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CURRICULUM & TEACHING STUDIES | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Social and business entrepreneurship as career options for university students in the United Arab Emirates: The drive–preparedness gap

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Abstract: With limited employment opportunities, entrepreneurship is becoming a viable option to combat unemployment. This study explores undergraduate students' attitudes towards business and social entrepreneurship in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), assuming that the lack of awareness among students regarding social entrepreneurship and the lack of education opportunities in this particular field are unfavourably affecting their attitudes towards these areas. A survey of 1,080 students attending different disciplines in 14 UAE public and private universities reveals a gap between entrepreneurial desire and preparedness. About 38 and 23.3% expressed an interest in becoming entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs, respectively. Despite this level of interest, the limited access to social entrepreneurship education, training and experience leads to a drive–preparedness gap that must be reduced in order to maximise the potential of the UAE's next generation. Integrating social entrepreneurship as part of the university entrepreneurship education programmes can ensure that the future business entrepreneurs are more socially conscious.

Subjects: Behavioral Sciences; Education; Social Sciences

Keywords: social entrepreneurship; attitude; entrepreneurship; entrepreneurship education; United Arab Emirates

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

With scarce employment opportunities, entrepreneurship is increasingly becoming a preferable career option for university students. This study explores undergraduate students' attitudes towards business and social entrepreneurship in the United Arab Emirates. Social entrepreneurship means solving social problems using business models. Thirty-eight per cent expressed an interest in becoming entrepreneurs and 23.3% said they would like to be social entrepreneurs; however, the research suggests that there is a gap between the aspirations of the students to become social or business entrepreneurs and their preparedness in terms of education and training in this field. With this is in mind, this study concludes that integrating social and business entrepreneurship as part of the university curriculum outside of business programmes can create more social consciousness and promote awareness among students regarding other career opportunities that are available for them.

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1. Introduction

Researchers have long seen entrepreneurship as a driver for economic growth by offering more competition and productivity. However, and because of expanding social challenges around the world, social entrepreneurship—finding solutions to social problems using business models—has risen as a field that is attracting the attention of researchers, policy-makers as well as entrepreneurs (Abu-Saifan, 2012).

Entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship are two rapidly expanding areas for students, researchers and policy-makers alike (Alsaaty, Abrahams, & Carter, 2014). However, currently, there is limited information available about the level of interest in entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship among students attending UAE universities. In this paper, both business entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship are viewed as viable employment options.

As of now, where employment opportunities after graduation are turning out to be limited, students are becoming intrigued by entrepreneurial endeavours instead of opting for a traditional career path. In addition to engaging individuals in serving their community, social entrepreneurship is becoming one of the solutions to combating unemployment nationwide, e.g. by providing job opportunities for others (Buckner, Beges, & Khatib, 2012).

Much has been written about the potential role of the social economy as a solution to unemployment. Much of this literature projects a positive image of the social economy as a major employer creating meaningful, high-quality employment (OECD, 2013). The social economy is a third sector among economies between the private (business) and public (government) sectors. It includes organisations such as social enterprises, cooperatives, non-profit organisations and charities (Nicholls, 2008).

Social entrepreneurship, in a broader sense, signals the imperative to drive social change, and it is that potential pay-off, with its lasting, transformational benefit to society, that sets the field and its practitioners apart (Martin & Osberg, 2007). Abu-Saifan (2012) believes that entrepreneurial activities, whether they are practised in factor-driven, efficiency-driven or innovation-driven economies, lead to:

(1) lower unemployment rates

(2) increased innovation

(3) fast-tracked structural changes in the economy

When it comes to both business and social entrepreneurship, the situation in UAE is different from that in other countries. While the drive in many other nations is the deteriorating socio-economic conditions, the drive in UAE can be seen as related to the booming economy and the rising opportunities that students can utilise.

This research provides information that will help policy-makers better understand the factors that influence the level of entrepreneurial interests among university students, the ways in which to cultivate this interest, as well as social entrepreneurship's contribution to productivity and employment creation. The current period has the potential to pave the way for social entrepreneurship to grow. Social entrepreneurship can be a pathway to social, economic and political inclusion, particularly of youth, while engendering jobs.

Social entrepreneurship is a relatively new concept in the Middle East (including the UAE) (Alsahlawi, 2011). Shedding light on this important field can inspire policy-makers to transform it into reality so that it would have firmer footing in a wealthy nation, such as the UAE, whose collective values are so strong. This study will shine some light on the question of whether it would be advisable to consider offering new (or additional) courses designed to address student interests in the field of social entrepreneurship across UAE's universities. It attempts to investigate whether

there is a potential for social entrepreneurship to gain a firmer footing in the UAE by cultivating students' interests in this important area. According to Bygrave and Zacharakis (2011), equipping potential social entrepreneurs with the education, training and skills necessary to pursue opportunities in sustainable ways is much more challenging than identifying these opportunities.

1.1. Aim and research questions

The aim of this research is to investigate the level of interest towards entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship among students attending various business and non-business programmes in public and private universities in the UAE. It is designed to explore the interests and attitudes of students from various disciplines (business and non-business) in 14 universities across the UAE towards pursuing a career in social or business entrepreneurship. The study attempts to:

(1) explore the level of interest among UAE universities' students in pursuing a business or social entrepreneurship career path;
(2) find out whether students are prepared to recognise opportunities and pursue entrepreneurship career path in terms of training and education; and
(3) examine students' perceptions of their entrepreneurs' personality attributes and skills.

2. Literature review

2.1. Entrepreneurship and entrepreneur

Before defining the term "social entrepreneurship", it is important to define the word "entrepreneurship". If the word "entrepreneurship" is not clear, then modifying it with "social" won't be clear either (Martin & Osberg, 2007).

Entrepreneurship is the process of designing, launching and running a new business to offer a product, process or service (Yetisen et al., 2015). It was defined in the early nineteenth century by French economist Jean-Baptiste Say, who described the entrepreneur as one who "shifts economic resources out of an area of lower and into an area of higher productivity and greater yield" (quoted in Dees, 1998), thereby expanding the literal translation from the French, "one who undertakes", to incorporate the concept of value creation. Martin and Osberg (2007) regarded that the word "entrepreneurship" has two sides. On the positive side, it implies an innate ability to sense and act on opportunity, combining out-of-the-box thinking with the determination to create something new to the world. On the negative side, entrepreneurial activities require time before their true impact is manifested.

Driessen and Zwart (2010) defined successful entrepreneurs as the ones who "have the ability to lead a business successfully by proper planning, adapting to changing environments and understanding their own strengths and weakness". Rather than working as an employee, an entrepreneur runs a small business and assumes all of the risk and reward of a given business venture, idea or good or service offered for sale. The entrepreneur is commonly seen as a business leader and innovator of new ideas and business processes. Entrepreneurs see and exploit an opportunity using their positive mindset and a pro-risk-taking attitude (Harris et al., 1990). "Entrepreneurial spirit is characterized by innovation and risk-taking" (Tan, Williams, & Tan, 2005).

2.2. Social entrepreneurship, social enterprise and social economy

The term "social entrepreneurship" may be relatively new, but the phenomenon is not. There have always been social entrepreneurs, even if they did not wear the nametag. Early pioneers in this field have built many organisations which have been taken for granted. According to Abu-Saifan (2012), cases of social enterprises which have succeeded in solving complicated social issues have validated the field of social entrepreneurship. Abu Saifan pointed to some high-profile success stories about social entrepreneurs launching life-changing ventures, such as Muhammad Yunus, founder of the Grameen Bank and father of microcredit financing.

The word "social" simply adds a different meaning to entrepreneurship (Martin & Osberg, 2007). Business entrepreneurs typically measure performance in profit and return, but social entrepreneurs also take into account a positive return to society. Social entrepreneurship typically attempts to broaden social, cultural and environmental goals often associated with the voluntary sector (Thompson, 2002). At times, profit may also be a consideration for certain companies or other social enterprises. Social entrepreneurship in contemporary society offers an altruistic form of entrepreneurship that focuses on the benefits that society may gain (Tan et al., 2005). Simply put, entrepreneurship becomes a social endeavour when it transforms social capital in a way that affects society positively (Alvord, 2004).

Defining social enterprise is problematic (Teasdale, Lyon, & Baldock, 2013). The definitions and nature of social enterprise vary within and between countries (Kerlin, 2009). Noya and Clarence (2007) suggest that social enterprise refers to any private activity conducted in the public interest, organised with an entrepreneurial strategy and whose main purpose is not the maximisation of profit, but the attainment of certain economic and social goals, and which, through the production of goods and services, brings innovative solutions to problems such as social exclusion and unemployment (p. 248).

The increasing usage of the term "social enterprise" since the 1990s has complicated the social economy concept (Smith & Teasdale, 2012). A more recent OECD publication describes social enterprises as "a new innovative business model that meets both social and economic objectives contributing to labour market integration, social inclusion and economic development" (Mendell & Nogales, 2009, p. 93). They offer the following definition of social enterprise, based on the work of the EMES European Research Network in Europe: a social enterprise is a private and autonomous organisation providing goods or services with an explicit aim to benefit the community, owned or managed by a group of citizens in which the material interest of investors is subject to limits (Mendell & Nogales, 2009, p. 94).

These authors also point out that the social enterprise concept has become broader over time, and now incorporates cooperatives and non-profit and community-based businesses (Mendell & Nogales, 2009). For the purpose of this paper, social enterprises are considered to be part of the social economy, but it is important to emphasise that the social economy also encompasses a wide range of other organisational forms. The social economy that has been widely defined in academic and policy spheres is that offered by Defourny and Develtere (1999, p. 16), who suggest that the social economy "includes all economic activities conducted by enterprises, primarily co-operatives, associations and mutual benefit societies, whose ethics convey the following principles:

(1) Placing services to its members or to the community ahead of profit
(2) Autonomous management
(3) A democratic decision-making process
(4) The primacy of people and work over capital in the distribution of revenues"

By consolidating case studies from 91 social enterprises across the globe and providing insight into their successes, Martin and Osberg (2015) found also that a primary feature of a successful social entrepreneurship venture is sustainability. Without it, the enterprise would never create long-lasting and catalytic change in society's status quo. Martin and Osberg (2015) have taken Muhammad Yunus as an example, whose venture of micro-loans was not only financially sustainable, but also profitable, encouraging others to follow his model. Yunus' actions demonstrated how social entrepreneurs can make a change by creating a new technology to solve an ongoing problem.

After examining the existing research on social entrepreneurship, Zahra, Gedajlovic, Neubaum, and Shulman (2009) noted that there was no clear consensus in the literature, with the term having different meanings for different people. She reviewed over 20 definitions of social entrepreneurship and integrated them into the following single definition: social entrepreneurship encompasses the

activities and processes undertaken to discover, define and exploit opportunities in order to enhance social wealth by creating new ventures or managing existing organisations in an innovative manner (Zahra, Rawhouser, Bhawe, Neubaum, & Hayton, 2008, p. 118). Zahra's definition is broader than definitions made by other researchers in the field, such as Austin (2006), who defines it as "the underlying drive to create social value", and Tapsell and Woods (2010), who state that the "activity is characterised by innovation or the creation of something new rather than the replication of existing enterprises or processes". In these two examples, we see that both scholars have identified only some characteristics of social entrepreneurship, such as creating social value (by Austin) and innovation (by Tapsell).

Some other scholars, such as Martin and Osberg (2007), put social entrepreneurship into the context of a business entrepreneurial environment. They point to examples of contemporary entrepreneurs such as Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak, Pierre Omidyar and Jeff Skoll, Ann and Mike Moore and Fred Smith, who demonstrate clearly how entrepreneurs innovate through opportunities, and how social entrepreneurs expand upon these opportunities by focusing on social change. Social entrepreneurs thrive by identifying an unsatisfactory socio-economic equilibrium and embracing the opportunities that are present to change it. Like Dees, Martin and Osberg (2007) identify key characteristics: inspiration, creativity, direct action, courage and fortitude.

Equally as important as defining what social entrepreneurship is, Martin and Osberg (2015) identify what social entrepreneurship is not. The authors disregard both social services and social activism from being any form of social entrepreneurship. They point to an example of social services, such as building a school for orphans for the local population. For them, the school should have made long-lasting, widespread change to be considered social entrepreneurship. Since social activism takes indirect action by mobilising the community, social institutions, etc., e.g. Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi and Vaclav Havel, the authors did not consider it to be a form of social entrepreneurship. For them, a social entrepreneur would take direct rather than indirect action.

Equally, some other scholars embrace broader definitions which consider social entrepreneurship to be related to individuals or organisations involved in entrepreneurial activities with a social mission (Mitra & Borza, 2011). Thompson (2002) identifies social entrepreneurship as adopting a business model for social purposes such as:

(1) profit-seeking businesses that are committed to doing good;
(2) in social enterprises that are functioning as businesses but set up for a social purpose; or
(3) in the voluntary or non-profit sector.

However, like other scholars, such as Certo and Miller (2008) and Van de Ven, Sapienza and Villanueva (2007), who equate social entrepreneurship to philanthropy, Thompson (2002) concludes that the "main world of the social entrepreneur is the voluntary" (cited in Weerawardena & Mort, 2006).

Common across all definitions of social entrepreneurship is the fact that the underlying drive for social entrepreneurship is to create social value, rather than personal wealth, which is the main drive for business entrepreneurs (e.g. Zadek & Thake, 1997). Yes, a social entrepreneur can "make money" along the way, but that is not the driving force. Martin and Osberg (2007) also differentiated between business entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship mainly by the purpose for which it is created. In most cases, entrepreneurs are driven by financial rewards, while social entrepreneurs are driven by altruism and the social value they bring to society.

Abu Saifan's definition combines four elements that distinguish social entrepreneurship from other forms of entrepreneurship. According to Abu-Saifan (2012), social entrepreneurs are mission driven, act entrepreneurially through a mix of qualities that distinguish them from other

entrepreneurs and act inside an entrepreneurial organisational environment that is open, innovative and financially sustainable. These elements are in line with Gregory Dees (1998) definition that incorporated social mission, pursuing opportunities, innovation and having the relentless risk-taking personal quality, regardless of the availability of resources; however, Abu Saifan also placed emphasis on the durability and sustainability aspects of social entrepreneurship. All of these qualities set social entrepreneurs apart from other types of entrepreneurs.

2.3. Social entrepreneur

In contrast to the field of entrepreneurship, which has been extensively researched, the field of social entrepreneurship is still in its early stages (Abu-Saifan, 2012). Despite the fact that many scholars are working to provide definitions that distinguish the two, there is often still confusion about what precisely a social entrepreneur is and does.

Dees (1998), who was the pioneer in the field of social entrepreneurship, attempted to define the meaning of social entrepreneurship, identify the characteristics of social entrepreneurs in comparison to a business entrepreneur and pinpoint the characteristics of a successful social entrepreneur. According to Dees, not everyone can be or should be a social entrepreneur. Social entrepreneurs, according to Dees, are a "rare breed" that combine a passion and commitment for enduring social change with the ability to recognise opportunities for innovative solutions.

Just like how not everyone is fit to lead a business, Dees (1998) argues that not everyone is fit to be a social entrepreneur either. Dees defines a social entrepreneur by elaborating on five specific behaviours:

(1) adopting a social mission to create and sustain social value;
(2) relentlessly recognising and pursuing opportunities to further that mission;
(3) continuously innovating, adapting and learning;
(4) acting boldly without constraints of limited resources; and
(5) consciously being accountable to those who are served and for the outcomes created.

Dees' definition combines an emphasis on discipline and accountability with the notions of value creation, innovation and change agents, pursuit of opportunity and resourcefulness (Bygrave & Zacharakis, 2011).

Zahra et al. (2009), other prominent researchers in the field of social entrepreneurship, agree with four out of five of the elements identified by Dees (1998)—opportunity recognition, social wealth, new ventures and innovation—but she doesn't see accountability and resourcefulness as being essential distinguishing traits for a social entrepreneur.

Numerous researchers have alluded to opportunity recognition as one of the attributes of social entrepreneurs. As per Thompson (2002) and Anderson and Dees (2006), a social entrepreneur is the person who utilises opportunities to serve a social mission. Social entrepreneurship is a process of consolidating resources in an innovative way to create social value. A social entrepreneur will work to address social needs by looking for and seizing new opportunities that will make a change in either the social conditions or the economic conditions of a community, or both. In addition, when seen as a process, social value can be created by offering products and services and/or by creating a new organisation (Mair & Martí, 2006).

While there are many different definitions, for the purpose of this research, we will adopt the following definition that addresses the following key elements of social entrepreneurship:

> The social entrepreneur is a mission-driven individual who uses a set of entrepreneurial behaviours to deliver a social value to the less privileged, all through an entrepreneurially oriented entity that is financially independent, self-sufficient, or sustainable. (Abu-Saifan, 2012, p. 25)

2.4. Social and business entrepreneurship education and labour factors in the United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates has experienced an immense move in economic progress during the last part of the twentieth century. Since the mid-1970s, the UAE has risen to become one of the wealthiest nations in the world. Since then, higher education in the UAE has experienced a remarkable amount of growth during a 40-year period. This has offered many opportunities for the UAE's population. Women have also made outstanding steps at all levels of education: currently, three out of five undergraduate students are females (Gallant, Majumdar, & Varadarajan, 2010). Universities and other higher educational institutions play an increasingly important role in providing entrepreneurship education, training and technical assistance to existing and potential entrepreneurs. Although the country aims to move to a knowledge-based economy, there are still challenges seen with the quality of graduates being produced in the nation. It is found that there is improper growth of graduate studies. In addition, the quality of graduates coming out of university is not meeting the requirements of the market (as stated by the employers and employees). This presents the main challenges to the job market in fulfilling its needs (Hijazi Zoubeidi, Abdalla, & Harb, 2008).

Dubai has witnessed tremendous growth with regard to GDP since 2000, but the real growth could take place only with the transformation of the UAE economy into a knowledge-driven economy, which is greatly influenced by the quality and availability of highly qualified graduates in various fields. This was also the strategic vision of Dubai 2015, which aimed to improve the quality of education, aiming to maintain sustainability and improving the prosperity of social developmental goals. With regard to humans, Dubai strategic objectives aimed to produce a workforce of a high value, knowledge-driven economy, to retain the highly skilled employees and to improve the knowledge and qualifications of nationals along with their motivation (Hijazi et al., 2008). In this context, the significance and importance of individual entrepreneurial activity and education become extremely crucial in an economy like the UAE's, especially among the new generation of female and male graduates.

The majority of universities and colleges in UAE offer business education since it is highly demanded by the students and the market. Within the field of business, students have access to many courses related to entrepreneurship such as projects management, financial management and leadership, but courses that cover the topics related to social entrepreneurship specifically are limited at many colleges and universities in the UAE. For the most part, social entrepreneurship is offered at a limited number of schools that offer programmes in the social sciences or social work, such as New York University and UAE University. One problem with this approach is that it often does not connect the important factors related to running a business, instead only focusing on the "social" side. A successful social entrepreneurship programme needs both. Social entrepreneurship education should rather focus on teaching students how to create societal impact by discovery and sustainable exploitation of opportunities, starting with identifying an opportunity that addresses social problems until transforming the idea into a business plan.

Philanthropy and altruism represent the embodiment of social values in UAE society in enhancing social solidarity and contributing to the process of social development. To that end, the government has encouraged and promoted social work (by supporting volunteer and humanitarian organisations) and has implemented legislation to regulate their services to the public. For their part, social enterprises in the UAE have contributed generously to social welfare services and development programmes covering such areas as medical aid, student sponsorship, disability, special care, health care, the welfare of prisoners, etc. (De Koning, 1970).

The UAE Ministry of Economy data (according to the Labour Force Survey, 2009) estimated unemployment among UAE nationals at 14%, or nearly 35,000 unemployed nationals across UAE (Ministry of Labour UAE, 2011). According to the same report, the unemployment rate increased to over 25% among the youth. The number of national jobseekers registered in the National Human Resource Development and employment TANMIA database (excluding the Emirate of Abu Dhabi) reached 8,000; 83% of them are females. Out of the 8,000, 46% are diploma and university degree holders, 44% have only secondary education and 10% are below the secondary level. Data from the Ministry of Economy (Labour Force Survey, 2009) revealed that the percentage of nationals working in the private sector does not exceed 7% of the total national workforce. It has been estimated that some 200,000 nationals will attain working age during the coming 10 years, and no fewer than 100,000 of them are expected to enter the labour market. Emiratis, in general, prefer to work for the public sector because of better job benefits in terms of salary, job security, insurance and annual and sick leave.

To face these challenges, the UAE Government has taken several measures in the short and long run. In the short run, active UAE-wide Labour Market Programs have been implemented, targeting employment of 5,000 jobseekers annually through: direct support for national employees for a limited period of time; financial incentives to employers (% of salary) for a limited period of time; and providing support for training national employees. In addition, the UAE Government established the Khalifa Fund in 2007 for Emiratisation Empowerment. This entity is responsible for training of entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs and providing those national trainees with the funds necessary for them to start a business or social enterprise. In the long run, the government has introduced new policies, including Foreign Labour Restriction and nationals' empowerment, to focus on Emiratisation and to motivate nationals' participation in the private sector through securing comprehensive social protection, and public sector development (Ministry of Labour UAE, 2011).

Therefore, this study addresses an important issue that could have a significant impact on the future economy and labour-related issues within the UAE. By exploring the interests and attitudes of undergraduates towards new, and possibly "alternative", career options, it is expected to discover opportunities for the development of entrepreneurship education and engendering jobs in this region.

3. Research design

This is a descriptive cross-sectional study that aims to explore the attitudes within a cross section of the population. Out of 78 accredited universities in the UAE, 14 were selected using a stratified sampling method to represent all universities across the seven emirates of the United Arab Emirates (Table 1).

Approximately 1,500 students were asked to complete a survey using convenience sampling and the proportional allocation method, which included questions using a Likert scale to assess their level of interest in pursuing a business or social entrepreneurship career.

Table 1. Selected universities across the seven emirates of the UAE		
Emirate	**No. of accredited universities/colleges**	**Sample no. of universities**
Abu Dhabi	31	5
Dubai	29	5
Sharja	6	2
Ajman	4	1
Um Quain	1	0
Ras Al-Khaima	3	1
Fujairah	2	0
Total	76	14

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A questionnaire was designed in order to examine the research questions. The questionnaire was in English, as the target population of students comprised those in programmes/majors delivered entirely in English. The questionnaire was piloted among 50 students before being reviewed in order to remove any ambiguity or vagueness in how the questions were comprehended. A five-point Likert scale was adopted denoting the degree of agreement or disagreement with different statements. Online and paper-based surveys were both administered.

The online survey was sent by email during the summer semester in the 2015/2016 academic year, mainly to undergraduate students attending various academic programmes in the 14 universities and colleges selected. The students chosen for this study were enrolled in a variety of disciplines in business-related and non-business majors such as information technology, chemical engineering, health management and mass communication. Some of these individuals have also attended entrepreneurship courses. The email contained a link to the survey, which included 28 questions designed to explore students' interests in terms of entrepreneurship and/or social entrepreneurship. Only 1,080 students of the original 1,500 responded (resulting in a response rate of 72%); 820 filled out the online form and 260 filled out the hardcopy of the questionnaire. The written responses were entered into the online survey form for the analysis of the overall responses (1,080).

Before the question and answer section of the survey, students were provided with information about the goal of the study and a statement indicating that all data would be treated with confidentiality. The goal of the study and the definition of "social entrepreneur" were given to the students at the beginning of the survey as follows: "The purpose of this study is to assess students' attitude towards pursuing a career as a social entrepreneur. A social entrepreneur is a person who tries to solve social problems using entrepreneurship skills". They were also informed that participation in the survey is on a voluntarily basis. Table 2 shows the nationality of the respondents; as the table indicates, approximately two-thirds (66.8%) of the respondents were UAE nationals while the remainder (33.2%) were expats studying in the UAE.

Of the total respondents, 38% were female students and 62% were male. Among (695) Emirati students, 26.5% were females and 73.5% were males. In terms of age, 57.9% of the respondents

Table 2. Distribution of survey's respondents by nationality		
What is your nationality?		
Answer options	**Response percentage**	**Response count**
Emirati	66.8	715
Jordanian	5.6	60
Palestinian	8.5	91
Egyptian	2.3	25
Moroccan	0.7	7
Pakistani	1.2	13
Indian	1.1	12
Syrian	2.2	24
Tunisian	0.6	6
Lebanese	0.7	7
Iraqi	0.7	8
Sudanese	0.9	10
Yemeni	2.7	29
Somali	0.9	10
Other (please specify)	5.0	54
Total number of respondents who answered question		1,071
Number of respondents who skipped this question		9

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were in the age group of 18–24 years old, followed by the age groups of 25–34 (32.8%), 35–54 (7.8%) and 45–54 (1.5%). Among the 699 Emirati students, 58.1% were in the age group of 18–24, 36.3% were in the age group of 25–34, 4.6% were in the age group of 35–44 and only 1.0% was in the age group of 45–54.

The data revealed that many students were employed in full-time positions. Of the total respondents, 55.6% reported that they were employed or self-employed, and 44.4% were unemployed. Almost 35.1% of Emirati respondents are self-employed, while the rest (62.8%) are either employed or only students.

4. Survey results and discussion

This exploratory study provided the researcher with some interesting results that shed light on the interests of students in UAE's educational institutions to become business or social entrepreneurs.

4.1. Students' preferences and intentions

In order to obtain a general idea of a student's preferences and intentions, the questionnaire asked the participants to select from a list of three broad career categories as the desired future career path (Tables 3 and 4). The responses of Emirati students are close to the non-Emirati percentages. Of the Emirati participants, 22.1% indicated their desire to become social entrepreneurs, 38.5% preferred to become business entrepreneurs, while 34.9% expressed their interest in being employed. Of the non-Emirati participants, 23.3% indicated their desire to become social entrepreneurs, 36% preferred to become business entrepreneurs, while 35.7% expressed their interest in being employed. It is an impressive result that 59.3% of the non-Emirati and 60.6% of the Emirati respondents expressed the desire to become either social or business entrepreneurs. Higher education institutions could potentially benefit from these interests by offering new (or expanding their existing) programmes to meet the needs of these individuals.

Among those who are self-employed, 96.1% indicated that they would like to pursue their career as an entrepreneur. When the survey participants were asked about whether their parents were self-employed, 33.6% said "yes". Among those whose parents are self-employed, 88.2% indicated that they prefer to carry their parents' business forward. Having an already well-established business is a strong motivator for those to follow this career option. Only 11.8% indicated that they would rather pursue their career as an employee or social entrepreneur. The data from this study suggest that coming from a business-oriented family may increase the tendency of the student to express an interest in pursuing this type of career path.

When we look at the results from Tables 3 and 4, it is important to note that the percentages of the students who expressed a general interest in business entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship or employment as a career option are close to their answers given when asked about their plans after graduation. Sample student's comment: "It's good to do something just to help society. Social entrepreneur is good to improve society". Another student said: "I prefer to be an employee now but maybe in future I will think about social entrepreneur".

Table 3. Students' preference for different career paths		
For me, it is preferable to be …		
Answer options	**Percentage of respondents**	
	Non-Emirati	**Emirati**
A business entrepreneur	36.0	38.5
A social entrepreneur	23.3	22.1
An employee	35.7	34.9
Other (student)	5	4.5

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Table 4. Students' plans after graduation		
Do you plan after graduation to be …		
Answer options	**Percentage of respondents**	
	Non-Emirati	**Emirati**
A business person (entrepreneur)	36.2	37.0
A social entrepreneur (establish a project that will help society)	23.9	23.0
An employee	40.0	39.9

The results from Table 5 show that over half of the respondents (50.2%) among non-Emirati and 49.8% among Emirati reported that they found the social entrepreneurship field to be interesting. Among Emirati students, 27.9% found this career path to be challenging, compared to 31.1% of non-Emirati students. Emirati respondents who said that it is not important and unreasonable comprised 12.6 and 5.4%, respectively. Fewer non-Emirati students (9.9%) than Emirati (12.6%) found this field to be not important. Non-Emirati (expat) students come from countries who face more social challenges than in the UAE.

When students were asked about their preference for where to establish a social enterprise, 41.9% of the non-Emirati respondents preferred to establish a social project in their own country, whereas 67.7% of Emirati students chose the UAE (Table 6). This can be interpreted as the strong sense of belonging among Emiratis to their country and the lack of hope among non-Emiratis to return to their own countries. When asked to add any comments on the survey, one student wrote: "I would strongly support any social entrepreneurs if it would help my own community. Social entrepreneur is important to improve our community".

Table 5. Students' perception of social entrepreneurship		
Overall, I consider a social entrepreneurship career to be …		
Answer options	**Percentage of respondents**	
	Non-Emirati	**Emirati**
Interesting	50.2	49.8
Challenging	31.1	27.9
Not important	9.9	12.6
Unreasonable	4.8	5.4
Other (please specify)	4.1	4.3

Table 6. Students' preference for the country in which to establish a social project		
In case you are interested in social entrepreneurship, do you prefer to have a project that addresses societal problems in …		
Answer options	**Percentage of respondents**	
	Non-Emirati	**Emirati**
Your home country	41.9	–
UAE	11.9	67.7
The Arab region	23.1	11.6
Africa	10.5	9.6
Asia	8.6	8.1
Other (please specify)	4.0	3.0

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Table 7. Students' expressed interest about addressing societal problems

Which societal problems would you like to address?

Answer options	Percentage of respondents	
	Non-Emirati	**Emirati**
Social and family issues such as divorce and disability	24.3	27.3
Unemployment	17.6	16.6
Poverty	16.1	11.3
Education	18.8	22.8
Vocational training	3.5	3.9
Health issues	16.7	15.6
Other (please specify)	3.0	2.6

Table 8. Students' interests in addressing particular societal problems divided by gender

Which societal problems would you like to address?

Answer options	Percentage of respondents	
	Males	**Females**
Social and family issues such as divorce and disability	19.3	30.3
Unemployment	17.6	14.6
Poverty	11.1	11.3
Education	16.8	22.8
Vocational training	9.5	1.9
Health issues	12.7	13.6
Other (please specify)	3.0	1.6

Table 7 shows the results for the types of societal problems which students would like to see addressed. Of the non-Emirati and Emirati respondents, 24.3 and 27.3% preferred to address social and family issues, respectively. This was followed by 18.8 and 22.8% opting for education and 17.6 and 16.6 wanting to fight unemployment, respectively. More non-Emiratis (16.1%) wanted to fight poverty than Emiratis (11.3%).

Students' interests towards societal problems to be addressed differed by gender (Table 8). More females (30.3%) expressed their interests towards social and family issues and education (22.8%) and health issues (13.6%) than did males (19.3, 16.8 and 12.7%, respectively).

4.2. Students' attitude towards social entrepreneurship

The survey questionnaire included a number of statements intended to reveal the respondents' attitudes towards social entrepreneurship. Table 9 shows the respondents' attitudes towards social entrepreneurial activities. As is revealed, 74.4% of the non-Emirati students and 82.1% of Emiratis think that it is their own responsibility to support the government in fulfilling societal needs. Only 25.6 and 17.9% of the non-Emirati and Emirati respondents disagreed with the statement, respectively. Universities could benefit from this result—the positive attitudes of students towards social entrepreneurship—by cultivating their awareness about this neglected field of study in order to enhance students' perception and preferences of this career path.

More than half of the respondents (53%) indicated that they had contributed financially or in other forms to not-for-profit organisations (Table 10). One student said: "As Muslim I have a responsibility to help poor people and try to provide standard life". This indicates that altruism and helping others, the main values embraced in social entrepreneurship, are parts of their religious and societal values.

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Table 9. Attitudes towards social entrepreneurial activities

Is it my responsibility as an individual to support the government and business community in accomplishing society's social goals—yes or no?

Answer options	Percentage of respondents	
	Non-Emirati	Emirati
Yes	77.4	82.1
No	25.6	17.9

Table 10. Students who report donating to social or non-profit organisations

Do you donate to any social/non-profit organisation?

Answer options	Percentage of Respondents	
	Non-Emirati	Emirati
Yes	53.0	74.5
No	47.0	25.5

It is evident that more Emiratis have donated to a charity because they are relatively better off than non-Emiratis, who must work to be able to pay for their study.

The ratio of the surveyed students who have a positive attitude towards social entrepreneurship outnumbered that of those who disagreed with the given statement. The positive responses to the question under consideration—"If you had the opportunity to establish yourself a social enterprise, would you do it?"—illustrate the positive attitudes of the majority of respondents (77.5%) towards social entrepreneurial activities.

4.3. Participation in entrepreneurship education

Slightly over half of the respondents (50.9% among non-Emiratis and 54.3% among Emiratis) indicated that they have participated in entrepreneurship education at their college or university. Students reported taking one or more of the following courses: small business management, entrepreneurship, corporate social responsibility, accounting and/or project management. It is important to note here that "entrepreneurship courses" being taught in the UAE universities does not include part on "Social Entrepreneurship". Social Entrepreneurship is being taught as a part of Social Work programme in only two universities in the UAE. Out of those, 51.3 and 50.7%, respectively, have declared that these courses have inspired them to be a business or social entrepreneur, 26.5% were not inspired by these courses and 22.2% stated that they "do not know" (Tables 11 and 12). This indicates that entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship education could definitely inspire students to pursue this career.

The following table shows the analysis of the results when using a five-point Likert scale to assess students' opinions on the current entrepreneurship educational programmes at their schools and whether they are enough to create awareness among students about social entrepreneurship, and if there is a need to strengthen this programme within the curriculum.

Table 11. Participation in entrepreneurship education

Have you ever participated in entrepreneurship education at your college?

Answer options	Percentage of respondents	
	Non-Emirati	Emirati
Yes	50.9	54.3
No	47.6	44.2
Other (please specify)	1.5	1.4

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Table 12. Inspiration from entrepreneurship education to be a business entrepreneur		
Did these courses inspire you to become a business entrepreneur?		
Answer options	Percentage of respondents	
	Non–Emirati	**Emirati**
Yes	51.3	50.7
No	26.5	27.5
Do not know	22.2	21.9

Table 13. Students' opinions on entrepreneurship courses offered at their universities			
Answer options	*N*	**Average**	**SD**
Some courses prepare students to be a social entrepreneur	1,014	2.199	1.313
There is awareness in the college about the importance of social entrepreneurship	980	2.459	1.246
There is a need to create awareness about social entrepreneurship in the college	977	4.180	0.921
I would like my college to add courses on social entrepreneurship	958	4.031	0.890
	1,014	3.217	0.370

The average or mean ($\bar{x}$) and the standard deviation(s) (variation around the mean) of each of the four items assessing attitudes towards entrepreneurship as a career choice are presented in Table 13. Likert scale-type questions (1 = "Strongly disagree" and 5 = "Strongly agree") were asked. A high mean of $\bar{x} = 4.180$ has been calculated for the following statement: "There is a need to create awareness about social entrepreneurship in the college". There was also agreement with the following statement: "I would like my college to add courses on social entrepreneurship" ($\bar{x} = 4.031$). However, there is evident disagreement with the statement "Some courses prepare students to be a social entrepreneur" as the figures are relatively higher ($\bar{x} = 2.199$), which is also the case for the following: "There is awareness in the college about the importance of social entrepreneurship" ($\bar{x} = 2.459$).

4.4. Students' perceptions of their personality attributes

The literature indicates that entrepreneurs in general possess certain personality characteristics that set them apart from other individuals. Some of these characteristics discussed by various authors include determination, accountability, creativity, opportunity recognition, risk-taking and innovation. Although research on social entrepreneurs is still limited, successful cases of social entrepreneurs suggest a few distinctive personal qualities and skills. Thompson, Alvy, and Lees (2000) suggest that vision and endurance are necessary traits to create a social venture. Drayton (2002) describes social entrepreneurs as "creative individuals with a powerful, new, system change idea" (p. 123). Other characteristics include the ability to recognise opportunities. A participatory leadership style and a long-term community-oriented drive are both considered critical success factors in engaging in social entrepreneurial activities (Morse & Dudley, 2002).

When studying a student's potential as an entrepreneur, be it business or social, it is critical to have an understanding of the factors that are important for success in this type of endeavour. In contrast to Dees, who believes in trait theory, Light (2006) suggests that social entrepreneurs are not born with certain behavioural traits that set them up for success; rather, they have acquired skills and create supportive environments, which enable innovative problem-solving. Light sees that focusing too much on individual traits may make social entrepreneurship seem uneasy to achieve. Since it is too challenging to identify a single person who possesses the complete list of personality traits required for successful social entrepreneurship, Light suggests putting together a team of people that bring a mixture of talents, personalities, skills and resources to create innovative solutions and identify opportunities for change. Therefore, behavioural theories offer more opportunities for making social entrepreneurship easy to achieve.

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Tables 14 and 15 show that the majority of respondents believe that they have entrepreneurial characteristics. The answers provided by the respondents indicate that students consider creativity and opportunity exploration to be important. Almost 42.5% of the respondents indicated that they generate new ideas, 25.9% can take risks, while only 13% prefer the status quo. Opportunity recognition and exploitation are believed to be significant attributes of successful entrepreneurs. In providing the following answer: "I excel at identifying opportunities", only 17% agreed with the statement (Table 15). This supports the conclusion that the students' skills need to be enhanced to be able to recognise opportunities and successfully pursue this career option.

Risk-taking and creativity are believed to be significant attributes of successful entrepreneurs. In providing the following answer: "I like to try new food, new places, and totally new experiences", 49.9 and 49.1% agreed with the statement (Table 15). This supports the conclusion that the students believe that they possess the personality attributes that enable them to pursue this career option.

4.5. Students' self-assessment of their entrepreneurial skills
When students were asked whether they believe that they possess the skills and capabilities required to be a social entrepreneur, their answers greatly supported the premise that students want to be social entrepreneurs but don't think that they have the right skills yet (Table 16). This indicates that students believe that although they have the personal characteristics, they do not possess enough skills to be entrepreneurs.

5. Discussion
The data reveal that entrepreneurship, be it business or social, is a desirable career goal among Emirati as well as expatriate university students in the UAE. Given the challenges of finding suitable employment after graduation, many students tend to venture into entrepreneurial businesses or create transformative social enterprises that address a diverse set of social problems. Despite their interest in entrepreneurship, students' limited exposure to education, training and experience in this field has resulted in a drive–preparedness gap that must be narrowed in order to maximise the potential of the UAE's next generation.

As the results suggest, the likelihood of expressing entrepreneurial intentions is significantly and positively affected by prior qualifications and training; university students who reported having prior training in starting a new venture (such as families with entrepreneurial experience) were much more likely to express entrepreneurial intentions than those who had not undergone training.

Consequently, the findings of the study have important implications for both entrepreneurial education and public policy. The interest indicated by non-business students offers a great opportunity

Table 14. Students' responses to the attributes related to entrepreneurship (persistence; opportunity recognition)

Which of the following statements describe your personality?

Answer options	Percentage of respondents	
	Non-Emirati	**Emirati**
I enjoy facing and overcoming obstacles to my ideas	41.0	43.5
Nothing is more interesting than seeing my ideas turn into reality	44.0	42.9
I excel at identifying opportunities	17.1	17.1
I love to challenge the status quo	29.7	30.5
I want to do new things in my life but I feel that I cannot	20.6	20.2
I want to do new things but I have no idea how	22.4	24.3
I am emotionally charged and would like to make a change	22.1	22.5
I am highly committed and accountable. Others can rely on me.	20.8	22.0
Other (please specify)	2.6	3.0

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Table 15. Students' responses to the attributes related to entrepreneurship (risk-taking and creativity)		
Which of the following statements describe your personality? (students could choose more than one)		
Answer options	**Percentage of respondents**	
	Non-Emirati	**Emirati**
I can take risks with my money	25.9	27.3
When I travel, I tend to explore new routes	32.6	35.4
I like to try new food, new places and totally new experiences	49.9	49.1
It is too risky for me to try something nobody has tried before	20.5	20.8
I am creative and like to come up with new ideas	42.5	44.6
I prefer the status quo	13.0	14.6
Other (please specify)	1.4	1.6

Table 16. Students' self-assessment of their own entrepreneurial skills			
Answer options	**N**	**Average**	**SD**
I want to be a social entrepreneur and I have the skills and capabilities to be so	1,049	2.180	1.313
I want to be a social entrepreneur but I do not have enough skills	977	3.932	0.921

to initiate a formal expansion of entrepreneurship education beyond the business school. These results suggest that the introduction of targeted social and business entrepreneurship programmes, internships and other "hands-on" business experiences, coupled with broad private–public and non-profit–public partnerships in university research and the creation of incubators for both social and business entrepreneurs, can be extremely fruitful in fostering social and business entrepreneurship among university students.

Nurturing and engaging students' entrepreneurial spirit early so that they are prepared to start a business that will create social change and integrating social entrepreneurship as part of any entrepreneurship education programme can ensure that future's business entrepreneurs are more socially conscious. It is vital to ensure the enhancement of students' entrepreneurship skills through well-designed university courses on how social entrepreneurs develop their ideas, how they fund their ventures, the ways in which they overcome the challenges of integrating various levels of economic performance with social/environmental impact and the types of organisations that social entrepreneurs create (for-profit, non-profit, cooperative, hybrid, etc.). Training and targeted public policies can promote a social and business entrepreneurial spirit among educated UAE youth and, thus, facilitate the diversification of the country's socio-economic base and the transition to a knowledge economy.

6. Conclusion

This study reveals that there is a gap between students' entrepreneurial aspirations on the one hand and their readiness in terms of training and education on the other. It is evident that the majority of higher education students have positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship as career options; a number of students (38%) expressed an interest in becoming entrepreneurs and 23.3% expressed an interest in becoming social entrepreneurs. Despite this strong level of interest in entrepreneurship, the results indicate that the respondents lack education and awareness regarding social entrepreneurship. There is a strong perception among the respondents that their university should create more awareness about social entrepreneurship. Including social entrepreneurship within the university curricula and providing training opportunities to social entrepreneurs can help them sharpen their entrepreneurial and innovative skills and heighten their understanding of the potential to be "change makers".

Entrepreneurship seems an attractive career to many respondents; nonetheless, many respondents are also attracted to employment. Coming from a family that owns a business also increases the intentions of their children to be attracted to this career. The data also revealed that there are no significant differences between Emirati and non-Emirati intentions towards pursuing an entrepreneurship or social entrepreneurship career and such differences were only noted when the students were asked about the sector within which they would like to focus or the country in which they would like to establish their social enterprise. Moreover, the sectorial preferences differed by gender. The higher interest in entrepreneurship compared to social entrepreneurship can be attributed to the higher awareness and preparedness of this field. The data also suggest that students believe they possess the necessary entrepreneurial personality attributes. All that they require to pursue these career options are the education, training and skills. The majority of respondents (74.4%) indicated that they feel that it is their responsibility to support the government in its social endeavours. Does this infer that tomorrow's business entrepreneurs are more socially aware? Or does it infer that those students with a more social consciousness are more likely to become social entrepreneurs than business entrepreneurs? Obviously, additional research is required to answer this question.

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