

MBAS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP: A PERFECT PAIRING OR POTENTIAL MISMATCH?

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ABSTRACT

The global economy has long documented and acknowledged the golden years of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs play a pivotal role in this movement. They leverage readily available knowledge, such as diverse funding options, and capitalize on the digitized and interconnected world. Yet, their efforts frequently fall short of success. In this paper, I assess the knowledge and experience of MBA graduate entrepreneurs in starting and running real businesses. I aim to explore what are the areas of new business development where an MBA can assist a new entrepreneur in launching a business. The research also intends to explore crucial MBA management tools and strategies vital in the start-up phase of a new business. Ten MBA graduate entrepreneurs most familiar with the research area were interviewed to ensure the validity and robustness of my empirical findings. The research identified numerous areas in which MBA could support aspiring entrepreneur in launching their ventures, highlighting as many as twenty-six MBA management tools and strategies that could be utilized.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, start-up, MBA graduate entrepreneur, MBA program, MBA management tools and strategies.

ABSTRAK

Ekonomi dunia telah mengalami dan benar-benar menghargai era keemasan kewirausahaan untuk waktu yang cukup lama. Elemen krusial dalam gerakan ini adalah para pengusaha yang melimpah mengonsumsi pengetahuan yang mudah diakses dan mempertimbangkan berbagai pilihan pendanaan sambil memanfaatkan dunia yang terdigitalisasi dan terglobalisasi. Namun, mereka seringkali gagal untuk berhasil. Dalam makalah ini, saya menilai pengalaman dan pengetahuan para pengusaha lulusan MBA dalam memulai dan menjalankan bisnis nyata. Saya bertujuan untuk menjelajahi bidang-bidang pengembangan bisnis baru di mana seorang MBA membantu seorang pengusaha pemula dalam meluncurkan bisnis. Penelitian ini juga bermaksud untuk menjelajahi alat-alat manajemen dan strategi MBA yang penting dalam fase awal sebuah bisnis baru. Untuk mendapatkan temuan empiris yang valid dan kuat, saya melakukan wawancara mendalam dengan 10 pengusaha lulusan MBA yang paling akrab dengan area penelitian. Studi ini menyoroti beberapa area dalam pembentukan bisnis baru di mana seorang MBA dapat membantu seorang pengusaha baru dan menunjukkan sebanyak 26 alat manajemen dan strategi MBA yang dapat digunakan.

Kata Kunci: kewirausahaan, start-up, pengusaha lulusan MBA, program MBA, alat dan strategi manajemen MBA.

1. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is a vital tool for economic development, not only contributing to job creation, but also being the main driver of innovation and community advancement. In the last decades there has been a move from the managed to the entrepreneurial economy; aside from globalized and digitalized world other elements contributing to such trend are increased knowledge

production, global affluence, corporate reorganisation, and the fall of communist systems (Cunningham & O'Kane, 2017; Henley, 2021; Mnykh et al, 2021). Entrepreneurship is perceived as a trial-and-error endeavour due to the uncertainty of the proposed service, product, or business model (Kerr et al., 2014). Therefore, viewing entrepreneurship through multiple perspectives can play an important role in

addressing the issue of interdisciplinarity in entrepreneurship predicted for further development and research (Clark & Harrison, 2019).

In the examined context of business inception, Calvino et al. (2018) stressed that the typical size of the business when starting is small and most of the surviving businesses indeed stay small. It is necessary here to clarify that small and medium-sized enterprises have emerged as top priorities in the global agenda, playing pivotal roles in global economic development and employment opportunities (The World Bank, 2022). We can perceive self-employment as a reciprocal act – not only in the economic decline but also in the economic upswing (Svaleryd, 2015). And ultimately, both developing and developed parts of the world are being supported through entrepreneurial activities (Elliott, 2019; Radianto & Santoso, 2017; Schneck, 2014).

In the above context, one is left with a question: “how can novice entrepreneurs be supported in their business endeavours?” Although there is a piece of evidence about innate entrepreneurial capability (López-Núñez et al., 2020; Nagendra et al., 2014; Shane et al., 2010); there are on the other side several studies on educational contribution (Bhatia & Levina, 2020; DeMartino & Barbato, 2003; Matsuda & Matsuo, 2017). Entrialgo et al. (2019) point out entrepreneurship is indeed essential at higher educational institutions majoring in a variety of fields, not just Master of Business Administration (MBA) schools; regardless of if graduates become entrepreneurs or employees as later, they might for example expand into spin-off companies. In the new global economy, MBA programs are meant to prepare their students for the contemporary world of rising entrepreneurship, therefore their

curriculums need to consider such development (Allahar & Brathwaite, 2017; Entrialgo et al., 2019). By drawing on the concept of entrepreneurialism at higher educational institutions, the authors suggest that graduates from MBA programs are expected to exhibit a professional readiness for entrepreneurship (Matsuda & Matsuo, 2017). Matsuda and Matsuo (2017) propose that MBA graduates possess industry experience, professional networks, and knowledge gained from their MBA education, yet further research is needed to support how MBA programs can better support different areas in entrepreneurial pursuits. For my research, I will adhere to the MBA framework. As according to Entrialgo et al. (2019) and Matsuda and Matsuo (2017) there has been a growing demand by academics, business schools, and entrepreneurs for additional empirical studies delving into the specific connections and impact between MBA programs and entrepreneurship.

The primary aim of this research is to investigate the specific areas of launching a new business in which an MBA program can support a novice entrepreneur. To address the aim of the study related objectives have been described:

- 1) To examine the specific areas of new business establishment where an MBA can support a novice entrepreneur in starting their ventures.
- 2) To give a suggestion of applicable management strategies and tools obtained through MBA programs, specifically beneficial for aspiring entrepreneur.

This study aims to fill this gap through the following research questions:

Research Question 1: In which areas of launching a new venture can an MBA support a nascent entrepreneur?

Research Question 2: What MBA management tools and strategies can assist a new entrepreneur to start a business?

The paper is organised in the following way. Firstly, the paper examines the existing literature focussing on MBA programs in the context of entrepreneurial education as well as venture creation and develops comprehensive questions that need to be addressed. Next, I outline the research methodology followed by a discussion based on transcribed interviews of MBA graduate entrepreneurs. And finally, I end with a conclusion and recommendations for future research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Authors researching entrepreneurs agree that entrepreneurial abilities are inherent rather than developed through learning (Kuechle, 2019; López-Núñez et al., 2020; Nicolau et al., 2008). Indeed, starting a business does not require one to obtain a postgraduate education (Nagendra et al., 2014). Yet, researchers studying both innate entrepreneurial qualities and professional exposure to entrepreneurship suggest graduates from MBA programs gained their entrepreneurial resources such as improved leadership and creativity skills and generally a higher degree of success as entrepreneurs through their MBA programs (Ahmed et al., 2017; Matsuda & Matsuo, 2017). Nevertheless, several papers highlight the inclination of students of MBA programs to pursue entrepreneurship, regardless of their inherent entrepreneurial characteristics (Amofah et al., 2020; DeMartino & Barbato, 2003). MBA programs have become a key instrument for acquiring standard business skills in both business as well as entrepreneurial programs. Therefore, I will now review the literature on entrepreneurship

education as such, followed by the relevance of MBA programs and their specialisations, and finally the impact of MBA studies on entrepreneurial success.

2.1 Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education as such has long been a question of great interest in a wide range of fields. Rideout and Gray (2013) for instance challenge in their systematic critique of empirical research the widely held view that entrepreneurial education cultivates entrepreneurship. A similar interpretation of the effectiveness of entrepreneurial education can be found in Crysdián (2022). The author still considers universities as the primary provider of education, however, in terms of entrepreneurial education, the industry presents a more dynamic environment and suggests linking government, educational institutions and industry so the entrepreneurial programs at universities can indeed contribute to a knowledge society and economy (Crysdián, 2022). Overall, data from several sources have identified increased experiential learning of entrepreneurship at universities is associated with a higher degree of self-efficacy (Abd Rahim et al., 2022; Shen & Yang, 2022). The positive effect of practical over theoretical learning is further exemplified not only by a higher degree of self-efficacy but also consequently by higher entrepreneurial intentions of graduates from entrepreneurial programs (Nguyen et al., 2022; Piperopoulos & Dimov, 2015; Rauch & Hulsink, 2015). Conversely, an earlier paper by Bae et al. (2014) does not quite support a significant connection between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurial intentions according to their study of pre-and post-education entrepreneurial intentions. The authors indeed highlight the need to enhance the effectiveness of entrepreneurship

education to increase entrepreneurial intentions (Bae et al., 2014).

More recent attention has focused on the provision of specific recommendations on how to improve it. For example, Parris and McInnis-Bowers (2017) in their study propose an introductory business course where students cultivate self-efficacy by developing belief in themselves and their abilities by knowing they are the architects of the positive impact on the world using entrepreneurial reasoning and action. Additionally, Schulz (2022) expands Parris and McInnis-Bowers's (2017) suggestion further by highlighting that entrepreneurial education in general supports entrepreneurial intentions, however, it is the delivery of the course that might have different outcomes. The author in his study proposes it is the business plan course that strengthens the enthusiasm of learners with low entrepreneurial intentions to pursue entrepreneurship, yet lean startup camp helps students that are already profoundly driven by entrepreneurship to engage in startup ventures (Schulz, 2022). For students to better understand the dynamics of entrepreneurship and its effects, Mele et al. (2022) further recommend the introduction of university business idea incubators to offer students creative space to support their concrete entrepreneurial ideas in a challenged-based environment. And finally, Thrane et al. (2016) suggests to educational institutions use their six-step teaching framework operationalizing several enterprising elements: "identify work, disclosing disharmonies, qualifying disharmonies into general anomalies, constructing innovative solutions, prototyping and business modelling" (p. 920). In conclusion, the academic literature on entrepreneurship education has revealed the emergence of several contrasting themes. Given all that has

been mentioned so far, one may suppose there is a real need for more practical entrepreneurship education.

2.2 MBAs and Entrepreneurial Education

Regardless of the MBA's criticisms, "the MBA trains the wrong people in the wrong ways with the wrong consequences" (Mintzberg, 2005, p. 2), we can acknowledge numerous studies stating the benefit of MBA education (Baruch, 2009; Sar, 2017; Turner et al., 2017). For example, there is a growing body of literature on this much-debated question of the importance of an MBA in cultivating an entrepreneurial mindset but also helping students to gain new skills to better run a business adding to improved business opportunities (Allahar & Brathwaite, 2017; Nagendra et al., 2014). Additionally, recent work by López-Núñez et al. (2020) has established that the presence of entrepreneurial personality traits as well as entrepreneurial intentions show its presence in both real entrepreneurs but also university students. Indeed, entrepreneurial intentions and education appear to be positively related. A paper by Ahmed et al. (2017) suggests MBA students have indeed higher entrepreneurial intentions in comparison to students participating in entrepreneurship education. However, one research group has already drawn attention to the paradox of entrepreneurial intentions and the consequent action to pursue entrepreneurship and how MBA programs might need to introduce a curriculum supporting entrepreneurial self-efficiency (Amofah et al., 2020). As also noted by Entrialgo et al. (2019) in their exploratory review of executive and part-time MBA programs. They discovered not necessarily all MBA curriculums support entrepreneurial efforts and the majority do not offer

entrepreneurial subjects (Entrialgo et al., 2019). Overall, these studies might highlight the need for specialisation of MBA programs.

2.3 Specialised MBA

Over the past few decades, MBA programs have been diversified, and what was initially meant as an education for working professionals has branched out to various specializations (Allahar & Brathwaite, 2017; Kim et al., 2020; Turner et al., 2017; Ver Steeg, 2022). Some authors have mainly been interested in questions concerning entrepreneurial education within MBA settings. For example, Bhatia (2019) traces the deviation from the managerial to entrepreneurial mindset in some MBA programs aiming to approach MBA education from a more divergent angle than some critics argue. Further, Allahar and Brathwaite (2017) question whether mainstream MBAs are the best environment for startup founders and draw their findings from 25 years of experience in cultivating entrepreneurial education in a particular MBA program. The authors suggest introducing subjects such as entrepreneurship processes and business opportunities, business planning, entrepreneurial finance, and creativity and innovation to the MBA curriculum designed for the more mature and experienced MBA students (Allahar & Brathwaite, 2017).

As far as other specialisations are concerned several studies have begun to examine social entrepreneurship in MBA programs (Awaysheh & Bonfiglio, 2017; Kim et al., 2020; Ver Steeg, 2022). Social entrepreneurship addressing social and environmental issues is making its way into today's global economy and consequently raising interest in educational institutions (Awaysheh & Bonfiglio, 2017). More recent attention to social entrepreneurship within the

educational context has focused on facing social challenges through collaboration with all stakeholders and bridging educational institutions, companies, governments, and local and student organisations (Kim et al., 2020; Ver Steeg, 2022). It has conclusively been shown that introducing observational as well as experiential learning also better develops desired knowledge and skills (Awaysheh & Bonfiglio, 2017; Bruni-Bossio & Delbaere, 2021). Collectively, these studies outline a critical role for business schools to diversify their offerings to adjust to candidates from a variety of backgrounds instead of offering a mass-produced MBA curriculum (Mtapuri & Lethoko, 2018). Although I can observe a demand for specialised MBA, it appears the ivy league MBA programs still mostly offer the generalised MBA, however with elective subjects. An example of diversified MBA offering is for instance, the Tech MBA Program at the Cornell SC Johnson College of Business (Johnson Cornell SC Johnson College of Business, 2022), Fashion & Luxury MBA and also Tech MBA at NYU Stern (NYU Stern, 2022) or MBA in entrepreneurship at Babson College (Babson College, 2022).

2.4 Impact of MBA Studies on Entrepreneurial Success

Although joining an MBA program mean that entrepreneurs need to set aside extra time for studying, many who are already running their businesses decide to join to take advantage of the MBA networks that these programs offer (Matsuda & Matsuo, 2017). Indeed, exploring contrasting perspectives on MBA and entrepreneurship from two prominent academic figures provides further valuable insights. Thomas S. Robertson previous Dean of the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, the oldest collegiate school of business in

the world, confirms that “learning things on your own might be inefficient; while formal courses bring one up to speed in finance, marketing, sources of capital and raising money” (Daley, 2012, p. 64). Contrarily, as indicated previously the most outspoken critic of the MBA of any kind Henry Mintzberg, Professor of Management Studies at McGill University in Montreal, has a piece of advice to aspiring entrepreneurs: “find a business or venture or activity that you really love and get immersed as deeply as possible before trying to create something” (Daley, 2012, p. 65). Even though an MBA does not prevent an entrepreneur from failing and is not a guaranteed path to business success, there is empirical evidence about business schools supporting entrepreneurial endeavor (Bhatia & Levina, 2020; Oliver et al., 1991; Sar, 2017). Indeed, previous research by Matsuda and Matsuo (2017) calls for an empirical study to deepen the understanding of concrete areas where an MBA could assist a new entrepreneur as there has not been enough research done to that specific extent.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research Design

This research adopted an interpretivist epistemology to make sense of different roles that individuals engage within their natural as well as assigned environments characterised by subjective perceptions (Saunders et al., 2007). Additionally, an exploratory, descriptive design was adopted to enhance the study with new insights while better understanding the nature of the researched problems (Robson, 2002). Given the research aim and objectives, relevant existing literature, chosen research philosophy, available research

resources and the need to sufficiently generalise an embedded multiple case study strategy has been employed (Saunders et al., 2007). And finally, a qualitative approach was chosen to produce more profound and detailed knowledge about the researched topic as well as reflect the participant’s personal experience.

3.2 Sample

Based on the study objectives, a case study design and research questions emphasizing the importance of leveraging expertise a purposive non-probability sampling technique was employed. The participants of the study were determined as a specific group of MBA graduate entrepreneurs best acquainted with the research area. They were selected over four months, and ten out of fifteen targeted individuals agreed to take part in the research spanning over two months. In qualitative studies the sample size tends to be small, the research based on interviews looks to address the research problem in depth allowing the researcher to be fully immersed in the research field (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). The locations to address potential participants were identified as MBA schools. An online post was sent across different business school networks promoting the intended research with a call to action. The study targeted female and male entrepreneurs that graduated from a variety of MBA schools in different countries and operated their businesses locally, internationally, or online across a variety of fields (Table 1). Employing an international sample allowed me to present diverse views and experience, however the findings are not representative of global entrepreneurial experiences.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

	Age	Gender	Country of Residence	Type Company	of Number of Employees	Age of Company
A	66	Male	USA	International	5	13
B	43	Male	South Africa	Local	120	13
C	55	Male	South Africa	National	20	16
D	35	Female	Angola	Local	30	5
E	50	Male	Czechia	Local	1	4
F	42	Female	USA	Local	1	6
G	39	Male	South Africa	International Online	1	1
H	37	Male	Nigeria	International	20	31
I	30	Female	New Zealand	International	2	1
J	30	Female	Nigeria	Local and online	1	1

3.3 Research Tool

In my research, I utilized semi-structured interviews to collect primary data. To gather specific responses, I used close-ended questions. Conversely, open-ended questions allowed me to collect rich data as participants could share an in-depth view of the research topic. Further, employing one-on-one interviews allowed me to foster a comfortable environment where participants were more likely to share their opinions. Finally, interviews allow the researcher to gather a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences and insights that do not necessarily emerge in alternative data collection methods and minimize potential bias (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012).

3.4 Data Collection

Primary sources were used to collect data through online videos and recordings. Before I engaged in the actual interview procedure, a pilot study was employed to assess the clarity and

relevance of the questions. Being acquainted with the start-up environment facilitated a positive atmosphere and built trust with the MBA graduate entrepreneurs interviewed, allowing them to reveal authentic and substantial insights (Jobber & Chadwick, 2017). Furthermore, in this exploratory and descriptive research, I opted for a video chat (Skype) to allow the interviewees to feel at ease and available to share their insights instead of utilizing a personal one-on-one interaction. The study participants were keen to share their entrepreneurial journeys and mostly extended the initial time from thirty or forty minutes to one hour. This proved successful in acquiring a good understanding of the research topic and gaining reliable data.

3.5 Data Analysis

According to Saunders et al. (2007), we can compare scrutinizing qualitative data to assembling a jigsaw

puzzle as the process of data analysis involves identifying pieces of information with similar characteristics and organizing them systematically into groups to construct a coherent final piece. Furthermore, the data were accessed in a purposive and abductive way, considering the established knowledge and newly emerged insights gained during the research. I used NVivo 12 to analyse the collected data. Each recording was assigned a pseudonym and manually transcribed. Further, a thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Firstly, each transcript was reviewed for overall comprehension. This was followed by selecting pieces of text that discerned connections, leading to the identification of multiple themes. These themes were subjected to further categorization into subthemes, allowing for potential reclassification and reordering.

3.6 Ethics and Research Validity

The study has adopted a qualitative approach, calling to design specific strategies to maintain credibility (Noble & Smith, 2015). Firstly, I adhered to the recommendation by Easterby-Smith et al. (2012) in terms of reliability - I was committed to maintaining coherence in the presented data and ensuring the consistency and comparability of the data regardless of the

interviewers and occasions. Further, transparency was upheld during the data analysis. Finally, the interviewed MBA graduate entrepreneurs were asked to select the most available times when they are free to be interviewed to ensure consistency. Adhering to the appropriate language, confidentiality, trust, and anonymity was critical to achieve consistent discoveries and furthermore, I avoided being biased by utilizing the laddering method. (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012; Saunders et al., 2007). In conclusion, I sought to ensure the research's validity by formulating interview protocols that minimized bias and enhanced data comprehension. (Dennis, 2018). Finally, during the entirety of the research, ethical considerations were rigorously adhered to.

4. RESULTS

In this chapter, I provide the analysis of collected data.

4.1 Areas of a New Business Development

The table below shows the breakdown of the areas where an MBA can assist a novice entrepreneur in their business development. By far the most common area for MBA graduate entrepreneurs is the financial field.

Table 2 Key Areas where an MBA Can Support a Nascent Entrepreneur

	Critical Activities Required to Start a Business	Entrepreneurs (#)
1	Market research	9
2	Business strategy formulation	8
3	Marketing strategy	8
4	Financial planning	7
5	Human resources strategy	6
6	Defining company processes	4
7	Legislation	3
8	Business plan utilisation	3

4.1.1 Creativity and Innovation

In the study, I can differentiate between most respondents (70%) believing that an MBA is a crucial steppingstone to successfully launching a business and the rest of the research participants (30%) suggesting that obtaining an MBA is not a prerequisite for a new business establishment. 20% of respondents noted that MBA studies are meant for white-collar workers willing to adhere to set work duties and timetables so they can be promoted and raise their salaries. Indeed, Participant 5 argued that securing a post at a new company is a better option for a novice entrepreneur. Participant 6 stated: *“Entrepreneur needs to address a market need with a creative idea, followed by quick execution including pricing and selling not necessarily taught at business schools.”* Additionally, Participant 5 argued that MBA students may not necessarily need to prioritize innovation. However, he regards it as a crucial aspect of the entrepreneurial journey. Contrarily, more than half of the research participants learnt to combine all the presented knowledge as well as reflect on their past professional experiences and incorporate other students’ practices. They developed the capacity to foster creativity, innovation, and critical thinking skills.

Furthermore, Participant 8 believed he acquired a holistic strategy to launch a business during his graduate studies: *“It takes more in business than just buying and selling of your idea but rather providing creative solutions customised to a consumer’s wants they did not know they have.”*

4.1.2 Marketing Expertise

60% of respondents suggested they acquired an adequate marketing proficiency during their MBA studies, which is critical in launching a business. For a novice entrepreneur, it is recommended that they thoroughly define a customer persona, incorporating their choices and wants, while evaluating a thorough analysis of the competition (Participant 7). Furthermore, Participant 3 became more competent in offering his product to additional customers, resulting in higher customer numbers. At the same time, being in tune with customers’ needs helped him find more effective ways to address them. Lastly, clearly articulating marketing strategy, determining the unique benefits of offerings, defining a mission and vision statement, and finally understanding the branding and its message helped Participant 10 to utilize her MBA studies in her startup.

4.1.3 Financial Savviness

Most research participants (8) believed that grasping financial savviness is the ultimate skill for starting a prosperous business. Participant 9 highlighted: *“Thoroughly forecasting financial projections, analysing break-even points and finally aiming at positive cash flow can prevent many business failures.”* Further followed by Participant 4: *“Having done my MBA before starting a business my company might have been profitable by now.”* On the contrary, one-fifth of respondents found the MBA programs' financial courses ineffective. They suggested these programs teach how to analyse financial statements in already-running enterprises instead of startups or teach how to apply for a loan at a bank where angels and private equity firms fund many of today's businesses.

4.1.4 Project Management

One-third of research participants found project management know-how taught at MBA programs crucial for launching new enterprises. Participant 8 suggested: *“Project planning where one is required to assign a certain start as well as end date including risk logging and project closure help me to not only have a right team, allocate and manage resources but ultimately make my project a success saving my clients and me a lot of money.”*

4.1.5 Leadership and Management

More than half of the respondents agreed leadership and managing people can break or make the business. Participant 1, for example, noted that leadership affects the entire business ecosystem and its various stakeholders, not just the company employees. Additionally confirmed by Participant 2 by stating: *“Gaining leadership tools, I can lead my company and my employees*

better and think about those challenges in a more strategic manner.”

4.1.6 Business Planning

Three out of ten respondents mentioned that a strong and adaptable business plan, which is taught in MBA programs, is a central component of any new venture. One third of participants further learnt to define business processes to prevent major structural mistakes within a business as they believed they are traditionally taught at MBA programs. Participant 3 further holistically appraised his business through stepwise design, which allowed him to plan an effective business plan and take advantage of the market environment. Finally, two out of ten respondents found operational management taught at business schools to be effective for novice entrepreneurs.

In closing, MBA programs upskill their students with various experiential learnings and provide a comprehensive curriculum for novice entrepreneurs to launch their businesses successfully. Participant 9 concluded: *“As an entrepreneur, it is not always possible to have experience in every aspect of business, the MBA assists with this as it covers a broad spectrum of subjects from Financial, Marketing, Human Resource Management, Project Management and Strategy, all key elements which are required in owning and operating your own business.”* Finally, each of the interviewed participants proposed multiple areas where a Master of Business Administration program can support a novice entrepreneur, despite one-third of respondents suggesting it is unnecessary to join an MBA to launch a venture. Assuming that is the outcome, the proposition, *“there are areas of launching a new venture where an MBA can support a nascent entrepreneur,”* is accurate.

4.2 Relevant Management Tools and Strategies

Table 3 MBA Tools and Strategies That Can Be Employed in a Launching a New Venture

	MBA Tool and Strategy	Entrepreneurs (#)
1	Financial analysis	8
2	Benchmarking	2
3	Sunk cost	1
4	Project management	4
5	Gantt chart	1
6	Risk management	1
7	Stakeholder analysis	1
8	Marketing	4
9	Market research	2
10	Branding	1
11	Mission and Vision	1
13	HR management	4
14	Team planning	1
15	Company Culture	1
16	Leadership styles	1
17	Business strategy	3
18	SWOT analysis	5
19	Balanced Scorecard	2
12	PESTLE analysis	1

Even though most research participants believed MBA programs benefit novice entrepreneurs, one-third of respondents stated only one MBA tool or strategy. Nevertheless, half of the researched MBA graduate entrepreneurs, regardless of their predisposition towards an MBA, suggested obtaining their degree transformed their mindset and actions while gaining self-awareness and knowledge about themselves. Participant 3 for example stated: “*Since becoming an*

MBA graduate, I am addressing opportunities in a multiphase way and looking differently at limitations.” Further followed by Participant 6: “*I probably utilise a lot of what I have learnt in business school, but I think being able to tackle a problem and finding the best solution are my key learnings.*”

4.2.1 Financial Planning

Most respondents suggested that proficiency in financial analysis is the

ultimate skill one can learn at an MBA. Participant 1 shared his experience of utilising Excel sheets and evaluating his finances, which allows him to forecast his budgets and plan in one, two, and five years and appraise his accounts. Furthermore, a novice entrepreneur must know when a new venture starts to make a profit, as stated by Participant 9. On the contrary, there was a doubt by Participant 7, who questioned the financial module in MBA programs as being quite far away from the actual professional environment. Having the classes delivered by accomplished entrepreneurs, not just academics, might bridge the gap between academia and the professional environment.

4.2.2 SWOT and PESTEL Analysis

50% of respondents noted SWOT analysis as the second most crucial tool gained during MBA studies. SWOT analysis ought to be ultimately placed as the first management tool employed by a new entrepreneur, uncovering not only shortcomings but also limitations of the new venture while determining the unique selling proposition (Participant 9). Participant 2 used both SWOT and PASTEL analysis within his company settings, which was notably political, and appreciated their complementary roles.

4.2.3 Gantt Chart, Risk Analysis and Stakeholder Analysis

Four out of ten respondents highlighted project management as a well-utilized tool when launching a venture. Indeed, Participant 8 believed new enterprises or anything business-like would benefit from being treated as a project as it might offer various invaluable tools. Finally, 30% of participants suggested that out of all the project management, the Gantt chart, stakeholder analysis, and risk analysis were the go-to tools to assist with project

management and are highly recommended when starting a business.

4.2.4 Business Strategy

Participant 10 argued that the strategy proffered in the current concentrated market involves employing an applicable business strategy while considering present innovation and forming a “Blue Ocean” market space. Furthermore, it is critical to know what business activities a new entrepreneur should avoid (Participant 7). Finally, three out of ten respondents held the belief that a well-crafted marketing strategy is a cornerstone for effectively launching one’s product to the market and is a vital tool for the selected business strategy.

4.2.5 HR Tools and Networking

Additionally, 40% of participants found the HR module favorable. Specifically, the team-planning and company culture, as noted by Participant 9. In conclusion, 20% of research participants found their MBA network crucial if well managed.

In conclusion, the data analysis provided several recommendations about MBA management tools and strategies suitable for startups. Therefore, the proposition “utilising MBA management tools and strategies assist a new entrepreneur to start a business” is accurate.

4.3 Discussion

The study was pursued to find out in what areas of new business development MBA programs can assist a nascent graduate entrepreneur and what MBA management tools and strategies they can utilize. In the forthcoming section, I interpret my findings about the secondary data and describe new insights that came out as a result of my research.

As discussed in the literature review, there are contrasting views regarding the usefulness of an MBA for entrepreneurs. These contrasting views are described as either supporting or opposing opinions towards MBA programs. For example, Nagendra et al. (2014) say an MBA program is not prerequisite for launching a venture. Indeed, one-third of participants believed this to be correct. One respondent in this study further confirmed that an MBA contributes to excluding individuals with an entrepreneurial mindset. This finding is consistent with that of Henry Mintzberg, who suggests seeking alternatives to obtaining an MBA, such as applying for a post with an established business (Mintzberg, 2005). A statement by Mintzberg (2005) was very similar to the sentiment of an MBA graduate entrepreneur pointing out to go work for a start-up for a few years before jumping on your own.

Furthermore, a study by López-Núñez et al. (2020) develops the understanding by pointing out that entrepreneurial intentions were found to be present in both groups of their research participants - not only in university students but also in real entrepreneurs. This view was echoed by an informant who suggested that MBA will not necessarily teach you how to spot a business opportunity and how to address a market need in a very desirable and efficient way while being profitable at the same time. These results might reflect those of Bhatia (2019), who found that not all the current MBA programs offer general managerial education but there is a tendency in some to introduce a curriculum that cultivates the entrepreneurial mindset.

Consistent with the literature, a paper by Olivier et al. (1991) proposes that MBA programs have been originally intended for industry professionals rather

than entrepreneurs. A small number of researched participants agreed with Olivier et al. (1991) and saw an MBA program as a limitation for entrepreneurs. Interestingly, one of the respondents noted how he struggled after finishing his MBA to take on a corporate position, disillusioned by how the whole corporation works. He described MBA to be a boot camp for middle management teaching just management skills but not teaching risk-taking and innovation the most critical skills for an entrepreneur. One does not need an MBA to do anything in life, however, the badge comes in handy when becoming the well-paid puzzle piece in the corporate machine, another participant added. These findings raise intriguing questions regarding the nature and extent of the MBA program as such. However, with small sample size, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be adequate if a larger sample was addressed. Nonetheless, a possible explanation for these results may be the lack of adequate entrepreneurial subjects and experiential learning in MBA programs of the critiquing participants.

On the other hand, some say MBA programs are relevant education for nascent entrepreneurs. They perceive MBA programs to be designed as a course containing various crucial disciplines that is effectively delivered having entrepreneurship in mind. Indeed, Thomas Robertson's (2012) suggestion in Daley's study is similar to one research interviewee's concern that an entrepreneur may not always know all the disciplines required to start a business that an MBA teaches. Bhatila and Levina (2020) further suggest educational institutions might need to change their attitude toward knowledge by challenging rationality and broadening the scope of their curricula since entrepreneurship

disrupts conventional business principles and models.

It is encouraging to compare this opinion with that found by more than half of the respondents. They suggested that they mastered connecting all the MBA teachings with theirs and their colleague's past professional experiences to employ divergent thinking in their new ventures. The respondents appreciated a much wider scope of education at their MBA programs than the traditional entrepreneurial ones. In addition, prior studies have noted the importance of the specialisation of an MBA to offer a competitive education (Allahar & Brathwaite, 2017; Kim et al., 2020; Turner et al., 2017; Ver Steeg, 2022). A small number of those interviewed suggested that MBAs in the past were the Rolls-Royce of degrees, but nowadays there are many people with MBAs and therefore the need to specialise has become more relevant and may require further study.

Furthermore, Matsuda and Matsuo (2017) propose a new entrepreneur could take advantage of employing newly acquired leadership expertise as well as creativity gained during MBA studies. The current study found that MBA learning about transformational leadership can indeed make one a confident leader as a variety of leadership styles is introduced during the MBA program. And finally, the majority of participants on the whole demonstrated leadership was a commonly acquired skill during their MBA studies. Additionally, there are similarities between the attitudes expressed by a few participants in this study and those described by Matsuda and Matsuo (2017). Such as that, an MBA graduate entrepreneur is able to benefit their venture by employing MBA networks (Matsuda and Matsuo, 2017). In summary, research participants agreed

with the above discovery and suggested that this was their major motivation for pursuing MBA programs.

In reviewing the literature, no data were found on the association between an MBA and applicable management tools and strategies gained in the course of the MBA program, which is a unique contribution of this study. The above combination of research findings concerning the secondary data have significant implications for the understanding of how an MBA can influence a nascent entrepreneur in new business formation and what might be the potential areas for improvement of the MBA curriculum. These findings can be used to strengthen MBA programmes that teach entrepreneurship as they can be integrated into the programmes to bring together supply- and demand-side.

4.4 Limitations of the Study and Future Research

My research aimed to benefit both academia and practice; nevertheless, it is critical to note the study's limitations. First, the research only drew data from ten MBA graduate entrepreneurs. For that reason, if I were to employ more significant sample, the study may deliver divergent findings. Second, the sample was not globally representative, and it might not offer diverse entrepreneurial experience. Third, the study might have brought more significant discoveries using mixed methods rather than qualitative ones. Fourth, elaboration on the effectiveness of other entrepreneurial programs might present contrasting discoveries. And finally, the research was also restricted in terms of time and finances.

5. Conclusion

The present research was designed to determine the effect of an MBA on entrepreneurship, being a perfect pairing

or potential mismatch. The paper assessed the experience and knowledge of MBA graduate entrepreneurs on starting and running real businesses. Overall, this paper strengthens the idea that studying an MBA positively impacts a nascent entrepreneur. The study's first unique contribution has been identifying several areas within the new business formation that a nascent entrepreneur can leverage. And secondly, a list of 26 tools and strategies has been outlined by the

research participants when asked to determine what MBA management tools and strategies can be employed by a new entrepreneur. However, not only does an MBA program equip a nascent entrepreneur with various tools and strategies, an MBA can positively change one's thinking and provide an entrepreneur with a flexible mindset and ultimately develop their competitive approach in the current aggressive market.

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