

## Investigating the role of public universities in imparting communities with entrepreneurship education, knowledge and skills

Mary Sililo Lubinda<sup>1\*</sup>, Nsama Musawa<sup>1</sup>, Gift Kaira<sup>2</sup>, Wamulume Mushala<sup>1</sup>,  
Victor Chikampa<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Mulungushi University, School of Business studies, Department of Business, Kabwe, Zambia;

Email: [marylubinda@yahoo.com](mailto:marylubinda@yahoo.com)

<sup>1</sup>Mulungushi University, School of Business studies, Department of Business, Kabwe, Zambia;

Email: [nsama.muwasa@yahoo.com](mailto:nsama.muwasa@yahoo.com)

<sup>2</sup>Mulungushi University, School of Education, Kabwe, Zambia; Email: [giftkaira@yahoo.com](mailto:giftkaira@yahoo.com)

<sup>1</sup>Mulungushi University, School of Business studies, Department of Business, Kabwe, Zambia;

Email: [wmushala@mu.ac.zm](mailto:wmushala@mu.ac.zm)

<sup>3</sup>Mulungushi University, School of Social Sciences, Department of Social Development Studies, Kabwe, Zambia; Email: [victorchikampa@gmail.com](mailto:victorchikampa@gmail.com)

\*Correspondence: Mary Sililo Lubinda, Email: [marylubinda@yahoo.com](mailto:marylubinda@yahoo.com)

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### ABSTRACT

One of the core accountabilities of a university is community service. There are many universities in Zambia today and there is little known about their involvement in empowering the communities around them with entrepreneurship skills. Therefore, this study sets out to investigate the role of public universities in empowering local communities with entrepreneurship skills. In assessing this, the study focused on the role of universities in imparting entrepreneurship education and skills to the community. It further looked at the role of the universities in encouraging entrepreneurship activities. The study adopted a positivism paradigm quantitative design. To achieve the laid down objectives, a survey design was used as a research strategy. Structured questionnaires were randomly distributed to 208 members of the surrounding communities from four universities. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics as well as inferential statistics specifically Linear Regression and Analysis of Variances (ANOVA.) Research results showed that public universities input in empowering surrounding communities with entrepreneurship skills and knowledge is fairly low hence the need for improvement. The study further revealed that the entrepreneurship knowledge possessed by the community is quite high. Universities need to take interest to ensure that the knowledge acquired by the community is applied.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurship skills

### INTRODUCTION

Small and medium entrepreneurship are identified as key drivers to environment, productivity and economic development because they are the main sources of employment generation and output growth (Love & Roper, 2013; Nakyejwe, Kasimu &

Sabi, 2021). However economic growth depends on the performance of businesses. Entrepreneurial businesses can only perform well if entrepreneurs possess the necessary business competencies such as budgeting, borrowing and investments (Sabana, 2014). Since these small businesses are the backbone of many economies, insufficient

skills to successfully operate a business means the whole economy is at risk (Dahmen & Rodriguez, 2014). It means that business houses and institutions of learning can play an important role in imparting entrepreneurial skills among local business owners through training. Every university has three principal roles. These are teaching, research and community service. Most universities the world over have concentrated on teaching and research and have underplayed community services as their role (Kuratko and Hodgetts, 2004). The concept of community service ranges from empowering the communities with services offered by the institution to allowing the community to supply the institution with services to the advantage of the community. One of the core accountabilities of a university is community service. There are many public universities in Zambia today and yet there is little known about their involvement in empowering the communities around them with entrepreneurship skills. Thus, the study has bridged the information gap on public universities community service issues by critically looking into the role of public universities in empowering communities with entrepreneurship skills.

In Zambia entrepreneurship has become an area of interest for many citizens especially the youthful population. With the vast opportunities that most people have seen in these uncertain times; many have opted to start their own business ventures. In order to do so, some people have taken steps like pursuing university programmes that teach entrepreneurship in order to enhance the skills, while others have started businesses by gaining entrepreneurship skills through observation. In the long-run, most people will shift to entrepreneurship due to the high unemployment levels in the country.

Thus, the study has bridged the information gap on public universities community service issues by critically looking into the role of public universities in empowering communities with entrepreneurship skills.

### **Research Initiating Question**

The research initiating question for this study is therefore: why variance exists in entrepreneurship skills, with specific reference to the role that public universities play in this regard not to the exclusion of other factors.

### **Objective of the study**

This study sets out to investigate the role of public universities in imparting communities with entrepreneurship education, knowledge and skills. Specifically the study looked at investigating:

- 1) The level of entrepreneurship knowledge that the community surrounding the public universities possess
- 2) The role of public universities in imparting entrepreneurship education to the community.
- 3) The role of public universities in imparting entrepreneurship skills to the community.
- 4) The role of public universities in encouraging entrepreneurship within the community.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Conceptualizing Entrepreneurship**

The word entrepreneurship is derived from a French word entrepreneur which means to make decisions or to begin something (Ramirez, Orejueta & Vargas, 2010). According to Roberts and Chrisman (1996) as well as Belen (2011) cited in Kilasi (2013) the concept has evolved to mean self-employed individuals. According to Kilasi (2013) entrepreneurs are individuals who can establish their own ventures and thereby employ others. According to Ramirez et al., (2010) Joseph Schumpeter an Australian economist and professor at Harvard coined the term for the first time in 1912 to refer to ventures some people and managers who through their activities generate goods and services (Ramires et al., (2010) An entrepreneur is seen as someone who is ready to take financial risks of business ventures. ILO (2006) as cited in Kilasi (2013)

on the other hand defines entrepreneurship in terms of encompassing the potential benefits of different types of enterprises such as economic, social, public and corporate firms of entrepreneurship. Fayolle (2007) define entrepreneurship in the form of an entrepreneur as someone who makes things happen. Entrepreneurship according to the European Commission (2008) is therefore an individual's capacity to turn ideas into action in whatever activity that is undertaken. The goal of entrepreneurship is therefore to enhance creativity and self-employment.

### **The role of public institution in promoting entrepreneurship**

According to Bhaskar (2016) public university have started to move beyond traditional teaching, learning and research to embrace innovative, skills, commercialization, entrepreneurship and creation of economic value. The role played by universities in this regard is important due higher unemployment rates in the country. According to the Zambia Statistics Agency (2023) the unemployment rate in 2021 was at 13.8%, 2023 at 4.37% with the highest at 15.34% in 2004. So imparting entrepreneurship skills is a viable option for members of the community who are suffering long periods of unemployment. Institutions of higher learning have the moral obligation just like any other organization to improve the economy of the surrounding communities (Ooi & Nasiru, 2015). University corporate social responsibility by imparting entrepreneurship skills in the long run improves the livelihood of communities in which entrepreneurs are imbedded (Fatoki & Chindoga, 2011).

In imparting business skills public universities have proved to be useful because of the manner in which they spread information and add to the general society development. Brown (2016) points out that public universities are useful for business, yet in addition great initiators of business creation. Supportive atmosphere is desirable for entrepreneurship as a way to deliver a cause for new ideas. The introduction of entrepreneurial studies in universities is a

way to inspire organized collaboration amongst members of a community in order to come up with innovative ideas.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

Schumpeter two theories of entrepreneurship were used as the central theoretical foundation for this study. Schumpeter proposes that innovation and technological change of a nation comes from entrepreneurs (Heck-Beng, 1990). He was of the view that entrepreneurs are the ones who make things work/happen in any economy. Secondly, Schumpeter predicts that because large organizations are more likely to have capacity to invest in research and development, they would produce most of the innovations. Accordingly, large monopolistic enterprises would be the principal engines of technological progress as they are likely to have the necessary resources to undertake complex technological activities (Heck-Beng, 1990).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study adopted a positivism research paradigm, with quantitative design. This design was deemed appropriate in investigating the role of public universities in imparting entrepreneurship knowledge and skills to their surrounding communities. Similar studies in this area have adopted such a design (Al-Hammad, and Al-Qudah, 2019). A survey was used as a research strategy. Structured questionnaires were randomly distributed to 208 members of the surrounding communities from six public universities.

### **Population size**

The population of the study comprised surrounding communities in the six public universities in Zambia.

### **Sampling techniques and sample size**

Of the six public universities four were randomly selected. The four were selected at random to give each of the institutions an equal chance of being selected. The name of the institution was written on a piece of

paper, folded and a draw was conducted. The sample size 392 was calculated by:

$$s = z^2 * p * (1-p) / m^2$$

s= sample size for infinite population

z= Z score. This was determined based on confidence level of 95% r confidence level with the Z score=1.96.

p= % of population probability (assumed to be 50%=0.5)

m= Margin of error. Which was 5%=0.05.  
The 392 was distributed equally to the four universities

### Data collection/Research Instruments and measurement of variables

The main objective of the study was to investigate the role of public universities in empowering communities with entrepreneurship skills. 17 items from Al-Hammad, and Al-Qudah, (2019) were used to quantitatively assess the variables in the study. The variables in this study were measured by assessing the perceptions of the community using respondents' mean rank of the items on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree, which was rated 5 to strongly disagree which was rated 1. Appendix 1 shows the items that were included in the Likert scale.

### Data Analysis

Data was analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics to describe the data and inferential statistics specifically linear regression and analysis of variances (ANOVA) in SPSS 28.

### Validity and Reliability of the Measure

To verify the validity of the content of the study instrument, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test was done while to confirm the consistent and reliability of the data Cronbach's alpha values were calculated.

## RESULTS

### Response Rate and the Respondents' Profile

208 questionnaires were collected across all the four universities representing the response rate of 53%. It can be observed from table 1 that there were more males (59%) compared to females (41%). In terms of education levels majority had gone up to bachelors level (39%). Most of them are single (52%) and in the age bracket of 24 to 29 years (41%)

**Table 1:** Demographic Profile of Respondents

Item	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	123	59.1
	Female	85	40.9
Education	G12 or below	44	21.2
	Craft certificate/ Diploma	63	30.3
	Bachelors	82	39.4
	Post graduate diploma	16	7.7
	Masters/PH D	3	1.4
Age	15-23	45	21.6
	24-29	86	41.3
	30-35	55	26.4
	36-41	13	6.3
	Above 42	9	4.3
Marital status	Single	108	51.9
	Married	94	45.2
	Other	6	2.9

### Test for Validity and Reliability of data

To verify the validity of the content of the study instrument, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test was done while to confirm the consistent and reliability of the data Cronbach's alpha values were calculated. The overall Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.832 was observed indicating that the correlational matrix was factor analyzable (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). An acceptable cronbach alpha of 0.859 for all the 17 items was obtained. The scale meets the benchmark reliability standard of greater

than 0.70 (Gliem & Gliem, 2003; Pallant, 2010.)

### Descriptive Statistics

Arithmetic means of respondents were calculated to assess the level of entrepreneurship knowledge possessed by the community, rate of encouraging entrepreneurship activities by the university, level of imparting entrepreneurship education by the university, level of imparting entrepreneurship skills by the universities. To achieve this, the arithmetic means of respondents were calculated. The following criteria were used for the purpose of classifying the arithmetic averages on the study domains and their items to judge the sample responses. Arithmetic mean (less than 2.33) low grade. Arithmetic mean (2.34 - 3.66) Average grade. Arithmetic mean (3.67 - 5) high grade. The same measure was applied for assessing the other variables (Al-Hammad, and Al-Qudah, (2019). Table 2 below gives a summary of the Arithmetic means.

**Table 2:** Summary entrepreneurship knowledge by the community, universities encouraging, and imparting entrepreneurship education and skills

	Mean	Rank
Entrepreneurship knowledge possessed by the community	3.72	high
Encouraging Entrepreneurship activities by the university	3.31	Average
Imparting Entrepreneurship education by the university	2.75	Average
Imparting Entrepreneurship skills	2.72	Average

It can be observed from table 2 above that the respondents from the community possess the high level of entrepreneurship knowledge with an average score of 3.72. The rate of universities encouraging entrepreneurship

activities gave an average of 3.31. The next item that was assessed was the level of imparting entrepreneurship education by the university this showed that the rate at which the universities impart entrepreneurship education is fair with an overall average score of 2.75. The results on imparting entrepreneurship skills like carpentry, cooking, tailoring, farming, poultry and others gave an average score of 2.72. It can be noticed that although all three items are average, the universities encourage entrepreneurship activities in the community more than they impart knowledge and skills.

### Regression Analysis

As can be observed from table 2 above, the community had a high level of entrepreneurship knowledge while the contribution by the universities was average hence there was need to explore the relationship between the entrepreneurship knowledge possessed by the community and the role that the universities played. To achieve this linear regression was performed. The entrepreneurship knowledge possessed by the community was the dependent variable while encouraging entrepreneurship, imparting entrepreneurship education and imparting entrepreneurship skills were independent variables. The analysis was done after checking for normality of the dependent variable and multi-collinearity of the independent variables. The results of the regression outputs are shown in Table 3. The significant F test shows that the three variables jointly contribute to entrepreneurship knowledge (F=21.452, P=0.000). However, the Adjusted R is low (22.9%) indicating that there are other major factors that contributed to entrepreneurship knowledge in the community.

**Table 3:** Summary of the Regression Output

Variable	Coefficient	Prob
Constant	2.227	0.000
Imparting entrepreneurship education	0.175	0.013
Imparting entrepreneurship Skills	0.083	0.300
Encouraging entrepreneurship activities	0.374	0.000
R-squared	0.491	
Adjusted R	0.229	
F-statistic	21.452	0.000

### Analysis of Variance

To check if there was any difference in means in variables (encouraging entrepreneurship, imparting entrepreneurship knowledge and skills) among the universities one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) test was performed. The results are shown in the table 4.

**Table 4:** ANOVA Test results

Variable	F	Significance (0.05)
Community Entrepreneurship Knowledge	0.549	0.578
Imparting Education	2.983	0.053
Imparting Skills	1.299	0.275
Encouraging entrepreneurship	0.174	0.840

The results show that there is no statistically significant difference in means among the university in encouraging entrepreneurship, imparting entrepreneurship education and skills by the universities as the P values for all four variables are more than 0.05 level of significance.

### DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The results for this study have shown that the people surrounding the university community possess a high level of

entrepreneurship knowledge scoring an average of 3.72 out of 5. In terms of contributing entrepreneurship education and skills the universities are doing fairly, but there is great need for improvement. Similar results were found by Al-Hammad, and Al-Qudah (2019), where university student possessed a higher level of entrepreneurship knowledge, but the contribution by the university was just average.

The regression test shows that the three variables (encouraging entrepreneurship, imparting entrepreneurship education and imparting entrepreneurship skills) jointly contribute to entrepreneurship knowledge by the community (F=21.452, P=0.000). However the Adjusted R squared is very low (22.9%). This confirms that the rate at which universities contribute to entrepreneurship in the community is quite low hence there is need for improvement. Other researchers have found similar results. (Umanailo, Umanailo, Bugis & Bon, 2019). However, this result differs with Nejati, Shafael, Salamzadeh & Daraei (2011) who found that world leading universities were committed to their social responsibility.

The ANOVA results show that there is no statistically significant difference in means among the universities in encouraging entrepreneurship, imparting entrepreneurship education and imparting entrepreneurship skills, this implies that there is need for all public universities to improve in offering entrepreneurial skills to the community.

### CONCLUSION

This study investigated the role of public universities in imparting communities with the entrepreneurship education, knowledge and skills. In assessing this, the study focused on universities' role in imparting entrepreneurship education, skills and encouraging entrepreneurship activities. The quantitative design was adopted with a survey as a strategy. Data was collected from surrounding communities of four public universities. The results indicate that the rate at which universities contribute to

entrepreneurship in the community is quite low (Adjusted R (22.9%). Hence there is need for improvement. The study further revealed that the entrepreneurship knowledge by the community is quite high however it is not clear if this knowledge is applied in engaging in entrepreneurship activities, therefore there is need for another study to be carried out to compare the entrepreneurship knowledge and the application of this knowledge by engaging entrepreneurship activities. Further the study showed that imparting entrepreneurship education, skills and encouraging entrepreneurship activities only contributed 22.9 % of the community entrepreneurship knowledge, there is need for another study to be carried out in order to ascertain what other factors contributed to the entrepreneurship knowledge possessed by the community.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The rate at which universities contribute to entrepreneurship in the community is low there is need for universities to improve by engaging entrepreneurship activities more. The entrepreneurship knowledge by the community is high but it is not clear whether this knowledge is applied by the communities. Universities need to take interest to ensure that the knowledge acquired by the community is applied. A further study can be carried out by universities on other factors that contributed to entrepreneurship skills possessed by the community

**Availability of data and materials**

Data can be gotten from the corresponding author on reasonable request

**Appendices**

**Appendix 1:** Questionnaire Likert Scale items

S/N	Imparting Entrepreneurship education by the university
1	The University develops a culture of entrepreneurship among Community through short courses, seminars, and forums.
2	The University is keen to hold training programs in the community according to market requirements.
3	Faculty members (Lecturers and other staff) increase Community awareness about self-employment as an alternative to professional employment
4	The University holds awareness lectures to clarify legislation and laws related to business.
5	The university organizes meetings with successful entrepreneurs in the community.
Imparting Entrepreneurship skills by the university	
1	The University holds competitions for pilot projects among members of the community in order to transform the idea into a pilot project.
2	The University adopts entrepreneur ideas from Community.
3	The University has (Business incubators ) organization that helps start-up companies and individual entrepreneurs to develop their businesses by providing a full scale range of services starting with management training and office space and ending with venture capital financing to support leading Community members
4	The University aims to develop in its community members, short courses

	and practical skills like Carpentry, Cooking, Tailoring .Farming, Poultry and Others
	<b>Entrepreneur knowledge</b>
1	Entrepreneurs aims to achieve self-sufficiency in society without relying on the government
2	Entrepreneurship is a free business characterized by creativity and innovation.
3	Entrepreneurship is the only solution to eliminate unemployment
4	Entrepreneurs have the ability to risk the capital they own to achieve their goals
5	Entrepreneurship depends on market experience and knowledge
	<b>Encouraging Entrepreneurship</b>
1	The University gives the community an opportunity to do business with it.
2	The University encourages the community to provide services such as accommodation through boarding houses
3	Whenever there is a contract for construction, the University taps its labour from the community

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### **Authors Contributions:**

MSL conceived, and coordinated the research. NM, MW, VC analyzed the data and interpreted the results. GK did the literature review we wish to state that we all reviewed the manuscript before finally submitting it to the journal.

### **Ethical declarations**

Although this data included human beings, the authors got consent from the respondent's to participate in the study and that no identifying information was collected to ensure confidentiality.

### **Consent for publications**

No images, individual details or videos for clients' data are part of this paper.

### **Competing Interests**

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

### **Declaration of interests**

Not applicable

### **Submission declaration and verification**

We declare that this paper has not been submitted to any journal besides this one

### **Use of inclusive language**

Not applicable