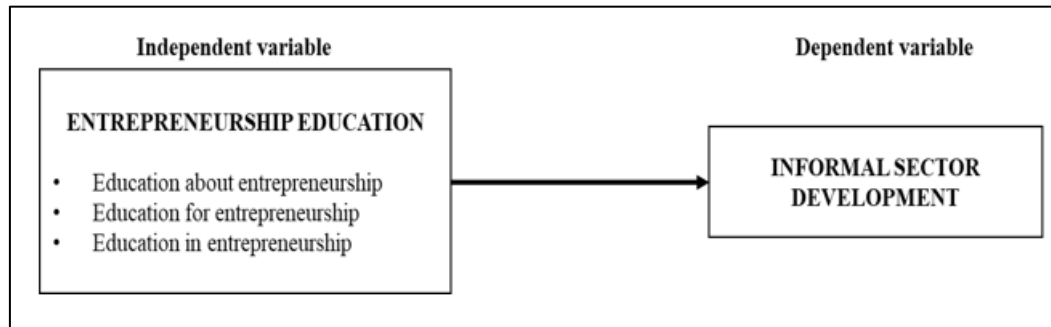


Figure 1: Conceptual framework (Source: Author's constructions)

3. Methodology

The research followed the desk research methodology where secondary qualitative data was collected through review of literature. This methodology is supported by Hughes et al. (2019) and Snyder (2019) who suggest that theoretical perspective-based researches must draw evidence from review of related literature. The methodology employed included library search as well as review of related literature to entrepreneurship education and informal sector development. The desk research methodology based on integrative literature review comprised search of data from peer-reviewed journal articles, textbooks, conference proceeding papers, institutional reports and published research articles. The search for data was done in prominent databases such as Wiley Online, Springer, Semantic Scholar and Google Scholar. Keywords employed in the search strategy included entrepreneurship education, Zambia and informal sector development.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Role of entrepreneurship education in informal sector development in Zambia

Entrepreneurship education has been found to have a critical role in driving informal sector development in Zambia. For instance, the study by Mtonga (2023) support the role of EE in informal sector development by establishing that EE significantly contributes to SME development in Zambia. Chilombe (2023) also found that entrepreneurship training has significant role in driving development and growth of MSMEs in Zambia. The results by Chilombe (2023) confirmed the findings from the study by Ndhlovu (2022) which also revealed a significant role of entrepreneurship training in growth of MSMEs in Zambia. The contribution of EE to informal sector development was also underscored by Muchoka (2020) who found lack of EE to be among the key factors influencing development and growth of MSMEs in Zambia.

Furthermore, Kawimbe (2024a) also supported the significant role of EE in informal sector development in Zambia by establishing a positive relationship between EE and success of MSMEs in Zambia. In addition, the findings by Kawimbe (2024b) that lack of EE is among the factors contributing to MSME failure in Zambia underscore the critical role EE in enhancing informal sector development in Zambia. Chivwindi, Banda and Hapompwe (2023) also support the importance of EE in promoting informal sector development in Zambia by concluding that lack of EE is among the major bottlenecks to MSME development and growth in Zambia. More so, Chabala and Mwale (2019) also emphasize the importance of EE programs noting their significant role in fostering business creation in Zambia.

On the other hand, revised national MSME Development policy of 2023, support that entrepreneurship education and training (EET) play a significant role in promoting Zambia's informal sector development through facilitating development of the MSME sector (Government of Zambia, 2023). These have aimed at enhancing MSMEs' participation in the industrial development through linkages between MSMEs and large firms, development and dissemination of technology, improved entrepreneurship education and training. Chijikwa and Mulenga (2022) also recommended for business entrepreneurial training to promote SME development and formalisation in Zambia.

In a nutshell, the aforementioned review indicates the significant role of EE in promoting informal sector development in Zambia. The findings are comparable to the findings from existing empirical studies in the context of other countries (Anthony et al., 2017; Okesiji and Adewunmi, 2020; Sorokin et al., 2021; Uleanya et al., 2021; Essien & Adelekan, 2021; Muparangi et al., 2022; Okeke & Alonta, 2023).

4.2 Challenges for entrepreneurship education in Zambia

In the case of Zambia, several challenges acting as barriers to effective provision of EE have been documented in existing literature. The challenges emanate from both the supply-side and the demand side (Ngoma & Sichimba, 2020). For instance, Konayuma (2015), Kachembele (2020) and Mwamba et al. (2021) pointed out several challenges faced in EE provision in Zambia including inadequate entrepreneurship teachers, lack of institutional support, lack of financial

support and poor entrepreneurial culture. The study by Mwamba et al. (2021) further added that the education curriculum for tertiary institutions in Zambia such as the Kwame Nkrumah University inadequately promote EE. The same challenge was also reported in Phiri et al.'s (2024) study which revealed that the current curricula in Zambia inadequately address and support EE. The other challenges faced in EE provision in Zambia reported by Phiri et al. (2018) and Phiri et al. (2024) include low staffing levels, inadequate national policy on EE, erratic and inadequate funding and lack of infrastructure for EE. The findings by Phiri et al. (2024) confirmed the results by Phiri, Mbozi and Kalimaposo (2019) that inadequate policy framework inhibited effective provision of EE in Zambia's TVET institutions.

In another research, Kaala (2022) reported a number of challenges inhibiting EE in Zambia including lack of interest among learners, poor or inadequate EE infrastructure, poor staffing, negative attitudes towards EE as well as inadequate funding. Soko and Chiyosha (2023) also reported challenges faced in EE provision in Zambia including improper coordination, absence of effective policies, poor funding, inadequate sensitization and awareness programs. The challenges of inadequate funding and lack of trained staff were also reported by Chanda et al. (2024). The research by Mwila (2016) also concluded that poor state of infrastructure, ineffective curriculum implementation and inadequate funding were the main barriers to effective EE provision in Zambia. Ndhlovu (2022) also demonstrated that whilst the Government of Zambia recognize the importance of EE, there remains the concern of lack of awareness regarding available EE programs. From the reviewed literature, there are several challenges faced in provision of EE in Zambia ranging from inadequate funding to lack of effective policies.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The research has examined entrepreneurship education and its impact on informal sector development in Zambia following a theoretical perspective. The research revealed that entrepreneurship education plays a significant role in driving informal sector development in Zambia, a developing economy seeking to achieve sustainable economic development. The results showed that entrepreneurship education represents a significant initiative for sustainable informal sector development in Zambia through its impacts on employment creation and literacy. The research 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. Based on the findings, the research emphasizes the need for effective institutional interventions to support entrepreneurship education in Zambia. The study also recommends for integration of EE into the Zambia's educational curriculum. However, the research had its own limitations of relying on secondary data. The study recommends further researches to be done using primary evidence.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicting interests.

Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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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