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Abstract

Despite the significant expansion of formal business education in Uganda, its direct impact on fostering entrepreneurial intent and subsequent venture creation remains inadequately understood, creating a critical evidence gap for policymakers and educators. This mixed methods study, therefore, aims to empirically evaluate the efficacy of business education programmes in Uganda in stimulating entrepreneurial outcomes between 2021 and 2026. Employing an explanatory sequential design, the research first conducted a quantitative...



Entrepreneurial Intent and Venture Creation

A Mixed Methods Analysis of Business Education's Efficacy in Uganda (2021–2026)

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ABSTRACT

Despite the significant expansion of formal business education in Uganda, its direct impact on fostering entrepreneurial intent and subsequent venture creation remains inadequately understood, creating a critical evidence gap for policymakers and educators. This mixed methods study, therefore, aims to empirically evaluate the efficacy of business education programmes in Uganda in stimulating entrepreneurial outcomes between 2021 and 2026. Employing an explanatory sequential design, the research first conducted a quantitative survey with 412 final-year business students from four universities, followed by in-depth qualitative interviews with 32 survey respondents who had progressed to early-stage venture creation. The quantitative phase revealed a strong positive correlation between experiential learning components and entrepreneurial intent, with students exposed to incubator programmes being 2.3 times more likely to express high intent. The qualitative findings subsequently identified the critical mediating mechanisms, principally the development of resilient self-efficacy and pragmatic network access, which translated intent into action. This study provides a novel, integrated analysis of the psychosocial and resource-based pathways through which education influences venture creation. The findings offer concrete implications for curriculum designers, advocating for a pronounced shift from purely theoretical instruction towards embedded experiential and mentorship-based learning models within Ugandan higher education.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurial intention, Venture creation, Business education, Mixed methods research, Sub-Saharan Africa*

Article Highlights

- Experiential learning components show strong positive correlation with entrepreneurial intent
- Incubator programme participants demonstrate 2.3× higher likelihood of high intent
- Resilient self-efficacy and pragmatic network access identified as critical mediators
- Mixed methods reveal psychosocial and resource-based pathways from education to action

Policy Implications

Curriculum designers should shift from purely theoretical instruction toward embedded experiential and mentorship-based learning models in Ugandan higher education.

This study employs an explanatory sequential mixed methods design with data collected between 2021-2026.

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is widely regarded as a critical engine for economic development, job creation, and poverty alleviation in emerging economies([Jeong & Compion, 2021](#)). In Uganda, a nation characterised by a youthful population and persistent challenges of underemployment, fostering a robust

entrepreneurial ecosystem is a pressing national priority. Business education, delivered through universities, technical institutes, and non-governmental programmes, is posited as a primary mechanism for cultivating the necessary skills, mindset, and intent to launch and sustain new ventures. However, the precise efficacy of such education in translating pedagogical input into tangible entrepreneurial outcomes—namely, heightened entrepreneurial intent and subsequent venture creation—remains inadequately understood within the Ugandan context. This gap is significant, as resources allocated to business training must be justified by demonstrable impact on local economic realities. The problem is further nuanced by critiques that standard business curricula, often modelled on Western paradigms, may not fully resonate with or address the unique institutional voids, cultural norms, and resource constraints faced by Ugandan aspiring entrepreneurs. This study, therefore, seeks to interrogate the relationship between business education and entrepreneurial outcomes in Uganda from 2021 to 2026. Its central objective is to provide a mixed methods analysis of how, and to what extent, formal and non-formal business education influences entrepreneurial intent and venture creation rates among Ugandan graduates and trainees. The trajectory of this article moves from establishing this contextual and scholarly necessity, through a detailed explanation of the sequential exploratory mixed methods design employed, to a presentation of quantitative results and qualitative findings. Ultimately, it aims to contribute evidence-based insights that can inform curriculum development, policy formulation, and support mechanisms to enhance the practical relevance and efficacy of entrepreneurship education in Uganda, aligning pedagogical aims with the lived experiences and ethical considerations of local enterprise.

Methodology

To address the research objective, a sequential exploratory mixed methods design was employed, wherein an initial quantitative phase informed and was subsequently elucidated by a deeper qualitative phase (Cardella et al., 2021). This approach was selected to first establish generalisable patterns regarding the relationship between business education and entrepreneurial outcomes, and then to explore the underlying mechanisms, perceptions, and contextual nuances that statistics alone cannot reveal. The study population comprised individuals who had completed a formal business education programme (diploma, degree, or certificate) or a structured non-formal entrepreneurship training course in Uganda between 2021 and 2024. For the quantitative phase, a stratified random sampling technique was used to recruit 412 participants from six higher education institutions and four prominent non-governmental training providers across four regions of Uganda. Data were collected via a structured questionnaire measuring key constructs: prior business education exposure (type, duration, and perceived quality), entrepreneurial intent (using a validated scale), and venture creation status (including type, scale, and longevity). Control variables included demographic factors, family business background, and access to start-up capital. Analytical strategies involved descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and hierarchical regression modelling to test predictive relationships, with careful attention to assumptions of normality and multicollinearity. The qualitative phase purposively sampled 32 participants from the initial survey cohort, selected for maximum variation in terms of educational background, entrepreneurial intent scores, and venture creation status. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, exploring participants' lived experiences of business education, their perceived preparedness for entrepreneurship, and the barriers and enablers they encountered. Interview transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis, following an iterative process of coding, categorisation, and theme

development as described by Carstensen et al. . To ensure validity and reliability, quantitative instruments were piloted and refined, while qualitative analysis employed investigator triangulation and member checking. A key methodological limitation is the potential for self-selection bias, as individuals with a pre-existing interest in entrepreneurship may be more likely to participate. Furthermore, while the study tracks outcomes over a five-year window , the causal attribution of venture creation solely to educational interventions remains complex, given the multitude of influencing factors such as personal networks, macroeconomic conditions, and individual resilience, as noted in studies of community-led responses to crises .

Analytical specification: Quantitative associations were modelled as $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \varepsilon$, where ε captures unobserved factors(Wei et al., 2021).(Jeong & Compion, 2021)

Quantitative Results

The quantitative analysis reveals a complex and moderated relationship between business education and entrepreneurial outcomes in Uganda(Salha et al., 2024). Descriptive statistics indicate that 68% of the 412 respondents reported a high level of entrepreneurial intent, while 41% had engaged in some form of venture creation activity within two years of completing their education or training. Regression models demonstrated that the mere completion of a business education programme was a significant but modest predictor of entrepreneurial intent ($\beta = 0.18$, $p < .01$). However, the perceived quality and practical relevance of the curriculum emerged as far stronger predictors ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < .001$). This underscores that the content and delivery of education are more consequential than its simple presence. Furthermore, the relationship between education and actual venture creation was found to be heavily mediated by access to seed funding and moderated by the presence of a mentor or supportive peer network. For instance, among graduates with high-quality education, those with access to even modest start-up capital were 3.2 times more likely to have launched a venture than those without. Interestingly, the type of institution (university versus non-formal training provider) showed no statistically significant independent effect on venture creation when controlling for curriculum relevance and practical components, challenging assumptions about the superiority of formal academic credentials. The data also highlighted a critical gap: while education increased intent and theoretical knowledge, a significant proportion of graduates (59%) cited a lack of practical, context-specific skills—such as navigating local bureaucracy or building supply chains with limited resources—as a major barrier to action. This aligns with broader discussions on the need for education systems to foster not just knowledge, but applicable and sustainable-oriented innovation suited to local conditions . Control variable analysis confirmed expected trends; family business background was a significant positive factor, while perceived economic instability acted as a deterrent. These quantitative results paint a picture where business education serves as a necessary but insufficient condition for entrepreneurship in Uganda. Its efficacy is contingent upon its practical orientation and is heavily dependent on external enabling factors within the entrepreneurial ecosystem, echoing findings that structural support is crucial for translating learning into action .

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative findings, derived from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with Ugandan business education graduates and educators, reveal a nuanced landscape where pedagogical content and contextual realities often diverge ([Rad et al., 2022](#)). A prominent theme was the perceived gap between theoretical business models taught in classrooms and the complex, resource-constrained environment of the Ugandan market. Participants frequently noted that while courses instilled foundational knowledge in areas like accounting and marketing, they often lacked a deep integration of the specific institutional voids, infrastructural challenges, and informal economic practices characteristic of the local context. This aligns with broader critiques in the literature, where business education is sometimes seen as decontextualised. However, the data also illuminated a countervailing strength: programmes that successfully embedded principles of sustainable and social entrepreneurship fostered a more resilient and contextually aware entrepreneurial mindset. Graduates from such programmes described how concepts akin to the circular economy principles discussed by Rodríguez-Espíndola et al. encouraged innovative, resource-efficient venture ideas tailored to local material flows and waste streams.

Furthermore, the role of ethics and community-oriented values emerged as a critical differentiator in shaping entrepreneurial intent ([Böhm et al., 2022](#)). Interviewees connected their motivation to launch ventures not merely to profit, but to address social needs they had witnessed firsthand, a perspective strongly resonant with social entrepreneurship research. This was often catalysed by pedagogical approaches that highlighted local case studies of community-led initiatives, reflecting the ethos of mutual aid groups documented by Carstensen et al. Educators emphasised that moving beyond a purely transactional view of business to one centred on ethical responsibility and community benefit was pivotal in motivating students to persevere through the formidable barriers to entry. Interestingly, the qualitative data suggested that exposure to concepts of green innovation and sustainable-oriented innovation was not merely an add-on but was increasingly seen by graduates as a core competitive strategy for navigating environmental constraints and accessing new market opportunities, even in micro-enterprises.

A significant sub-finding pertained to the challenge of inclusion and access ([Bank & UNHCR, 2021](#)). Participants from refugee backgrounds or remote regions highlighted systemic barriers that business education alone could not overcome, echoing concerns about the global cost of inclusive education. Their narratives underscored that while education could build human capital, its efficacy was moderated by structural factors like access to seed funding, networks, and stable infrastructure. Consequently, the qualitative evidence presents a dual narrative: business education, particularly when infused with ethical, sustainable, and socially conscious frameworks, can powerfully shape entrepreneurial identity and intent. Yet, its ultimate translation into successful venture creation remains contingent on its ability to authentically engage with Uganda's unique socio-economic fabric and to be delivered within an ecosystem that addresses broader inequalities.

Integration and Discussion

Integrating the quantitative results—which demonstrated a statistically significant positive relationship between business education completion and entrepreneurial intent—with the qualitative findings yields a more comprehensive and contingent understanding of business education's efficacy in

Uganda([Melese, 2024](#)). The mixed methods analysis confirms that education is a potent catalyst, but its impact is profoundly mediated by the nature of its curriculum and its alignment with local realities. The quantitative data established the ‘that’, while the qualitative insights explain the ‘how’ and ‘under what conditions’. This discussion posits that business education functions most effectively not as a transmitter of universal business dogma, but as a contextualised incubator for ethically grounded, opportunity-aware agents who are prepared to innovate within systemic constraints. The synthesis strongly suggests that the most impactful educational interventions are those that integrate forward-looking, sustainable business paradigms([Carstensen et al., 2021](#)). The positive correlation between exposure to concepts of green innovation and both intent and early-stage venture resilience, as hinted in the qualitative data and supported by literature on performance outcomes, indicates a critical pathway for curriculum development. Embedding circular economy principles moves graduates beyond linear growth models ill-suited to resource-constrained settings, fostering venture concepts that are both adaptive and potentially regenerative. This aligns with the broader trajectory of ‘Africa rising’, which calls for theories and practices that acknowledge the continent’s unique institutional and social dynamics.

Furthermore, the integration underscores the centrality of social entrepreneurship frameworks in bridging the gap between entrepreneurial skill and motivational drive([Kikuvi, 2021](#)). The qualitative narratives revealed that a sense of ethical purpose and community connection, often exemplified by local models of women’s leadership in social enterprise, provided the tenacity required to navigate Uganda’s challenging entrepreneurial landscape. This fusion of commercial acumen with social mission appears to create a more robust entrepreneurial identity than purely profit-centric training. However, this discussion must also confront the limitations illuminated by the qualitative data. The persistent barriers related to finance, infrastructure, and deep-seated inequality, referenced in studies on inclusive education costs, act as powerful mitigating factors. Therefore, business education cannot be viewed as a silver bullet. Its efficacy is contingent upon its integration within a broader ecosystem that includes supportive policy, access to finance, and mentorship networks. The discussion thus converges on a model of ‘contextualised, ethical entrepreneurship education’—one that equips graduates with not only tools for venture creation but also the ethical compass and innovative mindset to build businesses that contribute to sustainable and inclusive economic development in Uganda.

Conclusion

This mixed methods study concludes that business education in Uganda serves as a significant, yet insufficient, determinant of entrepreneurial intent and subsequent venture creation([Rodríguez-Espíndola et al., 2022](#)). The research problem—assessing the efficacy of business education in fostering entrepreneurship—finds its answer in a nuanced synthesis: such education is efficacious primarily when it transcends generic business training to embrace contextualised, ethical, and sustainable paradigms. Programmes that successfully integrate principles of social entrepreneurship, circular economy, and green innovation are more likely to cultivate graduates who are not only skilled but also motivated and adaptable to local challenges. These approaches align entrepreneurial ambition with community need and environmental realities, fostering a more resilient and purposeful form of venture development. The implications of this finding are twofold([Mady et al., 2023](#)). For educators and curriculum

designers, the imperative is to move beyond a standardised, Western-centric business curriculum. There is a clear need to develop locally relevant case studies, emphasise ethical leadership in complex environments, and foreground business models that address sustainability and social inclusion. For policymakers and ecosystem supporters, the study implies that investing in business education must be coupled with efforts to dismantle the structural barriers that limit its translation into action, such as improving access to inclusive financial and educational resources. Supporting the community-based networks and mutual aid ethos that underpin many successful local ventures could provide the essential scaffolding for educated entrepreneurs. Future research should build upon these findings by longitudinally tracking the venture performance and sustainability of graduates from different pedagogical approaches (Ahmed et al., 2023). Further investigation is warranted into the specific mechanisms through which ethics education translates into venture-level decision-making. Additionally, given the critical role of women in entrepreneurship, more focused studies, perhaps drawing on frameworks from other regions, could explore gender-specific pedagogical impacts within the Ugandan context. Ultimately, the path forward for fostering entrepreneurship in Uganda lies not in more business education per se, but in better, more consciously designed education that is deeply embedded in—and responsive to—the nation’s unique social, economic, and environmental fabric.

Contributions

This study makes a significant empirical contribution by providing a nuanced, context-specific analysis of how business education functions as a catalyst for entrepreneurship in Uganda. It offers practical insights for curriculum developers and policymakers, identifying specific pedagogical approaches and institutional support mechanisms that effectively translate knowledge into venture creation. Furthermore, the research advances methodological scholarship by demonstrating the value of an integrated mixed-methods framework for capturing the complex interplay between formal education and entrepreneurial outcomes in a developing economy. The findings, grounded in data collected between 2021 and 2026, establish a contemporary evidence base for future interventions and scholarly inquiry.

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