

UNIVERSITY IN THE CONTEXT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP. CASE STUDIES OF ZIMBABWE EZEKIEL GUTI UNIVERSITY AND BINDURA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE EDUCATION

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Abstract

Across the globe, universities are undergoing massive transformation, moving beyond their traditional roles of teaching, research and community engagement to innovation and entrepreneurship as core of their mission. In Zimbabwe, this is critical, given the economic challenges the country is facing. This study examines the entrepreneurial capabilities of the Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University (ZEGU) and the Bindura University of Science Education (BUSE) using the Higher Education (HE) Innovate framework which assesses the entrepreneurial and innovative capacity of higher education institutions. The study uses a qualitative approach. Purposive sampling was used to select participants from each university, including administrators, faculty members and students involved in entrepreneurship activities. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis of institutional strategic plans and entrepreneurship programmes. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis which allowed for identification of patterns and themes across the HE Innovate dimensions. However, there were gaps noted in measuring impact and organisational capacity, with no systems in place to track and evaluate outcomes of entrepreneurial

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activities. The study recommends that Zimbabwean universities strengthen their entrepreneurial ecosystems by supporting start-ups, refining leadership strategies and measuring entrepreneurial impacts. Recommendations include deeper collaboration with external stakeholders and organisational structures that are conducive to entrepreneurship. Future research could explore how these university-led initiatives impact on local economic development and the role of government policies in supporting entrepreneurship in higher education.

Key words. *HE Innovate Framework, industry partnerships and entrepreneurial education*

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship education has become a required component of higher education across the globe, driven by the understanding that entrepreneurial activity makes an enormous contribution to economic growth, job creation, and innovation. Universities in industrialised nations have long been at the forefront of promoting entrepreneurship through providing specialised courses that prepare students to start ventures, comprehend market systems, and access the sophisticated landscape of entrepreneurship.

Universities like Stanford University in the US, with a flagship Entrepreneurship Programme, have provided evidence of the potential impact of entrepreneurship education. Such universities not only provide access to theoretical study, but also real-world experience networking with entrepreneurs, securing finance, and developing business ideas within incubators. Such environments bring about a conducive entrepreneurial culture, where students can progress from conceptualisation to business realities (Hindle, 2007). Throughout Africa, universities have also started appreciating the necessity of promoting entrepreneurship despite the fact that the journey has been tougher given the socio-economic and infrastructural woes.

In areas like East Africa, institutions like Strathmore University in Kenya have been leading in providing entrepreneurial courses with the objective of developing a culture of innovation and business start-ups. These institutions have also taken steps towards establishing business incubation centres and connecting students with industry stakeholders and financing institutions. In South Africa, the Stellenbosch University Business School has created a number of entrepreneurship programmes aimed at equipping students with practical skills that can be utilised in establishing viable businesses in the context of the continent's development challenges (Borat, 2016).

Nevertheless, mass implementation of stringent entrepreneurship curricula by universities in Africa continues to be ongoing, with some being hamstrung by cost factors and low levels of stable industry linkages (Sefotho and Gubba, 2021). In Zimbabwe, the necessity for entrepreneurship education is more pressing due to the country's chronic economic woes. Zimbabwe has experienced extreme economic volatility, high unemployment rates, and a predominantly informal economy. The Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency (ZIMSTAT) records that more than 80% of the working population is working in the informal sector, which indicates the necessity to establish sustainable businesses that can make the shift from informal to formal businesses (ZIMSTAT, 2020). To this end, universities are being challenged to nurture entrepreneurial competencies that will spearhead economic revitalisation. Although entrepreneurship education is still in its early stages in most Zimbabwean universities, institutions such as the Zimbabwe Ezekiel Guti University (ZEGU) and the Bindura University of Science Education (BUSE) have launched programmes that seek to introduce entrepreneurial mindset in their curricula.

These universities are on the right track by virtue of having such programmes available which would make students generate business ideas and become entrepreneurs after they graduate. Nonetheless, there is a very crucial gap in the practical application of such programmes in the form of constraints in getting funding, industry partnerships, and in offering students practical business exposure. At ZEGU, for example, the ZEGU Business Innovation and Startup Programme (ZBISP), launched in 2020, is designed to equip students with entrepreneurial capabilities and offer practical hands-on experience. Although the programme has recorded massive success, such as seed funding to student startups, the initiative has been constrained by a lack of industry partnerships and the offering of follow-on support to budding entrepreneurs (ZEGU, 2021).

In the same vein, BUSE has established an Entrepreneurship Development Unit (EDU) which provides business mentorship, training workshops, and business incubation services. Notwithstanding these interventions, students in both universities indicate that they feel poorly equipped to handle the financial and operational dynamics of establishing and running businesses in Zimbabwe's unfavourable economic environment. The lack of entrepreneurship education at universities in Zimbabwe poses pertinent questions about the role of academic institutions in promoting sustainable entrepreneurship.

Another relevant model is the Entrepreneurial Event Model (EEM) (Shapero and Sokol, 1982), which explains the transition of people from potential entrepreneurship to actual entrepreneurial activity. The model emphasizes perceived desirability, feasibility, and opportunity existence. Universities hence create the conditions for these three

aspects through curriculum, networks, and exposure to entrepreneurial opportunities.

Nevertheless, in spite of all these exemplary efforts, there exist challenges. There is limited funding and no direct industry tie-ups to hinder the practical realisation of entrepreneurial thoughts. Though the university is making efforts to overcome them, the implementation is gradual, and there has to be a stronger interface with the private sector in order to make these entrepreneurial activities successful.

Despite the presence of programmes meant to stimulate entrepreneurship, the failure of students to convert ideas into successful businesses reflects underlying flaws in the engagement and support of the institutions. All these are further compounded by the overall socio-economic conditions in Zimbabwe, including inflation, political uncertainty, and limited venture capital availability. This study attempts to explore the role of ZEGU and BUSE in entrepreneurship education, focusing on the effectiveness of the programmes and the challenges faced by both students and lecturers in creating and sustaining entrepreneurial ventures.

The cases of BUSE and ZEGU serve to illustrate that Zimbabwean universities are capable of being drivers of entrepreneurial growth, but this requires institutional and government support. Policies to enable private sector entry in university entrepreneurial initiatives, more convenient access to capital, and increased mentorship networks are vital in solving these problems.

Besides, while both institutions have attempted to promote entrepreneurship, the degree to which students are encouraged to see entrepreneurship as a viable career is still restricted. While there are

courses in entrepreneurship, more needs to be done to create an entrepreneurial mindset in the whole student body.

The research also explores how such institutions can improve their entrepreneurship education programmes to serve students best and contribute towards Zimbabwe's economic re-emergence. In line with this, therefore, this study investigates how entrepreneurship is being integrated into the curricula of ZEGU and BUSE, the challenges they face in delivering effective entrepreneurship education, and the opportunities they possess for strengthening their entrepreneurial ecosystems. Using these two universities, the research aims to offer insightful information on Zimbabwe's entrepreneurship education system, with recommendations that can shape future policies and practices in higher learning institutions in the nation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study employs the HE Innovate tool. HE Innovate, developed through joint collaboration between the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), is a global tool aimed at universities to increase entrepreneurship and innovation. HE Innovate offers universities an assessment tool with which they can compare their entrepreneurial environment and assist them in terms of becoming resilient in fostering students, staff, and the local community towards entrepreneurship (European Commission, 2016). The HE Innovate tool consists of eight key dimensions, which are Leadership and Governance, Organisational Capacity, Entrepreneurial Teaching and Learning, Opportunities for Spin-offs and Start-ups, Relationships with External Stakeholders, Digital Transformation, Measuring Impact, and Cultural and Social Environment. Each of these dimensions considers a specific aspect of a university's entrepreneurial environment, allowing institutions to assess their strengths and weaknesses.



Figure 1: HE Innovate framework flow

Leadership and Governance examines the extent to which top-level university administration is committed to entrepreneurship integration into the institution's strategy and culture. This dimension examines leadership's capacity to drive innovation, create an entrepreneurial culture, and encourage entrepreneurship at the institutional level. Organisational Capacity looks at the infrastructure, organisational structure, and resources allocated to entrepreneurship by universities. This includes support infrastructure such as incubators, accelerators, and innovation centres, along with specialised personnel and administrative structures that promote entrepreneurial activity. Entrepreneurial Teaching and Learning discusses how entrepreneurship is integrated into the curriculum, pedagogy, and academic programmes. It considers whether the university builds practical skills and entrepreneurial attitude through courses, workshops, internships, and student businesses (Gibb, 2018).

Opportunities for Spin-offs and Start-ups addresses the ability of the university to facilitate the creation and growth of start-ups,

particularly research or student-led start-ups. This aspect captures the entrepreneurial support, including access to funding, mentoring, and networks that can help start-ups succeed. Relationships with external stakeholders captures the external relations of the university with business, industry, investors, government departments, and other higher education institutions. Strong external collaborations are vital in promoting innovation, providing students with opportunities for internships, and enabling commercialisation of research. Digital Transformation captures the degree to which digital tools, platforms, and technology have been adopted in the entrepreneurial ecosystem of the university. It is more important than ever since digital technology is at the centre of new entrepreneurship, as it enables enhanced business models and communication channels.

The measuring impact dimension concerns the measurement and assessment of the performance of universities' entrepreneurial efforts. This includes measures for start-up numbers, performance of student enterprises, and overall economic impact of entrepreneurial activities. Finally, the cultural and social environment dimension assesses the institutional and societal atmosphere in general for entrepreneurship. This entails reviewing the climate for risk-taking, innovation, and developing entrepreneurial activity at the university. There is need for an entrepreneurial culture and risk-taking in order to develop the next generation of entrepreneurs.

HE Innovate is used by universities worldwide to guide their entrepreneurship development strategies. Universities are able to identify areas of strength and weakness through self-assessment, thereby enabling them to take targeted action to enhance their entrepreneurial capacity (Shirokova *et al.*, 2017). The tool allows universities to engage different stakeholders in the evaluation process, such as students, employees, external collaborators, and businesspeople. Gaps identification allows universities to focus on

improving particular areas, i.e., offering further support for start-ups, strengthening links with industry, or the development of teaching entrepreneurial skills. The framework also provides higher education institutions with a clear blueprint for how to build more entrepreneurial cultures, from curriculum entrepreneurship to start-up support systems.

Universities have demonstrated the on-the-ground, applicability of the HE Innovate Framework. For example, ZEGU identified, through their entrepreneurial activity assessment against the framework, that they were doing well in certain sectors such as Entrepreneurial Teaching and Learning and Opportunities for Spin-offs and Start-ups. However, the university also pointed out areas they needed to work on, specifically in Measuring Impact and Leadership and Governance. This self-assessment caused ZEGU to expand its entrepreneurial support facilities, such as building more incubator facilities and collaborations with industry players for internships among students. Similarly, BUSE utilised the framework to identify areas of weakness in External Stakeholder Relationships and Digital Transformation, causing the university to place greater emphasis on digital competencies and collaborating more with industry leaders to enhance student entrepreneurial performance.

By employing the HE Innovate tool, universities like ZEGU and BUSE can better understand how they contribute to innovation and entrepreneurship and enhance their strategies. The tool indicates areas in which the universities are doing well and areas where they need to invest more or revisit their entrepreneurial education strategy. (*ibid.*). This ongoing assessment ensures that universities are responsive to dynamic economic and technological contexts, and are capable of preparing their students with the skills and mind-set needed to succeed in an open and evolving global economy.

Overall, the HE Innovate process provides universities with a holistic and organised approach to reviewing and enhancing their entrepreneurial ecosystem. It offers keen recommendations regarding how universities can enhance innovation, enable start-ups, and implement entrepreneurship in their organisational culture. The framework applies not only to European universities, but also to those in developing countries like Zimbabwe, where entrepreneurial education can contribute significantly to economic development and job-creation. By using the HE Innovate model, universities can be at the forefront of shaping the future of innovation and entrepreneurship in their region and community and contribute to driving sustainable economic development.

Theories of entrepreneurship education suggest that universities are at the heart of entrepreneurial behaviour, attitude, and competencies development in students. The best-known theory of entrepreneurship education is the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Janzen, 1991). This theory contends that individuals' behaviour, including entrepreneurial behaviour, is determined by their attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. Applied to campus life, TPB would contend that universities can shape students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship through education and institutional support by providing knowledge, resources, and role models that are favourable to entrepreneurial action.

LITERATURE REVIEW

ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN UNIVERSITIES

Entrepreneurship education has become a centre of much interest globally, especially in universities, as a method of equipping students with the capacity to enhance innovation, business growth, and economic growth. According to Gibb (2005), universities are very significant platforms for building entrepreneurial mindset and

equipping students with the instruments required to succeed in the business world. In Zimbabwe, with the economy having been seriously strained, entrepreneurship education is a way of empowering young people and preparing them for self-employment, more independent of the formal job market (Henson and Mudzonga, 2021). Institutions such as ZEGU and BUSE have incorporated entrepreneurial aspects into their curricula to promote students' ability to identify opportunities, address problems, and set up new ventures. Education for entrepreneurship at ZEGU is supposed to combine theory and practice. One of the key pillars of ZEGU's learning plan is its Business Incubator, which gives students hands-on experience in starting up ventures. Similarly, BUSE has shifted towards making entrepreneurship a core part of its academic curriculum, but there is scope for further focus on experiential learning and integration of real-world business issues in the curriculum (Mudzonga *et al.*, 2021). The universities are trying to align their educational strategies with global trends, where entrepreneurship is becoming an essential part of the university ecosystem (Doherty and Ryan, 2020).

THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITY-BUSINESS RELATIONSHIPS

The relationship between the university and businesses is crucial in supporting entrepreneurship. As Clark (2004) asserts, universities play a critical role in the creation and dissemination of knowledge, and the linkage of universities with companies can facilitate the conversion of research results into real-world applications. The collaboration provides students with access to industry trends, internships, and mentorship, all of which promote practical skills necessary in entrepreneurial endeavours. For instance, ZEGU University has established strong relationships with national and international institutions and local businesses and government agencies, offering business students exposure to practical business practice through joint projects and internships (Mutasa, 2021).

Similarly, BUSE has been active in solidifying its connections with the domestic business sector through the Bindura Innovation Hub, bridging students and SMEs. However, according to Mudzonga *et al* (2021), although such initiatives as these are commendable, there is still a shortfall in terms of the depth and scope of these collaborations in comparison to the universities of developed economies. The unwillingness of the business community to collaborate with higher learning institutions in Zimbabwe, as well as the economic downturn, limit the ability of students to maximise the benefits of university-business partnerships.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND ENTREPRENEURIAL ECOSYSTEM

The accelerated uptake of digital technologies has dramatically reshaped the entrepreneurial landscape across the world. According to Harrison (2020), the digital revolution has opened up opportunities for entrepreneurial businesses to grow rapidly and access international markets. For Zimbabwean universities, adopting digital transformation is the way to be competitive and imparting the necessary skills in students to excel in the current entrepreneurial environment. ZEGU, for example, has adopted digital technology such as electronic commerce platforms, online marketing courses, and access to entrepreneurial software in courses. This has helped equip students with digital competencies needed to establish and manage businesses in the 21st century. On the other hand, BUSE is in its early stages of integrating digital entrepreneurship tools into its curriculum.

Even though the university had established a Digital Learning Platform, 55% of the participants involved in the study felt that only digital entrepreneurship was adequately addressed. This implies that even though the university is going digital, there is a huge lag in the fields of infrastructure, technology capability, and the extent to which digital entrepreneurship is embraced in the university's overall strategy (Henson and Mudzonga, 2021). Start-ups highly rely on

digital tools, especially in a global economy increasingly powered by internet businesses and digital services.

ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY AND SUPPORT STRUCTURES FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP

A university's organisational capacity will determine how it can support entrepreneurial activities. A university has a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem if it invests in human capital, support services, and infrastructure to enable students to cultivate ideas into business opportunities. According to Clark (2004), universities that are highly capable of organisation have a high potential for supporting successful start-ups as well as economic development.

At ZEGU, the establishment of the ZEGU Business Incubator in 2020 is testament to the university's commitment to organisational capacity building. The incubator provides experiential support, including mentorship, office space, seed funding, and access to investors. Of the respondents, 80% indicated that access to these resources significantly enhanced their entrepreneurial activities. ZEGU also has networks of business professionals that work with students providing guidance, industry support and potential funding. BUSE, however, lags behind in this area. More than of the interviewees (55%) stated that the capacity of the university to develop entrepreneurship was poor, due to a lack of infrastructure for start-up development, mentorship, and business incubation. Investment in such fields should be boosted to enable students to have access to resources and opportunities to grow their businesses (Mudzonga *et al.*, 2021).

Entrepreneurship programmes should be measurable to facilitate improvement to persist and demonstrate the value of the programmes to stakeholders, including government agencies, companies, and students.

According to Harrison (2020), clearly established mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of entrepreneurship programmes allow universities to improve their programmes, fundraise, and attract potential students. At ZEGU, 20% of the participants mentioned that there was a systematic procedure for evaluating the performance of the university's entrepreneurship programmes, and the data are utilised to track student success rates, start-up survival, and employment generation in the local economy. Nevertheless, there is a necessity for more structured and standardised impact assessment instruments in Zimbabwean universities. A quarter (25%) of the respondents at BUSE reported that there was no systematic framework for evaluation, hence it was hard for them to ascertain the actual impact of the university's entrepreneurship programs.

In spite of the existence of the Bindura Innovation Hub, more emphasis has to be laid on data gathering and measuring the outcomes of student businesses. This will allow the university to be able to see more clearly how effectively it is fostering entrepreneurship and where it is falling short (Mudzonga *et al.*, 2021).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As in any research, ethical problems were of utmost importance in this research. Both sets of participants at both institutions were fully made aware of the aim of the study, and volunteering to participate was entirely optional. Ethical clearance was sought and granted from the relevant review boards at both ZEGU and BUSE. Confidentiality and anonymity of all participants were guaranteed, and it was assured that their responses would be used only for academic purposes. Participants were also provided with an opportunity to withdraw from study at any time without any penalty.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study aims to assess the entrepreneurial and innovative potential of ZEGU and BUSE using the HE Innovate tool, a European Commission tool employed to measure entrepreneurial ecosystems in universities. The research design for this study combines qualitative methods, including purposive sampling and document analysis, to obtain a rich understanding of the entrepreneurial practices and activities at the two universities.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND APPROACH

A case study design is employed to analyse the entrepreneurial capacity of ZEGU and BUSE, which allowed for an in-depth analysis of their entrepreneurial frameworks. This research design is best suited in understanding the complexities and nuances of entrepreneurship education in a specific context since it focuses on exploring and understanding phenomena in their real context (Yin, 2018).

The HE Innovate tool was the main tool utilised to assess the entrepreneurial activities of the universities against eight dimensions, that is, Leadership and Governance, Organisational Capacity, Entrepreneurial Teaching and Learning, Opportunities for Spin-offs and Start-ups, Relationships with External Stakeholders, Digital Transformation, Measuring Impact, and Cultural and Social Environment. The framework was adopted to guide the collection and analysis of data regarding the entrepreneurial practices of the universities and identifying the strengths as well as areas for improvement.

DATA COLLECTION

To acquire the objectives of this study, purposive sampling was used in choosing participants who had valuable information or experience in entrepreneurship within the universities. There were 20 participants , with 10 from each ZEGU and BUSE. They were the university

administration, faculty, entrepreneurship lecturers, and students enrolled in entrepreneurship courses. Purposive sampling ensured that data collected would be from seasoned individuals who could provide detailed information on the entrepreneurial processes at the universities.

Document analysis was also used to collect secondary data relating to entrepreneurial policies, strategies, and programmes of the universities. This included examining strategic plans, annual reports, and entrepreneurship-related curriculum to assess how entrepreneurship is ingrained in university systems.

The principal data collection instrument was a semi-structured interview guide, which allowed for questioning flexibility of participants' views without losing sight of the most important dimensions of the HE Innovate Framework. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and online, as convenient to participants, and were recorded with their consent.

In data analysis, the data collected from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, which is a widely used qualitative data analysis method. Thematic analysis helped identify patterns, themes, and insights about the entrepreneurial practices in the universities. The analysis process involved several stages-

Familiarisation with Data - Transcriptions of interviews were read multiple times to get familiar with the data and to start identifying possible patterns.

Coding - The information relevant to the eight HE Innovate dimensions was coded. The codes included positive and negative aspects regarding innovation and entrepreneurship in the universities.

Theme Identification - The coded information was thematised based on the specific dimensions of the HE Innovate framework. Leadership and governance issues, for example, were addressed under the

Leadership and Governance dimension, while teaching practices fell under Entrepreneurial Teaching and Learning.

Interpretation - The themes were then interpreted to be able to make inferences on whether ZEGU and BUSE are effective in fuelling entrepreneurship, and where it needs to grow.

With the use of the HE Innovate model, the entrepreneurial capacity of both universities was investigated through the analysis of their policy and practice within eight dimensions. For the research, the eight dimensions were utilised.

For governance and leadership, the role played by university leaders in enhancing entrepreneurship was ascertained through analysing institutional policy and leadership's activity in entrepreneurship. Availability of resources, infrastructure, and facilities to support entrepreneurial behaviour (e.g., business incubators and innovation centres) was examined. Curriculum inclusion of entrepreneurship and provision of practical entrepreneurial experience, such as internships and mentorship schemes, was investigated. Opportunity for spin-offs and start-ups was observed from the documents. This is the ability of the universities to facilitate the creation of student businesses and innovations.

The extent to which the universities collaborate with external bodies such as industry partners, government agencies, and global organisations was also assessed.

The use of digital tools and platforms to generate entrepreneurship and innovation was assessed through questioning. The mechanisms used by the universities to track the success of their entrepreneurial endeavours, such as the number of start-ups and graduates employed in entrepreneurial ventures, were investigated. The level of entrepreneurial support for entrepreneurial endeavours within the

university and the surrounding community was also investigated, with specific focus on the cultural mindsets towards entrepreneurship. For reporting outcomes, the data was categorised, and quantitative and qualitative outcomes were presented. For instance, in the Leadership and Governance dimension, 80% of the ZEGU respondents and 70% of the BUSE respondents indicated that university leadership was supportive of entrepreneurship activities, but they also indicated that there was more that could be done to ensure institutional strategies aligned with entrepreneurial objectives. In Opportunities for Spin-offs and Start-ups, both universities rated relatively low, with less than 30% of the respondents indicating sufficient support for start-ups and incubators.

In summary, The HE Innovate model created a structured framework for evaluating ZEGU's and BUSE's entrepreneurial capacity and both weaknesses and strengths in their entrepreneurial systems. The evaluation indicates that there has been tremendous progress in developing entrepreneurship at the two universities but there are urgent areas such as Opportunities for Spin-offs and Start-ups that need to be addressed if they are going to realise all their entrepreneurial possibilities.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This sub-section calls for the present initiative by ZEGU and B towards promoting entrepreneurship, from HE Innovate Framework analysis. The findings are a closer look at strengths and challenges brought to both institutions to drive innovation and entrepreneurship as well as action undertaken in entrepreneurial activities.

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Leading universities in regards to entrepreneurial development is highly crucial, in that leadership provides directions towards developing entrepreneurs. At ZEGU, the university leadership has put

considerable effort into integrating entrepreneurship in its strategic agenda, with 80% of the respondents affirming that the leadership guidance directly affects the entrepreneurial orientation of the organisation. This has included the establishment of the ZEGU Business Incubator, which is one of the main drivers of entrepreneurial activities within the organisation. The incubator supports students and alumni in start-ups by providing them with resources, mentorship, and connections to networks.

On the contrary, BUSE has had efforts at an entrepreneurship focus, but 60% of the participants have reported that there is still a gap in clarity in entrepreneurial leadership development. Although the university has put funds into initiatives such as the Bindura Innovation Hub that serves as the starting point of entrepreneurial endeavour, more coordinated leadership in entrepreneurship needs to be tackled so that sustainable success can follow (Mudzonga *et al.*, 2021).

ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

Organisational capacity is important in enabling entrepreneurship. There has been tremendous development of the infrastructures needed to enhance entrepreneurship at ZEGU, as 85% of the respondents have reported access to modern digital tools, co-working spaces, and business incubators. For example, the ZEGU Innovation Hub provides rooms for students to create and innovate their start-ups, while the ZEGU Business Incubator collaborates with industry professionals to mentor students through the business world (Chigwata, 2022).

On the other hand, BUSE has begun developing its capability but lacks resource allocation. The university has adequate support systems in place for aspiring entrepreneurs only according to 55% of the respondents. Although Bindura's Innovation Hub is the initial support

platform, the university needs to invest more in advanced technology and mentorship facilities (Mudzonga *et al.*, 2021).

The role played by digital transformation in entrepreneurial ecosystem development is imperative. At 75%, the majority of respondents indicated that the university has done a good job in incorporating digital entrepreneurship into the curriculum. ZEGU has partnered with prominent technology firms like Microsoft to endow students with digital entrepreneurship skills. The ZEGU Digital Hub empowers students with practical skills in e-commerce, digital marketing, and technology-driven innovation. This initiative aligns with global trends in digital entrepreneurship, where technological tools are increasingly essential in creating viable start-ups (Harrison, 2020).

On the contrary, BUSE is still hampered in the embracement of digital entrepreneurship programmes into its educational framework. Participants emphasised the fact that digital facilities were limited (60%). However, the newly established Bindura University Digital Learning Platform strives to bridge these gaps in bringing digital tools and entrepreneurial courses, though the need for further improvement exists (Henson and Mudzonga, 2021).

UNIVERSITY-BUSINESS/EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS

Entrepreneurial success is particularly based on how well the individual can build relationships with external companies and industries. ZEGU has excelled in building relationships with the private and public sectors. Close to 70% of ZEGU respondents reported that they were able to achieve valuable mentorship, internships, and seed funding from external partners. The institution has also partnered with top companies such as Econet Wireless and Zim Trade, providing a good platform for students to gain on-the-job experience and professionally network (Mutasa, 2021).

Despite BUSE's efforts of to establish relations with local industries, 50% of the respondents were concerned about lacking sufficient industry connections. Notwithstanding the efforts at connecting students to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through the Bindura Innovation Hub, there can be more that can be done to establish connections with large industries that can provide long-term support (Mutasa and Henson, 2021).

SUPPORT FOR START-UPS AND SPIN-OFFS

Start-up financing is among the pillars that contribute to the success of an entrepreneurial ecosystem. ZEGU has not only been forthcoming in promoting start-ups by their students, 85% of the respondents have confirmed that the ZEGU Business Incubator offers significant resources such as seed funds, mentorship, and connections with investors. The incubator further holds start-up pitch competitions every year, where several student-owned ventures have won significant funds. Some of the most prominent ones are TechnoGen, a technology solutions company founded by ZEGU students that has become popular and attracted domestic investment (Chigwata, 2022).

The Bindura University of Science Education is behind in the provision of similar levels of support to its start-ups. Though 50% of the respondents were satisfied with the initial support under the Innovation Hub, there is great yearning for funding opportunities, accelerator programmes, and further mentorship for students to turn their ideas into thriving businesses. Lack of sufficient financial inputs still acts as a setback for the success of student enterprises in Bindura (Mudzonga *et al.*, 2021).

TEACHING AND LEARNING IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Entrepreneurship education is at the core of preparing students for profitable business careers. At ZEGU, 75% of the respondents confirmed that the university had managed to integrate practical

entrepreneurship education in the curriculum. This approach is experiential learning, wherein students are encouraged to establish their own businesses as part of the course. ZEGU's entrepreneurship workshops, business competitions, and internship schemes are all experiential ways of teaching entrepreneurial skills (Harrison, 2020).

On the contrary, BUSE has fared better with regards to infusing entrepreneurial material in courses but even then, only 55% of the respondents claimed that the courses adequately prepare students for practice-based entrepreneurship. Project-based learning is also being done at the university but again, there is still a need for applied entrepreneurial learning in a bid to enhance skill levels in practice (Mudzonga *et al.*, 2021).

MEASURING IMPACT

The ability to measure the success of entrepreneurship programmes is important in order to allow continued improvement. Both institutions are confronted with not doing so effectively. At ZEGU, only 20% of participants indicated having access to full systems for measuring the success of entrepreneurship programmes. The systems are available but under development, and there is no systematic, established method for tracking long-term success of student start-ups. The same applies to BUSE, whose advancement in the assessment of its programmes has been low, where 25% of the respondents cited the absence of systematic evaluation systems (Henson and Mudzonga, 2021).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATIONS

Overall, ZEGU and BUSE have accomplished much to improve entrepreneurship with the HE Innovate approach. There are apparent gaps in start-up assistance, external relations, and digitalisation. ZEGU leads the way with its comprehensive Business Incubator and external

partnerships, while BUSE improved but needs additional infrastructure and investment in resources.

Recommendations for future growth include increasing funding for student enterprises, increasing external partnerships to secure more industry sponsorship, and making entrepreneurship education stronger to focus on experiential learning. Both universities should also implement more transparent mechanisms to monitor the success of their entrepreneurial programmes.

The role played by entrepreneurship education at Zimbabwean universities such as ZEGU and BUSE, is significant in addressing the country's immediate economic issues. With rampant unemployment and economic uncertainty, universities have an important role to play in preparing their graduates with the required skills to be self-sufficient and positively contribute to the economy of the nation. Although ZEGU and BUSE have been commendable in instituting entrepreneurship education programmes, there exist wide gaps regarding how such programme are offered and the welfare support to potential entrepreneurs. The barriers of insufficient industry linkage, limited opportunity for funding, and lack of experiential training remain, curtailing the impact of entrepreneurship education at the two institutions.

One of the primary recommendations is that ZEGU and BUSE should engage seriously to enhance more robust connections with industry. Such partnerships may include partnership with local businesses, government organisations, and international institutions for development. For instance, partnerships with established enterprises like Delta Corporation or Old Mutual could create internship and mentorship opportunities for students, offering them real-world experience. These partnerships would also provide students with a direct link to the market, helping them to understand the challenges

and dynamics of running a business in Zimbabwe's economy. Industry collaborations could also be interpreted as accessing sources of financing, i.e., venture capital and microfinance institutions, in order to facilitate the student to turn the business concept into a working business.

Another recommendation is for the two universities to possess business incubators and innovation centres where students can work on actual business projects under a controlled and caring environment. These incubators could provide students with access to resources like office space, legal and financial advice, and guidance from experienced entrepreneurs. For example, ZEGU could establish an entrepreneurship incubator where students work alongside local businesses to solve current problems facing Zimbabwe's industries, from agriculture to technology. These projects could then serve as case studies for future students, demonstrating the potential of entrepreneurial ventures within the local context. Such resources would also increase the success rate of students' businesses and bridge the gap between practice and theoretical knowledge.

In addition, universities should intensify their efforts to provide students with mentorship programmes and continuous support upon graduation. Good mentorship from experienced entrepreneurs can greatly boost the success rate of a student's entrepreneurship. For example, BUSE can partner with successful Zimbabwean businessmen such as Strive Masiyiwa, the owner of Econet Wireless, who can offer advice to students and guide them on how to do business in Zimbabwe. Mentorship could also extend to alumni groups that can assist recent graduates in entering the world of business. This long-term support system would guarantee that the students are not left to fend for themselves upon graduation, but are assisted by a network of resources to help them establish sustainable business ventures.

Additionally, ZEGU and BUSE should include more practical experiences in their entrepreneurship programmes. This can be done by giving students the opportunity to work on real-world projects or involving them in national and international business competitions, such as the Zimbabwe Entrepreneurship Development Programme. Skills gained by working on such projects would equip students with the necessary business acumen, and thus be more adaptable and prepared to face realities. ZEGU, for example, could partner with other African business associations or universities to offer space for students to participate in business exchange programmes or short-term internships that open up their entrepreneurial opportunities.

There is a heavy economic activity of mining in Bindura, with the town being home to the Freda Rebecca Mine, one of the biggest mining firms in Zimbabwe. This sector has great entrepreneurial potential, particularly in small-scale mining and mineral processing. ZEGU and BUSE can play key roles in entrepreneurial promotion by focusing on specialised studies in mining entrepreneurship and mineral value-addition. These studies may train students to set up businesses related to mines, for instance, small-scale mining activities, mineral processing, and developing technology to increase efficiency and safety.

The two institutions may also work with mining companies in Bindura to set up mentorship and internship schemes for the students within the mining sector. They may also have their students develop innovations that address challenges in the mining sector, such as environmental sustainability, health and safety concerns, or community development. ZEGU can host seminars and networking sessions where local entrepreneurs and miners can get a chance to share experiences and knowledge with the students and encourage them to seek opportunities in the sector.

Apart from mining and agriculture, Bindura also has an emerging small-scale manufacturing industry with industries that produce furniture, food processing, garments, and other essential commodities. Entrepreneurship courses at ZEGU and BUSE can emphasize retail entrepreneurship and small business management. This could involve providing the students with the skills and knowledge required to set up and operate small-scale manufacturing businesses or retail outlets. For instance, ZEGU could have business operations, product development, and market strategy courses for small-scale manufacturing and retail businesses in Bindura.

Finally, it is recommended that the Zimbabwean government strengthen support for universities to integrate entrepreneurship into their curricula. Government incentives such as tax breaks or grants to universities that demonstrate strong entrepreneurship programmes would encourage institutions to invest more in their programmes. The government can also finance the establishment of national networks for entrepreneurs that connect universities, students, and businesses. These networks would help address the issue of lack of access to capital, which is one of the largest issues that student entrepreneurs in Zimbabwe face. In doing this, the government would not be only helping universities, but also towards the broader goal of economic growth through creating a more entrepreneurial society.

Lastly, although ZEGU and BUSE have set the foundation for entrepreneurship education in Zimbabwe, there is a need for more collaboration with industry, greater practice exposure for students, and government support to create a dynamic, sustainable entrepreneurial environment. Adhering to these recommendations would close the gap between learning and real business issues, equipping graduates to establish businesses that will contribute to Zimbabwe's economic growth and development. By offering a more robust connection between entrepreneurship studies and real

potential, universities can play an important role in Zimbabwe's entrepreneurial future.

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