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The Impact of Entrepreneurial Education on Startup Success in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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Introduction

Historical Development and Relevance of Entrepreneurial Education in Saudi Arabia

Nowadays entrepreneurship is as big as one of the most powerful forces that is propelling the day's economy, innovations, and jobs. Saudi Arabian entrepreneurial education is still in its early stages but developing at a very high speed, especially after the nation adopted the economic reform program, Vision 2030. The master plan initiated in earnest years ago in 2016 is to diversify the economy of the nation away from hydrocarbons by developing an entrepreneurial private sector—one that is startup and small- and medium-sized enterprise-based.

Scholarship of Saudi Arabian entrepreneurship then began looking backwards in time in the early 2000s when King Saud University, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM), and King Abdulaziz University added courses in entrepreneurship to their curricula. Curriculum then was only levels and was even theory-focused with specializations in management theory, business planning, and feasibility studies. This realignment of the national agenda to growth driven by innovation was accompanied by a call for experiential competency-based entrepreneurial training in real-time mode and experimentation within programs instituted. One of those switch points was the institution in 2016 of the Small and Medium Enterprises General Authority, or Monsha'at. Monsha'at also pushed development in a national entrepreneurship ecosystem by sponsoring accelerators, incubators, startup bootcamps, finance access, and international cooperation initiatives.

Foundation- and non-profit-sponsored initiatives—those of the Bab Rizq Jameel and Misk Foundation, for example—were structured early-stage training, mentoring, and services.

University incubators like the KAUST Entrepreneurship Center closed research-to-market

windows by commercializing. Today, education in entrepreneurship in the Kingdom ranges from bachelor's and minor degrees, executive development, to government seminars, government-backed incubators and accelerators, e-learning centers, hackathons, and training workshops. Pre-university education encompasses the Ministry of Education "Future Entrepreneurs" program to evaluate strategic intent in the context of incorporating entrepreneurial and finance courses as part of their course study earlier.

While there is such program success, there is startup company failure too. Extremely high startup company failure rates are the result as they cannot sustain embryonic movement and performance after it, hence efficiency, applicability, and transferability of existing entrepreneurial education into actual startup performance are doubtful. Training attendance levels cannot ensure on their own measurable business survival and achievement.

With Saudi Arabia still struggling to attain empowering entrepreneurship as a development pillar, determining which entrepreneurial education streams—investor readiness training, business modeling practice, intensity of mentoring, or exposure to innovation management—are associated with improved startup performance is crucial. Relative to relatively entrepreneurially competent entrepreneurs in formality and informality institutions, this study seeks to undertake evidence-based inquiry that will help to be applied in informing curriculum design, policy convergence, and ecosystem investment. The findings are anticipated to provide prescriptive data to nascent entrepreneurs, universities, development agencies, and policymakers in an attempt to tackle the education gap and sustainable start-up success in Saudi Arabia.

Startups and Instantaneity of Prosperity

Startups embody the dynamism of markets and new market innovation economy, driving economic growth, jobs, and technology development. Startups can generally be described as the commencement of a new business firm, high point in its infancy or starting years of operations. Mature small firms are appropriate to maintain stable and neighborhood business, while start-ups are appropriate to create new solutions, replace competition, and construct high-growth, scalable businesses. Startups operate in the space of risk, experimenting with new types of business models and staking on technology to discover solutions to part of what ails the marketplace.

Terms used by startups have evolved from use in Silicon Valley boom and technology revolution but increasingly are being used to describe ventures in all industries including health, education, fintech, and sustainability. Startups are usually founded by entrepreneurs who have seen niches or inefficiencies in the marketplace and plan to capitalize on them using new products or services. Not so much a matter of size or age that makes a startup other than any other business, but rather its plans for itself to double or triple in size, penetrate increasingly more markets, and even disrupt industry tradition for others.

But a successful startup is a tough fight uphill and requires some ingredients. Beneath each successful startup there is a decent business idea which is clean and which is compelling. The idea must be centered around solving some real-world problem on some differentiated value proposition so that it shines above the rest. Without some significant market need, even very technologically innovative ideas won't fly.

Also, of highest and priority is the founding team. Start-up success is dependent on augmenting skill fit within optimally sized team, if possible, a business and technical skills fit. The founders

must learn from, be resilient to, and high-speed learn from bad feedback and failure because they're in the middle slot in high-churn domain where start-ups happen.

The second most essential need is good market sense. Very fine-grained market research to uncover customer pain points, track competition, and determine demand. A startup should also have a business model that not only stimulates innovation but growth too. Subscription model, freemium model, direct-to-consumer model, or business-to-business service, the model must allow the company to grow profitably on a scale.

Finance is also among the startup's success requirements. Startups will certainly require funds in order to develop their minimum viable product (MVP), test if their solution has a chance in the market and scale their business. Finance may be provided by founders' capital, family and friends, angel investors, venture capitalists, or government grants. There are quite a number of institutions in Saudi Arabia such as Small and Medium Enterprises General Authority (Monsha'at), Misk Foundation, and Saudi Venture Capital Company (SVC) which offer structured support and investment to the startups.

Apart from this, startups are also required to avoid legal and operational trends. Intellectual property rights, registration of the company, agreement of the shareholders, and compliance with local rule are the most important processes which are overlooked at the grassroots level. The majority of the startups are liable to commit errors which otherwise can be easily avoided without a strong platform.

Customer acquisition and trust are likewise brand and marketing strategy. A well-defined go-to-market strategy enables startups to set the terms on which they acquire and retain customers via digital marketing, social media visibility, partnerships, or direct selling channels. Customer

acquisition and retention are generally make-or-break for early-stage companies. And finally, networking and mentorship for startups can go a long way in propelling a startup to success. Incubators, accelerators, and university incubators, besides money, offer mentorship, training, advice, and networking.

Research Problem

Whereas the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has also invested more in entrepreneurship through activities such as ecosystem development initiatives, education reform, and national programs, there is a single primary concern: an enormous number of startups fail within their first two years of operation. While numerous programs are attempting to reveal and enlighten prospective entrepreneurs with that they need to accomplish, there are few empirical studies present which such learning processes are leading to long-term entrepreneurial achievement. The earlier studies that have been examining entrepreneurial training in the nation have been evaluating intention-making if one becomes an entrepreneur following training or not. There certainly is a kind of knowledge deficit gap, though, about how that learning makes its way to actual outcomes like start-up survival, business expansion, and ultimate success. No outcome measure is a valid concern, especially since government agencies, private incubators, and universities are all putting so much into entrepreneurship education. With there being so few statistics on what areas of study have actually been proven to contribute to success with startups, this type of program can become so out of touch with what the business world is actually looking for. That is what this research seeks to correct with the examination of quantifiable impact entrepreneurial education has on the viability and growth of Saudi Arabian startups.

Importance of the Research

1- Policy Insights

Entrepreneurship is the strongest of Saudi Vision 2030's three pillars, designed to transform the Kingdom's economic model away from one based on oil to innovation-driven development. Entrepreneurial education at such a time is less of an intellectual challenge, but rather a strategic national necessity in order to equip citizens, and youth in particular, with the ability to contribute towards the development of the private sector. The study offers policymakers evidence-based analysis into the question of whether existing programs are yielding concrete entrepreneurial effects, start-up survival and development. With tax dollars and funds pouring into programs through organizations like Monsha'at and the Ministry of Education, policymakers require a means of obtaining transparent, data-driven information in program decision-making to assess program effectiveness. The results of research will prove useful in informing more knowledge-based policy toward entrepreneurial learning directions of national economic diversification agendas that involve public-private partnerships for determining entrepreneurial intentionality as well as business viability.

2- Academic Contribution

Entrepreneurial learning academic culture is decent at the international level but less established in Middle Eastern and, more particularly, Saudi Arabian settings. A number of earlier research studies have been defying the research of entrepreneurial intentions in the form of an investigation of whether learning affects learning to be entrepreneurial participants the perfect question for this paper. Others have tried to examine the impact of such activities on the concrete business outcomes, survival, scalability, and innovation. This current research filled this gap

since it offered empirical validation based on Saudi Arabia's institutional and socio-economic environments. This study corroborates the voice of scholarly literature in linking education to actual startup success. Firstly, it offers a localized pioneering paradigm that, aside from contributing to local discussion, also presents a benchmark against which studies in other developing economies can be compared. Secondly, it develops theory in measurable entrepreneurial performance and learning in formal entrepreneurship.

3- Curriculum Development for Early-Stage Education

As Saudi Arabia alters its education system for the sake of global trends of the knowledge economy, incorporation of entrepreneurship in intellectual development early in age is a reason of greatest concern these days. Initiatives such as "Future Entrepreneurs" initiated by the Ministry of Education are evidence of increased concern regarding the alteration of entrepreneurial attitudes early in age. Without empirical data of what educational programs impact the most on the long term, curriculum development can be random or careless to needs in the market. Current research looks at the influence of education in entrepreneurship on the business performance of start-up firms in the sector and tries to determine what are the most significant factors, business modeling, finance, mentoring, and innovation management. The effects can be applied on re-crafting curricula, specifically for children of newly married couples who have not yet been exposed to the business world. By setting functional entrepreneurship methods and realities on initiating knowledge streams, the Kingdom will be positioning its future generation in a stronger position to easily fit self-employment, drive economic growth, and less government-funded work programs in the long term.

4- Practical Application

For Saudi Arabian incubators, accelerators, entrepreneurship development centers, and training schools, program design is being surrounded by a shortage of outcome measures. Pitching, skills training, and networking are the programs without the implication of which constituent parts ultimately lead to the long-term survival of the startups. This research fills that gap by not just taking subjective measures into account but also objective ones such as survival and growth. The research can assist those companies in positioning programs to best impact in the most suitable space, investor readiness, product-market, or iterative business modeling. Through alignment of learning content to quantifiable business result, the research enables enhanced public and private investment streamlining in training provision. In addition, the research provides utilitarian advice to aspiring entrepreneurs in a way that enables them to decide which kind of training, formal degree, accelerators, online courses, or mentorship, is likely to be of most use to their startup company. Finally, it improves the quality and sustainability of startups that are developed as an outcome of the Saudi entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Literature Review

Entrepreneurship education has also been a persistent theme in the vast literature on entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs have always linked entrepreneurship education with entrepreneurial intention, self-efficacy, and opportunity discovery and ability to start ventures (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015). The programs are focused on most critical skills like enterprise design, opportunity evaluation, risk-taking, and innovation and aim at making one competent enough to deal with uncertainty of start-up business cases. Nabi et al. (2017) in their systematic review of the effects of entrepreneurship education are concerned that entrepreneurship education through industry links, mentorship, and experiential learning may generate more entrepreneurial attitudes and stronger businesses. While the importance of entrepreneurial education has been rightly held as a universal principle around the globe during the past decades, most of the activity in this direction has been occurring in the Western environments, America and Europe, without anyone even considering if these models are pertinent or not for developing or non-Western economies. To what extent cultural values, infrastructural contexts, and economic levels qualify, country by country, across the Arab world, is not yet theoretically articulated in the global debate.

It is a fairly new agenda to aim entrepreneurial education and start-up creation in the GCC countries, such as Saudi Arabia. The Saudi education system so far has been theory preparation-based and public sector employment preparation-based, as opposed to entrepreneurial orientation and skills preparation in the private sector. That is being reversed in Vision 2030, where innovation, SME development, and entrepreneurship are promoted in the private sector. Al-Swidi and Al-Hosam (2012) similarly contend that young women's and youth entrepreneurship is jeopardized by sociocultural employment security patterns, risk aversion, and parental authority.

Entrepreneurship education is thus promoted as a skills-type intervention and as an ideational and culture-change phenomenon. Almulhim (2020) discusses such synergy in Saudi universities and believes that despite the fact that most of the universities also establish entrepreneurship centers and electives, diversity is still present when it comes to content, experiential learning, and employee capacity. In the Egyptian case, Hattab (2014) already established that entrepreneurship formal education courses do have some effect on business intention and business feasibility among students and the conclusion that the same education models that is, if appropriately localized, would prove just as successful in the Saudi case.

For all that progress, though, the grand literature gap persists: by far and large, most indigenous studies still examine entrepreneurial intention that is, start-up willingness as psychologically measured to the exclusion of start-up performance measures such as survival, scaling, and profitability. Methodological deficiency is evident in most of the studies to the point that not even a single one of them tries big-N quantitative data or mixed-methods to try to measure entrepreneurial education's effects in the real world after publication. Not much or no empirical work was done before recent times to try to reach the effect of different types of entrepreneurial education degrees, short courses, or accelerator programs on some measure of business success in Saudi Arabia.

With the aim to bridge this knowledge gap, the focus study in this paper is to analyze the impact of entrepreneurial education on start-up performance in terms of two contrasting outcomes: business growth and survival rate. It would be mixed-method design research gathering data in the form of survey data and individual qualitative interviews in order to be in a position to deliver evidence-based recommendations on those pedagogy practices most likely to result in startup success in the respective Kingdom's socioeconomic and sociocultural context.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Grounded on a mixed-methods platform, this study applies both quantitative and qualitative designs in studies on the impact of entrepreneurial training on startup performance in Saudi Arabia. The quantitative component represents the cross-sectional survey design, which facilitates systematic data collection from a large sample of startup founders within a specified period. It is a sound method to statistically significant relationships between entrepreneurial performance and education exposure. The qualitative element caps the process with an accomplishment of history and lived experience of founders through semi-structured interviews so interpretative analysis of theme and pattern perhaps unaffordable through survey can be facilitated. They are complementary with analyzable quantifiability and contextual richness of insight.

Target Population

The population being targeted in the present study is founders of Saudi Arabian startups who have founded their startups in the past one to five years. They are an accessible population and deserve to be researched upon since they are at the most susceptible stage of the entrepreneurial process where education would have the most direct impacts. The study is aiming at small and medium-sized business (SME) owners who are registered on the basis of local classification standards. The population under the study would be exposed to entrepreneurial education from formal university education through government or privately funded accelerator schemes. Focusing on the study population will ground evidence to be used in the rapidly evolving entrepreneurial environment within Saudi Arabia as part of Vision 2030.

Sample Size and Data Collection

A stratified sample of 100-150 founders of startups will be targeted, hoping to be adequate for quality analysis and not necessarily being very expensive to recruit and analyze. The questionnaire will be completed online using online questionnaires and will be advertised through the system of entrepreneurship support, Monsha'at, KAUST, KFUPM, and Saudi Arabia social networks of startups. Web-reach cost-effective electronic media will provide data collection and be made available for adaptable use for automatic handling. Demographic, business performance, and entrepreneurial educational exposure survey information overall will be collected. Anonymity will be applied to measure voluntary response by keeping answers confidential to ensure and preserve confidentiality and meet ethical requirements.

Independent Variables

Entrepreneur education is the independent variable of the research and will be addressed from various points with the purpose of examining its diverseness. Some of them are format (university courses, accelerator courses, workshops, e-learning), source (government agencies like Monsha'at, private incubators, universities), duration (segmented into below a month, 1–3 months, above 6 months), and subject matter (business planning, financial literacy, marketing, innovation, investor readiness). This multifaceted conceptualization allows control for the effect of each element of entrepreneurial education on firm start-up success, rather than operationalizing education as an inputs dichotomy. Measures of start-up success will be regressed upon two broad dependent variables: business survival and business growth.

Dependent Variables

Firm survival will be gauged as whether a firm is still in business and, if so, how long it has survived and continued to operate. That is a straightforward gauge of the staying power of a new start-up company. Firm growth will be gauged with measurable indicators of growth like growth in new products or services, new markets, and staff growth. They are startup drivers of growth and market opportunities use that indicate entrepreneurship global performance indicators.

Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics will be applied to analyze survey responses.

Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequencies) will be used to summarize the sample and provide a general description of comments.

Data Analysis

Correlation tests will be used with the view to testing for relationship between independent and dependent variables in inferential analysis. Multiple regression will determine the proportion of survival and growth of the business explained by entrepreneurial education variables, holding constant founder educational level, business sector, and age of the company. Statistical testing will be done on statistical computer packages like SPSS or Microsoft Excel, depending on whether data are in readily usable form. The qualitative aspect of the study will consist of 10-15 in-depth interviews with entrepreneurs who have undergone entrepreneurial training. Content analysis and narrative analysis will be used when interviewing to analyze. Content analysis will indicate and tally frequent themes like the learning of skills, improvement in confidence, or networking. Narrative analysis will be used at the interpretation of a single entrepreneurial path, how education influences decision-making, resilience, and entrepreneurial style. The combination of the two methods enables the research to carry out both generalizable patterns and a single experienced life placed survey outcomes.

Structure:

Thesis Structure Overview

Chapter 1: Introduction		Sets the context, outlines the problem, objectives, and significance of the study.
Chapter 2: Literature Review		Reviews prior research, identifies gaps, and builds the theoretical foundation.
Chapter 3: Methodology		Explains research design, population, data collection methods, and analysis plan.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings		Presents quantitative and qualitative results and interprets them.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion		Discusses implications, answers research questions, and concludes the study.

Limitations

Though this research will attempt to contribute to entrepreneurial philosophy to Saudi Arabian entrepreneurial success and education, some limitations have to be enumerated to place a constraint on its finding.

One such limitation of the studies is in design in the sense that it will only use quantitative data, and it will constrain richness and depth of observation. While LED surveys can theoretically provide mass-scale data and statistical correlations, it will be devoid of the actual experience, meaning, and abstract rationale of more likely startup founders to be obtained by qualitative approaches like interviews or focus groups. Acute understanding of how learning for entrepreneurship affects frame construction, choice-making, or second-by-second reaction to obstacles may therefore be sacrificed. Even though there exists space in quantitative method to measure that is particular and generalizable outcomes, there is no space as such to give it space to function in situational and subjective processes that are most typical of entrepreneurial success in the real world. Future studies would therefore be compelled to incorporate qualitative factors that can substantiate and build knowledge regarding startup success determinants in education.

However, the second constraint of this study is that it's including covered startups in Saudi Arabia for 2019-2024. They were selected in a way that the firms included would be newly established, and therefore, should have been impacted by the recent entrepreneurial education trends and government-sponsored ones such as Vision 2030. Of these companies, some were founded before the year 2019, and although they are not within the cut-off period, it is included in this study that have had constant long-term performance and will provide adequate long-term performance data. It also does not differentiate between pre-launch and idea-stage firms, and this

will be used in measuring the short-run entrepreneurial education effect. To this degree, while this limitation puts the study in the same place as new visions of policy for education and reform, it will limit generalizability of findings to future start-ups or future Saudi business cycles.

Another limitation of this study is that it tests post-launch performance, firm expansion and survival, rather than entrepreneurial intent. Even though actual startup performance metrics are concrete surrogates for achievement and expandability, this approach has the drawback of obliterating the psychological and motivational aspect toward entrepreneurship prior.

Entrepreneurial intention is the one most studied in recent literature as a concept and most frequently instigated by learning experience, social norms, perceived self-efficacy, and social support. In order to exclude pre-starting process from researching, one should remember not to reveal how entrepreneurial education would influence aspiration, opportunity recognition, or entrepreneurship readiness to engage in a business venture. Even where such terminal outcome focus remains applicable to the research aim in performance measurement of announcing performance, this does not allow inference of the magnitude of education effects on the entire intention-to-implementation continuum.

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