Creating The Conditions for Entrepreneurial Learning Within An Inclusive and Scalable African Business Education Ecosystem

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Degree
by
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Supervised by: Professor Walter Baets

11 February 2019
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Abstract

Entrepreneurship is key to growing and uplifting emerging economies like South Africa. There exists an extremely high failure rate amongst entrepreneurs in this country, this coupled with a lack of support for entrepreneurs, creates the conditions where an entrepreneurial culture cannot thrive. Entrepreneurship and education can be South Africa’s most significant tools of liberation and unlock exponential growth which can, in turn, address the socio-economic problems that exist. This research aims to understand what the critical educational and support elements are that drive entrepreneurial learning and development.

This research aims to discover what is required to create meaningful learning experiences for entrepreneurs and how this learning can be turned to practice and drive entrepreneurial growth. This growth may play a key role in addressing some of the gaps that exist between South Africa’s entrepreneurial potential and its current state. Online and virtual education technologies, pedagogies and methodologies are explored as the core proponents of these learning experiences.

Different models are explored and analysed in their distinct contexts to discover what it takes to create these learning experiences. New models of entrepreneur education and the supporting technology are examined to help understand how entrepreneur education programmes can create meaningful learning and development that produces and support high potential entrepreneurs. The research primarily explores an innovative model of an online entrepreneurship education offering that attempts to exponentially improve the impact of traditional models.

An adapted design thinking methodology is applied; this allowed the study to examine various models and phenomena through a hyper-practical lens. This methodology supported the research process in uncovering what challenges exist for an education model of this nature to develop meaningful learning and development opportunities for entrepreneurs.
The impact of this research could be widespread in assisting with the understanding of how entrepreneurs learn and apply knowledge.

The literature reviewed aimed to provide a view of what trends exist in social entrepreneurship globally and South Africa, and how these trends link to meaningful entrepreneurial learning and practice.

This research is unique in that it takes a nascent concept such as virtual ecosystems in the social entrepreneurial context and explores how a model in which deep learning experiences are present for entrepreneurs, affects meaningful development and entrepreneurial outcomes. This research focuses on building theory through qualitative data sources collected through the research instruments of interviews, questionnaires, observations, discussions and practical prototyping.
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1. **Introduction to Research Problem and Challenge**

1.1. Chapter Introduction

The following chapter explains the problem the research will attempt to solve or contribute to solving, the issues and challenges identified in this paper cannot all be addressed in the period that the research is conducted.

Entrepreneurship is a crucial economic driver, as well as one of the most powerful levers that can be leveraged for social upliftment. If a culture of entrepreneurship is fostered and a holistic ecosystem of support is built, an exponential amount of entrepreneurial ventures can be created and grown in an inclusive manner, this can in turn remedy and prevent many of the socio-economic challenges faced in emerging economies.

There have been many failed attempts to educate and support entrepreneurs, the reasons for these failures are multi-layered and complex. The incentivisation for the stakeholders can at times be perverse, leading only to short-term success and longer-term damage. There is a need to learn from these failures and build ecosystems that provide the right support and incentivisation for all stakeholders. At the core of this, there is a need to educate and inspire entrepreneurs in a meaningful way, through leveraging a blend of theory and practical application that goes beyond a surface level and yields long-term success. The study found an education intervention for entrepreneurs should aim to foster deep learning, which could retain the entrepreneur's engagement in the ecosystem and allow them to unlock the benefits of being supported(and supporting other entrepreneurs) in an evolving ecosystem.

The research will attempt to uncover how an innovative solution for entrepreneur education can be used to help entrepreneurs learn and develop through holistic ecosystems of support. The research may also uncover solutions to challenges facing other parts of the African education landscape.
The chapter will discuss the research question and research site after the addressable problems and challenges have been discussed.

An adapted design thinking methodology was applied when undertaking the research, the justification for such a methodology can be found in chapter 3.

The research in this paper has been undertaken because the study found that building platforms and interventions that enable entrepreneurs to meaningfully learn and develop may be key to unlocking inclusive and sustainable growth across the African continent.

1.2. Research Problem

The study found that the following challenges exist and would like research and prototype a solution to address them:

- Access to high quality entrepreneurial and business education that produces meaningful and practical outputs in Africa remains relatively low.

If more accessible and inclusive models are built and scaled, the abovementioned growth can be catalysed.

Inequality and the digital divide that exist on the continent are major challenges that inhibit inclusive learning, development and growth on the continent.

- Africa is not producing enough high-quality entrepreneurs to leverage the opportunities that exist, and opportunities will be missed in the future if more entrepreneurs are not created and developed to capitalise on these opportunities.
Current models and ecosystems are not offering enough programmes or accessibility to address the above challenges, and the impact that these are having are largely surface level.

The above three challenges culminate into one greater challenge; How can an ecosystem that provides access to high quality education be created to produce high-potential entrepreneurs, and fosters meaningful learning and development in these entrepreneurs? What shifts need to happen in existing models that impact primarily on a surface level, to produce a model that is focused on meaningful support and development?

Entrepreneurship education has been highlighted a global imperative, and a dire need exists in South Africa for a model that can radically improve on existing conditions. There currently exists interventions and models however the literature is relatively silent on successful practical models of entrepreneurship education that embody a deep learning focus.

Whilst orientation towards entrepreneurship in South Africa is high the study found that entrepreneurial success rates are abysmal. The positive entrepreneurial intent needs to be converted into long-term growth through the right education model that fosters deep learning and practical entrepreneurial success.

Through this research and the research that others have done before, an attempt will be made to understand how a model can be created to address these challenges better than existing education models and ecosystems have done so in the past. Existing models are not matched to the demand for entrepreneurial education and practical skills. There also exists a delivery misalignment in how entrepreneurs would like to consume and apply knowledge. Access and retention remain to be failings of existing models, for most entrepreneurs in South Africa, basic entrepreneurial education, personal development and a supportive entrepreneurial environment are not available, or may be too costly to access. The entrepreneurs that do have the opportunity to access the above are often not retained due to the lack of engagement through deep learning experiences and supported practical application.
1.3. Research Question

In light of the above research problem the following research question was developed:

**What does an entrepreneurship education model that produces practical entrepreneurial progress look like?**

1.4. Research Site

The research focuses on the impact that online education can have on entrepreneurial learning. GetSmarter (and its users) which is Africa’s largest online education company was researched and subsequent to this a practical prototype was built and tested. The results of the above are discussed in later chapters.

The prototype was part of Startup School Africa – A holistic online ecosystem for entrepreneurs that aims to help African entrepreneurs start and scale their ventures.

The research sites and the practical prototype of the Startup School are discussed in further detail in chapter 3.
2. Literature review

2.1. Introduction

The theory under review explores different concepts, cases and constructs relating to social entrepreneurship. The study will leverage the theory mentioned above and weave it into the current research to strengthen the cases and results that will be discovered. This will allow the study to use the existing paradigms and frameworks of social entrepreneurship to enhance the lenses and cases chosen to view the research through. Multiple definitions of social entrepreneurship, the motivations behind social entrepreneurship, how inclusivity and social entrepreneurship relate to each other, and finally how social innovations and entrepreneurship are scaled, will be reviewed.

2.2. Defining Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship involves recognising, evaluating and exploiting opportunities, but unlike the pure capitalist, the social entrepreneur or innovator aims to create shared and social value for the market in which they operate (Certo & Miller, 2008). This raises an important point: if we are to create more inclusive societies, current business models need to be innovated, and new models need to be built with inclusive disruption as a forethought and not a corporate social investment as a cure for models that are non-serving to the bottom of the pyramid.

Social entrepreneurship exposes the entrepreneur to a new and lesser understood myriad of challenges, and this is because these social ventures are active where markets function poorly (Di Domenico et al., 2010). This allows for market disruption and the correction of social flaws and exclusions in economic systems. Exclusive business models that serve niches in the market do not start with the goal of solving social problems, which results in a lost opportunity to create broader social value (Dees, 2001). The social entrepreneur begins with the goal of solving social problems (Santos, 2012).
Certo et al. (2008) argue that “Social value has little to do with profits but instead involves the fulfilment of basic and long-standing needs such as providing food, water, shelter, education and medical services to those members of society who are in need.”

It has been suggested by Mair (2006) that all successful ventures generate social value directly or indirectly by generating tax revenue for governments and or creating jobs. This is especially true in a country like South Africa, where one of the most significant social problems is unemployment, this, in turn, drives other social issues, such as crime (Dacin et al., 2010).

Definitions of social entrepreneurship across different authors all have at least this one thing in common; there is an underlying drive to create social value, over and above personal and shareholder wealth. This drive results in social innovation, these innovations are not necessarily legal entities or ventures, but various vehicles that drive enterprises, markets and society as a whole to create social value. Conceptually, it may seem that opportunities for social and commercial entrepreneurs are similar, but upon granular inspection, it can be seen that commercial entrepreneurs focus on new needs and breakthroughs, whereas social entrepreneurs tend to focus on serving market failures and broken systems to create inclusion through innovation. The size of the market is not top of mind for the social entrepreneur, and if a market failure exists and they can marshal the resources to serve this need, there will be sufficient motivation to enter the market. Commercial entrepreneurs will hunt for large total addressable markets (TAM), which show growth potential and long term profits if served correctly (Wei-Skillern, 2006).

Social entrepreneurship creates platforms whereby an inclusive global economy can be fostered, unleashing the spirit of inclusiveness amongst market participants. This allows value to be shared and further enhanced for the bottom of the pyramid and existing market participants respectively. The goal of creating social value for the poor is not top of mind for the commercial entrepreneur; this causes exclusions and barriers to entry into the formal market (Viswanathan et al., 2014).
Social entrepreneurship can be the force that demolishes barriers to the formal market, allowing a holistic inclusion of excluded members of society. This adaption to current economies will see quantum leaps in value creation and the upliftment of excluded groups (Dees, 2007). The benefits to these groups are apparent, the benefits to the rest of the market should be obvious too, these can range from better functioning societies, larger total addressable markets for businesses and exponential economic growth that is not realisable without inclusive business models.

This expansion into new markets allows for sustainable competitive advantage, because it adds a social mission to the capitalist model, achieving this social mission mends market failures and opens up a market that organisations without a social mission would not have had access to (Weerawardena & Mort, 2006).

Social entrepreneurship has not yet been clearly defined, and its definition is the subject of much debate amongst academics, entrepreneurs and others. What is usually agreed upon is that social enterprises are always a combination of social and profit goals, their commercial counterparts are more focused on the latter, and social value is usually created as a positive externality (Rivera-Santos, 2015).

While analysing different scholars and authors definitions of social entrepreneurship, The study found that social value creation is at the epicentre of most definitions. It also became clear in the study that social entrepreneurship is a powerful driver and enabler of inclusive innovation. If entrepreneurs and corporations take more of a proactive approach to social value creation, we may see a wholesale shift in the way market participants interact with each other.

To find a solution to the research challenges, the study will need to leverage the power of social entrepreneurship. Inclusivity and scalability are at the heart of the research challenges, innovating the current business model to allow for further social innovation will allow for social entrepreneuring and inclusivity to be built into future operations. Scaling may happen organically because an allowance for previously excluded participants has been made and
this naturally lends itself to business growth, which will, in turn, create further opportunity for inclusion and commercial success.

2.3. Motivation and Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurs are motivated intrinsically by creating social value, the motivation for profits and personal wealth creation may exist, but their principal goal is to create social value and mend market failures. A commercial entrepreneur may measure success by net profit or personal gain, but a social entrepreneur measures their success by social impact. This impact follows the creation of social value and is not always easy to quantify due to various factors stemming from its nascence in the minds of economists and other market participants. Motivation plays a vital role in entrepreneurship and business generally; there are fundamental differences between the motivations for social entrepreneurship and commercial entrepreneurship. The social entrepreneur is more intrinsically motivated and prosocial, the commercial entrepreneur draws motivation from more extrinsic factors, and this creates fundamental differences in business inputs, processes and outputs. To understand what motivates social entrepreneurs and innovators we must understand what motivates prosocial behaviour in individuals (Dacin et al., 2010).

People’s motivation to make a prosocial difference can emerge by experiencing two psychological states: 1. Perceived impact of their actions on others and 2. Affective commitment to others or the concern for their welfare. These two states are critical for creating energy to direct and sustain efforts to help others and create social value (Grant, 2007).

The social entrepreneur ultimately wants to achieve social impact and believes that their innovation will create this impact, they are concerned with the welfare of others that have been excluded from formal markets.

This motivates them to conceptualise and create innovations that breathe inclusivity into the market.
Social entrepreneurs are integrative thinkers, and social ventures are driven by integrative innovation. Integrative thinking is a crucial driver for social entrepreneurship. These innovators can hold the tension between conflicting ideas and create innovations through this tension. This thinking and tension motivate a social entrepreneur to create inclusive solutions (Arend, 2013).

When looking at subsistence entrepreneurs as social entrepreneurs it can be seen that the motivations of social entrepreneurs are not seeded in economic growth, but the quality growth and continuation of the standard of living for society. To measure the success of these social ventures, we must focus on the nuances that are not always present in commercial entrepreneurship settings. These nuances create motivations that stem from community influence, culture, as well as the individuals business and social goals. Commercial or goals relating to financial gain are in most cases secondary to the social entrepreneur. Social impact or community benefit are primary motivators for these entrepreneurs to engage in venture activity. They see the opportunity to make amends to the social inequality that exists within their ecosystem. Social entrepreneurs and innovators are goal driven, like their commercial counterparts, when these goals are established there is a natural drive that motivates the entrepreneur, commercial or social, to pursue and achieve these goals. The difference in these goals is what defines the different entrepreneurs, although they both will measure success and sustain motivation by achieving these goals. Scholars will often use a blend of financial and non-financial goals to measure the success of social ventures. The concentration of the different goals will differ from venture to venture based on the individual’s personality, attitudes, motivation and perception (Toledo-López et al., 2012).

Social entrepreneurs are motivated by adverse conditions and failures in markets where social challenges arise; these are conditions that breed resource constraints and require a different type of thinking, a lean thought process. This deficiency of resources creates motivation in the social entrepreneur, motivation to make the best use of these resources and combine them in such a way that meaningful outputs can be achieved to solve social challenges. This creates the conditions for social entrepreneurship bricolage. This framework allows the social entrepreneur to combine what resources are at hand to
achieve meaningful social goals. This allows for the achievement of goals and
the serving of markets that were not previously achievable or served. The
motivation to engage with these conditions stems from the social
entrepreneur’s deep-seated social goals. To a commercial entrepreneur these
conditions may seem to adverse or have too many misunderstood variables to
engage with. They will miss the opportunity because at first glance these
markets look unprofitable and unattractive to serve. This perpetuates systemic
issues, which create markets that exclude potential participants from the
bottom of the pyramid. The social entrepreneur is motivated by creating
inclusivity in business models and markets, this disrupts the current system
and creates social and positive change (Dorado & Ventresca, 2013).

This disruption of markets and models speaks to the social entrepreneur’s
intrinsic need to create social change. Through this social innovation the social
entrepreneur becomes the catalyst for disruption, this further motivates the
individual to continue entrepreneuring with a prosocial focus. If the impact of
these innovations is longstanding the social entrepreneur will be motivated to
widen and deepen this impact in markets models and society because this
impact is not necessarily profit-driven, it creates a unique condition that
allows continuation of venture activities even when opportunities are
delivering minimal financial returns. If financial return and profit were the
sole focus and motivation of the social entrepreneur, many social ventures
would never gain traction, and this is why the intrinsic motivation and drive to
create social value are fundamental to the success of social ventures.

Unserved needs of the participants at the bottom of the pyramid stem from
exclusive business models, this creates an opportunity for the social
entrepreneur, the opportunity to create social and financial value. This
opportunity is often missed by seasoned market players, due to the perceived
lack of commercial opportunity, this creates markets gaps that can be served
by social entrepreneurs, which will result in social value creation and financial
gain. The financial gain may too be motivation for the social entrepreneur to
sustain their efforts. This creates synergies with the markets that they serve
because these markets need products and services that are built with
sustainability-driven thinking. The social entrepreneur needs an integrative
framework for decisions around how to serve this market, this more challenging framework stems from multiple and heterogeneous needs and behaviours existing in the markets they serve. This more sustainable approach proves challenging in the development stages of a venture, but in turn creates the platform for longer social impact and social value creation. This motivates the social entrepreneur to engage in social business activity and push on where financial gain does not always present itself in abundance (Subrahmanyan & Gomez-Arias, 2008).

The past decade has seen the attention of academics and the general public magnified and directed to entrepreneurship with a social focus. This has brought the question of the social entrepreneur’s primary motivation to engage in these prosocial activities into focus. The achievement of social objectives is a common motivator across the literature. Another common factor is that social entrepreneurs do not engage in business activities to primarily generate personal financial profit. In research where nascent entrepreneurs who state that their primary business activity is creating social value and building inclusive economies, it can be seen that this vision, motivates the entrepreneur to ensure that the focus throughout the venture lifecycle is one that catalyses social change. Entrepreneurs that envision future profits and anchor their motivations in this will often abandon ventures that yield social value but not financial value. The goal of addressing social needs are central to most social entrepreneurs and can be seen as the golden thread in the motivation of social entrepreneurship theory (Renko, 2013).

Creating social wealth in a social entrepreneurs setting is a crucial outcome that motivates the processes behind a social venture. The social entrepreneur will search for opportunities to innovate in markets whereby social wealth can be created and not just financial wealth. Existing business owners, managers and employees may also be motivated to create social wealth through innovative initiatives which see them playing the role of social intrapreneurs. This group and other social entrepreneurs may be motivated by the opportunity to create new business model innovations that replace obsolete or exclusive business models with more inclusive and socially driven models (Zahra et al., 2009).
A passion for social change exists in social ventures and in the social entrepreneurs that found them, if this passion is absent, the social vision and mission of the organisation are difficult to meet. This passion can often stem from the community network that the social entrepreneur has, this embeds the social entrepreneur further into the ecosystem and motivates them to drive social change in the system. The social entrepreneur plays the role of change agent in their ecosystem, and they understand that this role allows them to bring about social change in their communities actively. Through this change, they can start to achieve their goal of social impact and address the challenges that exist (Miller & Wesley, 2010).

Social entrepreneurs may also be motivated to innovate in challenging market segments like the bottom of the pyramid, due to the myriad of problems that face an entrepreneur in these segments. There is more imperative for innovation in these segments due to resource constraints, these constraints cause conditions that are unforgiving of traditional business models, and thus innovation must prevail. The serving of these markets is also often a nascent practice, which means that something innovative or novel will need to be done to create a thriving venture and stakeholder ecosystem (Bradley et al., 2012).

The market opportunities referred to above are not seen to be bearing profits by the commercial entrepreneur, they are therefore not motivated to pursue and exploit these opportunities, if enlightened to how much potential exists at the bottom of the pyramid they may turn more of their focus to these opportunities and try to build more inclusivity into their models and offerings. It would create a radical shift in business and greater economies if existing market participants began to engage with markets in a more prosocial and inclusive way. This may create further motivations for both sets of entrepreneurs to behave more socially and create more shared value in economic systems. This could result in an even greater social impact being achieved (McMullen, 2011).

Adding a level of compassion to commercial entrepreneurs and their business models could also contribute a great deal achieving the above as compassion
for communities existing with far fewer resources is a crucial motivator for social entrepreneurship (Choi & Majumdar, 2014).

The connection between social and commercial entrepreneurs is an important one for social entrepreneurs, and they will be motivated by the present success of commercial ventures and innovate these models to recreate more inclusive models to serve excluded segments. Social ventures are also likely to be successful if they foster social capital between various stakeholders including resource-rich businesses and communities with unfulfilled needs. This interdependence creates stronger social capital between parties and can motivate both parties to exchange ideas and resources. This social capital can also be eroded where less dependence exists, and this may become demotivating for the social entrepreneur (Ansari et al., 2012). It is of paramount importance to understand the structural dimension of social capital; what it takes to build and increase it and more poignantly, how it can be maintained, this is because it is one of the critical factors that will determine how far social entrepreneurs are willing to go to alleviate and solve social challenges. If the entrepreneur is operating in an environment that does not allow for the strengthening of social capital, they will not be motivated to continue venturing in this environment (Mair & Martí, 2006).

Social entrepreneurs have a relentless drive to create social impact and enrich the lives of previously excluded market participants, their motivation to do this can be stated as altruistic. Their motivation to succeed through helping others to succeed is a powerful catalyst for inclusive business models (Corner & Ho, 2010). The environment in which the social entrepreneur grew up in or currently lives in could also form a critical motivational force in the ventures and activities they undertake. If they have experienced exclusion first hand, they may be more motivated to create more inclusive models that stem from creating social impact (Viswanathan & Rosa, 2010).

The theory has led the study to find that social entrepreneurs are primarily motivated by the following goals; social change, social value/wealth and social impact. They can too be motivated by financial gain, but this is usually secondary to their primary social goals.
A social entrepreneur is unlikely to engage in business activities that only result in personal wealth gain or financial value. This may motivate their commercial counterparts, but will not form sufficient motivation to keep them engaged in the activity. If the social entrepreneur perceives that there is social value to be created, they will be enthused to engage; they will sacrifice short term profits for the realisation of long-term sustainable business models that allow for inclusivity and continuous social impact.

Social entrepreneurs are also motivated by their compassion for other people and their altruistic drive to help them, passion for helping others can be cited as a motivational factor in social entrepreneurship and other vehicles that create social value (Rivera-Santos, 2015).

2.4. Inclusivity and Social Entrepreneurship

A theme that constantly surfaced in the review of the literature was that of inclusivity and how it relates to social entrepreneurship. The study wanted to explore whether the two constructs enable each other and always exist in synergy. The study wanted to explore the possibility of creating a more inclusive African business education ecosystem. The study created the view that existing entrepreneurship education models and ecosystems are often elitist and exclusive. The research will explore whether a business model innovation can successfully occur, to create a more inclusive ecosystem that allows for the inclusion of previously excluded groups and individuals.

Social entrepreneurship is an enabler of inclusive growth in existing business models and start-ups alike. Social entrepreneurship can provide much-needed acceleration of change needed for inclusivity. Commercial entrepreneurship provides benefit to existing market participants but not to those who are excluded from participating in formal markets, and these exclusions lead to market failures. Social entrepreneurship focuses on mending these market failures and enabling inclusivity in economic systems (McMullen, 2011).

One of the biggest positives of inclusive innovation is the benefits that accrue to the disenfranchised. When commercial entrepreneurs commercialise
innovations, inequalities in the serving of the whole market may arise. Inclusivity that stems from social entrepreneurship fosters social growth and allows for the economic inclusion of disenfranchised community members. Inclusive business models and business growth allows for economic growth and the delivery of inclusive social value. To meaningfully address the exclusion that has occurred in these business models, social entrepreneurs must search for solutions that allow inclusive innovation and inclusive growth. These types of innovations create models and systems that improve the lives of these disenfranchised groups, which positively affects their wellbeing, economic status and prosperity. Successful business model innovations allow inclusion of previously disenfranchised groups in high growth and high-profit activities, these business model innovations are created by social entrepreneurs and social innovators. A network of social entrepreneurs can create rich social capital for societies. This social capital can be leveraged to create inclusive systems where all participants are benefitting socially and financially (George et al., 2012).

Social entrepreneurs need strong institutional support to create inclusive systems, weak institutions coupled with commercial entrepreneuring can encourage socially destructive outcomes, this is especially true when economic performance is the only measure of success. If institutional support exists for social entrepreneurs, social inclusion can be built into current systems, the outcomes produced by this system create financial and social value, as well as enabling more productive use of resources for the benefit of many. Leveraging the power of entrepreneurship can form part of a powerful mechanism for poverty alleviation, this is especially evident in the bottom of the pyramid markets, where social exclusion exists. Social entrepreneurs play the role of change agents, developing and disrupting systems to create and sustain inclusivity, social value and social impact. They are also looking to achieve equality amongst market participants, one example being income inequality. Where large scale income inequality exists social exclusion presents itself, this is due to lack of income forming a barrier to formal markets (Hall et al., 2012).
Entrepreneurs are shaped by the social contexts in which they operate, and if they are exposed to strife and social adversity, they may well be shaped into social entrepreneurs, who want to solve these social challenges and uplift the ecosystem in which they operate. The common or social good that these social entrepreneurs create fosters a system state that allows for inclusivity (Hall et al., 2012).

Inclusivity and the critical motivator of social entrepreneurship - social impact, go hand in hand in creating social innovations that solve social challenges.

Inclusive approaches to growth are mainly adapted by social entrepreneurs or capitalists that want to have a more prosocial focus. This focus empowers excluded parties to enter the formal market through more inclusive systems. This creates social cohesion between communities and business systems, this, in turn, creates shared value and business culture of inclusion (Ansari et al., 2012).

Social entrepreneurs have an inclination towards more mindful and inclusive behaviour which results in more sustainable decisions being made and inclusive systems being built (Chrisman, 2006). Market economies are demanding more inclusive and socially responsible offerings; this is consistent with what social entrepreneurs aim to offer the market (Levin et al., 2008). Social entrepreneur plays a vital role in creating and sustaining socially inclusive economies (Haugh, 2007).

The issues that exist where disenfranchised groups have been excluded from the formal economy create the opportunity for the social entrepreneur to realise their goals of creating inclusive business models. They are attracted to the social challenge of market exclusion, and they believe that inclusion in formal markets and other business ecosystems is key to solving these social issues. These market deficiencies motivate the social entrepreneur to create and sustain inclusive innovations, resulting in enhanced and inclusive social wealth (Santos, 2012). This can lead to poverty reduction and business value creation beyond the current mindsets of commercial entrepreneurs (Bradley et al., 2012).
Social entrepreneurs are after a different bottom line, unlike their commercial counterparts who chase net profit, social entrepreneurs are interested in social impact and inclusivity as a bottom line, and this drives their activities and the way they interact with other participants in the market (Choi & Majumdar, 2014).

Through the creation of shared value, the social entrepreneur strives to create a more equitable and inclusive system for previously excluded groups (Seelos & Mair, 2005). Inclusive capitalism also shifts the focus of current business models to create a business culture of inclusion, with the hope of improving the lives of billions of people who are still disenfranchised at the bottom of the pyramid (Nielsen & Samia, 2008).

Inclusive business models may be the solution to poverty, understanding how social entrepreneurs create and sustain these inclusive business models will be crucial to the success of poverty alleviation (Bruton et al., 2013).

Social entrepreneurs aim to create platforms that allow the impoverished and excluded to participate in markets. If these platforms are not created, market failure can be accelerated and cause a further movement away from social inclusion; this causes the heightening of barriers into markets and more adverse conditions for the poor (Cooney & Shanks, 2010). The creation of these participatory, inclusive platforms allows social capital to be built and strengthened between market participants. The poor will be empowered to make an entry into formal markets and business as the suppliers will embrace the opportunity to create and capture further value from a target market that was not previously accessible. The mutual benefit being created in this situation allows for a more extensive exchange of value between existing and new participants (Mair & Marti, 2009).

Social entrepreneurship and inclusion can be cited as complimentary terms in many pieces of literature (Dacin et al., 2010). Inclusive designs in business are the mark of a social entrepreneur (Dorado & Ventresca, 2013).

They are not distracted by short term financial gain, and this allows them to design for long term sustainable inclusion. The social entrepreneur will be the innovator that creates solutions to poverty through these mutually beneficial
models (Ramachandran et al., 2012). If this becomes a collective movement towards inclusion by social entrepreneurs, it will allow whole countries to grow their economies inclusively and sustainably (Linna, 2013). Building these new and efficient trading channels will open up the world to a global movement towards inclusive economies (Kistruck et al., 2013).

The social entrepreneur is key to building bridges between different market participants, without them, connections cannot be forged, and shared value creation cannot happen. Therefore social inclusion will not be driven forward (London & Hart, 2004).

If business models are to be successfully innovated, a mindset of inclusion must be adopted; this is the preferred mindset of the social entrepreneur. These individuals strive to create social impact; this impact is achieved through the fostering of inclusive business models that allow for holistic social value to be created and widely exchanged.

2.5. Scaling and Social Innovation/Entrepreneurship

To create widespread social impact, the social entrepreneur must be ambitious enough to scale their social innovation, but unlike commercial innovations which have well documented scaling strategies, the social entrepreneur must navigate their way through many new challenges in this nascent and emerging area of social entrepreneurship. The scaling of social innovations and entrepreneurship is relevant to the study because the study will be attempting to scale the output of the business model innovation produced through the prototype developed.

Social entrepreneurs need to be more innovative than their commercial counterparts when it comes to scaling their operations; this is because they are usually operating in resource-constrained environments. Scaling is far easier for enterprises that are resource-rich and have the financial resources to expand operations, as well as the right people executing on the right strategy. Social innovations need to take a more collaborative approach to scaling, by connecting with their communities and garnering the support of their extended
networks. Without excess resources, the social entrepreneur must apply integrative thinking and work within a bricolage; this will breed further innovation (Zahra et al., 2009).

A method of unlocking scale for social innovators is through regional partnerships, with similar ventures or large multinational enterprises (Webb et al., 2010). The study will aim to partner with local business schools and other ecosystem stakeholders in African countries. This will allow them to identify synergies, penetrate local markets and achieve scale for social innovation. The identification of synergies will be critical because the prototype should not be seen as a competitive threat to local market participants. This would be counterintuitive to the motivation for undertaking this project.

Scaling for social entrepreneurs is further challenging because funding models and mechanisms are gamed towards scaling commercial enterprises (Santos, 2012). Funding for social innovation and entrepreneurship is still in a very nascent stage, especially in developing markets. Venture capitalists, private equity firms and other commercial funding institutions are averse to funding social innovations or enterprises for the following reasons: The risk profile is high due to the lack of previous commercial success, financial return is primary for the funder, but secondary for the social entrepreneur, this causes misalignment and further aversion to investing because the social entrepreneur may not be able to settle their debt or provide commercial level returns within a required timeframe. New age social funders understand that there is massive value to be captured at the bottom of the pyramid, which stands at approximately 4 billion people. This market could represent much greater future financial returns and by serving it, create scalable inclusive innovations and another bottom line of social impact.

Social entrepreneurs need to build scalable business models in their home market ecosystems, this will allow them to incrementally build and test further inclusive innovations at a much lower risk and quicker time to failure, before scaling into other systems and markets (Khavul & Bruton, 2013). If social entrepreneurs can prove social wealth creation in their ecosystems, their
innovations will diffuse faster and more effectively into other ecosystems, this will allow for smoother scaling of their inclusive innovation.

Ambitious social entrepreneurs will have the intrinsic need to make a social difference on a scale that outgrows their home markets; this will see them aim to scale their innovations into global markets (Thompson et al., 2000). If the challenges above can be overcome, the social entrepreneur can successfully create an inclusive global network, powered by their social innovation.

Social innovators can at times have the opportunity to leapfrog their commercial counterparts; this is due to the experience they gain through resource constraints and creating low-cost innovations. These low-cost innovations can be scaled faster than more expensive commercial innovations which require higher investment and therefore higher risk (George et al., 2012). Common to the thinking of most scholars is the correlation between scaling and resource availability (Mair & Martí, 2006).

Another common theme that presents itself in the literature on scaling social innovation is the leveraging of partnerships (Wei-Skillern, 2006).

The study found that in order to successfully scale the inclusive innovation, they must identify key strategic partnerships with partners that buy-in and are aligned with the vision. This will hopefully enable the effective scaling of the innovation and exponentially grow the social impact the venture may have.
2.6. Conclusion

Social entrepreneurship is fundamentally different from commercial entrepreneurship or venturing, in the latter, financial gain is the primary goal, social entrepreneurs orientate themselves around the goal of creating social impact. This is achieved by creating social value in markets and addressing social challenges that are created by the market and social failures. Social entrepreneurs are primarily motivated by social impact, and also by their altruistic drive to help others.

Social entrepreneurship is the most potent driver and enabler of inclusive innovation. Inclusive business models are enabled by social entrepreneurs with a vision to create a positive social impact. They create platforms that bridge divides between market participants, to enable the widespread creation and sharing of social and financial value.

The social entrepreneur is further challenged by the opportunity to scale their inclusive innovation. Scaling social innovations is challenging due to the resource constraints that exist in the social entrepreneurs operating environment. This forces the social entrepreneur to be more innovative and integrated into various ecosystems. They have to forge meaningful partnerships with other social entrepreneurs and large multinational enterprises to help achieve meaningful scale outside of their business ecosystems.
3. Methodology and Method

3.1. Chapter Introduction

This chapter will outline the methodology and method that was applied during the research process.

A design thinking methodology guided the research process. This methodology was adapted from Stanford’s Bootcamp Bootleg to suit the practical nature of the research. It has enabled the prototype to evolve around the development of theory and the user (entrepreneur) to become the centre of the research and design process.

This methodology is valuable for this research because it allowed for an in-depth understanding of the user’s needs and what solution was required to evolve around these needs.

This has enabled the building of a prototype that could be tested and used to develop further interventions that answer the research question and help build an inclusive education solution for South Africa.
3.2. Design Thinking Methodology

The design thinking process that was adapted for the research is outlined in Figure 1 below. The process was adapted to suit the context of the research. The adapted process is outlined in Figure 2.

![Diagram of Stanford Bootcamp Design Thinking Steps]

**Figure 1: Stanford Bootcamp Design Thinking Steps**
From Figure 1 above it can be seen that the original process has been adapted from:

**Empathise**

**Define**

**Ideate**

**Prototype**

**Test**

To a process and methodology that is described below:
**Frame(Define) – The literature review and research problem/challenge(Chapter 1 and 2)**

It is important that the problem is correctly framed and defined, this serves as a strong anchor for the research as discoveries unfold. This phase is used to understand the context and system that the problems and challenges exist within.

**Empathise – Study 1**

This phase is used to understand the users on an empathetic level. The study found that only once this level of understanding has been achieved can the right solutions be co-created. Tools such as observation, interviews and empathy mapping are used to achieve this.

**Ideate**

Once the above level of understanding has been achieved, the ideation process can begin, with the invaluable information from phase 2, ideas can originate from a much deeper level of understanding and translate into meaningful practical solutions.

**Prototype**

The above ideas are converted into a functional prototype that forms the basis of the solution.

**Test**

The final phase in the process is to implement and test the prototype with real users to ascertain whether it solves the challenges framed in phase 1.
It is important to note that a key advantage of this methodology is that it does not enforce a strictly linear path, it is iterative and allows the researcher or designer to move back and forth, freely between phases, or repeat the process entirely to aid in building a better solution.

Phases 2 through 5 are unpacked in chapter 4.
3.3. Method

The below table outlines the method and process that was undertaken for the research as well as the relevant timelines and participants involved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of Research</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frame (Define)</td>
<td>Review of Literature and Framing of problems and Challenges</td>
<td>Researcher and Entrepreneurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Prototype for Empathize Phase</td>
<td>Creation of Online courses</td>
<td>Researcher, Business Schools, Universities and GetSmarter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathize And Data collection</td>
<td>Interviews with GetSmarter users</td>
<td>Researcher and Entrepreneurs/Users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideation</td>
<td>Analysis of above data and model, translate into improved ideas for prototype</td>
<td>Researcher, Startup School Team and Supervisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prototype</td>
<td>Converting the above ideas into working prototype</td>
<td>Researcher and Startup School Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test</td>
<td>Implement prototype with real users/entrepreneurs</td>
<td>Researcher, Entrepreneurs and Startup School Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further Data Collection And Analysis</td>
<td>Collect data on above prototype through observation, interviews and platform</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions and recommendations</td>
<td>Building of theory based on the above reports, drawing conclusions and making recommendations</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Method Description
3.3.1 Data Collection

Data collection for this research paper began in January 2016 and ended in November 2018. The data collected for this research centred around the users and models of online education mentioned above. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format via face-to-face video calls. Email follow up was done in cases where additional clarity was needed. The interviewed parties were introduced to the nature of the study before the interviews took place. The interviews lasted 45 minutes and were transcribed by a professional third party. All interviews were conducted by a trained interviewer to ensure there was no researcher bias. The rest of the data was collected through observation and the learning platforms, and was recorded in the researcher’s field notes.

3.3.2 Research Instruments

Semi-structured video call interviews allowed for a detailed and in-depth exploration of the user’s experiences. An interview guideline was applied to each interview to ensure consistency. The guideline was formulated with the research question as its basis. Online survey tools were also made use of, as well as other qualitative and quantitative tools from the online learning platforms.

3.3.3 Sampling

To ensure unbiased and meaningful results, the interview participants were chosen randomly from the GetSmarter courses and the Startup School programme.

3.4. Chapter Conclusion

This chapter discussed the methodology and method that were used during the study.
4. Designing a Solution

4.1. Empathise – Study 1

For the researcher to truly understand the users and their context, and produce the data required to truly empathise, a pre-prototype was built. This pre-prototype took the form of University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business (UCT GSB) online courses built and presented by GetSmarter.

Market research was done, and experts at UCT GSB were consulted in order to build a portfolio of courses that would help solve some of the research challenges and understand what still needs to be done to answer the research question.

The pilot was made of three GSB open online short courses:

- **Values-Based Leadership**
- **Entrepreneurship in Emerging Markets**
- **Business Innovation**

The courses were based on the GSB’s MPhil in Inclusive Innovation which consists of similar content but an NQF 9 Masters level. The open online short courses were developed and presented at a more foundational/introductory level. It is important to note the researcher was registered and was a student on the abovementioned Masters, parallel to this research project taking place. This allowed for a further data point and important comparative learning analysis.
The courses were designed using the ADDIE instructional design model which is outlined below:

**Analysis**

The subject matter, target market and broader environment is analysed to give course designers an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the project.

**Design**

The course is then designed with the above information informing these design decisions. The outcome of this step is a learning design plan which informs the rest of the steps.

**Development**

In this step the course materials, learning assets and software is developed. This is then built on the platform which is then tested.

**Implementation**

The course is presented to students in this step.

**Evaluation**

Through learning analytics, student and instructor feedback the course is evaluated. A report is generated with insights on the presentation of the course as well as learning outcome achievements and student performance. The course can then be updated to bridge any gaps or strengthened where areas of weakness exist.
Table 2 below describes the three courses in terms of length, price and student number:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course name</th>
<th>Length</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Values-Based Leadership</td>
<td>6 Weeks</td>
<td>R18000.00</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurship in Emerging Markets</td>
<td>6 Weeks</td>
<td>R18000.00</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Innovation</td>
<td>6 Weeks</td>
<td>R18000.00</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Description of course metrics

4.1.1. Data collected and analysed

It was vital for the study to critically evaluate this model and the experience of the users to ascertain whether it was positioned to solve the challenges initially outlined.

- The Users (Course Participants)

The participants of these courses all self-identified as entrepreneurs or as being entrepreneurial before the start of the courses. Their reasons for joining the courses were diverse, but all of them shared the common goal of wanting to progress in business or as an entrepreneur.

- Completion Rates

The completion rates for the courses averaged over 90%.

This is an extremely positive sign, albeit in line with GetSmarter’s overall completion rates.
Open online courses usually average between 7-10% completion rates (Khalil and Ebner, 2014)

- **User Feedback**

Participants were randomly selected and interviewed. Grounded theory was used to systematically turn the data and feedback into the below themes:

**Practical Entrepreneurial Skills**

The participants were all impressed by the content of the courses but felt that more practical lessons and opportunities to apply these lessons are needed.

**Price**

The price of the course was highlighted as a barrier to creating an inclusive model.

**Cross-Subsidisation**

All the participants believed there could non-paying students on the course subsidized by them (higher income users) paying higher course fees, to raise the diversity and inclusivity levels.

**Coaching**

The participants believed the coaching was helpful to ensure they completed the courses but wanted more customised business coaching.

**Ecosystem**

The participants believed that to help them progress as entrepreneurs, they would need a more holistic ecosystem of support that included mentoring, networking, funding opportunities, peripheral business services and advocating for policy change to create optimal conditions for starting and running a business in South Africa.

The above themes and feedback were then taken into the ideation and prototyping phase.
4.2. Ideation and the prototype

The researcher reflected on the empathise phase and continued to question the existing models. After engaging with multiple stakeholders and most importantly potential and current entrepreneurs for many months, it was decided that a first principles approach was needed and that a new purpose-built model was needed. This became the prototype.

All the data and experiences were leveraged to arrive at the following the prototype.

The vision for this prototype was as follows:

“A world-class ecosystem for growing entrepreneurs from all backgrounds, across Africa, to help build a thriving, innovative and opportunity-rich future for all Africans.”
The ecosystem needed to be inclusive and holistic to succeed, this is the model that was envisioned:

**Figure 3: Holistic Ecosystem of Support**

Over the next 12 months, the prototype was built as “The Startup School” which can be found at [www.startupschool.ac](http://www.startupschool.ac).

The Startup School is a project that aims to capacitate and facilitate support to encourage entrepreneurship in South Africa. The programme content is supported by a strong and experienced team of education, coaching and entrepreneurial specialists. The ecosystem was built around the core educational programme.

Startup School gives the entrepreneur the opportunity to expand on their business insight through a challenging and interactive 12-week online learning
journey. The course’s unique support structure of start-up coaching alongside comprehensive coursework means that they will develop and build on their entrepreneurial mindset.

The programme also provides a space to develop one’s network and make new connections. By the end of the course, participants have a comprehensive business plan, an enhanced understanding of how to develop their business and an opportunity to present their business plans to a range of investors for potential funding opportunities.

The Startup School’s design is to ensure entrepreneurs not only have the theoretical and practical learning, but the coaching and mentoring support to supplement and ensure the learning, growth, application and success of the business is realised. The course’s topics are as follows:

**Week 1: Developing an entrepreneur’s mindset**

The entrepreneur will learn about the importance of developing an entrepreneurial mindset and study from the examples of successful global and home-grown entrepreneurs.

**Week 2: Problem identification and solutions development**

In week 2, the entrepreneur will learn about the challenges facing different communities today, and the work that is being done in overcoming them, various problem-solving methods, and the ability to formulate solutions to a variety of problems.

**Week 3: Creating an entrepreneurial strategy**

Week 3 will discuss the fundamentals of business strategy and look at how to start formulating the entrepreneur’s business plan, as well as the importance of a personal entrepreneurial strategy.
Week 4: Defining and marketing your value proposition

In this week the entrepreneur will discover the world of marketing and learn how to define their target market. They will also learn how to define a specific value proposition for their business.

Week 5: Sales(person)ship

In week 5, the entrepreneur will learn various sales techniques and how to set and interpret sales targets and reports. Additionally, they will be guided in developing and presenting a sales pitch for their business’s value proposition.

Week 6: The fundamentals of small business finance

Week 6 covers all the entrepreneur needs to know regarding the basics of small business finance and accounting. This includes the interpretation of various accounting reports and setting and managing a budget for their business.

Week 7: Talent management and staff development

In this week the entrepreneur will learn about human resources and labour law in a South African context, discover when to outsource various tasks or when to hire full-time employees. They will also learn the characteristics of value-based leadership.

Week 8: The art of clear and constructive communication

In week eight the entrepreneur will discover the importance of constructive communication, how to improve as a communicator, and the best ways to manage conflict in their business.

Week 9: Intrapreneurship: Becoming indispensable

The potential entrepreneur does not need to own a business to have an entrepreneur's mindset. Week 9 looks at ways of progressing within organisations, working as a professional, and becoming a linchpin of an organisation.
**Week 10: Sharing the dream: Pitching your business plan**

During the course, the entrepreneur will be led on a journey to completing a business plan. In this week, they will learn presentation skills and create a presentation of your business plan. They will also learn about ways in which they can foster further opportunities for presenting their business plan.

**Week 11: Execution and operations**

This week covers a broad-based look operations management as applied to different sector scenarios and will teach the entrepreneur to develop an execution framework based on their business plan.

**Week 12: Growth strategies: Where to next?**

In week twelve the entrepreneur will learn about a variety of tested growth strategies and how to discern when their business is ready to scale or expand into new markets.
The above course is supported by the following elements of the model:

**Figure 4 Key elements of Startup School model**
**Addressing Learnings from Empathise phase with a new model (In blue):**

**Practical Entrepreneurial Skills**

The participants were all impressed by the content of the courses but felt that more practical lessons and opportunities to apply these lessons are needed.

Every week practical lessons are at the forefront of the entrepreneurs learning experience as well as multiple opportunities to measure the application of these lessons in the real world.

**Price**

The price of the course was highlighted as a barrier to creating an inclusive model.

The course is free, and entrepreneurs only pay a small admin fee (R950). If they cannot afford the admin fee, it is waived.

**Cross-Subsidisation**

All the participants believed there could non-paying students on the course subsidised by them (higher income users) paying higher course fees, to raise the diversity and inclusivity levels.

As mentioned above.

**Coaching**

The participants believed the coaching was helpful to ensure they completed the courses but wanted more customised business coaching.

Business coaches help the entrepreneurs every at every step.

**Ecosystem**

The participants believed that to help them progress as entrepreneurs, they would need a more holistic ecosystem of support that included mentoring, networking, funding opportunities, peripheral business services and advocating for policy change to create optimal conditions for starting and running a business in South Africa.

All of the above-mentioned elements are built into the ecosystem.
4.3. Testing the Prototype

The prototype was then tested over the next 18 months with the research challenge and question in mind.

4.3.1. Results summary

Close to 400 entrepreneurs in total have gone through the programme to date, and the below results were measured after the first presentation:

![Feedback on Startup School course content](image_url)

*Figure 5 Feedback on Startup School course content*
Figure 6 Startup School Demographics and completion rates

Figure 7 Feedback on Startup School coaching and mentoring
Figure 8  Overall feedback on Startup School experience

Figure 9  Profitability of Startup School Entrepreneur
4.4. Chapter Conclusion

The empathising through to the testing phases played an instrumental role in fostering a deep understanding of what is required to solve the research challenges and potentially answer the research question.

The details and significance of these results are analysed and discussed in chapter 6.

A full report on the above results can be found in the appendices section.
5. Results and Findings

5.1. Chapter Introduction

The study set out to discover what entrepreneurship education model would impact positively on practical entrepreneurial output in an inclusive and social ecosystem of support.

This chapter presents the results and findings from the qualitative interviews conducted with entrepreneurs. The following themes emerged through a systematic design thinking process.

5.2. Themes

5.2.1. Prior experience

There was limited online experience in all cases. Whilst over half of the respondents had some formal education in the form of an undergraduate degree the majority had limited online education experience. None had any formal entrepreneurship training from a traditional university. Only a few had experience online entrepreneurship or face-to-face entrepreneurship course. Despite not having online experience, only one respondent voiced their concerns about learning online.

“When I further learned that it’s an online course, I kind of got a bit of the technophobia coming into play, as well. So I was, like, how do you do this? Because traditionally, I’m used to going into class, I’m used to submitting my assignments to a lecturer. And, you know, interacting physically with the lecturer who’s there in a physical form. So initially it was a bit of a shock, and I guess with the tutorials that you have, the online guidelines, I kind of had to, like, go back now and again to kind of, say, am I perfectly clear with what’s expected of me in terms of me learning from my computer from home, without me, you know, having to go to class?” -Respondent 5

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However, the respondent stated that once they got into the course they felt more at ease and found the over-all experience user-friendly and intuitive.

“So, I kept on going back, just to, like, second-check if I don’t need to be in class anywhere sometimes, so it was a bit of a shock, but not a difficult platform to get on board and adapt to.” -Respondent 5

It was interesting to note how the respondents felt that entrepreneurship education was important, yet they had not received any prior training, or limited training, in their undergraduate or post graduate degree.

“You know the only entrepreneurship (education), and that’s the sad part, I think, about the learning syllabus in university and in secondary school, is that we’re not exposed to that level of entrepreneurship... the most I’ve ever been exposed to is probably one of these flea markets that we had to run as pupils in Grade Seven or so.” – Respondent 4

5.2.2. Pace of learning

All of the respondents felt that the course was quite content intensive and demanding.

“The course was intense, and I used to spend easily three to four hours a day reading up on things and I don't regret it at all. It was hectic, those 12 weeks, but it was good.” Respondent 1

However, they viewed it as a positive challenged that forced them to prioritise their time to learn and engage with the content. The respondents felt that the course was structured in such a way that they could consume small amounts at a time and at their own pace. The fact that the course had strict reminders for when assignments were due also helped.

“It made me commit to every single week doing what I was supposed to be doing and keeping on track... It held you accountable.” Respondent 2

“I think the fact that the course had very firm deadlines was enough to hold me accountable.” Respondent 6
5.2.3. Course content and structure

The majority of respondents viewed the traditionally viewed softer skills of entrepreneurship as the most enjoyable part of the course and relevant to their business (goal setting and understanding mindsets).

“You know what I really enjoyed in each week’s activity was the reflection parts of the activities because it wasn’t just doing financial and handing it in or doing a sales pitch and handing it in. It was the reflection that you looked into it afterwards. That for me was good because it suddenly gave me time to reanalyse what was going on and how I’ve learned from this. I enjoyed the reflections a lot” Respondent 1

“...the goal-setting was so, so key. And building your company on purpose. That, for me, was really great content in terms of embedding a purpose in your company and not just doing it for, you know, the money or being seen, or whatever the case may be. Because when things happen within the company and you’re experiencing a lot of challenges and issues, you want to be reminded that you’re doing this for a purpose bigger than the problems.” Respondent 3

“I think, you know, when I started the business, I didn’t have direction. I was misdirected by where I want to take this, how I want to do it, and my biggest highlight, I think it was week two, where we learned about being a purpose-driven organization. To this day, that lays the foundation of me waking up every single day to find purpose and what it is that I’m going to do in order to purpose somebody else.” - Respondent 5

All of the respondents felt that structure and framework of the course were well designed and well thought out and followed logically from one module to the next. The fact that the course was designed to be experienced in small pieces also provide value to the respondents.

“Even a business plan, I’d never written one because it was too hard for me to actually sit down and think out all those things but in the course, it was broken
down into small sections. So it wasn’t this overwhelming task that I kept on saying, I can’t do this, or I will get to it when I get a chance which is never going to happen ... where it was this huge thing. It was easy enough to do one section at a time (on this course) and then at the end of it we put it altogether, so that really was good.” – Respondent 1

“For me, I really feel that, as an online learning platform, this was the best that I have gone through.” – Respondent 3

“I think the content of the course. It was so, so informative. It was... like, I needed a recap on a whole lot of things because, yes, I haven’t been back in school in a while, and it just offered me that. It wasn’t too much of a clutter. It was direct, it was straight to the point. Like, this is what it is.” – Respondent 7

When asked about inclusivity there was a split between candidates discussing the course being inclusive in terms of the different mediums of content (videos, articles, podcasts etc.) and the course being available online for mobile, tablet and pc’s.

“. throughout the programme, we had, you know, content that was, you know, literature-based, as in, like, you had to read something. And then on other aspects, we had videos to explain the concepts. So that, for me, was very inclusive, because I know myself that I’m able to learn better with, like, video-based content.” – Respondent 3

“It was online, you could do it anywhere. All you needed to have is a computer, or even you could possibly use your smartphone device as well, and you could literally, if you have a spare half an hour, if you have a spare hour during the day, if you’re sitting and possibly, you know, waiting in between a meeting, you could quickly log on and then go through the content.” – Respondent 4

“I was able to access the website easily on my phone, my tablet, everything wherever I was. I was able to access.” – Respondent 1

“It (the course) was really convenient, because I think at some point along the line, my laptop’s keyboard died, but I could use my cell phone to actually get everything done, which is really awesome. And when there was... when I was
not doing anything, I could always just go online and start doing my assignments or reading... Or when I was sitting in the hospital room and waiting for the doctors to come through, I could actually just complete my assignments during that time, instead of wasting my time on social media.”

Respondent 7

The challenge around data and connectivity came up with four candidates who stated that this could pose a potential problem going forward for candidates who don’t have access to WIFI or data and could therefore be viewed failing to be inclusive.

“I travel a lot for work as well so sometimes internet access for me was a little bit tricky, having time to go through and do everything. But it’s just something that I had to prioritize and so I think that was the trickiest thing but other than that I thought it was pretty simple and easy to do.” Respondent 2

“There were those days when I tried to stay or come to the office early to try and do my submissions, but I’m a single parent, so I have a single head at home, where I have to have my daughter at school at a certain time and pick her up at a certain time. So it was a challenge for me to be at a place where data and network is always readily available.” Respondent 5

One respondent felt that the course material was light on academically focused content and would have preferred more traditional university-based course material.

The majority of respondents stated that the content provided practical guidance, tools and insight that that they could implement in the businesses from day one. There were two candidates who stated that whilst the course content was highly beneficial to their learning experience they felt it would be advantageous to have more locally relevant case studies depicting entrepreneurs in Africa.

“I think I would have loved to hear more stories of people doing stuff within South Africa. It makes it more relevant. Because when it starts going abroad, it’s like, okay, it’s so far away from me. They’ve got much more opportunities.” Respondent 7
The majority of respondents indicated that the course content was holistic in its approach to entrepreneurship and business course material but provided the right amount of knowledge for each area. It was interesting to notice that whilst some respondents had experience in certain areas and others less so, they all felt that the course material helped them with their weak areas.

“(The course) geared my thinking in line with not only looking at my perspective but look at it as a holistic perspective of what that particular topic was about.” Respondent 4

The majority of respondents stated that the course took business theory and ideas and broke it down into practical insight and examples that were easy to implement and understand. The way in which the course has been structured was also a key theme that emerged in that four respondents stated that the modules followed well into one another and that they were able to build onto their learning and make new connections that were relevant to their industry, themselves and their business.

“The other epiphany (during this course) was that I'm going to have to learn how to... I can't do anything... And yes, so it was... So that was a big change in my temperament. And I think it was for the better. It’s interesting that when you start being more clear, direct, and firm with people that you employ, they actually start respecting the company and yourself, and even themselves, more.” Respondent 6

5.2.4. Community and network:

A key focus within each of the case studies was the mention of mentors, coaches and the discussion forums. For the respondents who spoke about mentors, the majority felt that the relationship and feedback were valuable and that they provided an excellent sounding board for the candidate and helped push them.

“I liked the fact that there was a coach and that you paired me with a mentor in the second half. I think that’s really nice to have that personal reach out
and somebody to WhatsApp me and say how is it going? And I felt like I was a part of an actual school rather than just an online number which was really nice.” Respondent 2

“It was nice to have the experience of somebody else, a sounding board.” Respondent 1

Only one respondent felt that their experience with their mentor could have been improved upon in terms of a better match.

“I think it was the mentoring... or the mentor/mentee pairing, because, like, my mentor... I... well, first of all, I didn’t really have much engagement with her, and just looking at her background and what she does and all of that, I don’t think it was suitable for me.” Respondent 3

Having a safe environment to speak to someone, like a mentor, was also mentioned in the research interviews by four of the respondents.

“The feedback that she (the mentor) gave me after each submission, you know, was amazing, because I really was able to take that feedback and, you know, not only see it from my perspective, but see it from a holistic perspective.” Respondent 4

In terms of the discussion forum, there was a split in those who felt it was beneficial and those who felt they could have derived more value. By way of an example, there was a respondent who felt the discussion forums didn’t approach topics with a critical eye and that their fellow classmates were too agreeable on the platform.

“I found it really difficult to get good feedback and good criticism over discussion groups.” Respondent 6

Two respondents felt there needed to be a more formalised approach to the forums and this should be introduced earlier on in the programme.

“It’s important to work with somebody who you’ve never worked with before to get criticism and feedback but I think it needs to come a little bit earlier in the course and perhaps not such high stakes feedback.” – Respondent 1
5.2.5. Application and implementation:

All of the respondents felt that the course provided them with the necessary theoretical knowledge and practical tools to help them shift their existing business or business ideas forward. In applying the knowledge that they received from the course material and interaction with coaches the majority of respondents felt that the course helped guide them towards making specific decisions as opposed to remaining in limbo.

“Within a month of finishing the course, operations was running independently. Customer service was running independently. Outreach is almost there. And I’m just so excited to get the other four departments running independently, because that means if I have people I trust managing each department, then I can continually focus on culture, I can continually focus on growth. And actually, I think it’s improving their lives, giving them more independence, and the company.” Respondent 6

“It (the business) was going to be dormant for, like, the fifth time, probably, you know, but... So it was basically non-existent, and the course has basically given me an opportunity to take something that was at a non-existent level...I might not be where I wanted to be, but it has certainly moved miles from where it was when I started.” Respondent 5

An interesting finding with regards to this theme was that of accreditation. Only two of the respondents made mention of the course and whether or not it could be accredited.

“So, I'm not sure how Startup School’s accredited, probably internally. But if it could have some... Somehow have an actual university-based accreditation, that would be great. But that's not really to improve the course, that's more to take the market.” Respondent 7

“It would be nice if it was. Even it was NQF Level Four.” Respondent 7
5.3. Chapter Conclusion

This chapter briefly summarised all of the entrepreneur interviews and what themes emerged from these interviews. Real entrepreneur quotes were included to add context. The above themes along with the prototype results form the basis of what is discussed in the next chapter.
6. Analysis and Discussion

6.1. Chapter Introduction

This chapter aims to present an analysis discussion of the research results and how they translate into learnings that can aid in solving the research challenges.

The chapter also aims to discuss if the above results translate into a working or failed model.

This culminates in the description of what works according to the study, and if the research question can be answered at this stage.

6.2. Learnings related to initial challenges

In order to understand whether the initial research challenges were addressed, they are highlighted below followed by a summary of the researcher’s experience with that particular challenge.

Challenge 1

Access to high-quality entrepreneurial and business education in Africa that produces meaningful and practical outputs is limited.

Learnings and experience

Throughout the research, it was confirmed that the above challenges exist across the continent, although the research was specific to South Africa, it was noted through further engagement that the challenges extend to the rest of the continent(Field notes).
The researcher experienced and discovered through the empathise, prototyping and interview phases that the above challenge was addressed in the following ways:

**Create an online ecosystem**

Having a cost-effective virtual ecosystem that can be accessed from anywhere at any time addresses the issue of access and aids in building inclusivity and diversity into the model.

**Ensure content is hyper-practical and can be tested in meaningful ways**

In order to achieve practical entrepreneurial outputs, the content must balance theoretical concepts with practical learning and doing opportunities.

**Challenge 2**

Africa is not producing enough high-quality entrepreneurs to leverage the opportunities that exist, and opportunities will be missed in the future if more entrepreneurs are not created and developed to capitalise on these opportunities.

**Learnings and experience**

The above challenge was confirmed by engagement with investors that stated that there is not enough pipeline of start-ups in Africa and deploying capital is difficult due to lack of entrepreneurial activity (Field notes).

High-quality entrepreneurs are also required to create economic opportunity and employment opportunities to address the high unemployment rate.

The researcher discovered through testing the prototype that the above challenge may be solved by the scaling of the prototype. The school has enrolled close to 400 entrepreneurs to date at a completion rate of 90%, and
this is only during beta testing. The study found that in the next five years the school can enrol 100,000 entrepreneurs at a completion rate of 80%. This would add immense economic opportunity on the continent and create much-needed employment opportunities.

**Challenge 3**

Current models and ecosystems are not offering enough programmes or accessibility to address the above challenges, and the impact that these are having are mostly surface level.

**Learnings and experience**

The above challenge was confirmed in the empathise phase, and current offerings are not suited to address this challenge and do not create meaningful outputs.

The study found that the prototype offers the right programme to solve the above challenges and that the accessibility issue is addressed through having an open and online ecosystem.

**Challenge 4**

How can ecosystem that provides access to high quality education be created to produce high-potential entrepreneurs, and fosters meaningful learning and development in these entrepreneurs? What shifts need to happen in existing models that impact primarily on a surface level, to produce a model that is focused on meaningful support and development?

**Learnings and experience**

The study found that the prototype has created an ecosystem that produces the above outputs, the prototype successfully shifts from traditional models which
are exclusive in many ways, to an inclusive model that produces the right entrepreneurial results.

6.3. Discovering what worked

In trying to address the above challenges, the study found through the prototyping and interviews that the following elements were key towards building a solution:

6.3.1. Virtual ecosystem

Traditional models that are restricted to a physical location are not suited for solving the challenges at scale, and they may be able to service a small number of entrepreneurs, but are limited in the impact they can have. The elements that come with a traditional approach can be barriers to solving the challenges.

If a virtual (online) model is built, that is not location dependent and allows any time access, the entrepreneur’s education and business needs can be serviced far better. Much more customisation can take place, and the entrepreneur can focus their time and learn in a much more efficient manner.

6.3.2. User-friendly

The entire experience must be user-friendly. The users associated with these challenges often do not have any prior experience working with online tools and content. For the user to feel supported, the content and tools must be easy to use. If the experience is not user friendly, the entrepreneur will feel unsupported and demotivated.
6.3.3. Practical experience

A key discovery was that the entire experience had to have practical relevance. If the entrepreneur is unable to apply their learning experience practically and meaningfully in their business or life, then an opportunity was missed.

Deep learning experiences occurred where the entrepreneur had the opportunity to apply their learnings in a practical way and feed this experience back into their learning journey.

6.3.4. Coaching, networking and mentoring

Due to the sometimes lonely journey of entrepreneurship, the entrepreneurs felt that they needed a support system.

The business coaches that supported their journeys were instrumental in motivating them to achieve their business goals and complete their learning journeys.

The ability to network with other entrepreneurs was noted as an essential part of their business journeys. This led to new friendships and business connections.

Receiving mentorship from experienced entrepreneurs was also noted as an invaluable part of their learning, having a mentor was inspiring to the entrepreneurs and added a level of experiential learning that other models lacked.
6.3.5. Holistic ecosystem of support

An important factor in producing successful entrepreneurial outcomes was that of holistic support and an ecosystem that housed all the necessary elements to give entrepreneurs the best chance of success.

It is not enough to only offer learning experiences, to solve the research challenge a holistic ecosystem is required to support entrepreneurs.

The ecosystem must offer funding opportunities, peripheral /professional services, advocacy, mentorship, networking all centred around the learning experience.

6.4. Translating what worked into a model for the future

The design thinking process gave an in-depth understanding of what the solution may need to look like.

The previous chapter discussed what worked in the context of the research, those lessons have become instrumental in strengthening the prototype.

Based on the entrepreneur feedback and results from the prototype, the study found that the research challenges can be addressed theoretically and practically.

In the future, it will be imperative that the model is scaled to achieve impact beyond South Africa.
6.5. Research Question

At this stage, it is important to circle back to the research question to understand whether the research has answered it.

**What does an entrepreneurship education model that produces practical entrepreneurial progress look like?**

The results discussed from this research found that the model in question looks something like the model prototyped in this research.

To answer the question specifically; the study found:

*Startup School is a model of entrepreneurship education that produces practical entrepreneurial progress.*

6.6. The prototype (Startup School)

The study found that the most significant contribution of this research is the prototype and the results from its testing. It was a thorough and iterative process to get to a working prototype.

The prototype (Startup School) can solve the research challenges. At scale the model can produce thousands of high-quality entrepreneurs every year, this would add immense economic growth and employment opportunities.
7. Conclusion

7.1. Chapter introduction

This chapter refers back to the literature, highlighting key lessons from the literature reviewed and how the researcher experienced these lessons through the research.

This will allow the study to validate or invalidate the lessons in light of their experience.

The chapter concludes by stating what value this research has added.

7.2. Market disruption through social innovation

The literature suggests that social innovation can be a positive disruptive force in the market.

This lesson was validated through the research. The prototype as a social innovation will become disruptive to traditional models and ecosystems in the market. The prototype at scale could solve the challenges that incumbents have not been able to solve, this will force them to innovate in their models to become more relevant and geared towards solving current and future challenges.
7.3. Solving the unemployment crisis through social innovation

The literature suggests that social innovations will be key to solving the unemployment crisis.

This lesson was validated through the research. The prototype is producing high-quality entrepreneurs that are creating economic growth and employment opportunities. The model is built for scale and can dramatically increase its output of entrepreneurs over the next few years.

7.4. Creating social value through social entrepreneurship

The literature suggests that social value can be created through social entrepreneurship.

This lesson was validated through the research. When the prototype was tested it was discovered that previously disadvantaged individuals were able to access high-quality education and unlock their entrepreneurial potential. The study found that this will in turn, create immense social value.

7.5. The bottom of the pyramid

The literature suggests that entrepreneurship in the traditional sense can at times exclude individuals and groups from the bottom of the pyramid(lower-income) and that social innovation is required to include the bottom of the pyramid.
This lesson was validated through this research. In terms of entrepreneurship and accessing resources needed to be a successful entrepreneur, it was experienced that lower income individuals have a disadvantage and also achieve lower entrepreneurial success rates. In terms of access to education, lower income groups are also excluded from high-quality education due to price barriers.

The prototype aims to ameliorate both of the above disadvantages through its inclusive approach.

7.6. Achieving scale through social innovation

The literature suggests that additional scale can be achieved through social innovation.

This lesson was validated through this research. If the prototype took a purely commercial focus, it would have missed opportunities to include an addressable market that exists at the bottom of the pyramid. The model was built with an inclusive focus which has driven scale beyond a purely commercial focus.

7.7. Motivation and social entrepreneurship

The literature suggests that the motivation of the social entrepreneur differs from that of a traditional entrepreneur.

The researcher’s personal experience as a commercial entrepreneur versus their experience building the prototype as a social innovation validates the above lesson.
The motivation for building the prototype was driven by solving social challenges and creating social value, not by commercial gain.

7.8. Connection between commercial and social entrepreneurs

The literature suggests that mutually beneficial connections must be made between commercial entrepreneurs in order to foster progression.

This lesson was validated through this research. Entrepreneurs from both backgrounds were present during the testing of the prototype, large corporates and nascent social entrepreneurs engaged to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.

7.9. Poverty alleviation through social entrepreneurship

The literature suggests that social entrepreneurs and their innovations may be the solution to alleviating poverty.

This lesson was validated by the research. The prototype is producing high quality entrepreneurs that are creating economic growth and employment opportunities, and if these efforts are scaled, an opportunity-rich society can be created.

7.10. The importance of partnerships for social entrepreneurship

The literature suggests that partnerships are crucial for social entrepreneurship.
This lesson was validated by the research. The implementation of the prototype would not have been possible without key partnerships and the leveraging of a holistic ecosystem to support and drive practical entrepreneurial outputs.

7.11. What value did this research add

The study found that the most significant contribution this research has made is the building and testing of the prototype through the adapted design thinking process.

The prototype represents a real working solution that is already solving complex social challenges. The research discovered how models are currently falling short and allowed for a new prototype to be built based on real user feedback. The testing of this prototype produced meaningful results that have widespread implications for improving the prototype and for improving existing models.

Secondary to the above, the research discovered multiple elements that can contribute to the successful building of a holistic ecosystem to grow and support entrepreneurial activity in South Africa and beyond.

The research allowed for continuous improvements to the prototype which will continue beyond this study, and this could lead to the building of a larger scale ecosystem that produces the impact necessary to realise exponential entrepreneurial growth.
7.12. Conclusion

The lessons from the literature were all validated by the research and the researcher’s experience.

These lessons are key in evolving the prototype. The practical lessons resulting from testing the prototype are invaluable towards further solving the research challenges.

The prototype and the impact it has achieved and will continue to achieve is the most notable contribution by this research process.

The next steps will be to apply all the learnings from the research to the prototype and scale the efforts of the Startup School.
8. References


Wei-skillern, J. (2006). E T & P Entrepreneurship : or Both ?

9. Appendices

9.1. Startup School 2018 Report
“You will never find an online course that is more concise, more in-depth.”
— Lucky Lugogwana

INTRODUCTION

According to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) 2017/2018 report, South Africa’s entrepreneurial activity is at its highest level since 2013. The statistics reveal South Africa is sitting at 11.0% total early-stage entrepreneurial activity (TEA), 4.1 percent higher than 2016’s score of 6.9%. The report also measured entrepreneurial intention (an individual’s intention to start a new venture) had increased and is currently sitting at 11.7%. Taking into consideration that entrepreneurs and small businesses have been tasked with the monumental role of assisting in job creation and reviving the South African economy, these statistics are hopeful. However, they are still alarmingly low. If we look at unemployment figures released by Statistics South Africa, the data indicates unemployment has risen from 51.1 percent in last year’s fourth quarter to 52.4 percent in the first quarter of this year.

With over 57 million people calling South Africa home, the country is a veritable melting pot of cultures, traditions and heritages. Since the inception of its democracy in 1994, South Africa is still a relatively young country with one of the most inclusive and progressive constitutions. And despite this, the country’s foremost social problems remain exceptionally high income inequality, an ineffective job-creating capacity and extreme
under-employment that has had a direct impact on the country's ongoing poverty levels. As a nation South Africa is in desperate need of improving these circumstances. A proposed solution by governmental agencies, policy makers and big business is the bolstering and reignition of more small and medium businesses.

In many developing economies, startups and small businesses have been shown to contribute substantially to job creation, economic growth and more equal income distribution. There are several ways in which this is achieved but the most notable approach is through education.

For the past 15 years, experts interviewed for the GEM report have constantly cited education and training as one of the three most significant factors constraining entrepreneurship in South Africa. The report research also indicated that the overall quality of preparation for establishing and scaling a new business by universities and colleges has declined from 2016 and is now below the average of other African countries included in the survey.

As a country it’s critical that South Africa acknowledges these findings that clearly indicate that existing models of learning are hindering the country’s economic development.

“Startup School has taught me valuable lessons on entrepreneurship and how to convert and execute an idea into a viable business model that is scalable going forward... Thank you to the team for guiding us through this fantastic course.”

– Murray Charter
A NEW PARADIGM IN ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION

A key tenet to entrepreneurship is creating customer value. In order to create value an entrepreneur requires resources, both tangible and intangible, that can be used to develop new services in the hope of growing their business to a point of profitability. Occasionally, one of the key challenges facing entrepreneurs is a lack of resources. Readily available startup capital or funding is an obvious resource that is often lacking but research also indicates that entrepreneurs believe they lack necessary business skills such as marketing and management expertise as well as basic knowledge on how to confidently run and scale a business\(^1\).

Research argues that not only is successful entrepreneurship linked to education but there is a positive association between education and the successful establishment and survival of startups and SMMEs\(^2\).

From a global perspective the public and private sector have gone to great lengths to develop education and training programmes, providing seed capital and tailored services in the hope of addressing the needs of nascent entrepreneurs. The challenge however, is that the existing environment in which these entrepreneurs operate is becoming increasingly turbulent as global forces drive continual change and disruption to business processes. The result of this rapid change has had a direct impact on how existing and aspirant entrepreneurs expect to receive and experience knowledge. Assisting aspirant entrepreneurs and students with a meaningful learning experience is just as critical in today’s progressive online learning environments as it has been throughout the history of education.

The key to the future of business education however, lies in providers of education adapting to change and implementing technology-based solutions that leverage the skills, experience and approaches within the industry to a broad cross-section of entrepreneurs.
Palesa Moloi: ParkUpp

As an online learning platform, Startup School is the best that I’ve been through... it’s really set the bar.”

Palesa Moloi is a qualified Chartered Accountant with a passion for technology and business. She’s also the founder and CEO of ParkUpp, a mobile app that is based on the sharing economy model, enabling ‘sellers’ to rent out their driveways in high traffic areas and ‘users’ to rent these spaces. ParkUpp often gives the example of people who live in the busy CBD or close to sports stadiums and the need for visitors to find a decent place to park their car that’s safe and close enough to where they need to get to.

“ParkUpp was established in 2016 whilst I was completing my articles for my CA. I knew then that I wouldn’t end up in the traditional corporate world and that I needed to start thinking about how I might start my own business,” states Palesa. Having already been on a few entrepreneurship programs, both traditional face-to-face and online focused, Palesa questioned how Startup School might differ from her previous experience and whether Startup School would give her the necessary skills to finally get her business off the ground. In fact, Palesa laments how one of the programs she went on, before joining Startup School, had content that was just not advanced enough and didn’t really upskill or inspire her. Finding that balance can be difficult and it’s a challenge many startup founders have encountered, specifically when it comes to looking for business-related content, sifting through what might be relevant and identifying practical tools and tips that relate back to a specific industry or business focus. It’s also hugely time-consuming. The Startup School platform, however, is different. By providing a diverse range of content, from different industries and in different mediums, Palesa believes she’s started learning in a whole new manner. Having theoretical content mixed with practical activities has also empowered her to start incorporating what she learnt in each module into her lifestyle from day one. “As an online learning platform, Startup School is the best that I’ve been through... it’s really set the bar.”

Research argues that more traditional education systems are struggling to develop the requisite attributes and skills required to produce entrepreneurs. Furthermore, it proposes that there needs to be a fundamental shift in the emphasis of educating “about” entrepreneurship to educating “for” it. Palesa advocates that “Before you start a company you need to know if you’re capable or not... Not just in terms of technical skills, but the softer skills too.” The Startup School program addresses this challenge by developing and curating content, activities and support structures that empower candidates on the course to develop entrepreneurial capabilities associated with the right-brain as well as their left-brain analytical skills.
WHO IS STARTUP SCHOOL

Current business management courses are predominantly focused on leadership, administration and sales and marketing whilst entrepreneurship courses tend to concentrate on innovation, personal initiative, achievement orientation and opportunity identification. At Startup School we believe in developing content that merges business and entrepreneurial education.

Startup School was founded in 2016 by some of South Africa’s most successful entrepreneurs. By combining business management methods with entrepreneurial practices, Startup School provides would-be entrepreneurs with the necessary skills, knowledge and support to shift their ideas into action.

The success of Startup School lies in its approach to entrepreneurship education that concentrates on learning by doing. Startup School’s online education platform comprises of 12 modules focused on educational material that is theoretically rigorous and practically relevant. Taking into consideration the shift in global online education practices, the Startup School method is based on deep learning approaches that combine theory with practical examples, contextually relevant case studies and interactive learning activities. The learning is continuously supported by dedicated Business Coaches who monitor the candidates’ entrepreneurs progress via the Learning Management System as the candidates progress through the learning material and activities. These Business Coaches provide detailed and actionable feedback on each weekly activity submission. Additionally, Startup School

“Startup School is a brilliant, innovative way of actually learning.”

– Lynton Naicker
“Startup School removed me from my comfort zone to let me grow.”

– Sadiyah

Entrepreneurs are afforded the opportunity to be paired and supported by a growing network of mentors. These mentors are volunteer business men and women who have a proven entrepreneurial record and experience in starting and growing a business. Candidates on the programme are guided from the ideation phase of their business through to the completion resulting in an investor presentation and comprehensive business plan.

Online learning has grown in popularity over the last decade with vast amount of literature focused on effective online teaching and learning practices. A substantial amount of this literature is focused on the value of deep or “significant learning” strategies.

The concept of deep learning is based on the connection students have with course material. In order for the connection between a student and course material to be categorized as “deep,” the connection has to be direct, meaningful and involve a range of learner-centred approaches that encourage thinking and understanding.

Research conducted on the critical categories of deep learning are depicted in the below taxonomy. The more exposure and interaction students have with each of these categories, the greater their propensity to experience and create knowledge that is meaningful, lasting and applicable to everyday situations. Each of these categories are manifest in Startup Schools online education platform and holistic support environment.

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**Startup School journey map**

**FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE**
Understanding concepts or terms

**APPLICATION**
Solving problems or making decisions

**INTEGRATION**
Making connections
“I think the content of [Startup School] was so, so informative. I needed a recap on a whole lot of things because I haven’t been back in school in a while, and it offered me just that. It wasn’t too cluttered. It was direct, it was straight to the point.”

– Queeneth
“Great experience and great coaches... Given another chance, I would do this course over and over again.”

– Nobuhle Mathonsi

COURSE CONTENT

The programme content has been developed in collaboration with educational experts and entrepreneurial specialists. Each module of the programme is dedicated to a specific discipline in relation to entrepreneurship and new business development. From developing entrepreneurial mindsets, to creating a marketing plan, drafting a startup budget, Startup School candidates are exposed to a host of content that builds on their competencies and adds to ability to not only succeed in a growing and competitive environment but be significant whilst doing so.

Recognising the need to move beyond surface level learning and help candidates reach their full potential through deep learning practices, Startup School developed a series of actions that have been imbedded at varying levels in the programme. These actions mirror research findings on what elements are required in order for an online classroom to promote deep learning.
COACHING AND MENTORING

Whilst coaching and mentoring share many similarities it’s important to understand how they differ from one another and the role they play in the development of an entrepreneur.

Startup School’s unique support structure ensures candidates have access to comprehensive coursework as well as coaches who help develop and build on their entrepreneurial mind-set from day one. Startup School is equally committed to ensuring that business mentorship is used in a positive and impactful way.

Startup School coaches act as a mirror and sounding board for the candidates.

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**Participant feedback on Startup School coaching and mentoring**

Data from end-of-course survey of Startup School’s first presentation in 2019.

On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate the quality of feedback provided by your coach? (1=low, 5=high)

- 5: 64.35%
- 4: 23.65%
- 3: 6.25%
- 2: 1.5%
- 1: 0%

On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate the quality of support provided by your coach? (1=low, 5=high)

- 5: 59%
- 4: 22%
- 3: 15%
- 2: 4%
- 1: 0%
The role our coaches play is part professional and part intimate; thus empowering the candidates to tackle difficult situations head-on and come out the other side a well-rounded and better version of themselves. For Startup School entrepreneurs, coaching helps them address the following three areas in particular:

- **Accountability**: Our coaches are concerned with why a candidate selects specific actions and helps them develop more self-awareness and mindfulness as a leader.

- **Challenges**: The entrepreneurial journey can be lonely and often gets to a point where individuals no longer feel challenged. Startup School coaches aim to push candidates to question their preconceived values, address their behaviours (good and bad) and develop ways to identify specific strengths and improve upon weaknesses.

- **Confidential development**: A key theme throughout the Startup School programme is for candidates to develop an entrepreneurial mindset. Part of developing that mindset requires acknowledging faults and areas of weakness. This is not an easy process and requires effort and constant reflection. Startup School coaches offer a transparent and professional environment for candidates to talk through difficult choices, decide on priorities and reflect upon what's important for their business and for them as an individual.

In addition to coaches, Startup School also relies on a strong mentorship pillar that supports the growth of entrepreneurs. Using key information from both the candidate and the volunteer mentor, Startup School ensures the best possible pairing in order to facilitate a successful mentor and mentee relationship.

The role of Startup School mentors is to provide ongoing advice and support. Startup School mentors have extensive business experience from a multitude of industries, have learnt their lessons the hard way and are willing to share their experience and, potentially, their exceptional networks.

“A true entrepreneur is a doer, not a dreamer... Startup School facilitates the doing! An incredible and empowering experience to understand and bring to the surface the entrepreneurial spirit within you.”

– Dustin Naidoo
Gcina Madida: GoGcina

Gcina is a vibrant, empowered and creative woman from Johannesburg who founded GoGcina in 2016. Her business, GoGcina, manages art galleries and emerging artists and helps them gain exposure by promoting them at specific artistic festivals and placing commissioned pieces in corporate and government spaces. Her business had been lying dormant for a year, but applying for and being accepted into Startup School changed that.

Gcina’s passion lies in encouraging artists to move beyond the ‘struggling artist’ phase and start to derive financial value from their talents. Having completed a Bachelor of Arts degree in a traditional university setting, Gcina is a bit of a self-confessed technophobe. When a friend told her about Startup School, however, she decided it was something she needed to be part of – even if it was all going to be online. Gcina found the Startup School platform surprisingly easy to navigate and very adaptable. Because Startup School uses a variety of mediums to provide candidates with information and for them to submit assignments, Gcina was able to play to her strengths. “I hate writing, but I love talking – so when I found out that we could submit some assignments via video presentation I loved that!”

One of Gcina’s biggest challenges is a common one amongst entrepreneurs - feeling lost and without direction. Without the support and direction of managers that an employee in a traditional corporate can tap into, the journey of entrepreneurs can feel more lonely and at times, rudderless. “When I started this business I didn’t have direction… my biggest highlight was in week two [of Startup School] when I learnt about being a purpose-driven organization.” For Gcina, the lessons she’s learnt from the course and her Startup School mentor have provided her with the necessary skills to fulfill her dream of changing the face of the creative industry, particularly for women. Developing and driving a business with purpose is the key lesson Gcina has taken from the course. Equipped with the skills and advice she’s acquired over the 12-week Startup School program she’s determined to help create an economically viable platform for emerging artists in South Africa. “Before Startup School my business was non-existent…. and whilst I might not be where I want to be yet, I’ve certainly moved miles from where I was when I started the course.”
COURSE PROCESS

The Startup School programme is open to any individual with a business idea or individual whose business is in its nascent stage of development.

APPLICATION PROCESS

The application process requires prospective candidates to complete and submit the following:

- A one minute video in which the prospective candidate needs to motivate for their place on the course.
- A completed application form in which the prospective candidate gives basic personal information; level of education; a written paragraph describing their work experience; a written paragraph that describes their new business/business idea.

The process ensures that prospective candidates have the necessary aptitude towards navigating online content as well as an ability to communicate a business idea concisely and in multiple mediums.

ORIENTATION MODULE

Successful candidates are notified and then placed onto the programme starting with the Orientation Module.

BOOTCAMP PHASE

Following the Orientation Module, Module One and Module Two (3 weeks) any candidate who has not engaged with the course itself and who has not submitted any of the activities is removed from the programme. We refer to this phase as the "bootcamp" phase. The Bootcamp phase entails the following:

- A weekly discussion forum topic and at least one activity for submission for review by the business coaches.
- Completion is recognised when there has been:
  - consistent engagement with the course (weekly discussion forums and coach engagement via feedback on activity submission)
  - 70% of the activities have been submitted for review.

“I feel that there is definitely a confidence increase after the course. Obviously having gone through the whole start up thing from thinking about my idea again and my purpose, I think all of my touch points are a lot stronger.”

– Shona MacDonald
MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Startup School programme is measured from a holistic standpoint whereby the resources, candidates and coaches are all assessed and evaluated on an ongoing basis.

There are two critical review periods that take place in the middle of the course and at the end of the course. Six to 12 months post the completion of the course candidates are sent a further survey to assess the stage of their business.

The course is designed to ensure the most committed candidates rise to the top.

In order to achieve this the programme requires candidates to have a minimum of 70% submission rate on all weekly activities and actively engage in discussion forums. Should they achieve this then they move through to the application process for a mentor as well as funding for their business idea.

Whilst priority is extended to candidates who actively engage in the content there is also ongoing support for those who have completed their assignments and require a mentor.

“Really valuable experience. I recommend this course for anyone wanting to get started with a new business or if scaling up an existing endeavour.”

– Robin O’Brien

![Race and Gender demographics chart]

Startup School participant demographics

- 23% White South African
- 59% Black South African
- 28% Other

- 65% Male
- 35% Female

- 91 students enrolled at start of course
- 82 enrolled post Bootcamp
- 90% completion rate

Data from Startup School’s first pre-accelerator in 2018.
CONCLUSION

At Startup School we believe that entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of vision and creation, seeing change and opportunity where others see chaos and confusion. The entrepreneurial journey goes beyond building a business. It’s a practice that pushes people to go beyond their limits and drives them to live a life of success and significance.

Leading management thinker, Peter Drucker, stated "The entrepreneurial mystique? It’s not magic, it’s not mysterious, and it has nothing to do with the genes. It’s a discipline. And, like any discipline, it can be learned".

We believe that, equipped with the correct entrepreneurial education and support, small businesses and startups in South Africa can confidently move forward in driving economic growth, promoting sustainable employment and levelling the playing field for more equal income distribution.

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On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate the online learning environment? (1=low, 5=high)

- 5: 3.5%
- 4: 18%
- 3: 38%
- 2: 33.5%
- 1: 0%

This course is helping me conceptualise and present my business ideas clearly.

The course is providing guidance on how to become a competent entrepreneur.

**Participant feedback on overall Startup School experience**

Data from end-of-course survey of Startup School’s first presentation in 2018.
Lynton Naicker: SnapSlip

As a consumer, imagine never having to worry about the hassle that comes with keeping paper-based receipts. What if you could keep all of them on one single platform for exchanges, refunds, warranties and guarantees, and for tax and insurance purposes? As a retailer, imagine being able to digitally send customers their receipts, cross-sell them products and build brand loyalty all within a simple application. This is what Lynton Naicker, founder of SnapSlip hopes to achieve with his digital receipting and analytics application. Yet turning these big ideas into reality requires more practical entrepreneurial and business focussed education than Lynton ever received whilst earning his post-graduate degree in Commerce. Before Startup School, his only exposure to entrepreneurship was at a market day in high school and a very theoretical piece at university.

For Lynton, Startup School is an inclusive and innovative platform that facilitates learning by blending theoretical content with practical tips and tools and support. The reason Startup School has been successful for him is because of how the program has been structured. “I’ve been able to go through the content at my own pace…and it has encouraged me to prioritize a bit of time, but also know in the back of my mind that it’s so flexible that I can move things around and facilitate the learnings if need be.” Lynton echoes the shift that many traditional education systems are having to grapple with. Startup School is founded upon a personalized learning model, working to provide the necessary tools and materials each candidate needs in a weekly basis. The model also creates an environment where all voices can be heard and provides flexibility and support to ensure concept mastery at the highest level.

Traditional educational reforms, particularly around entrepreneurship, often fail because of strong cultural and structural resistance to learning and teaching. There is growing evidence that having a blended learning approach that fuses both “hard/technical” skills and “soft/transversal” skills is a successful way to help entrepreneurship candidates approach and solve problems involving creativity and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects. For Lynton, Startup School was just the balanced and blended approach he needed, providing entrepreneurial education that is technical, practical and supportive. Research indicates that 93% of startups view having a coach or mentor as critical to their success. Startup School coaches and mentors act as sounding boards and ensure that knowledge, experience, and moral insight are transferred to their mentees. For Lynton, the benefit of having a coach and mentor meant the world of difference to his business and to him as a person. The ability to bounce ideas off someone outside his close circle of friends or family and see things from a holistic perspective were not possible before joining Startup School. “The Startup School course has been so efficient, it was so easy to use, and the mentors were absolutely brilliant,” concludes Lynton.
“In Xhosa there is a saying that says ‘inyathi ibuzwa kwabaphambhili’ - it means ‘the way is asked from those who have walked it’...Startup School represents that!”

– Siyabonga Chris Stanley Pamlu
References


9.2. Interview transcriptions

Sadiyah Interview SUS
Speaker Key:
IV Interviewer
IE Interviewee

00:00:00
IV We’re recording now. Cool, how are you? How are things going?
IE I’m good thanks, just we came out of a market this weekend and it was one of those hectic crazy, busy weekends so this week the admin that needs to be caught up. It’s a bit of getting back into it week.
IV Totally I understand. Whereabouts are you based?
IE Klerksdorp, North West.
IV Okay lekker. I hope ... you guys must be starting to go into spring now? It must be warming up a bit?
IE It is warming up a bit but the August winds have now started, so those can wreak havoc.
IV Absolutely.
IE But we need that, yes we need those winds before the summer comes in.
IV Yes. Cool Sadiyah, so let me just introduce myself. I’m Jared Kruger and I’m the Head of Education for Startup School so trying to sort out all the stuff that happens that you’ve experienced in the last while, and I just wanted to have an opportunity to chat to a couple of the entrepreneurs that were on this most recent presentation just to get a sense of your experience, of who you are and what you got or didn't get from being with us.

00:01:25
So I’m going to ask you a couple of questions, it’s more going to be a conversation. As I say particularly around your experience with us.

IE Okay.
IV So although I have briefly, I’ve been watching the course obviously for the whole time and I’ve seen some awesome work coming in from a lot of you guys, particularly you and I noticed ten guys that are looking very interesting.

So I think what I’d love for you to start with is just let me know who you are, the name of your business and just a little bit of a background to your business.

00:01:56
IE Okay so who I am. I’m a mother, a wife, and a budding entrepreneur. That’s where we are. In terms of the business I run a business called Mesmerising Nexus. It’s baking premixes that I make and we started off by looking for easy and tasty things that we could be making.

My sister moved down to Cape Town. She’s doing dentistry there and we come from a family where food is central so anything revolves around food. And she moved away, boarding place and suddenly she was missing home such a lot and all of those things. And she didn’t have the facilities to make all the things that she was used to.

And so I started mixing up for her these premixes and sending it to her because she didn't want to go and buy the flour and sugar and blah, blah all of those things. And well her friend saw it and everybody else said oh wow, and it tasted like the homemade things so not that you could walk into the supermarket and buy off the shelf. It tasted the same as it would with homemade things.
Wow yes and opportunity that we can look into and it’s been two years almost. It’s been a good experience.
IV Brilliant that’s so cool, I totally get that. So it’s quite a long way away for your sister to have moved. How far along is she with her dentistry studies?
IE She’s now in her fourth year so she’s got one more year to go.
00:03:54 And then her internship yes, so she loves living in Cape Town now. I don’t know whether she’ll move back home.
IV The thing is to get you to move here now.
IE Yes, that’s an idea. That’s quite an idea.
IV You should think about it. All right so a couple of other admin based questions. Have you enrolled before in any entrepreneurship programmes, whether it’s face to face or online?
IE No, not an entrepreneurship programme. I’ve done a short social media marketing course, one of those small little things.
IV Where did you do that through?
IE What was it – Shaw Academy I think.
IV Okay and how did you find it?
IE It wasn’t anything where I can say that I did it and I left having learned such a lot.
00:05:00 It was not really much to go by.
IV All right, and that was an online course?
IE Yes it was an online one.
IV Cool so what would you say, compared to your experience of that, what did you think of the Startup School’s online platform?
IE Startup School’s online platform is really well built together, so you go onto your portal and everything is there. You have all your sections all laid out, you have your resources. You have everything that you need that is there. I like the fact that I didn’t have to go and research on each topic, because they gave everything that was there already.
Now and then I might have had to go read up a bit more if I didn’t find enough information to do what I needed, but a lot of times everything that was already provided was enough, actually a lot to go on with to gain an in-depth understanding of what was needed.
IV Fantastic.
IE The course was intense and I used to spend easily three to four hours a day reading up on things and I don’t regret it at all. It was hectic, those 12 weeks, but it was good.
IV Fantastic that’s great to hear. So I’m going to ask you a question now and I’m going to use the word innovation.
00:06:37 When you hear the word innovation what do you think it means in relation to online education platforms?
IE Innovation with regards to online education platforms. So let me just think. I would say, are we talking in relation to just this or my kids are home schooled so we do a lot of online work.
IV That’s interesting.
IE The apps and that that do come out and the ones that we do use, it would be once ... I think it needs to be user friendly. Some of the ones that we do with the kids especially, I’m just thinking, you have a lot of connectivity issues where your progress doesn’t upload on time and things like that.
They have to redo things because it wasn’t uploaded correctly, that sort of thing. So that needs to be sorted if you want something.
Also having a system where you can work it on all different platforms, so you’re able to use it on your computer.

But you’re also able to use it on your tablet as well or a mobile app that syncs easily to the computer app or the cloud based. That’s also something that should be looked into.

I know the accounting package I use is brilliant if you’re using it on a cloud base, but the mobile app is very limited. I suppose that’s what they wanted but I find it a bit of a hindrance because I have to then sit down at my laptop every time I need to do something instead of just on the go, being able to do it.

Okay and in terms of Startup School, do you think that we’re closer or what do you think we’re like in relation to what you just mentioned in terms of innovation?

I enjoyed it. I didn’t find there were any hindrances in anything. I was able to access the website easily on my phone, my tablet, everything wherever I was. I was able to access.

Yes overall I had no issues using the online facilities or anything like that. It was enjoyable. There were a few hiccups here and there where I wasn’t able to access the discussion thing.

Inclusive okay ... I’m not quite ...

That’s fine and it’s an open ended question because I think what’s interesting about that, there’s a lot of potential barriers to education across whatever platforms you use, and online obviously brings its own issues. So in terms of language or in terms of how advanced you need to be with tech for example.

What is important when it comes to an online education platform in terms of inclusivity?

Okay. The overall, I would think that it needs to be simple enough for everybody to be able to use. The Startup one was easy enough. There were no complicated things going on within that, and ideally it shouldn’t be something that takes up a lot of data for instance.

Okay yes.

Because not everyone has access to Wi-Fi so you’re going to have to buy your data bundles and loading the site alone is going to take up half of that because of all the images and what not. That’s not going to work in terms of exclusivity.

What else?

I think that’s a great point. I think it’s one of the big deals with online education is that the big cost is in the data.

Especially in South Africa. We suffer with data costs here.

Yes we do. Cool if anything else comes to mind at some stage later in the conversation or otherwise email me if there’s anything you think about.

I will.

So now the question I always love to ask is why did you apply for this particular course?

So it kept on popping up on my Facebook feed, the video with Ideal [?] I think.

Yes.
IE Yes and that kept on popping up on my Facebook feed. I looked at it once and I went through it and again it popped up again. And I looked at it seriously and I showed it to my husband, and he’s like okay what is this?
00:12:39 At first we thought it was some insurance thing, Investec, you’re not sure how this is going.
IV Yes.
IE And then we spoke to a few others and somebody actually knew Ideal and they said speak to him and see what he says, and we spoke to him and he said absolutely it’s the most amazing thing. You have to apply for it.
   I said okay I don't have anything to lose, I don't know much about business. I had a look at the scope that was online and I said, okay I can use this to learn a lot from. Things like financials, business plans ... I never ever did that because I didn't know how to. It was just too much stress and all of those things. 
   I just ignored that thing completely and said I’m starting and that’s it.
IV Yes.
IE I said okay it’s about time I start learning these things and we applied. It was just I don't have anything to lose, let’s go for it and see what happens.
IV Excellent.
00:13:41 IE And I’m really glad.
IV Cool talk me through your experience of the course. Your ups and your downs and just generally what you felt about the experience?
IE It threw me out of my comfort zone a lot. This interview has actually thrown me out of my comfort zone as well.
   I suffer from a stutter so now and then you might hear it in here. So I don't do videos, I don't do interviews, that sort of thing unless I absolutely have to. And the application I did a slide show video.
IV Yes I remember.
IE And I was not able to do the voiceover because every time I tried it, it was horrible. It took me ten minutes to get through the one minute thing and so eventually I phoned my sister and I said, this is the wording, just do me a voice note on it and then I will attach it onto the video.
   So the initial one which was the application is not even my voice on there. That’s my sister’s.
IV That’s fantastic.
IE It was not something I could do and then subsequently I spoke to Tanya and I said listen this is the issue. I’m not too sure if I’m going to be able to do the videos. And she said it doesn’t matter. Just do it and let’s see how we are going.
00:15:06 And yes, now I’m speaking to you on the phone and having a conversation without me feeling uncomfortable but still all night last night I kept on thinking about the interview this morning.
   So what I liked about this was that it removed me from my comfort zone to let me grow and I wouldn’t have if I wasn’t in the situation where I absolutely had to do it.
   Even a business plan, I’d never written one because it was too hard for me to actually sit down and think out all those things but in the course it was broken down into small sections. So it wasn’t this overwhelming task that I kept on saying, I can’t do this or I will get to it when I get a chance which is never going to happen ... where it was this huge thing.
It was easy enough to do one section at a time and then at the end of it we put it altogether, so that really was good.

IV Fantastic that’s so cool to hear. Well here is another question that might even be also quite nice for us to reflect on your experience.

00:16:28

So what do you think your entrepreneurial capabilities were before you started the course and then where you think you came out with at the end? So to give you an example if you thought you were very creative in terms of developing products, that’s what you had before, but you actually came out the other end knowing that you are not only creative and creating products, you’re also actually a really good salesman.

IE Yes if I look back the way I was doing things was playing games. I felt like it was more a hobby than a business until I actually did the course and I realised that so many things have to be in place.

The other nice thing for me was that the first activity was where we did strengths and weaknesses on yourself.

IV Yes.

IE And it was good for me because I never actually thought about those things or realised that I have more strengths than I admit to myself.

IV Yes.

IE So the confidence boost was nice to see I am this kind of a person and I always ... it’s a bit like an inferiority complex maybe. I don’t know, where we always are putting ourselves down. So it was a good self confidence that I needed to say.

00:18:00

And yes, once I started having a look at it I realised I do have these qualities and these qualities and these qualities and I can do this and this and this, and just because seeing it there suddenly made me realise I can do so much more than what I have been doing. Like this for instance.

IV That’s fantastic. It’s such an interesting thing when you have the opportunity to reflect in a structured way your realisations of what you can, more just what you can do. It’s quite a special moment.

IE You know what I really enjoyed in each week’s activity was the reflection parts of the activities because it wasn’t just doing financial and handing it in or doing a sales pitch and handing it in. It was the reflection that you looked into it afterwards. That for me was good because it suddenly gave me time to reanalyse what was going on and how I’ve learned from this. I enjoyed the reflections a lot.

IE I probably wrote long essays at the time but I enjoyed the reflections.

IV And I encourage you to carry on with that exercise in your journey. Reflecting is such a powerful tool.

00:19:25

So don’t forget about it as you move forward with your entrepreneurship in your personal life. Reflection is a very, very powerful thing and especially if you’ve found it useful now, it will only become more and more useful as you grow.

IE Yes although it helps to have somebody who you can converse about it with so we had a coach to work with, and you would get your feedback from there. So journal writing could be a reflection. Someone was telling me the other day, you should do the journal writing but there’s no one to collaborate with. You need to have a sounding board.

IV Agreed. But you know you might be interested in thinking about starting a blog or something like that where you actually put your writing out where you could engage with people on a more public kind of way.
IE That might be an option although the time [inaudible]/
IV Tell me what were some of the challenges that you experienced during this course?
IE The time factor.
IV Okay.
IE Because I was still working all the time and actually then sitting down to working on the material for the Startup School. So I would end up sitting at eleven at night starting to read now.
IV Yes.
00:20:57
IE A lot of times I would be up in bed and fast asleep with the laptop sitting on my lap because I tried to get through everything that there was and the biggest thing for me was the time factor.
IV Any other challenges there?
IE However I think had more time been allocated it wouldn’t have gotten done because then I’m the kind of person that waits for last minute and if I know that there’s more time then I wouldn’t have ... okay yes I’ll get to it.
IV You don’t prioritise it?
IE Yes, because there was a time limit on it, you knew you had to work on it and push.
00:21:58
IE It worked well for me.
IV Fantastic. There’s nothing quite like a bit of pressure to get work done hey?
IE Yes.
IV What would you say are some of the highlights that you experienced on the course?
IE Highlights on the course ... the first week where we had to do our own SWOT analysis. That was for me a bit self confidence booster.
IE The financial aspect of it, things like –
IV What was it about the financial aspect that you found useful?
IE I hated accounting in school. I sucked at it. I could never understand what was going on.
IV Me too.
IE And so not knowing –
IV Sorry I’m just going to answer that quickly, just give me a minute. Jared speaking, hi. Sorry I’m busy at the moment, I can’t take this call. Thank you so much.
00:23:25
IE Sorry about that, I’m at my home office and this phone is right in here and I knew it would just carry on ringing if I didn’t deal with it.
IE That’s not a problem.
IV You were talking about the finance module and what was strong about it for you.
IE I started off this business, to my mind it was as long as I have all my suppliers paid and I still have money in my account to carry on doing this, I’m good.
IV Yes.
IE You know ... whether I’m actually making money or not was a different story.
IV Yes.
IE But for me that was the whole thing. My husband fortunately is more accounting inclined and he used to help me a lot. But still I understood nothing until the financial module where I said now I really have to get into this and I came out of there knowing what it all was. I now understand my budget perfectly.
It’s the first time in my life I’ve ever had a budget now drawn up for a whole year.

IV Brilliant.

00:24:36

IE And financial statements, I finally understand them. I know the first time I looked at the financial statements that I pulled from the accounting package, I sent a message to Tanya and said, I think I’m running my business at a loss here. It looks terrible. And then my husband came home and I was in a state.

He said that’s wrong and I was like did you see this? All I’ve made for the whole year is R2,000. All my hard work is gone. And so then he said, no but look your stock is all paid up. You’re not owing anybody money. You’ve got so much as your inventory and I realised, oh but there is so I haven’t just worked for only R2,000. There are things in there.

But I never understood those things before and so for me that was a very big highlight that I could understand my business in terms of the money issues.

IV Yes and would you say that there’s room for even more stuff in there? Would you want more content or more help in terms of the finance stuff or do you think it was the right amount of content and work to do in that module?

IE As a beginner it was enough for me. More would have been hard to ingest all at the same time especially as it’s the first time you’re really looking into these things in depth.

So I think for now that module was fine. I don’t know, is there more to accounting than what was there? I don’t know but what was there was good.

00:26:21

IV That’s fantastic to hear. I think that’s one of the big challenges with finance. People are often scared of it because it’s important and it is big risk stuff but it’s actually not that complicated. It’s about trying to get the grasp of the basics and then everything else starts to fall into place.

IE Yes.

IV So what I wanted to ask is if you look at your business from when it was running before you started this course and now that you’ve finished the course, would you say that there ... are there any changes? Can there be some comparisons made from where it was to what it is now? Would you be able to highlight any of those for me?

IE Yes. Again the financial aspect. Before the course I didn't have anything in terms of records to show or month to month how I am doing, that sort of thing. Now I do. I can tell you for this month I made so much and I sold so much and blah, blah. I have those reports in place now and that’s so important in a business. I didn't realise it before that, that these things are so important.

Also branding and market awareness, so the marketing segment of that. I think how to get yourself ... segments and all of those things.

00:28:03

You break it down instead of just saying I’m advertising. You don't just advertise anywhere and everywhere, that sort of thing. It’s now a structure. There is a plan in place for how to move forward.

We’ve just registered the company for the business now in this week so that’s also been –

IV Oh that’s amazing.

IE Yes so there is progress in the business which I wouldn’t have had the knowledge or what you say ... the guts maybe to do it before this because I wasn’t sure which way to go a little bit. But I’ve suddenly got the confidence boost to say listen I need to seriously move forward with my business and this is how I need to move forward.

IV Yes.

IE So for me that was good.
That’s such great feedback. Cool I’ve got three more questions I want to ask and these next two are very similar to what we spoke about earlier but I just wanted to ask them more obviously. Did you find that the Startup School programme and its content and activities were inclusive?

IE  Yes.
IV  Great.
IE  They worked well for me, I didn't have any issues with it.
IV  Brilliant and then did you feel that the programme was in your view innovative?
IE  Yes definitely.
IV  Why?
IE  Like I said I did the other short course, social media marketing one and it felt like you were just almost you’re eating the chicken but you’re only eating the skin of the chicken in that one, and here you were getting the meat right down to the bone. Does that make sense?

Sorry I told you I like food.
IV  That’s a great analogy.
IE  It’s a food analogy.
IV  One of the best analogies I’ve heard.
IE  So it was very ... and I haven't come across an online programme that works so well. Usually it’s just top, only the skin of the chicken, that’s all you’re getting. You're not into the meat and this one was really getting into it.

Fantastic that’s great and then the last question I have before I hand over to you to ask me any questions you want to ask, is do you think that the course could be improved upon in any way and how would you improve it?

IE  I’m really not sure. Like I said, the time factor was a problem but in retrospect it wouldn’t have worked well for me if there was more time given. But at the same time I spoke to somebody else and I told her it’s really intense. She said, oh I can’t do intense so I don't know if that can be ... or is it only me who found it intense because that’s just the way I do things. I get really into things when I do it, so maybe it wasn’t so intense or it shouldn’t have been so intense as what I experienced?
IV  I think it is a very intense course and I think what makes it so intense if that entrepreneurs are incredibly busy people and you’ve got to do so much as an entrepreneur in the early stages of your business. You’re absolutely everything to everybody and now you’re working on a course which is linked to that business and so it actually in many ways creates more work although it’s important work.

So I don’t think you should think that you were the only one who found it intense. I think that’s a common experience for people.

IE  But it was as good intense but I told a lot of people about it and they were like, I don’t think I have the time for it, so I suppose it depends on what you’re looking for.
IV  Yes.
IE  Yes like I said, I really enjoyed this course. It was not something where I can say you should have done this better or that better. The only one aspect that I didn't quite enjoy was the sales pitch where we had to do a peer review because I couldn’t get anybody to review [?] my things. I really found it hard to get somebody to review it.

In the end I just told my brother to review it but he doesn’t have any of the entrepreneurial knowledge to actually say it should have been like this or like that.

So I did ask on the discussion group and –

IV  And you got no ... yes.
IE But I didn't get anything back from there.
IV You’re also not unique there in that a lot of people found it quite difficult to do the peering. I think it as a good ... we’re going to look at it a bit differently next time.

00:33:21
It’s important to work with somebody who you’ve never worked with before to get criticism and feedback but I think it needs to come a little bit earlier in the course and perhaps not such high stakes feedback.
IE The other thing is that the mentorship, it came in very late.
IV Where would you think it should come in?
IE Because I spoke to my mentor last week Friday and he was okay so we’re on week three now but when is your submission due for your funding? I told him well it was due the previous week. And we had only been in contact for three weeks whereas we should have been in contact for about seven weeks already for us to have reached the submission where he could look at all of that.

So the timing on that was a bit off, nevertheless I’m enjoying the mentorship.
IV Cool tell me more about the mentorship? What are you enjoying about it?
IE Experience so the mentor I’m working with is Scott Forrest and he’s in charge of regional ... he’s the Regional Director for the Spar Group in the Western Cape and so he knows all about all the items that go up onto the supermarket shelves and how to get them there and all of that, exactly where I need to be getting to.
IV Yes.
00:34:47
IE And he’s been giving me a lot of tips on presentation, how to get yourself into the market, how to market your product so that you get people interested in it. All those sorts of stuff and also on the production end of it. I was all out for buying a new machine to help me and he tells me but all the goods that you want on your machine, but do you have a plan of your distribution channel? No.

So you’re going to get a machine and you’re going to get out 5,000 units for the month and then what? Who is it going to go to? Okay you’re right, I didn't think of that.
IV That’s excellent.
IE So it’s quite interesting.
IV That’s great.
IE Nice to have the experience of somebody else, a sounding board.
IV That’s fantastic to hear, that’s really cool. Do you have any questions that you want to ask me?
IE I don't think so.

00:36:04
IV Well look you’ve got my email address now so I encourage you to pop me an email at any stage if you have any questions or if there’s something to add to this feedback. But I’m super excited about your business and what you’ve learned, and we will continue to stay in touch with you.

Obviously the competition is still happening now and then on the 7th September we’re doing the closing ceremony which will be digital, also via [inaudible] like this so I hope I’ll see you there at that.

But please be in touch and we will obviously be in touch with you and hopefully we’ll also be presenting you with all sorts of opportunities for meetups and networking.
IE The other thing that I took away from this, there was the Colour Works logo competition.
IV Yes?
IE So we were one of the 67 who were selected.
IV Okay how is it going?
IE It was amazing and I wouldn’t have known about it was it not for Startup School who gave us the lead into it and said, this is happening, why don’t you apply? And we did apply and yes we got in so I’ve now got a whole new brand identity which we are trying to integrate –
IV Amazing I’d love to see it.
00:37:25
IE If you could send it to me, I’d love to see it.
IV I will do so, I’ll send it to you. It’s just that my designers here feel that we already have a brand identity which the customers are used to. We shouldn’t move too far away from that so it’s small changes that we’re now making but things like the colours and how many to use in a logo.

I had seven colours in my logo. Nobody advised that you should actually only have up to three so you know, small things which are just going to enhance the business and it was amazing going to the meet and meeting with the designers who were there on the Mandela Day as well. It was amazing. I wouldn’t have had that opportunity without Startup School because I wouldn’t have known about it at all.
IV That’s great. Well thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate you taking the time to chat to me and as I say, please pop me a mail if you have anything else to chat about.
IE I will do.
00:38:37
IV And I wish you all the best with the competition and strength to your business which I know is only going from strength to strength, and well done on overcoming the fear of talking in an interview or on video. If you hadn’t said anything to me I wouldn’t have noticed anything.
IE Yes it’s come a long way, I’m glad for it.
IV Fantastic, thank you so much and have a fantastic rest of your day, and enjoy your weekend when it comes around.
IE Thanks and the same to you.
IV Great thanks so much.
IE All right then Jarred, bye-bye.
IV Bye.

Shona SUS Interview
Speaker Key:
IV Interviewer
IE Interviewee

00:00:00
IV Cool thank you so much for agreeing to take this time. I know it’s not that easy to find the time in one’s day when you’re busy working on a new business to talk about other things.
IE No it’s all right, I don’t mind. I really enjoyed the Startup School so I’m happy to give feedback.
IV Cool so if we could just start if you could give me the name of your business and a little bit of a background to the business just to contextualise this interview?
IE Sure so I’m from Thursday’s Lingerie and Swimwear. I started the business there are no properly fitting, beautiful and affordable bras for girls above a C cup and the market is really limited in terms of options, but there’s huge demand for it.
And personally having struggled to find beautiful bras and swimwear, I realised this demand and decided to do something about it. So it’s grown from there to instead of just being a bra making business to one, that I want to empower women to see the beauty in themselves that they’ve always had in themselves and to feel that way.

And also to use it as a platform to empower other female entrepreneurs in Africa and to collaborate, to work together and create really beautiful, unique products for our area, for our girls here.

IV Fantastic cool. It’s always a fascinating thing for me. My sisters always say actually getting a reasonable quality bra that fits properly is ridiculously expensive in South Africa.

IE It is. Honestly the only ones that are properly made, so a bra is a functional fashion item. It does a purpose, especially if you’ve got heavier breasts. It’s supposed to perform a specific function. So if you’ve got a bra that performs that function, yes they are over R1,000 and they’re all imported. There are some locally made ones but then I think whoever is making them just forgot completely about style and women’s need to feel pretty.

IV Yes that’s fantastic.

IE So it’s a no brainer, I think.

IV Well done, that’s a great gap in the market. So have you ever enrolled in any other entrepreneurship programmes before this one?

IE Yes I have. I’ve been a part of Awethu when I was living in Johannesburg which was also really beneficial. I was there, I was a pretty new startup then as well. I hadn’t made any products before so I definitely find that platforms like incubators and the Startup School are really good at getting your focus, on providing support and also not making you feel alone in the journey.

IV So have you done any other online programmes before?

IE Yes I’ve done an online programme called the Mini MBA through Marketing Week.

IV Cool how was that?

IE It was very good. It’s a UK programme, it was very good as well. The videos were very interactive and interesting. It was a similar kind of setup to you guys. Yes I really enjoyed it.

IV Did your experience of the Startup School differ in any way and how did it differ?

IE It did in the fact that I think I was able to reach out more. I liked the fact that there was a coach and that you paired me with a mentor in the second half. I think that’s really nice to have that personal reach out and somebody to WhatsApp me and say how is it going? And I felt like I was a part of an actual school rather than just an online number which was really nice.

IV It was also nice to see who the other classmates were on the website and I also liked how the tasks differed. They weren’t all things that you had to read, so for this Marketing Week one I always had three readings that I had to do and then I only had assignments at the end. I liked that I had to do stuff every week, even though sometimes with time it was always a bit hectic but it was good.

IV That made me commit to every single week doing what I was supposed to be doing and keeping on track. And if I was late on something I got a reminder and I was oh I must not be late again. So it was really good. It held you accountable and it was nice in the fact that some of them were the videos, some of them were things I had to read, some of them were written assignments. Some were short, some were long so I liked the variety of it.

IV If it’s too similar I think it would have got a bit boring but it was nice.
IV Cool and the next two questions are just for your interpretation but what do you think it means in relation to online education?

00:05:42 IE I think innovation means doing things differently in a way that would improve something. So it doesn’t necessarily have to be completely unique but listening to the market and adapting in a way that would suit that market and improve on previous products.

IV And what does inclusion mean to you in relation to online education?

IE Inclusion means open to everybody, so I liked that it was subsidised, number one so that it made it affordable. I liked that there wasn’t an entry requirement about previous education standards, previous advantages or disadvantages. There was no betting or even where you were in your business. I liked that you could be a very new startup. You could be scaling up your business. It didn't matter, it was open to everyone which I really liked.

IV Fantastic so why did you apply, what made you apply for this course?

IE I'm always trying to continue my learning journey. I don't think that you ever know anything and [inaudible] so even though I’ve studied entrepreneurship and I’ve done incubators before it’s good for me to continue to refine skills because sometimes you miss things out and you learn something new on the journey, and it keeps you focused.

And then obviously the prize money at the end of the competition, at the end of the school was a big draw card as well so if I was having any apprehensions about how much time I had to do to now become a student again while working a full time job and starting a company, the prize money was definitely a big pull factor.

00:07:43 IV Cool and just talk me through your experience of the course, thinking about the beginning and towards the middle and then by the end, what experience could you describe? How would you describe your experience?

IE I was very excited to start it. I liked that there were emails introducing you and giving you a little bit of a heads up about what was to come and I liked when it started that it was quite a lot of reading, quite a lot of things to do because that’s when it’s still new and exciting and you want to do as much as possible. And later as you would naturally get busier and it would become more of a ... maybe it was also just my schedule getting busier but the tasks got easier to complete and the modules were less to read, which made it that I was able to keep up with the work load, which I really appreciated. It kept me interested.

IV Great and in terms of thinking about your entrepreneurial capabilities, if you think back to before the course, what do you think they were and then compared to post course? Is there a difference? Could you talk to me about that?

00:09:03 IE If there were any differences between those capabilities then and now?

IE I feel that there is definitely a confidence increase after the course. Obviously having gone through the whole start up thing from thinking about my idea again and my purpose, I think all of my touch points are a lot stronger. The fact that you paired me with a mentor has made me also have somebody that I can bounce ideas off of which really helps as a single entrepreneur in my business. So I don't have a business partner that I can chat to about things so that really helps a lot.

It makes me more confident in my decisions.

There are also certain tools that I learned from the Startup School that have really helped me. For example the supply chain tool where you had to list your supply chain and delivery times for each one has really helped me for planning my launch and making sure that I will order all of my stock on time, and allow gaps for any delays which has been a
problem in the past. So that was a very nice visual tool that I use now on a daily basis actually.

IV   Brilliant and did you experience any challenges on this course?
IE   I think time is always a big challenge. As I said I’ve got a full time job. I travel a lot for work as well so sometimes internet access for me was a little bit tricky, having time to go through and do everything. But it’s just something that I had to prioritise and so I think that was the trickiest thing but other than that I thought it was pretty simple and easy to do.

00:11:01

There were resources if I was struggling with understanding something.

IV   What were your highlights?
IE   I think refining my purpose of my business. I always thought I had a very strong purpose because I was always to empower women to feel great about themselves but it really got me to refine that and make it a lot stronger and to actually think about incorporating it into all the platforms of my business. So I think that has become a lot stronger and for that I’m very happy.

Even the lesson on values based leadership, leading by example in how you interact with people and the environment that you set up for contractors and all employees comes down to the purpose of your business as well. So I really like to build a strong focus on that.

IV   Cool. If you think about the actual business, go back the 15 or 16 weeks it’s been before the course or programme and the mentorship and then looking at it now can you see ... could you point out any differences between the business as it looks then and now?

00:12:27

IE   Well yes so now I’m almost ready to launch my first lingerie range whereas before I was not. So that’s quite a big difference. The fact that there’s a lot that goes on behind the scenes behind a product launch. Obviously a lot of it I think was going to happen anyway. I had products on sample stage but it’s just refined everything that I do and made me think a lot more clearly about it which I think I was on a natural growth path anyway, this has just assisted me in it.

IV   The timing of it was ideal for you?
IE   Yes timing was perfect. And it was also good because it really is very easy to get caught up in life and in other things that are going on, especially when you’ve got another demanding job, to lose focus and this really made me focus on what was the most important thing and that is getting my business off the ground.

IV   Great I’ve got three more questions. The next one is did you find that the Startup School programme and its content and activities were inclusive?
IE   Yes. I think so. I think it’s probably difficult for one person to say without doubt because I felt included, therefore I wasn’t thinking of how other people could be excluded from it. I think if somebody felt excluded then it would show that it wasn’t but I felt very included and there wasn’t anything that would have surprised me.

00:14:17

IV   Cool and then a similar question, did you find that the programme, content and activities were in their way innovative?
IE   Yes I think so, as I said I liked the fact that there was a variety in the content and the submissions we had to do. I liked that it drew from current articles and current resources that are relevant for today’s world instead of quite traditional universities where a lot of the content is pretty outdated. So in that way I really liked it. Innovation, I think I don’t know, it’s quite difficult to be ... I think it was in a way but not hugely so.

Maybe the way that the communication is structured was quite innovative in a way but I’m not so sure.
IV Cool it’s an odd word to try and lock down innovation and innovativeness. The last question is where do you think we could improve the course?
IE I’ve thought about this before because there was a survey and I’m very happy with the way that it was. I can’t think of anything that I would change about it so I think that’s a very good sign because I’m quite particular a lot of the time. So I can’t think of anything that I would do differently. I think you guys have a great product.
IV Cool, fantastic.
00:16:00
Well I’m going to stop recording there because that’s the end of the feedback session and we can carry on chatting.

Palesa Interview SUS
Speaker Key:
IV Interviewer
IE Interviewee

00:00:00
IV I’m hitting Record now, but just to let you know that this is going to only be used for Startup School’s internal, kind of, quality control stuff, and our own research around what it is we’re doing and how well we’re doing it or not, if that’s okay.
IE Okay, no problem.
IV Cool. Yes, thank you so much for taking the time to chat to me. I’m not sure how Tanya introduced me, so maybe it’s a good starting point for me to tell you who I am. I have the dubious title of being Head of Education for Startup School. So essentially it means that I try and put this all together using very smart people that know a lot more than I do.
IE Absolutely, yes.
IV Cool, yes, so this is just a… we wanted to kind of get feedback from some specific entrepreneurs on the course. And also just for you to be able to chat to me a little bit about your experience and to give us some feedback about, you know, what you felt was good, what was bad, what could be improved on and all that kind of stuff.
IE Okay, no problem.
00:01:15
IV Cool. So I know that your business is looking very… pretty promising, and you seem to be quite far down the line with it. So I think just to start, so we can frame the feedback here, just give me the name of your business and a little bit of background on what it is and what you’re trying to achieve.
IE Okay, so my name is Palesa Moloi. I just recently qualified as a CA, literally like a month ago.
IV Oh awesome. Well done.
IE Thank you so much. So I started ParkUpp in 2016, while I was doing my articles, because I just thought, you know, after doing this, I need something else to do, because I’m clearly not a corporate person.
IV I don’t know who is, so…
IE Yes, exactly, right? So I don’t know much about tech. Well, when I started it back then, I didn’t know much about tech. I hadn’t had any… well, I had a bit of start-up experience through another company that I was working with on a part-time basis.
00:02:22
So it’s been quite an interesting journey for us, so we raised a bit of funding from, like, our angel investor, and then I sort of, like, put together a team. Some people fell off
along the way, because they just felt like, okay, this is taking too long. I mean, you’re talking two years of literally still getting things off the ground.

But most of that I think has been impacted by the fact that all of us were working part-time in the business, so in 2016, we made it into this programme called the Orange Corners. It was great, but the thing is, I couldn’t attend, like, most of the sessions, because they happened during the day.

So I kind of didn’t really get much value from there, because of my inability to attend. So 2017, not much happened within the company. Yes, a lot of people were disgruntled, so then this year, I was, like, okay, cool, something needs to happen, because also I’m finishing my articles. Then I applied online at that Startup School.

So yes, when I applied, I just explained that, you know, I’m gearing up to me leaving corporate, so I would like to take part in the 12-week programme, which is really great. Is this where I stop now?

IV No, that’s fantastic. No, it’s perfect. I mean, you said, you know, two years, you know, that’s like a long time, but I mean, it’s not really that long. And it’s interesting to hear how people in this day and age kind of disgruntled quite quickly, hey. It’s… they don’t realise just how long the game is when you want to start your own thing.

IE Absolutely, yes.

00:04:13 IV Cool. So you said to me that you… you did do some traditional face-to-face stuff and clearly with your… being a CA, you’ve spent a lot of time in a lecture hall.

IE Yes.

IV And in terms of any other entrepreneurship programmes, you mentioned the one other one that you… you know, that was in person that you struggled to get. Has there been anything else that you’ve done or tried to do, sort of, online or otherwise?

IE Oh, this year, we also made it into the Solution Space programme in Cape Town, so apparently… Okay, I actually didn’t mention my company name when [overtalking]. So I’m involved in ParkUpp, which is a parking app that’s going to help people to, you know, find parking and pay for their parking ticket.

And the markets that we’re planning to go into is, you know, kind of the Airbnb model, and also the parking facility management. Just to explain a little bit about the Airbnb model that we’ve taken, or the sharing economy, is that people that stay in and around, like, you know, stadiums or high-traffic areas like that, especially when there’s, like, an event taking place, they can then put up their driveway on our platform and make extra income. 00:05:34

There’s obviously, you know, like, legislation around that. And then the other leg of it is the long-term parking. So if you look online, there’s… Especially Property24, they’re always putting up… or people putting up driveways for people to lease them on a long-term basis. So we’re also going to… so it’s essentially a platform for people to manage their property, for people to be able to discover their property easily, as well.

Or parking lot, rather. So beginning of the year, we also made it into the Solution Space cohort, so it’s… I think they’re also working with the GSB and then there’s also MTN that’s involved. So our company structure, as it stands, we have three cofounders, being myself, and then Wenzi, who… you know, his speciality was in film, or is in film. And then Michael, who did his MBA with Wits.

So there’s currently three of us as cofounders. So in the past three months, Wenzi was involved with the Solution Space and, you know, going through that incubation phase. So again, I couldn’t get involved as much, because I was here in Joburg.

IV You had a time demand?
Absolutely. And also finishing off my articles. So we’ve gone through that incubation process, and then… oh, to also mention who’s involved in the team, we have three developers and one designer.

Brilliant. That’s a nice sized team.

But yes, all of them are [sound slip], yes.

Cool. So the Solution Space, that’s very cool and it’s all linked to GSB. So in terms of other online programmes, have you… is there any ones that you’ve done on, like, Coursera or any of those sorts of programmes?

Oh, last year, 2017, we made it into the Tony Elumelu Foundation, which was online.

Yes, okay, cool. And how [overtalking]. Does that differ a lot from what your experience was with the Startup School?

Absolutely.

Okay, tell me why.

So… okay, so with the Tony Elumelu Foundation, I really felt that, you know, a lot of the material that was there, it was… not so advanced. So a lot of the information or material is something that I had already learned from, like, varsity. So it didn’t really upskill me in terms of giving me a different perspective. So it was pretty much the same… what do you call it? Like, I want to say topics, right, that were being covered.

But the perspective was still pretty much the same as what I had gone through, like, varsity.

So with the Startup School, I felt that, you know, the perspective was quite high-end, very different from, you know, the way entrepreneurs… even from what do you call the thing? The Orange Corners. The material was quite different. I want to find a way to describe different better. So okay, let me find to actually…

You know, you were saying about it being, you know, the same kind of topics, but sort of maybe are you referring to like their approach or the whole online experience, or the support structure, maybe.

[Sound slip] of the content… So a typical example was, I think, in week one, we were just talking about, like, the entrepreneurial mindset, but the material was quite… geez, like… like unicorn type of feel. You know when you’re dealing with a company that’s like high-tech, they see things… or like Google type of material.

Okay, I’m going to use, like, examples, so [overtalking].

Yes, that’s great.

Yes, so… so I would… okay, maybe let me use Investec versus Absa. Okay, maybe that’s not a good one. Okay, maybe let me do that. So when I look at Investec, Investec, the culture is quite different. It’s self-starter, it’s, you know, very intellectual people, but also… so you’re given the room to interpret it yourself and put together something in an innovative way, right?

So I… and when I look at Absa, I just feel that it’s still doing things the archaic way. So yes, so the content in the Startup School was more, like, we’re looking into the future, it’s very futuristic, in a sense. And then in the other, Tony Elumelu, it was very archaic, like, okay, I’ve learned this, so, you know, it doesn’t change the way that I see things, even with the topic.

Yes, that’s the best way I can describe it.

Okay, yes, that’s great. Brilliant. Well, maybe this next question might also help us, like, frame it better. Like, for you, what do you think innovation means in relation to, like, an online education learning or platform?
IE: So innovation… I think it’s still taking, you know, the basic principles, but now using a different and much more… I don’t want to use high-tech, because high-tech can be anything, right? I really struggle to articulate what I’m trying to say.

IV: No, no, I mean you’re doing very well, because innovation’s a very slippery term, isn’t it?

IE: Yes, it’s so slippery. So innovation for me is taking a Nokia and turning it into an iPhone, right? So I felt that with the Startup School, we took basic principles of building a business, and now we turned it into an iPhone.

IV: Nice. That’s… yes, that gives me a very good sense of it. Cool, so the other thing I wanted to ask about, because, you know, online learning is a challenge in some respects, but I also… I mean, you know, from our perspective, we believe it is the perfect way to, you know, to embrace education, particularly in spaces with guys who are busy, and entrepreneurs being the busiest of all those guys.

00:12:22

So inclusion is big deal for us, in relation to our online education. So what would you say inclusive means in relation to online education and its platforms?

IE: So inclusion, I think… okay, let me just think about this. I think it includes, like, different types of learning. So for example, throughout the programme, we had, you know, content that was, you know, literature-based, as in, like, you had to read something. And then on other aspects, we had videos to explain the concepts. So that, for me, was very inclusive, because I know myself that I’m able to learn better with, like, video-based content.

But if it’s something that I do need to read, I will read it, right. And then the other thing was the timing of when the content was released, because, like you said, entrepreneurs are busy all the time, so if you don’t give them enough time to go through the content, that’s not inclusive. You haven’t really considered, you know, different work schedules of, like, different… or individual entrepreneurs and all of that.

So that was also inclusive. And then also just the content in itself. So, you know, configuring the financials with, you know, the sales and operational aspects of a business, that’s quite inclusive, because as an entrepreneur, you kind of have to know a little bit of everything, instead of just focusing on financials, for example.

So the content was very inclusive. Then what else?

00:14:26

So I think also the examples that we were given were inclusive of different industries. So we had instances of reading up on, you know, car manufacturing companies, I think, at some point, tech companies, even, like, social entrepreneurs. So that, in itself, was also inclusive. So it’s the different industries that were incorporated into the programme.

Yes, so those were the key, sort of the three key things for me that were inclusive.

The timing, the content, and then the industries.

IV: Cool, thank you. That’s very helpful. I’m going to ask you a question you might have answered already, but I kind of want to get a more personal account of… it’s a very simple question, but why did you apply?

IE: Okay. So inasmuch as I’m, you know, a CA, I felt that going into the tech industry is going to require a different understanding of, you know, building this business, because for the most part, especially coming from an auditing environment, I was more exposed to, you know, audit risk and that type of stuff, so I can’t immediately assume that, you know, just because I’ve seen all types of businesses, I can go and run one.

So I needed to kind of go back and get a business-oriented experience and perspective of the things that I had already known, right?

00:16:08
And also, I think what I would have liked to have, though, is have that in-person... even if it was just one day, like, after the programme, to network with people in person. That was something that was missing for me, because I had assumed that, at some point, we’re going to meet these people that, you know, are imparting the knowledge to us.

And just that networking opportunity. I think even online, I was able to speak to a few people and get their perspective on things. Yes and then also just gearing up. So the timing of the programme was very key for me, because it was literally 12 weeks before I took a jump.

So yes, it was very important for me to get into a programme that was going to prepare me for this next chapter.

IV Brilliant, cool. Thank you. So now, I mean, we’ve spoken and you’ve given me some great feedback, particularly that in-person networking. That’s something we definitely need to consider.

But I would love to just kind of hear a bit of your... if you could talk me through your experience of the course, from the beginning, kind of what your... what you anticipated would happen and what actually happened, and how you’ve kind of come out the other side and what that experience was like for you.

IE Okay, so I think week one, for me... okay, I’m just going to briefly go through the weeks that I have on my own notes here. So week one, of identifying, like, your strengths and weaknesses, was so key, because I think before you start any venture, you kind of have to, you know, do that soul-searching and go through that, you know, self-awareness onion of peeling your own layers.

00:18:06 Are you really ready for this thing? Is it even worth you knowing all of this stuff about entrepreneurship when you’re not even... when you don’t even know whether you are inherently one? So that was so key, and also just some of the points around, like, what you can start doing to, you know, do that soul-searching. So, like, meditation.

I had already started incorporating that into my lifestyle from day one. And I think also that weekly goal, that weekly goal thing that we had to do.

IV Yes, the goal-setting exercises, yes.

IE Yes, the goal-setting, absolutely. I think that was so, so key. And then week two, I don’t know if I actually... oh, okay. So week two, the purpose-driven... so building your company on purpose. That, for me, was really great content in terms of embedding a purpose in your company and not just doing it for, you know, the money or being seen, or whatever the case may be.

Because when things happen within the company and you’re experiencing a lot of challenges and issues, you want to be reminded that you’re doing this for a purpose bigger than the problems.

00:19:41 IV Yes, definitely.

IE So yes, that was all great content. So just to go through, like, my process, you know, throughout the weeks, I would, on a Sunday, that was my planning. So I would plan things on a Sunday, but then I also realised that the content was released on a Monday. So what I would do is that I would change things around.

On a Monday, I would look at the content and I would be, like, okay cool. This is what needs to happen. And then I would plan my hours that I’m going to allocate throughout the week to go through the content, and then on Sunday, I would... so throughout the week, while I go through the content, I would start, you know, putting together my notes and also looking at the tasks that were, you know, allocated for that week.

I would also allocated times during the week to do them, like, little by little, so that when I got to Sunday, it’s just a matter of putting my response together and just submitting it.
I think the fact that we were given seven days to go through the content was also… yes, it was good, because then you got time to manage everything. Then I think my favourite part, really, I think it’s because of the way that I learn as well, were the videos, the visuals.

And then, yes, the reading, I think I… yes, I usually started with that, because I know myself. Reading can be one of those things. I’m just, like, okay… no, I like [sound slip].

So, which other week?

00:21:28

IV [Overtalking] what was your…? In terms of… yes, which was your favourite week?

IE Okay, so I think my favourite week was week one and week two, to be honest. Yes, so week one, that entrepreneurial mindset thing, it’s really key for you to know yourself, you know, before you could even start this company that’s, you know, external to you. You first need to know, like, are you capable? Not just in terms of, like, technical skills, but the soft skills that you need to build this company.

Do you have them? And if you don’t, what are you going to do to upskill yourself? So week one, for me, was, like, everything. And then also identifying your purpose as a company. So week two was really great. And then also, the implementation. Because a lot of us, as entrepreneurs, we get stuck in the planning phase of, like… oh wow, this is a great idea, this is what I want to do, here’s a strategy.

But how are you going to implement that? What are the tools that you need? Do you really need funds? The human capital involved and other resources that you might need to bring your strategy and plans into fruition. So I think, yes, that was really key. And then the sales week, because inasmuch as, you know, you can have all these great ideas, you need to sell the product for it to actually be sustainable.

So the salespersonship week was really mind-blowing for me, even the techniques that they put out there, the sales processes.

00:23:14

And also the tools that you could use to, you know, track your progress, like the CRM for example. Yes, so that was a great week for me. The finance part, I think, coming from a finance background, I really must say that that week was… like, it changed my perspective on the way that I see finances. Because obviously I come from an IFRS background, and I usually want to overcomplicate the numbers and all of that.

So I think what came out there for me was the simplicity of building your finances. So it doesn’t need to be all complicated. It just needs to make sense, right, and it needs to be plausible assumptions and also testable and realistic.

IV That’s great feedback. Thank you. Especially coming from somebody who’s so strong in the financial services or CA background, you know.

IE Yes, yes. Then bootstrapping. Also, the content that came out of that was so key, because, you know, raising funding is something that… what do you call it? I don’t think it’s hard, it’s just people need to know why they’re raising funding, because a lot of people just want to raise funds and all of that. And sometimes you can really do without, like, the big money for a while in your company while you’re testing your model and all of that.

So the techniques that came out of the bootstrapping, and also just understanding that, like, while you’re bootstrapping, there… you know, it gives you, like, creative freedom, you know, to solve, like, daily problems within the company.

00:25:11

I think what I also learned about the bootstrapping is that sometimes when you raise money, it tends to make you a little bit lazy, finding, you know, those creative solutions around the business, because you might think that throwing money at your problems is going to make them go away, but sometimes it actually makes the problems worse than they are.

IV Yes, definitely.
IE Yes, and then also the exposure to, like, legalese. I didn’t know about the company. We actually just started engaging with them [overtalking].

IV Oh that’s fantastic.

IE Yes, so what I also realised is that, you know, running a start-up is… I think what’s hard about it is, like, juggling all these different, you know, disciplines within the company, and at times, we want to do everything ourselves, and like sometimes there are actually companies out there that can help you out, you know, especially with the legal aspects.

So legalese is really great, knowing about them. And then talent management, yes, so I think that was a great way of putting that into perspective, in terms of also leading your team.

00:26:35

What did I…? Like the most important thing that I got out of this?

IV Well, maybe I can frame it slightly differently. So would you say… where would you say the course assisted you the most in terms of entrepreneurial development, for yourself?

So maybe think about your entrepreneurial capabilities on reflection before the course, and what they are now, coming towards the end of the programme.

IE Sjoe. That’s actually quite a loaded question.

IV Yes, absolutely.

IE Sjoe. Okay. Whoa. Okay, I really need to think about that one. So I think for me, coming into the programme, I knew… okay, I knew that I know certain things, but I also didn’t know the things that I don’t know. So what the programme did for me was that, you know, there’s actually a lot of stuff out there that you don’t know about.

But number one, you don’t need to know everything, right, but you just need to know the right stuff. Because the content was… like every single week, there was a… I had a new perspective on the topic that was at hand. And before, like, the programme, I would go through, like, a lot of material online, just reading stuff, but my perspective didn’t change.

00:28:13

So I think me, as an entrepreneur, like, after the programme, firstly, it’s implementing the things that I had learned throughout the programme, and also enabling myself to further be able to find those types of content. I don’t know how I’m going to do it, because I don’t know how you guys did it to find all of those.

So what I did was I kept a link of most of the content, just to see, okay, cool, there’s a common thread. This is kind of what’s happening. Because I think after the programme, you also need to, like, sustain yourself, you know, as an entrepreneur, and not just say, I’ve gone through these 12 weeks and so I’m just going to put that content on the backburner.

You still need to, kind of, update the knowledge that you’ve learned. And then I think the other thing that I learned was, you know, the people skills. So before the programme, I kind of thought that, you know, being a leader… oh yes, so the other key thing that came out is the understanding of, like, being a leader within the company.

You know, you pool all these people with, like, great skills and expertise, and often what I used to want to do before the programme is kind of, like, direct everyone and say, no, this is what you need to do, and all of that.

00:29:49

But if those people really know what they’re doing, you, as a leader, you need to give them the platform to do what they need to do. That’s what I got from that leadership week.

I don’t know if I’m answering your questions, because I feel like it’s [overtalking].

IV No, that’s very cool. It’s fantastic feedback, because I mean, you know, just hearing it from an entrepreneur when you’re on the other side of teaching entrepreneurship, you know, it’s very… it’s enlightening to hear somebody talking about their experiences and in such a positive way.
So yes, thank you. I think... I mean, you're answering most of my questions I've got. I really have one more that I'd like... and then we can just kind of generally talk about what you... what your... if there's anything else you want to ask me.

But you made [sound slip] that it would be great to have an in-person networking session at some stage, but is there anything else on the course that you think could be improved upon?

IE Could be improved upon? I think it was the mentoring... or the mentor/mentee pairing, because, like, my mentor... I... well, first of all, I didn't really have much engagement with her, and just looking at her background and what she does and all of that, I don't think it was suitable for... not just my [sound slip].
IV For you?
00:31:14
IE Yes. Yes.
IV No, that's good. Great feedback. And tell me, that's actually... I'd love to dig a little bit deeper here. So do you have a... have you got a mentor, or have you had a mentor at any stage in your life before this?
IE Yes, I did have a mentor. I don't know if you know Shepherd Shonhiwa. He was the COO of Times Media.
IV Yes, yes, I know him.
IE Yes, so I went through... I think it was also a 12-week programme with... it wasn’t a programme, but it was... yes, it was an executive coaching programme essentially.
IV Okay, fantastic.
IE Yes, so I used to meet up with him on a monthly basis, where we’d talk about stuff and he would talk me through my challenges. And so, like, every month we had a topic that we were going to discuss, and then we would link it to the things that were happening within the company.
IV Brilliant. Okay. So you think that that... perhaps something like that would work better in an instance like this?
00:32:19
IE Yes. Yes.
IV Okay. No, that’s very helpful. I think it’s one of the things that’s the most challenging part of the programme for Startup School, is finding the right guys who are prepared to volunteer, and then making sure that that introduction is the best possible one. You know, and I think we don’t... in this early stage, you know, we don’t always get it right.

There are a couple of guys that definitely hit it off, but it’s not always the most successful introduction. On that note, would you be willing to consider, in the future... I mean, I know you’re going to be going into an incredibly busy time now, with your business, but in a couple of months’ or years’ time, would yourself... availing yourself to be a mentor, would that be something you would be interested in?
IE Yes, I would definitely be interested to mentor.
IV Fantastico. That’s always good to hear. It’s such a... I think that’s important to the entrepreneurship space, is there are so many things you learn on the ground that can’t be taught. That, you know, if you can hear it somebody who’s experienced it, that learning is just so much better.
IE Yes, absolutely, yes. I just wanted to ask something, though, if you don’t mind.
IV Yes, please go ahead.
IE So I think the other thing, for me, that might have, like, helped... so looking at, you know, like the business or the things that, like, Investec does, and I don’t know what your level of involvement is, but, like, as, like, the Startup School...
So for example, as an entrepreneur, we need like access to market and all of that, so is it possible to get some kind of, like, business support from Investec itself? Access to market or even just opening up those doors, knowing that, like, we’ve gone through the programme and now we want to implement our business and our idea, is it possible to get that kind of support?

IV Yes. Absolutely. So very early days for us. We ran a beta presentation last year, with a small cohort of about 30, and so now you guys are the first full cohort, where we had 90 starting and 80 people finish. And so we are… we do work very closely with Investec, and they are developing all sorts of pretty cool sort of post-course…

Some of these words are so… they kind of have the wrong connotations, but, you know, incubator-type spaces and ongoing support, particularly in accounting services, legal services and investment… sort of investor platforms, where you have access to multiple guys who are interested in investing.

So there is a lot bubbling just under the surface in that space, and this kind of course is going to be the kind of transition into that. So the cream of the crop will quite often find themselves in more of a relationship with Investec and where they are art in terms of the entrepreneurial space.

While I can’t answer the question 100%, I can say to you that there is a… you have a good… you have good access, now, to an opportunity to access the space there, having gone through this programme funded by them. So this… you entered the competition?

IE Yes, I did.

IV Oh, fantastic.

IE I just submitted it late, because I was not feeling well.

IV No, not a problem. So while that is a competition, I mean, you’ll… as an accountant, you’ll also recognise that it’s not the biggest amount of money from a funding perspective, but what it does do is the… it puts those businesses, such as yourself, in front of key people at Investec.

And if anything, it just gets your name and your business seen in that space, and whether it comes directly out of what you’ve done now and what this immediate time is about, or further down the line, the introduction has been made. Yes, so they’ve actually got a very exciting programme which they’re currently piloting, which is about… and I’m… Sorry, I’m now… why… its actual name has slipped my mind.

It’s where they give you a… essentially like a shadow chief of finance, who is based at Investec. And they shadow the company for a couple of months, to assist with really getting it launched. And that sits separately from Startup School. It’s Investec’s own initiative, but one of the guys who was on the beta presentation the end of last year has made onto that programme.

So yes. It is an exciting space, and as we grow, we’re going to see a lot more of that kind of thing happening. How much do you… do you know about some of the other Investec initiatives, like their… where they visit different countries that have got… are very strong in the start-up space? Have you seen any of that stuff advertised by Investec?

IE The last one that I saw was in 2016 or 2017, about going to Silicon Valley.

IV Yes, okay. Cool.

IE But ever since then, I haven’t seen anything else.

IV Okay, cool. Alright, well, I will… we’ll definitely be… you’ll be getting a lot more, kind of, information around what they do and don’t do as we move forward. But that’s a great question and a great word of advice. Is there anything else? I mean, I’m very keen to pick your brain. I mean, on what other improvement you think could be made to the course.
What other improvements? Oh, before I answer that, I actually wanted to hear from you what do you think were, like, the key takers that we should have taken from the programme?

Sjoe. Well, I think you hit the nail on the head right at the beginning of this conversation, when we were talking about people have assumptions about what they think it is to start a business and to run a business.

And what we really hope we can get across is that, while it’s hard work and there’s lots you need to know, it’s not impossible, and it takes just some dedication to the task, but also simplifying things, as you said about the finance module, you know.

Don’t overcomplicate things unnecessarily. Kind of separate… pare it right down and see what’s the essence of this thing and what you need to do. So we’re hoping that the takeaway for a lot of guys is that all this complexity that people almost, like… the sort of shroud of mystery that they put over business, isn’t so mysterious. You know, it’s… it’s relatively simple stuff.

It doesn’t mean it’s easy stuff. You know, you take it all together and try and be as logical as you can, and you can actually do this thing. So that would be, for me, what is the high-level takeaway. And then the other thing is that it’s… that there is access to information fairly freely nowadays, you know.

And that’s, like, if you see, as you said, a lot of our content is curated, but a lot of the time when you, as an individual, you go online and you try and search for something, you eventually just… it’s just there’s so much noise, you don’t know what is good, what is bad, what is…

So we hope that we’re kind of able to distil some of that stuff, get the most from what’s already available, and also learn that you can find quality out there. And once again, approaching it in a simple, straightforward way. Yes, and then I suppose, as you said, your favourite module, which is my favourite module, is that entrepreneurial mindset.

I think that it’s so critical to just have… approach it with the right thinking and attitude. So those would be my three big things that people need to take away.

Okay.

Cool, does that answer your question?

Yes, definitely. Definitely. Geez, what can be improved? Honestly, for me, I really feel that, as an online learning platform, this was the best that I have gone through, because like I said, I had already gone through Tony Elumelu and I would also add the Orange Corners there, because we did have an aspect of online learning. But yes, so I think this, for me… like, after this, I don’t have to go through another online learning experience, because this just set the bar.

So I know… okay, obviously I don’t know everything, but I know enough to kind of get started.

Yes, so now it’s just a matter of implementing what I’ve already learned, and I don’t think I’ll be going through another online learning experience.

Fantastic. So in terms of ongoing relationship with somebody like us. So, you know, we spoke about it, and you’ve actually got great experience in terms of all the sort of options that are out there. What would you say would be a good way for us to continue kind of being involved with you?

By that, I mean understanding what you’re doing, where you’re at, how the business is going. And I mean I know there’s typical things, like, yes, we could send out newsletters or, you know, that kind of thing. What…? Do you have anything that you could suggest to us
that would work for you, knowing how busy you’re going to be, what’s happening in the future, how we could continue being a part of what it is you’re doing?

IE I think it’s also, yes, just playing an advisory role in our company. Even if it’s like, you know, a monthly check-in to say, okay, cool, where are you? What are you doing? What’s… what challenges are you facing? How have you solved them?

So I can also have that feedback loop to know that I am solving the challenges that I’m faced with on the daily the right way, and I’m applying myself correctly with what I’ve learned throughout the programme. And yes, like you said, those little things of, like, sending out newsletters.

It would be great… and like I said, the in-person… so if you guys do have networking events that you’re hosting, it would be nice for us to be invited to them. Yes.

IV Fantastic. What would… I’m now just spit-balling here, but like, what would you feel about digital networking events. So I know there’s a lot of guys who do these, sort of, you know, hackathons and those sorts of things, but would you be willing to try a virtual networking… like a webinar style thing, sort of once a quarter?

IE Yes. Yes, that would definitely be helpful.

IV Great, okay, cool. You know, because one of the things we, as a digital school, and as an online school, we have people from all around the country and indeed the sort of SADC region, so it’s often kind of difficult to get everybody in one room, and while I think as we grow and we could definitely look at having, like, one in Cape Town, one in Johannesburg, one in Durban, it would be good to also make sure that there’s a bigger one that kind of got everybody from a broader, more nationally, in one room.

IE Yes.

IV Okay, cool. We’re very keen to test one of those, which we’ll do towards the end of the year.

But cool. Thank you… I really, really enjoyed this. Thanks so much for all your feedback, and you’ve now got my email, so please, if you have anything after this meeting, after this chat, that you have, that you didn’t get a chance to talk about, please pop me an email, let me know if there’s anything I missed or anything you want to add.

And I really appreciate the time you’ve taken and good luck with the competition, and we’ll see you, hopefully, on the seventh in the prizegiving closing ceremony.

IE Okay. Thank you so much, Jared. It’s been really, really great.

IV Thanks so much. I really appreciate the time you’ve taken.

IE Okay, no problem. I’ll definitely pop you a mail.

IV Great. You’re a star. Have a fantastic day and we’ll chat soon.

IE Okay, thank you so much.

IV Cheers. Bye.

IE Cheers.

Lynton SUS interview

Speaker Key:

IV Interviewer

IE Interviewee

Pretty cold there. Can you hear me now?
IE  Yes, I can hear you.
IV  Okay, fantastic. Whereabout in Joburg are you based?
IE  So I’m based in Morningside, which is, I think, in Sandton.
IV  Okay, cool. Yes, I grew up in Joburg, and I went to Trinity House. I was in Randburg for most of my life, so yes, I know Joburg well.
IE  And whereabout are you [inaudible]?
IV  I’m in the southern suburbs of Cape Town, in Plumstead.
IE  Okay, very nice area.
IV  Yes, yes, we’re very happy here. Cool, thank you so much, as I say, for agreeing to chat with me, and well done on completing the course and for having such a promising-looking business, and kind of committing to the journey with us. It’s been fantastic.

00:00:53

The purpose of today’s interview is just for me to get a little bit of a sense of your experience on the course, some feedback, kind of why you did it, and what you thought could be improved, those sorts of things. So I’ve got about 15 questions that we can go through, but it’s just more of a conversation, if that’s okay.

IE  No, that’s absolutely perfect.
IV  Perfect. So I think if we could start, just… could you give me the name of your business and a little bit of a background on your business and what it does?
IE  Sure, okay. So the name of the business is Snap Slip, and SnapSlip is the digital receipting and analytics application. So basically it eradicates the use of paper receipts out of point-of-sale, and it sends these receipts digitally to a customer’s profile within the application.

Benefits for a customer is that they never have to worry about the hustle and tedious process of paper receipting, so they won’t have bags, purses, or wallets filled with paper receipts, or the nuisance of tracking those receipts. The customer can use these receipts for exchanges, refunds, warranties and guarantees, and tax and insurance purposes.

00:01:59

[Sound slip] value and the revenue generation lies in the data analytics that I make available to the actual retailer. And how that works is [sound slip] very briefly, is I run all the data from the receipts. I then match that up with customer profiling, and in a nutshell, via an online bespoke online dashboard, you know, customised to the store’s needs, I can tell the store in a nutshell what someone is buying, when they’re buying it, and to a certain extent, what they might buy next.

So then the store can cross-sell them products, advertise directly to them and just build brand loyalty as well as upsell products.

IV  Yes, that sounds very cool. I definitely would like to use it for tax purposes. That would be an incredible app for me.
IE  No, definitely. And also, just the… you know, the environmental side of it is that it creates an environmentally-sustainable ecosystem due to the fact that we’re getting rid of paper. There’s no dependence on paper, as well as there’s no paper usage or wastage.

IV  No, that’s fantastic. Cool. So tell me, have you ever done any entrepreneurship programmes before this one? Traditional and/or online?
IE  To be honest, no I haven’t. You know the only entrepreneurship, and that’s the sad part, I think, about the learning syllabus in university and in secondary school, is that we’re not exposed to that level of entrepreneurship. I think, you know, the most I’ve ever been exposed to is probably one of these flea markets that we had to run as pupils in Grade Seven or so.

00:03:46

IV  Yes, I remember, yes.
IE That was a very brief, you know, introduction to it. And I really wish that universities could offer this as a module, because I do believe that there’s a lot of intrinsic value in doing it. Especially a course like the Startup School.

IV Great, thank you. So for you, in your mind, what do you think innovation means in relation to online education platforms like the Startup School?

IE So I personally believe the Startup School is a brilliant, innovative way of actually learning and, you know, going through the medium of the various topics on the course. The reason, personally, I felt that it was brilliant, because it was so efficient.

It was online, you could do it anywhere. All you needed to have is a computer, or even you could possibly use your smartphone device as well, and you could literally, if you have a spare half an hour, if you have a spare hour during the day, if you’re sitting and possibly, you know, waiting in between a meeting, you could quickly log on and then go through the content.

00:04:53 And, you know, the learnings were at your own pace, so that you could possibly… sorry, I just want to switch my phone to silent. You could possibly go at your own pace and your own time, and it was just a very friendly way of actually going through the learnings, and it actually encouraged me to, you know, prioritise a bit of time, but also know in the back of my mind that it’s so flexible that I can, you know, move things around and facilitate the learnings.

IV That’s great, man, thank you. That’s very cool to hear. So here’s another question that’s also a bit, sort of… it may not be that clear, so we can just sort of chat it through. But what do you think inclusive, the kind of concept of inclusive or inclusivity means in relation to online education?

IE So if I had to… and this is from my understanding, I mean, [sound slip] in the sense that it… I felt that I was very much… even though the learnings were, you know, across all aspects of entrepreneurship, I felt it was very inclusive to what I’m doing. I felt that, on a personal level, it touched exactly the hard points that I was going through.

From… you know, from the very first learning of characteristics of an entrepreneur, you know, often when you start your journey, you don’t think of those small nuances that actually make quite a great impact on your journey through the entrepreneurship mindset.

And although this was a very broad course, I felt that it was very inclusive to the hard points that I was going through, and I felt that it was actually customised to me, as well.

00:06:32 IV That’s great to hear.

IE [Overtalking].

IV Cool. So I mean, why did you apply? What kind of got you…? What set you in motion to, you know, do the application process and commit to this journey?

IE So I think the thing that really spurred me on was the videos. I watched the video… I forget the gentleman’s name, but he had [overtalking].

IV Adile[?]

IE Adile, yes. He had the biscuit factory. So I actually saw Startup School on Facebook. I think it was advertised on my Facebook, if I’m not mistaken.

IV Probably, yes. Yes.

IE And I watched the video, and you know, the video really took me back and to think that, you know, the main concept of me actually learning anything in terms of entrepreneurship was either going through the Lean Start-up or reading some sort of material or a book, or listening to a podcast.

But then again, it’s very vague and it’s not personal, and it’s not that personal touch and, you know, that intrinsic value that you get from a course like the Startup School.
And I watched that video, and it really took my interest, and I said no, let me apply for this. Once I was accepted, I was over the moon, because I realised that this here is a massive learning opportunity to better myself as an entrepreneur.

IV  Fantastic. That’s great. Yes, he’s a… Adile’s a very special, inspiring story, that, hey. That’s such a [overtalking].

IE  Yes, the story really touched me, especially the part where he wants to give back, as well, to the community and how the Startup School actually helped him accomplish that goal, as well. Just showing that it’s not only a revenue or growth-gared learning initiative. It’s also one that deals to, you know, helping the greater community and, you know, bettering the environment or the entrepreneurship ecosystem.

IV  Yes, fantastic. So talk me through your experience of the course. Kind of what you… what was it like at the start, what was it like in the middle, how did you find it towards the end?

IE  So, you know, for me, it was a first, because I’ve never done any correspondence learning. All the… my… throughout my university career and my high school career, it was always, you know, in a classroom or in a lecture room, listening to someone lecture.

00:08:52  And to be totally honest, you possibly take only 30% of what that person is actually talking about, because you either… you know, your mind goes racing off somewhere, and you’re not really in tune to what that person is lecturing about.

The medium that I felt in terms of this online learning platform was excellent, because you were in control of the pace of how you want to go through the learnings, as well as the… you know, the interactive videos, which I believe a video says way more than actually reading a bit of text, because you’re able to grasp the concept, personally, for me, by watching a video and then, you know, you can summarise a video and say, and this point and that point and that point. Whereas if you read a text, you kind of lose it halfway through. And I really felt that that was quite powerful, as well as the… you know, the examples and the chatroom and the conversation that, you know, you could spur on there was excellent, because you’re also not looking at only your perspective. You’re also able to look at the perspective of the other entrepreneurs, and then broaden your horizons.

So in that regard, I think it was a brilliant format and brilliant medium.

IV  Great, that’s fantastic. If you think about, at the beginning of the course, your entrepreneurial sort of capabilities, what do you think they were at the start, and then do you think that there was significant development, and if so, what was that development by the end?

IE  So before I started the Startup School, I had no clue about many of these facets. For instance, I can give you an example, I never, ever thought about design thinking. You know, using the design thinking process to solve a problem. That never registered with me. As well as, you know, a marketing plan.

My marketing plan would probably be, oh, print a poster or a pamphlet and put it up there, but I didn’t realise the fundamental development points of actually gaining a value from that marketing plan and how you should set out that marketing plan, as well as the segments that you need to push that marketing plan into.

You know, starting off, I was… I went in with an open mind, and I’m very, very glad I did, because I was able to, if I may use this colloquial way of saying it, be a sponge and absorb all the learnings, and actually put those learnings to use in my business. And, you know, what really helped me a lot, as well, is having that mentor.
So I had Jackie as a mentor, and Jackie and I would constantly chat over WhatsApp, and I think I might have annoyed her a couple of times, because I did chat to her quite often, but it was so brilliant. And the feedback that she gave me after each submission, you know, was amazing, because I really was able to take that feedback and, you know, not only see it from my perspective, but see it from a holistic perspective.

Which she’s viewing it from. And actually add that into my… going forward into my forthcoming submissions. And that, for me, was a great deal of help, and from where I started to where I ended off was chalk and cheese. I believe that this course has enriched me, you know, that no textbook or no lecture could have done.

That’s fantastic. So I mean it’s so great to hear that you say one of the highlights for you was the… Jackie as a coach, and the feedback that you got from her. I think that’s such an important bit of feedback for us to hear, because that’s… as you would have noticed in the course, we don’t grade anything, like give a mark, you know, this is 80%, this is 90%. Rather we, give actionable feedback.

Did… so you said you enjoyed the feedback, and you said you were able to use it. Am I correct in repeating what you said there?

Yes, that’s correct, yes. I was able to… I know she was very descriptive, which I really, really appreciated and really, really actually very, very appreciated that she was so descriptive in her feedback. And that was the point that really helped me in my forthcoming submissions, because I was able to, you know, gear my thinking in line with not only looking at my perspective, but look at it as a holistic perspective of what that particular topic was about.

Before… and one of the points that stuck out for me was I was engaging with a lot of individuals before this Startup School in regards to trying to, you know, appeal for funding or pitching for a strategic partnership, or just pitching the concept to prospective clients. And they… to be honest with you, they weren’t very successful before the course.

After the course, and especially going through, you know, the various topics, as well as, you know, the business strategy, and, you know, the activity on pitching your business, I
was able to encompass all those learnings into my final pitch, and I’ve actually had some very successful pitches, as well as interviews.

One of the highlights was, and I used a lot of the learnings in the school, was that Investec runs an initiative where they take a certain number of entrepreneurs in a specific field to another country, so I was selected as one of the top eight Fintech solutions at the time to go across to Singapore.

And in my interview with the panel, I actually used a lot of the learnings through which I learned in the Startup School, and that, I think, if I hadn’t had that exposure, I don’t think I would have been as successful in that application as I was after having this exposure. As well as I actually really spoke to a lot of the entrepreneurs on the trip with me, and I really pushed them to join the Startup School and I really puncted the [overtalking].

00:16:03
IV Brilliant.
IE For me, because for me, I think it’s a must-have value-add to any entrepreneur.
IV Great, thank you. That’s very cool. The last question I have for you, and then I will… I’m happy to answer any questions you have for me, is simply: do you think… or where do you think the course could be improved?
IE You know, to be honest, and I’m not just doing this to be nice, but to be completely honest, I think the course is fantastic. I really can’t fault it any shape, way or form, because it was so efficient, it was so easy to use, the mentors were absolutely brilliant. I also was able to secure another mentor, Nick Longley.
IV Oh, lovely.
IE Yes. So that worked well. I think the only thing there was a conflict in schedule, because he was based in the UK, so if anything, maybe that could have been addressed a little bit better. But that was also on our onus, Nick and myself’s onus, because obviously we had to curate our schedules, as well as him being two hours behind.

So that was just a bit of a difficulty or challenge, but that was purely on our side. But in regards to any improvement, I think you guys are doing a brilliant job. You know, give credit where credit is due, this is a fantastic course, and I highly recommend it.
IV That’s fantastic. Thank you so much. Well, have you got any questions you want to ask me, or anything else you want to add?
00:17:36
IE Yes, possibly, you know, if there is any further courses in, say, maybe… I know this one is the Startup School, but if there are any other entrepreneurship-inclined courses that you guys offer, please, I would love to, you know, have that exposure and go through them. And, you know, I… the one point that I’d like to bring to your attention is I wish that they would offer something like this in university, too.

And going through to Singapore, they actually offer similar nuances of the Startup School as a curriculum in university, and I wish we could have done that in South Africa, because I studied an Economics degree, and I feel like I wasted four years of my life. Whereas I did this for, what was it? 12 weeks?
IV Yes.
IE And I feel like it added way more value than a four-year degree.
IV Yes, it’s amazing. It’s very interesting, that. I think that… I think these kinds of… the online space is definitely shifting the needle in the education space, but as… you know, as it grows, there’s also a lot of stuff being offered that is of low quality. So it’s about… and the universities, in theory, should be able to… you know, you should be able to trust that they’re offering good quality.
00:18:51
So it’s an interesting dynamic, you know, between accredited and not accredited, and where it’s institutionally-based, but it’s an exciting space, and we’re very excited to be in it, because I think we can have a massive impact, and I’m really looking forward to that.

IE The pain point, I think, in our country, is that we don’t have enough people geared into entrepreneurship or in the entrepreneurship mindset. And, you know, that is… the point to blame there is exposure, and I think this course really exposes you to that thought process. And [over-talking].

IV That’s fantastic. Cool. Well, thank you so much. And I just wanted to make one more comment, like, in terms of other courses, we are developing a deep dive marketing course, specifically geared to those guys who have completed this course. So it’ll be a six to eight-week, much more intensive marketing focus course for those start-ups who are in the early stages.

So I’d be very excited about having you on that course, because we’re going to run it as a beta presentation, so as a test. Probably October-November, but we’ll keep you in the loop.

IE Definitely. I’d really love to be part of that.

IV Fantastic. Yes, it’ll be a small cohort and, you know, we’ll be testing it, but the content is being developed at the moment by some brilliant people off the back of our learnings from this particular presentation. So I’m excited about what it can offer and how it’s going to shift the needle for a lot of guys who are… have a basic understanding of marketing, but actually need to, as I say, shift the needle and do something very different.

And we’re looking forward to maybe making that impact in that space.

IE No, definitely. Sorry, Jared, I just want to point out one more thing, if possible. I think, you know, if you guys… just to expose this concept a bit more. I found it on Facebook, but I think if you guys hit all the social media streams, as well as, you know, some of the entrepreneurial sites, like Ventureburn, I definitely think you’d get a greater, or maybe even enhance your response.

I mentioned this to Innovate, as well, in regards to the trip in which they took us for the young… you know, the SA entrepreneurs, that it… you know the exposure, and a lot of the other entrepreneurs resonated with this, that the exposure wasn’t, you know, as in-your-face as some of the other things out there.

So, you know, I think this is a brilliant course, and I think, you know, the more videos that you guys have and the more exposure you have, I think, you know, people would really latch onto it, because I think there’s a lot of value that you guys are creating in that.

IV That’s fantastic. I thank you, and I really do take that to heart. I think we’ve been quite deliberate in our slow build-up, making sure that our product is, and our course is, of highest possible quality before really pushing it out there.

And I think you’re right: now we are shifting into a space where we do need to start spreading it a bit further. And we’re looking forward to running… we’re going to be running four presentations next year, with trying to target about a hundred to 120 students per presentation. So… as opposed to just the two presentations we’re doing this year.

So yes, we’re super-excited about what the impact can be.

IE I know the Investec… because you guys are partnered up with Investec, Investec holds a lot of value. That brand really goes places. So when people see that you… you know, your concept is partnered up with Investec, you run for the doors for that, because that’s… it’s a really hot commodity.

IV Yes, no, 100%. Well, thank you so much, and I will be in touch. Please, you’ve got my email address now, pop me an email at any stage if you have any concerns, suggestions,
whatever. We look forward to seeing you on the seventh of September at the closing
ceremony, and that’s when the announcement will be made for the prize money.

But our relationship will continue with you, as you grow your business and as we
offer more and more to support entrepreneurs in South Africa.

IE Excellent. Thank you so much for your time, Jared. I really appreciate it.

00:23:13

And thank you for the exposure to this course. It was absolutely brilliant.

IV Great. Thank you. And thanks for committing.

IE Sure.

IV Cool. Thank you. Cheers, bye.

00:23:23

Gcina SUS Interview

Speaker Key:

IV Interviewer

IE Interviewee

00:00:00

IV Fantastic. Okay, I’m hitting record now. Great. So chuffed to have you chat to us, and
so glad that you were on the call. So really what we’re going to talk about today is just to get
some feedback from you on what your experience was like and how you enjoyed or didn’t
enjoy certain aspects.

So I think the best place for me to start is to get a little bit of a sense of your business
and a little bit of a background to the business, and what the name of the business is, etc.

IE Okay, so thank you once again for the opportunity, Jared, I absolutely appreciate it.

My business is called Go Gcina, and what we do, we manage and curate empowerment
galleries, art galleries, and it’s funny how this little enterprise started, because the company
was dormant, and it just so happened that one of my friends, who’s a curator, went into
maternity leave.

And she needed somebody to look after a current contract which she has with the
IDC. They’ve got a gallery, which empowers emerging artists.

00:01:15

And because I’d worked with her previously at her gallery at Melrose Arch, I was the
obvious choice. So, this, kind of like, gave my business a second chance to basically be
active. But I obviously didn’t have any direction in terms of beyond this, what do we do with
this?

And with, obviously, Startup Schools, then I started putting processes into place. So,
in essence, we manage empowerment galleries, we look after emerging artists, and further to
that, we then utilise their commissioned work, either to put it in corporate spaces, government
spaces, to do festivals, art festivals, and any art events that will give these artists exposure
and ultimately help them to create a career out of their passion.

IV Love it. Love it. Being an absolute art lover myself, it’s so cool to hear people doing
this kind of work.

IE [Unclear] I just… for me, it’s such an organic talent that you don’t need to go to
school for. And yet, they sit on their talent and they starve. You know, they starve. And so I
thought to myself, you know, given this platform that I have, I think there’s a purpose that we
can further utilise and kind of permeate into this industry.

So yes, that’s how it came about.

00:02:47
 IV Cool. Have you ever done any other entrepreneurship programmes before Startup School?
IE No, except obviously that I’ve got a degree and it has business as part of my majors, but no.
IV What degree did you do?
IE I did Media Studies, so it’s a Bachelor of Arts degree from University of Joburg.
IV Oh cool. UJ.
IE Yes. UJ. It was RAU back then.
IV Yes, was it RAU? Well, back… I was at Wits, so at the time that it changed to… it was still RAU, I think, when I started at Wits, and then it was UJ. Yes.
IE Yes, so we were part of the guinea pigs at the… with the interchange. So we never go any accolades for it, but we’re kind of like the bunch that made this work, you know, so…
IV Brilliant. Brilliant. Cool, so… in terms of your experience with the Startup School, I think what’s interesting for me is it’s an online… you know, the online learning thing. I wanted to find out: what do you think was different between the online experience and your previous experience of doing a contact-based degree?
IE Okay, so firstly my creative side kind of makes me a technophobe, a little bit. I love my gadgets to a certain limit, so my experience, initially, when I signed up for the school, I thought I’d somehow still have to go and attend class, you know.
00:04:25 And I’m a very social person. I love socialising with people. So I thought, okay, I’d get to interact with other students. But then when I further learned that it’s an online course, I kind of got a bit of the technophobia coming into play, as well. So I was, like, how do you do this? Because traditionally, I’m used to going into class, I’m used to submitting my assignments to a lecturer.
And, you know, interacting physically with the lecturer who’s there in a physical form. So initially it was a bit of a shock, and I guess with the tutorials that you have, the online guidelines, I kind of had to, like, go back now and again to kind of, say, am I perfectly clear with what’s expected of me in terms of me learning from my computer from home, without me, you know, having to go to class?
So I kept on going back, just to, like, second-check if I don’t need to be in class anywhere sometimes, so it was a bit of a shock, but not a difficult platform to get on board and adapt to.
IV Great, so the question that I have is sort of… it’s a little bit out there that I was… respond as you like. What does innovation mean to you in relation to online education platforms?
IE Innovation, for me, in terms of online platforms, it means accessibility to people that were previously not privy, or had access to information because maybe they are remotely placed.
00:06:23 But with innovation obviously comes smart technology, and I think that has kind of like given, or equalised, society in terms of making sure that knowledge is spread across equally to people that are now the ones that want to receive the information. So before it was for the privileged only, but with innovation it’s allowed for access to be more broadly available and to basically create equality in terms of knowledge provision.
IV Cool. So that leads me to the next question: what does inclusive mean in relation to online education?
IE So inclusive for me would mean that, whereas it used to be for a few exclusive minorities, it has now created… inclusivity has now created a platform where all of those
people that were once not able to access that, never had those exclusive rights to access information, are now included as being part of that community of learning.

**IV** Great. Cool. What made you apply for this course?

**IE** So it's a funny thing, because I knew nothing about the course. It was... yes, and we've got a WhatsApp group with some of my previous schoolmates, and one of them is already in business, and we kind of like share information, which is now part of that inclusivity thing, as well, because of me being on that WhatsApp group and innovation and technology giving me that platform, we were able to share.

00:08:21

Or he was able to share this information that, guys, there's an online course that you guys can take up and look at if you guys want to, kind of like, you know, grab the opportunity. And I looked into it, went through, obviously, the qualifying criteria, and I thought to myself, wow, I'm in a situation where I need direction in terms of... not just for Go Gcina, because I own another entity called Flexichaba[?], where I am a BEE partner.

It's a company that offers printers, multifunctional printers, and it was a new industry to me, and me being given an opportunity to head up this business, I absolutely needed direction both ways. So with Flexichaba and Go Gcina, just to take it up and kind of give it that boost.

So I thought to myself, for that amount of money, this can buy me the world, you know. And yes, so that's how I got to learn about it. It was through basically a friend on WhatsApp and me hitting up that link and getting to just find out and research more about this course.

**IV** Cool. So talk me through the experience that you had on the course.

**IE** So I'm not... I'm a big talker. I'm not... I don't enjoy writing, but it's funny, when I get into it, then I kind of can do it.

00:09:58

So just to talk you through maybe my overall experience, my biggest challenge was the exercises, or what did we call them again? It was...

**IV** Activities.

**IE** Activities. Was activities where I had to write and express myself, and I think the ones where we did the videos, I absolutely enjoyed those. I loved them. Whether ultimately, you know, I probably got that activity wrong or right or whatever, for me it was just that presentation, I love. I love, love, love. So overall, that's in terms of the submission of the course, but in terms of the content itself, wow.

Some of the things are things that you're already practicing in business, but they just are not in a line processes, or they're not documented, so they're a bit haphazard. It's processes that are haphazard. So with this particular course, I've been able to then streamline processes. As little as my processes are, because we're at a start-up phase, we're not even scaling up yet, but it has helped me to kind of like set a foundation, purely from the content that I got from the Startup course.

It was really, really valuable. It has absolutely helped me to create and put procedures in place.

**IV** Excellent. Well, I mean, this... the next question's actually not dissimilar to what you just answered, but if you think about your entrepreneurial capabilities at the start of the course and what they look like now, is there a difference and can you tell me what kind of difference there is?

00:11:49

**IE** So I would say, definitely. So when I came into the course, I was already an entrepreneur, so I didn’t know I was an entrepreneur, because I've had, obviously, strong
sales I’m bringing, you know, through the different corporates that I’ve worked, I’ve been a business development manager, I’ve been in sales for 13 years, and successfully so.

But when I started the course, honestly, in terms of me taking on my own business and running with it, I had zero skills with that.

IV Okay.

IE And thinking outside of the box in terms of how I can get this little baby and grow it, shame, this baby was dying. It was going to be dormant for, like, the fifth time, probably, you know, but… So it was basically non-existent, and the course has basically given me an opportunity to take something that was at a non-existent level. 

I might not be where I wanted to be, but it has certainly moved miles from where it was when I started.

IV That’s fantastic to hear. So you mentioned that some of your challenges were in the committing things to paper, you know, the writing, which is not… lots of people do battle with it.

00:13:21

But I think… I mean, I have to comment, I think your stuff is brilliant, so I don’t think you should undersell yourself in terms of your writing, but what were your… did you have any other challenges on the course?

IE Yes. As much a we talk about, you know, inclusivity and innovation, network challenges in this country are endless.

IV Yes, talk me through those.

IE So I’m with Telkom, and, you know, most of the time, the only place that I could genuinely submit without any glitches is when I’m at the office. Now granted, the office is where I have to, kind of like, give 100% of my time to Flexichaba, because it’s a business that has been, kind of, afforded to me by partners that believe in me.

And so I have to give them 100% of my time. And there were those days when I tried to stay, or come to the office early to try and do my submissions, but I’m a single parent, so I have a single head at home, where I have to have my daughter at school at a certain time and pick her up at a certain time.

So it was a challenge for me to be at a place where data and network is always readily available.

00:14:54

IV Yes, okay that’s…

IE Yes, when I was at home, that’s when the challenge came through, because then I’d be using my phone to hotspot, which is on a Telkom network. Boy, I would probably submit ten times before this thing would go through, and at some point in time, I would even, like, just give up and say, you know what? Let me hit Mugg & Bean or McDonalds.

But going to Mugg & Bean or McDonalds means I have to pay, like, money, like for a coffee of whatever. So the only challenge that I really had with this platform, for a person like myself, who is trying to grow, I’m not established yet, every cent counts for me, was just the data.

That was… if there was a place where I could come and hotspot, maybe at Investec or whatever, you know, it would make life brilliantly easy. And then I think more than anything else, the work was spaced out quite nicely. It was just up to kind of like maintain the momentum. Otherwise, if you lose that, then the weekends become hectic, you know.

And I did find myself sometimes having, yes, hectic weeks, and then kind of leaving it for the least moment. And because Sundays I serve at church – I’m in choir – so mornings and the evenings, I’m at three church services.

00:16:19

So I never have a Sunday where I can sit and [overtalking].
IV: Oh, that’s hectic.
IE: And submit. So then I’d find the days that I’d left it for, last minute, for my Sundays, yes, I would almost tear off my weave, even though I can easily take it off, you know [overtalking]. I’m just going to tear off the hair of this weave. So that’s it, though. I think more than anything else, it is network.

And the rest was just challenges that we bring upon ourselves because we’re not facing up to those activities throughout the week [overtalking].
IV: Sure. I mean, I just wish we could… and I think it will come right, but I just wish it would happen faster, that internet was just a… like, everybody had it, and fast, and reliable, and at an affordable rate.
IE: Not expensive, yes.
IV: [Overtalking] it’s madness, you know. It really slows… it slows our economy down, you know, that people can’t just jump online fast and easy.
IE: No, and the thing is, I mean, I don’t consider myself that disadvantaged in terms of finances. Yes, sometimes, it’s a struggle. But I remember one night where my data, like, ran out as I was, like, hotspotting. I don’t what my laptop was basically downloading. I don’t know.

And then suddenly data was gone.

00:17:48 And I was, like, what? You are… I was literally… it was crazy. But it’s because of that accessibility. And I can imagine somebody who’s living, you know, below their means or, you know, they don’t even… it’s either bread or data, and [overtalking]. They’re the ones that will stay, kind of like, out of this inclusivity, even though innovation is moving. But they’re staying behind, just because of access.

[Overtalking] so that was just a challenge [overtalking].
IV: Okay. That… yes, I think that it is a common thread, so it’s great to hear it from you. So what were your highlights, then, of the course?
IE: My highlights for the course… I think, you know, when I started the business, I didn’t have direction. I was misdirected by where I want to take this, how I want to do it, and my biggest highlight, I think it was week two, where we learned about being a purpose-driven organisation. To this day, that lays the foundation of me waking up every single day to find purpose and what it is that I’m going to do in order to purpose somebody else.

So it’s become such a highlight for me, that, you know, to somebody, it might seem so tiny, but it blows my mind away every single day that I say to myself, may this business grow in its own purpose in order to purpose others. So that has been one of my biggest highlights for me to define both my businesses now as purpose-driven organisations.

00:19:42 I mean, for Go Gcina, I’ve purposed it to make a difference within the creative industry, particularly for women. You know, whether they be crafters, I just want to take them to a point where, you know, they can be functional artists, where we can find functional art, whether it’s in our home décor stores or whatever. But that has been my biggest passion and purpose.

And then for the other business, it’s basically to purpose girl technicians, and particularly technicians of colour, because I’m in an industry where technicians are predominantly male. I’ve yet to come across a female technicians who services a printer, you know.

So that has given me the highlight, overall highlight, for this course, because in all the other activities that I kind of did or submitted, the underlying theme, or the thread across them, was always to stick within purpose for whatever [overtalking] that I delivered.
So that has been a highlight for me. And I think, more than anything else, I’ve never had a mentor, any type of mentor, as much as I’ve got my two business partners. Yes, they probably are my mentors, but I’ve never seen them in that light. And… which is probably one of the biggest highlights as well, because now I do see them as mentors. You know, they were just people that have given me an opportunity, but I’ve never actually been deliberate about, you know, taking certain things from them, I think, that will help me grow.

00:21:21
So having a mentor, as well. And it’s always nice to name-drop and say, I’ve got a business mentor. So that is… yes, it’s quite nice. So yes, so those are my two top highlights.

IV Brilliant, thank you. So just another question, going back to the idea of inclusion, do you… did you think that the content… I mean, we talked about network being an issue, you know, data and that kind of stuff. But in terms of the content and the activities, did you find that they were, on the whole, inclusive?

IE I would say, not fully, not completely. And, you know, I come from a business background where I know language is such a barrier for a lot of people. The content is beautiful when you have a level of education like myself, but in essence, where entrepreneurship is needed the most is where people have never had the opportunity to go to school.

Because they probably sit with a talent which they can sell or trade within their immediate areas and create employment for those people, that would relate at the same language level or educational level, and yet, you know, we’re sitting with something so beautiful that can create… that can show, basically, like somebody’s progress, but they’re probably never going to be able to access it because of the language barrier, because of educational barriers.

00:23:03
So the content is beautifully suited for me, and maybe that’s what it’s meant for, but I would say that where entrepreneurship is really needed, and where people could benefit from courses like Startup School, I genuinely think maybe there is some type of intervention that could create a more… that could, kind of like, broaden that circle of inclusivity.

So at this rate, it’s beautiful, but [overtalking].

IV So in terms of those interventions, I’d love to hear some of… just like, I mean, these are spit-balling ideas, you know. When you say interventions, do you mean, like, pre-courses or the actual course probably being, you know, translated into a different language? You know, what are your ideas around that?

IE So you’ve hit it on the mark, you know, and we can further, you know, talk about this… extend on that. I mean, it could be translated into a language that would kind of like, you know, fit into our broader communities, first of all. But more than anything else, I think it’s the level at which we are at.

So if we could bring it just a little bit down, and even some of the even exercises in a simplistic format, I think, you know, for me, I had a challenge writing, not because of the language or the level of education, but it was merely a case of a like and a dislike, you know.

But for somebody who can potentially maybe… they don’t mind the writing, they probably love the writing, but their barrier is that they just don’t understand, so what is being expected of them, or even when they’re learning the course, maybe they don’t… they’re not capturing the essence of what it is that they’re learning.

00:25:04
And it’s not just at that level. I just find, even with schooling in South Africa, at some point in time, that’s where we’re not getting it right, where kids are just, like… I could possibly do Maths, it’s practical, but maybe the question, maybe it’s not in a simplistic form that fits, you know, their level or their background.
So I think we could expand on it further. Maybe people like me, people of colour, people that know... people that have been raised in these backgrounds, maybe where we’re also lacking is that once we get to a certain point or level, we kind of like leave, you know, that background behind us and we kind of, like, now inclusive in an exclusive manner, if you understand what I mean by that.

IV Yes, I do, yes.
IE You know, and [overtalking] maybe [overtalking].
IV I would love for you to sign up to mentor on the next programme, if you’re keen.
IE Well, absolutely. That would be great.
IV Cool.
IE I think, like, as I said to you, the highlight for me is you are purposed to purpose other people. Why would I want to sit on that?

00:26:14

You know, when I know I grew up in those conditions, yet my dad got the opportunity to take us out there. It’s because somebody also gave my dad an opportunity for him to be able to give us opportunity. So I would absolutely... I would take it on hands-down, definitely.

IV Brilliant. Cool. I’ve got one more question, and then you’re more than welcome to ask me anything. It’s really simply: do you think that the course could be improved upon? I mean, aside from the things we’ve spoken about, is there anything else you think could be done better?
IE I would have loved to meet my fellow students or classmates or, like... As I would have loved to have, like, an opportunity, even if it’s, like, graduation day, even if it’s during the course. I know there was exercises in between there that I think people did meet. I don’t remember what happened.

But just like one day, or two days, where as much as, yes, it’s online-driven and it’s beautiful, but if we are able to meet... for instance., the Joburg ones can meet the Joburg ones, like [overtalking] the Cape Town ones [overtalking].

But that’s the one thing: I would have absolutely loved to meet even my mentor, even like you guys, you know, just to humanise it a little bit and have a human aspect to it. After all, people buy from people because, I think, even though we had that platform to, kind of, like, network and utilise it to kind of, like get to know each other.

00:27:46

Because people are so busy and already they are businesspeople. If you don’t put time aside to, kind of like, take them away from their computer or their phone, or whatever, they’ll never get down to really networking and really getting to know each other. So I think we all could have maybe gained valuable knowledge from meeting each other, business networks that could have grown, because it’s kind of, like, it’s dead now.

And then, yes, I think that’s one of the things that I would absolutely love to maybe see an improvement on. And I think if we can have incentive-based drives or competitions or whatever as the course is going, because one of the other highlights that I have, my logo got designed by that 67 Logos for Mandela Day. So... and I think... I don’t know how many people took it on board on the course, but...

IV I only know of two others that were successful.
IE Oh, is it?
IV Yes, so I think you’re one of three.
IE Okay. From 83 of... how many were we?
00:29:02
IV Yes, 82 completed the course. 91 started.
Okay. It sounds like varsity. It’s just that we didn’t have first year, second year. By the time you get to third year, it’s like a handful of people.

Absolutely, the survivors, the lone survivors.

The die-hards. No, yes, I guess it’s like a bit of a survivor, hey? You are the weakest link, type of thing. So yes, so I think if we have, like, incentive-driven things in between, yes, sometimes it’s good as a businessperson that normally has to, like, cheerlead yourself on sometimes to have something like… when I got this logo, I was, like, wow. Wow. I was just, like, wow, somebody recognised that I needed this.

And it was just… it was a beautiful incentive for myself, so… that would be great, as well. Yes. Any business-driven incentives along the way, those would be nice.

Cool. Thank you so much. Have you got any questions for me or anything you want to add?

I think… no.

Well, you’ve got my email address, so if anything pops up, please just, yes, send me a mail and I’ll get back to you. If you’ve got any questions or comments post this interview, I’d be very happy to chat.

Okay. Maybe just one question: do you guys affiliate with Investec in terms of…I think they take groups onto these excursions.

Yes, the excursions, the Innovate stuff. We don’t actually have direct contact with that, but a number of our guys do get the opportunity to go on those courses, on those sort of things, because of the nature of how the course prepares you for that pitch and for that application.

Yes, so it’s definitely worth pursuing if it’s something that you’re interested in, but we don’t have a direct channel, as such. We know a lot of those guys, we do know what they’re doing and where they’re going and, as I say, there’s a cross-pollination, but it’s not directly linked.

Okay. Okay. No, no, no, I just wanted to find out. It’s something that I would be interested in in terms of manufacturing, the textile industry, but yes, I’ll definitely look into it. And yes, once again, thank you, guys. I think more than questions, it’s an appreciation. Whole big bowls and bowls of gratitude for this course. It definitely has changed and impacted positively into my business life.

And yes, any time that you guys need me to come on board to assist somebody else’s life, to change as mine has, I will definitely look into it.

Definitely. Well, we’ll be… we’ll definitely be in touch with that.

Okay. Alright, Jared. Thank you so much.

And sorry once again for delaying this interview. And, yes.

Oh no, not at all. I understand.

Okay, alright.

Cool. Alright, well good day and we’ll chat soon.

IV Cool, so I'm just hitting record now. Yes, great. Whereabouts are you based?
IE I'm in Glenwood, Durban, at the moment.
IV Okay. It must be beautifully warmer out that side of the world?
IE What's it over there, 13 degrees right now?
IV Yes, pretty damn cold.
IE Yes, well, I'm from New Zealand, so Durban winter is a bit of a New Zealand summer, so we're just loving it.
IV Whereabouts in New Zealand are you from?
IE Christchurch, down south.
IV Okay. I've got family but they're more... They're Napier area.
IE Oh, Napier is absolutely beautiful, have you been there?
00:00:45
IV No, not yet, I'm desperate because I'm a very keen fisherman, and my uncle is as well, and he keeps showing all these pictures of these amazing trout caught in the rivers just around the corner from his house.
IE Yes, it's a dream. It's an absolute dream up there.
IV Cool, man, Benjamin. Thank you so much for agreeing to chat with me. So, let me just introduce myself. I'm Jared Kruger, and I'm... I've got the title of... Sorry, my dog... Just...
IE No stress.
IV Sorry, I'm just going to get them quiet. Just hold on.
IE No worries.
IV Sorry, there we go. I'm working from my home office today. And so, my dogs are one of the obstacles. Otherwise, it's a great office.
IE Yes, that's a great move. I'm working from home at least once a week.
IV Yes, it definitely makes a lot of sense, especially when I'm doing one on one digital meetings, it's just much easier to be in your own space.
IE Yes, if you want to do deep learning and deep tasks, it's definitely best.
IV Yes. Anyway, so, I'm the head of education for Startup School. So, very much in the background, working on the whole programme from the... From employing the subject matter experts to making sure that the learning design works and that the tech is good, etc.
00:02:16
And the purpose of me wanting to chat to you today is just to get some feedback on your experience of this course and where you think we can improve, etc., etc. So, I've got a couple of questions that I'm going to use to guide the conversation, but it's pretty informal. And as I say, I just want to get a sense of your experience with us, if that's okay?
IE Perfect, yes, fire away.
IV Cool. So, I think if we can just start with... If you could give me the name of your business, a little bit of a background on your business and what it does, that would be a good starting point for me?
IE Yes, sure thing. So, I founded FreshBox about a year and a half ago. And the concept of FreshBox was to be a sustainable and effective social company. So, we use a buy one, give one model to feed nutritionally at-risk children. So, we use a subscription model, so we bill them each month, and each week we deliver them a customised, beautiful box of fruit and vegetables. And they know each one they collect, we're giving the same amount to children in need.

So, it's supposed to be a simple, sustainable, and effective way to alleviate malnutrition, while providing a quality product.
00:03:29
IV Brilliant, cool. Yes, I've been watching some of your... Some of the videos that you've been creating and... Very cool stuff. I'm very, very excited about the work that you're doing.
IE  Thanks, and I hope the video quality will pick up soon.
IV  Yes, I think... It’s a tough road but it’s definitely a worthwhile journey.
IE  Yes, definitely.
IV  Cool. Have you enrolled in any other, either traditional or online entrepreneurship programmes before?
IE  No, I haven’t. I would preference [?] that by saying I did... Actually, the first year of my Bachelor’s degree was a business degree, before I switched to physics. So, I guess, I had a bit of a background around entrepreneurship there, but that was about eight years ago. So, this was pretty much a fresh course for me, it was my first one.
IV  Okay. And have you done any other online learning in any other space?
IE  When I was a teacher for a year, I taught a couple... I did a few online lessons, but nothing huge. And then, when I was at university, a couple of my courses had an online component as well, but nothing purely online, this was the first one.

00:04:40

IV  Cool. Well, then, yes, to talk a little bit more about your experience of this online... The course that you did, but also, more specifically the platform. So, I mean, in your understanding of online learning, what do you think innovation is in relation to that?
IE  I think in terms of online learning, the innovation comes from the scalability of it. So, now we go from a classroom where 30 people have access to one really great teacher to, suddenly, 30 million people have access to it.

My... And, I mean, that’s fantastic because that levels the playing field around education. My concern around online education, though, is it can gravitate towards a low bandwidth [?] form of communication. So, for example, the discussion groups, it’s really difficult to get a feel of the texture of the conversation. You get people typing responses when... And then you don’t get feedback from their body language. You don’t have... You don’t get a sense of the relationship you have. But, for the most part, I think you have the small sacrifice in the bandwidth communication for a large increase in the scalability of education.

So, for the most part, it’s [sound slip].

IV  And in terms of inclusion, do you think that... What do you think of inclusion, in terms of online education?

00:06:13

IE  What do you mean by inclusion? Do you mean the integration of education across all groups through culture, ethnicity, gender? Is that what you're referring to?
IV  Well, yes, I mean, I think that's one of the ways of looking at it. But, is... Do you think that there is... That the online platform offers a greater opportunity for inclusion? And I think it’s across ethnicity, gender, but then, also, perhaps even more detailed, in terms of people’s education background and levels of education. Do you think that online education platforms will be able to be more inclusive?
IE  Gee, that's a very complicated question. So, let’s start with the history of education. So... And let’s even contextualise it with the fees must fall movement. So... And let’s... Let me first preference this by saying I’m as liberal as they come. I want equal opportunity. I want equal education, I want equal access to nutrition for all people. But, we’ve got to be careful when we compare education to an ideal utopia, where everyone’s included, or the reality of our history.

So, throughout history, pretty much 0% of the population has had access to free tertiary education. It’s really like 0.00001%. And I was one of the people lucky enough to have that free education. I got a basketball scholarship to go to the States. So, as we progress and use technology to open up the education [or communication ?] streams to everyone, definitely, I think online education has the ability to include people who are... I wouldn't use
the word denied access to education, but who find it difficult to access education because of their socioeconomic backgrounds. Not being able to afford tertiary education or because of their geographical backgrounds.

00:08:10

I think ethnicity might be a proxy for some of those things. Yes, I think online education, obviously, has the ability to do that.

There is the issue where, if people don't have access to the internet or the electricity, then they're going to be excluded from that, but the fact that we're pulling... We're connecting a quarter of a million people to the electrical grid. And I think it's about 150... Sorry, a quarter... About 150 thousand people to the internet grid every single day, that... I mean, that problem is about to be solved anyway.

So, from a logistical standpoint, yes, absolutely. I think the question still remains, what's the higher quality form of education, is it watching lectures and then discussion groups offline, so create a more textured education? Or is it still the traditional classroom. And I don't want to throw the traditional classroom away just yet.

IV Absolutely.

IE There's really strong research that shows that the relationship with the teacher, particularly in high school and primary school, is the prime determinant of the quality of the education. But, when we're talking tertiary education, higher level, that's a different ballgame, because you're really looking at the dispensing of information. So, yes, to your question about inclusivity. Yes, obviously... Yes.

IV Fantastic. Cool. And now, let's get away from some of this to more... Let's get more into the specifics of your experience and this particular course. So, why did you apply for this 12-week programme?

00:09:46

IE Probably three-prong. One, I wanted to refine my knowledge of the business space within South Africa.

Two, I obviously wanted to learn. I'm a big advocate of learning. There's... No matter how intelligent or experienced you are, there's always something you can improve and learn.

And three, there was a big opportunity to grow my business, both from the intellectual property side and also from a financial side. So... And probably I just... I love coursework and I miss university a little bit, so it was a good chance to do that.

IV Cool. All right, well then, talk me through your experience of the course.

IE Yes, so 12 weeks, plus week zero. So, my experience of the course. So, when I had first logged in, I was very... I was both impressed and sceptical with the resources. So, I'm a science guy, so I'm very much about the amount of citations the paper has, and how embedded it is... Within the category of education.

So, for example, Newton has millions and millions of citations and I'd follow him over any new idea.

00:11:05

So, I was occasionally concerned with some of the references. It felt like it was ad hoc, pulsed from random Google searches. But at the same time, the overall framework of the course was really well set up. Work progressed from a very basics of business all the way through to your marketing, your financial model, to scaling up.

I'm a pretty structured guy, so I'd set aside two hours on Monday and Tuesday to get the work done, and then a revision day on Friday. And that was really, really adequate, except for a couple of the weeks where I had to put a bit more work in. But, for the most part, I found 10 out of the 12 lessons were really, really a benefit for my organisation. Either they solidified and gave us confidence in what we were already doing, or they challenged what we
were already doing through the framework. And pretty much made us reinvent and reevaluate the company.

So, it was really useful material [?]. There was... I do... This is one of my criticisms with online education, and it surprises me because I think people have a tendency to not speak their mind, especially people who are high on empathy, high on agreeableness, they won't speak their mind to risk offending people. But I think it's really important in education to speak your mind regardless of those things. I think if you're creating friction and offending people, then that's a good sign, that means ideas are being exchanged.

00:12:32

IV  Definitely.

IE  You can't really complex things with that. So, I was trying to think of a way to solve the problem where... In all the discussion groups, there was a thousand high-fives thrown around for every one critical comment. So, I tried to... Every single time I went out there, I tried to put a critical comment.

So, I would... I thought that the teachers, the mentors, and the moderators could have been more of a catalyst in that, in trying to create a bit more conflict within the discussion groups, instead of people just posting stuff [sound slip]...

IV  [Overtalking], yes.

IE  Yes, exactly. Exactly. But apart from that, the overall structure, I... This was the first one I've done, but I've looked at a lot of online courses, and the overall structure was really good. It was clear you were doing week zero to week 12. It was clear what you were trying to do each lesson, and it was clear the resources you were trying to use, and the course... And the submissions you were... Sorry, what am I trying to say here... And the work you were trying to submit as well.

IV  Yes. I actually... I really love what you raise about the discussion forums, and how... It's almost like a hygiene factor that comes in when people... There's two extremes you see in online, whether it's learning or just generally online. You either have those real trolls, who are out to absolutely stir the pot and cause mayhem. And then the, like you say, real back-patting kind of sterile comments. And it's difficult to try and hit somewhere in the middle. And I think it's critical that education platforms do that.

00:14:16

And so, I like that you said each week there was not enough of that. So, it's something we need to consider.

I was wondering, what... Do you have any suggestions as to how a, like you say, moderator or one of the coaches could galvanise slightly different engagement on those discussion forums?

IE  Gee, you put me on the spot with that question. But what pops into my mind is the first thing is that they can be an example of that. My experience in education is that setting an example is much better than setting an abstract framework. So, if from day one, they were... They started being politely critical of the ideas being put out there, then that would foster an environment that would lean more that way. And people would be less afraid to jump out of that.

The second, I would say, is... You see this a lot in corporations, is I know the Myers Briggs personality types is out of date, it’s not empirically based, and it should be relegated to the dustbins. But one thing it’s really good to do is it gets people to acknowledge that there are differences in personality and there's vices and virtues for each one.

And there's actually a new really good empirical model that, I guess you'd say, flows from the Jungian Myers Briggs personality type, called The Big Five Personality Types.

00:15:39
And just to summarise that, they did a factor analysis on the 50 to 80 personality types that were being brought out through psychological research. And they did a factor analysis to group all of them, they managed to boil it down into five, openness... Or it is openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism.

And the personality type that focusses on the discussion we’re talking about is mostly agreeableness. So, agreeable people would be much more likely to agree with a certain concept and not want to shake the boat. And disagreeable people, they're more like: I don't care about your emotions, are you getting things done, are your ideas rigorous?

So, I think maybe within the coursework, starting off with the model around the Big Five Personality Types, and that would be really good and, A: I'm getting people to acknowledge that there are differences I personality, and vices, and virtues, and that’s good.

And B: It’s actually a really good tool to know for your company when you're looking to employ people because if you know which personality they are, you’ll know where they’ll fit in. You don't want someone who’s highly creative and low on conscientiousness to be an accountant, because they just won't get the routine algorithms done.

00:16:51

But, you don't want someone who’s high on conscientiousness and low on openness to be thinking outside the box because they just don't think like that.

So, I think it would add to the coursework and, also, get people to acknowledge that there are differences in conversation, that’s fine.

IV Brilliant, that's great... Yes, love that. I think that could work very well. Cool, thank you. In terms of an ideal... Some of this is going to be repeating itself a little bit in what we’ve spoken about. But your entrepreneurial capabilities when you started the course, what do you think your strengths were then, and have they changed? Or have you been able to reframe them in some way now that you've gone through this 12-week programme?

IE Yes... Actually, yes, I do. And I think that can be partially attributed to the course, and may be partially attributed to the points and time that I started doing the course, relative to my company. So, I think we were coming out of the start-up phase of the company and going into the more scale-up phase. And there's the old additive this relates to the Big Five Personality Types, that creative liberals start companies, and conservatives conscientious type people run them.

And our company was at the stage where we were moving away from the phase where we had a bunch of creative artist hustlers, bringing this thing off the ground to the phase where the algorithms had been designed and we needed people to run them. And that was happening at the same time I was doing this Startup course.

00:18:24

And during this course, I was having exactly the epiphany that I'm communicating to you right now, that my... The way I act within this company needs to start changing from continual creativity to continual – how would you put it – conscientiousness or just routine and rigour. Yes, rigour, that's a good word. I'm going to write that down.

But, it... I don't know if saying it gave me a kick in the pants would be the right way of putting it, because I'm a pretty motivated guy as it is, but it certainly solidified the fact that: Okay, dude, the way you’re approaching this, you need to shed the dead wood of how you got this thing off the ground because the skills you're going to need to scale it, completely different.

And... Which week was it... I think it was the... There was three weeks around the marketing week that that really hit home. And I realised that I was going to have to undergo a psychological transformation in order for my company to be successful.

IV Yes. Sorry, apologies, I'm just going to mute this.

IE No worries. I'm shocked you've still got a landline.
Yes, very... Yes, the landline is a bit of a pain.

So that was it. So that was a big transformation I went through.

The other epiphany was that I'm going to have to learn how to... I can't do anything... Everything within this company, so I'm going to have to learn what Mark Cuban is really good at. You're probably a Mark Cuban fan, just looking at your background. But he's very direct with is communication; he's very clear on what he wants, and he says it with a smile, and he says: I don't care what your background is or your difficulties, and I don't care about your feelings, this needs to be... Are you doing this job or not?

And yes, so it was... So that was a big change in my temperament. And I think it was for the better. It's interesting that when you start being more clear, direct, and firm with people that you employ, they actually start respecting the company and yourself, and even themselves, more. Because, implicitly, you're saying... What are you saying... You're saying to them: What you're doing now isn't good enough, but you can... I believe you can do better. And they might walk away at that time and think: Oh, he's been really harsh on me. But during the day, after a good night’s sleep, they think about and realise: Oh, well, actually, maybe I can learn something from that.

Absolutely.

So, there was a transformation here, so... And I... And that kind of relates to the disagreeability within forums that I think... Creative entrepreneurs get it off the ground, but generally, they're really high empathy and really high on agreeableness, and that's not a good way to run a company, because people just walk right over you.

No, I think that's a one. I think, also, the other thing with that directness is, it also... When you get a counterchallenge, it’s normally framed in specifics, as opposed to generals. So, when you're managing people and you do... And you are more direct and more specific, when they have... Take issue with it, they can take issue with something directly as opposed to generally, and that is so, so important within an organisation.

Yes, yes. Yes, yes, definitely. And that almost relates to you're having a discussion, not about the person but about the idea and the issue.

Exactly.

Yes, well put. Well put.

Cool. Some... What were your challenges that you experienced on the course? I mean, you said the challenge being the discussion forums not being as useful as they definitely could be. What were your other challenges that you experienced?

I miss the collaborative work. So, one of the things I really liked around university was I definitely like working solo, but I like dedicating about 80% of my time to solo work, and then 20% of my time working with others so they can criticise the idea. And I found it really difficult to get good feedback and good criticism over discussion groups.

Luckily enough, I had a few friends that were doing the course, so we had a few scrums but, for the most part, that was one of them.

The other... The most challenging course, I found, was the marketing. And I just think that relates to my training and my backgrounds, and my personality type, I certainly view the world in terms of processes, systems, and objects. But marketing is a completely different game. Marketing, you're telling a story, you're thinking about the world more as actions and ideas.
So that was a real challenge. And I wish I could have had a mentor or someone with a really firm expertise in marketing to guide... To really just pull me apart on that. I'm still... I think we're going to outsource our marketing over the next few months. But, I wish I could grow myself into an expert marketer, and I felt if I had a mentor around that section I could have done it.

00:23:38

But, I still definitely improved through the coursework. And then, the challenge... A third challenge... I... Maybe... No, I was about to say accountability, but I think the fact that the course had very firm deadlines was enough to hold me accountable. So that was fine.

I would definitely recommend that the mentors and the teachers, like Tania and Jackie, they just are black and white about the deadlines. Because I had a couple of friends that flaked on me [?], and it was I had to do it, just get it done. But, yes, that would be my... Those would be my challenges.

IV Cool. And highlights?

IE The... I loved the financial couple of weeks, that was really good. That really, really stretched my thinking around: Okay, this is what the model looks like with 100 customers, 100 subscribers. This is what it looks like at 1000. And this is what it looks like 10 000. And this is what it looks like nationally. That is the week, the six-month plan, three to five-year plan.

And that made me revisit one of my favourite books, The Lean Startup. The assumption there is if you're doing things right, you're in a learning loop. And if you're in the learning loop then your plan’s five years from now are going to change on a two to three-month basis. So that was a... That week was a real highlight, that really stretched my thinking. And also showed... It was just fascinating to see how things change on a linear [...] scale, so that was really good.

00:25:31

Another highlight was one of my friends, Lucky, was on the course, and I really saw growth in him. But it was... I think he got... Out of anyone, I think he... I saw he got the most out of it.

And then, I like the challenge around pitching, that really made me think through communication and how to really refine how to communicate the model in 20 to 30 seconds. Yes. Yes.

IV Brilliant. Cool. So, this next question might actually... You might have already mentioned it, but I'm going to ask it anyway. If... What, if any, comparisons can you draw from your business now that you have completed the programme, as opposed to when you first started?

IE I'm so focussed on delegation now after the course. So, my operations is run... I could have a stroke and be out of the company for six months. And I know operations, customer service, and outreach departments would all run.

So, just to put things in context, before the course, you can think of FreshBox as seven departments acting as an orchestra in unison. So, operations, accounting, outreach, customer service, marketing, sales, and the seventh one, HR. And then, this is the transformation I talked about earlier, during the course. And this peaked after I was: I need to completely restructure this. My goal is to continually design algorithms and employ confident people to run those algorithms.

And within two... Within a month of finishing the course, operations was running independently. Customer service was running independently. Outreach is almost there. And I'm just so excited to get the other four departments running independently, because that means if I have people I trust managing each department, then I can continually focus on
culture, I can continually focus on growth. And actually, I think it’s improving their lives,
giving them more independence, and the company.

So that was probably the biggest change I saw.

That's fantastic, that's great to hear. It’s really nicely articulated. And that... It speaks
so well to the fact that you are in that... In the scale-up phase, which is such a difficult
transition for many entrepreneurs to make. To recognise that there's such a significant
difference between that... They do everything, be everything to everybody, really hustle hard,
to now putting structures and systems in place.

Mate, exactly. It’s a difficult world. It’s a completely different world.

Ag, sorry.

Yes, jeez, it’s crazy. And what’s so weird is that all these devices, you silence one,
and one of the other ones is silenced, and it’s... Cool. So, I've got three more questions, and
they're not terribly long, the last... The third last is: Did you find that the programme and the
content itself... And thinking about the South Africa audience, do you think these activities
were inclusive?

Okay. Okay. Okay, I'm going to try not to be too controversial here.

No, be controversial, I... That's what we want. This is what... You talk about
innovation and... I mean, we’re not dissimilar, we’re a start-up ourselves, and you have to get
feedback.

So... Okay, let me think. Could you, firstly, define what you mean by... Are we
talking about inclusivity how we defined in the first question?

Yes, I think so. I'm also quite happy that you... If you were to... Because there are
multiple ways of viewing inclusivity, and there's South African context, and then there's a
global context. I don't... I think what... Talk to me about what it means from your perspective.

So... Okay, so, just to preference things, my background is, I was born in New
Zealand, I did my undergraduate degree it the States. I did an Honours degree in Egypt. And
then I went and worked in the States and then worked in South Africa.

That's amazing.

I'm not trying to brag, what I'm trying to do is contextualise things.

No, totally. Just... Sorry, I have to stop you. Egypt, tell me what university were you
at there?

I was at the American University in Cairo. And it was... I was so lucky. It was an
absolute dream, man, it was like living for 12 months in the Gardens of Babylon. And just
having access to all the educational resources you want.

It was... And it was right at the time... It was just after the Arab Spring, so it was...
Yes, it was really cool. And I also played for the basketball team there. Sometimes I miss it.
It was kind of bad because I'm like: How could life get better? But, I guess it has.

Oh, that's wonderful.

But, yes, so, I just wanted to contextualise that and, again, say I'm as liberal as they
come. I want a... I don't like the word inclusive, but I think there's... I think the meaning of
life is to learn. And the more cultures and the ways of the world, looking at... The ways of the
world you can look at, the better.

But when this word inclusivity comes up, I'm really, really concerned on what that
actually means. And the reason... I kind of articulated this in the first thing. There was
coursework on inclusive innovation. It was very vague on what was being meant there. And it
struck me as too post-modern. And what the post-modernists try and do is they try and split
the world up. It’s complete... They try and split the world up into categories and then define which of those categories is the category that is excluding people, and which category is trying to be included.

00:31:41

And I don't think the world’s that simple at all, especially in our modern economy. And especially in business. My experience with business leaders is, if you're confident and you can contribute, they don't care if you're purple or... If you're a purple transgender or from the middle of nowhere in Africa, if you can contribute and add value, they're dying to include you in the company.

So, I think when we talk about how could it be more inclusive, I think we’re looking at it from the wrong end of the stick. I don't break the world up, I don't view the world through a power relations view, I view the world on how it’s moving forward.

So, sorry... Was the question how could it be more inclusive? What was the actual question?

IV  Did you find the content and activities inclusive, that's the question, but I think it’s...
IE  Well... So, yes, to bring that back, the post-modernist, they... And this is where this word inclusivity comes from. They say there are infinite ways of looking at the world, and that's true, but there's not infinite viable ways of looking at the world.

So, okay, is it inclusive to unviable ways of looking at business? No. And the free market is kind of like that too. If your idea isn't... The free market isn't exclusive machine, it’s trying to exclude unviable ways of working within the world.

So, my answer to that would be: I bloody well hope not because if it’s all inclusive, it means it’s all inclusive of ideas no matter how bad it is.

And then, to the extent that it’s inclusive, that it listens to all ideas, definitely. All ideas are more than welcome to come to the table, but we need to use the best tools to exclude the bad ideas. To separate the wheat from the chaff. And to make sure that we’re... As we progress through, we are actually an exclusive machine, and the exclusive machine is finding the most viable, competent way of doing things. So that would be my answer.

00:33:48

And if the most viable, competent way of doing things is from a different paradigm, fine. But the idea of inclusivity, I think, is... Doesn’t take into account the fact that there is actually rigour in science and competence within business.

I mean, try and... Yes, I hope I articulated that properly without sounding too defensive.

IV  No, definitely.
IE  But... And especially that article. That article that I read in the first...

IV  The Inclusive Innovation?
IE  The Inclusive Innovation. I've never heard so much rubbish in my life.

IV  No, that's cool. It’s a very interesting... So, the Graduate School of Business... The UCT Graduate School of Business has a... Even has a whole programme on Inclusive Innovation. So, it’s really interesting to hear your perspective. I don't have a strong opinion, I haven't immersed myself much in the content on that.

00:34:50

But it is a... It’s like the word innovation, inclusivity, and innovation, they all... They’re problematic in their definitions. And don't always serve the purpose that they should be.

IE  Totally. I mean, I recognise more than anyone that there's a richness to be gained in life, that accepting, and including and letting information into your life. But at the end of the day, you've got to have a lens and a system at which to categorise and exclude information. Otherwise, what are you doing? And I... Yes, I’ll... I certainly rubbed a few people up the
wrong way there. Because there's a risk when you say that, sounding like some absolute brutal, white male misogynist. But I don't accept that. I don't look at the world through that lens. And I think that's an appalling way of doing it.

And sorry, just to add onto that, I was happy that the article they cited in there was actually... Was in an academic journal. But I noticed it had zero citations. I would love to see the next year, to have... And there's really... Business schools have really, really well-cited text, especially coming out of schools like Harvard, etc., so I’d love to see, maybe... I think some of the material that was blog posts, etc., was really insightful, but it wasn’t as definitive as it could be.

I'd really like to see journal articles in there that have thousands of citations and can orientate people towards the knowledge actually accumulated within the business community.

IV Yes.
IE Yes.
IV Good, great, that's excellent feedback. Cool, I think that leads onto the... You started answering the last question I have, and that is: Do you think... Or how do you think the course could be improved upon? And you've mentioned now, the need for some resources that are more rigorous in their use in the business world.

What other areas of the course do you think could be improved upon?
IE Yes, I definitely think the rigour around the material. I think there's a... And so, there's two issues that, to me, if people can solve these problems, they're going to take the market of online education. And the first thing is the accreditation problem. So, I'm not sure how Startup School’s accredited, probably internally. But if it could have some... Somehow have an actual university-based accreditation, that would be great. But that's not really to improve the course, that's more to take the market.

And the second one would be, like I talked about before... And it's really hard to get around when you're dealing with online education, is the bandwidth of communication.

So, when you're in a lecture hall or a class... Or, let's even talk about a classroom, the bandwidth of education is really, really high. You can see your teacher in front of you, you can see his body language, you can see how emotionally invested he is in the subject. You can even read how much of an expert he is in the subject as well.

But when you're on online education, it’s really difficult to do. So, if you could somehow create a way where the bandwidth of communication was a lot thicker, then I think that would really improve the course. But that's not really a problem with Startup School, that's a problem with education... Online education in general.

And then, I'm trying to... And then I'm just... I'm just trying to think of one that's more specific to Startup School, not to online education in general. I think... This is a hard one because I know online education is designed to scale, but I think the grading and feedback could have been a lot better.
IV Okay, in what way?
IE Maybe... So, and this is a hard one... So, when I taught, you’d ask 30 students to write a paper and then submit it. And it was great... Like the smart students, it was easy to grade. It was like: Yes, that's right, that's right, that's right. Cool. Thanks for coming, maybe there's a few ways you could improve.

But the students that are behind, it's like: Oh, God, look at this essay, that section’s wrong, the grammar’s wrong, the structure’s wrong, the way the ideas are laid out is
completely wrong. So, there's a funny grading distribution there where the best students take up none of your time, and the worst students take up almost all of it.

So, maybe there's a way within there that you could strata [?] the classes, and maybe even delegating teaching. So, the students that are performing really well could be grouped with the students that aren't and they can provide feedback for... Yes, actually, I take that back, because I was already stretched for time and if you grouped me into a group with three people that were really battling, I'd probably just leave.

But yes, so I think... And that kind of relates... Yes, I think the grading could have been... The grading and feedback could have been smoother. But I understand you're trying to do a scale.

IV No, totally, and I think that's great feedback. I think it’s one of the things that we’re continually experimenting with is, what’s the... I come from an online education background. I worked at GetSmarter for many years...

IE Oh, did you [sound slip].

IV And did an academic function there. And learning what is the top end of that... There's a difference between scale and growth. And in education, you... The correlation to quality is... You can really see it quite quickly. And knowing what is the top end of what you can... Of students, you can service while keeping them on the... On a strong learning trajectory and when that starts to diminish when you start going with too much scale.

And I think in this particular presentation, we had 90 students on the programme. That's the upper end of what can be done. We would never want to get bigger than that without then adding more coaching support.

But, yes, it’s an interesting one. That's great feedback. I really do value that, particularly around the grading/feedback.

IE Well, maybe what... Next year, what you could do is, if you could do the first bit of the course as a preliminary four weeks, and then you reshuffle the groups into different [sound slip].

IV Yes, definitely. Cool. Do you have any questions you want to ask me?

IE Yes, actually, sorry... The company you worked for, GetSmarter, I've actually... I've been following them, what was that like working with them?

IV Oh, it was an incredible experience, hey. So, I joined the company when they were... They had about 240 employees and their academic team was about 32 instructors. And I came in and I headed up the instructor team, so I was, what they call, Academic Staff Manager. And I was there during the real rapid growth into the international expansion. So, we went to... I went from managing 32 academics to managing over 110 academics.

IE Yes, sure. Sure. Where were the offices, was it...?

IV Here in Cape Town, near Groote Schuur.

IE Okay. Yes. Because you guys have expanded into Oxford, Cambridge, etc., haven't you?
Yes, but... Or did. Yes, I was there when we did... We were the first... We did the first thing with MIT, and that was... We did two courses, one was Big Data, and the other one was Fintech. And we went from... And this is kind of thing... And you talked about the scale thing, we were... We had... What we considered big courses in the South African market were when we had 62 students on a programme.

We went to... On the Big Data course, we had 2000 students. And that kind of jump is just out of this world. And to try and describe it the best way I can is, it's the difference between sailing in a breeze of 2 knots, to getting into the harness on a windsurfer at 40 knots. That's the... It's a totally different... The rules change entirely.

And the risk is completely different as well, hey?

Yes. Yes.

And internationally very different. The South African market is much more... Is more tolerant in some things and not in others. And it's very different in the international market.

Interesting. And what... And which things is the South African market more tolerant on?

So, South African market tends to be a lot more patient. So, forgiving of errors, but very concerned financially. So, money related to service is a big measure.

Whereas, in the international... The international clientele were incredibly concerned by quality. And it's right. It was interesting to see how advanced that market is from that perspective. They’ve experienced a lot more in terms of other education offerings, so there's a lot more comparison to be made. And they can say: Well, this is not quality. Or: This is not working. Or... It was just a... It was great. It was excellent learning for us.

Have you worked or stayed overseas?

No, I haven't. My only experience is through GetSmarter, doing... Working with MIT for about a year, yes.

Okay. What’s your biggest hope and also your biggest fear for online education?

Sjoe, that's a great question. So, my biggest hope is, and it actually speaks to your comment about accreditation, I have a strong feeling that the university in its traditional form is still... Is problematic. And I don't think it’s going to... It’s not changing fast enough. And it’s not offering the world what it should be offering, in terms of learning.

And I think that the way of crediting or accrediting courses is going to have to change. And I think that the online space is going to be the forerunner in that, where people can validate the learning that they get, very quickly, from industry and from previous students. As opposed to a brand like a university putting their stamp of approval on it.

And I really look forward to that because I think... When industry starts to say: I value the people that did this course because I can show you the work that they're now doing for me, that’s when we’ve got powerful, really powerful, learning.

My biggest fear is exactly... Is that I think there's going to be a lot of really bad... There's... There's a low barrier to entry for people to set up courses and deliver them, and I think that we could water down quality significantly. And lead people astray. And I mean, we’re seeing it... We see it in South Africa as well, there are a lot of guys offering education. And I'm not even just talking about online, I'm talking just generally, that's expensive and it’s poor. It’s really poor quality.

And people spend a lot more than they have on education. And I think there's a lot of really bad, unethical stuff happening. And I think that that... There's room for a lot more of that to happen in the online learning space. So that would be my big fear.
IE Yes, and that relates to the accreditation, for sure.
IV Exactly.
IE Yes. So, just to make a comment on that, my old university... The university I went to, Gettysburg College, they... They replacing their president. And you probably know a bit about the American space, it’s extremely expensive to go to university there, and it’s almost becoming like a pleasure island instead of a learning institution.

00:48:54
And they sent us a survey that says: What do you want to see in the new president? What should the priorities be? And the list was like this extensive thing from, enhance the student experience, and the group diversity. Recruit and develop talent. And I just thought: I'm actually pretty firm on the stance that the university’s mission is to create competent and articulate citizens that can solve problems. And it just wasn’t discussed at all.
And that's my big hope for online education is, like you said, if you had that employer that was like: If you can do this course then I want you. Then I think that could add real value to society because businesses are just dying for competent, articulate, problem-solvers. And if you can use online education to accredit those people, then jeez, that’s one hell of a resource.

IV Yes. Absolutely. And the other thing that is a big deal for me is, I think there's a lot of administrative burden in getting educated. That I think we can cut through significantly with an online... Good online institutions.
You just go try and apply for a course at any university anywhere in the world, the hoops... Hoops that you have to jump through to get there, it’s really, really... It’s damaging to education.
00:50:23
And I think, through tech, you can streamline that stuff significantly and then people can actually get onto these things and do them and plug and play almost instantaneously. Yes.
IE For sure. Cool.
IV Great. Well, thank you so much for your time. And if you have any other comments or questions, you've got my email address now, so just send me a mail and we can chat again. Did you enter the funding competition?
IE Yes, I did. That was due July 26th I think.
IV Yes.
IE So, yes.
IV Cool.
IE When will we hear on that?
IV Yes, that's currently in processes with Investec and the panel of judges, so look forward to hearing the results there. And then, on the 7th September, we’ll be doing the closing ceremony digitally. So, hope to see you at that event.
00:51:15
IE Sure. For sure. What’s the process with the funders, is there going to be another round with interviews, or is it just going to be decided...?
IV Yes, so the... It’s currently sitting with the first panel and they will come to a short list. And those short-listed candidates will be notified in the last week of August. And they will then have a scheduled meeting to present, or to be interviewed, in front of a panel of judges, which will be new judges. Two guys from Investec, two guys from an investment firm... Another investment firm specialising more in the finance start-up space.
And I will be in on that, on the final round, judging just to... Not as a judge, but just to manage the process.
And then, out of that, they will decide on the top entrepreneur.
IV Cool.
IE Well, thanks for your time, man. And, yes, you've got my email. Listen, if you're ever in Durban, I’d love to show you our setup or even just grab a coffee.
IV Definitely.
00:52:26
IE It’s been quite interesting [?].
IV I'm actually... I'm really hoping I can get there in September. So, definitely, we’ll set something up.
IE Great. Awesome.
IV Great. Thanks so much, Benjamin. Chat soon.
IE Pleasure. Cheers.
00:52:39

Queeneth Interview SUS
Speaker Key:
IV Interviewer
IE Interviewee

00:00:00
IV …now, and it’s just going to record our voices. So… Cool, thank you so much for taking the time to chat to me.
IE It’s a pleasure.
IV I see you’re in your car, you’re out and about on business already.
IE No, I am actually going to hospital to give birth.
IV Oh my word. No, you’re lying to me.
IE No, okay, I’m not giving birth. I’m hoping you’ll be my lucky charm, but I’m nine months, so… yes, it’s crazy like that.
IV It’s amazing. That’s amazing. Well, that is so [overtalking]. Which hospital are you going to?
IE It’s a… Edenvale. I don’t know if you know it. It’s right here.
00:00:41
IV Even tho…ugh I live in Cape Town now, when I… I lived in Joburg for a long time, and my dad actually worked in Edenvale for many years, so I know it.
IE Oh, that’s awesome. No, thank goodness. At least I don’t have to show my face, because, like, oh my gosh, I don’t feel like showing my face.
IV Cool. Queeneth, let’s try and do this as quickly as possible so that you can get on with more important things, as they say.
IE Yes, okay.
IV Cool, so I just wanted to get some feedback from you on your experience with the course and where you’re at with your business and kind of what the Startup School did or didn’t do for you. So I think let’s start with: can you give me the name of your business and just a quick background on what your business does?
IE It’s called Bright Start and it’s an ECD centre, an Early Childhood Development centre. And it’s in a small little emerging community, or must I say growing community? In Nelspruit. That obviously is in need of a quality Early Childhood Development centre. It does have your normal creches, but I realised when I did my research that most of them don’t necessarily have the right… the kind of education that they need to actually open up one.
00:01:55
They usually just open up centres as a means of income. I see the government is trying, also, just to empower the ladies with… offering them an NQF Level Four, Level Five
qualification, which is awesome, but there are still those that fall through the cracks, where what’s the point of having a teacher if she doesn’t even have a matric, you know?

What is she instilling into the students? So I [sound slip] almost my business wants to close that gap, in the sense that we want to offer a quality education for these kids, just to give them a chance, because there’s no point in them competing with their counterparts in the cities if they’re actually starting off on a back foot.

So it was just about closing that gap and offering quality early childhood development in the centre. And for the kids not to necessarily drive all the way to the… to other schools that are further, which causes things like transport problems, and we hear about kids having to walk, like, a whole distance just to go get some education.

So it’s about convenience, it’s about safety, and quality education. And having fun at the same time. Shame, it is creche, at the end of the day.

Absolutely, but yes, like you say, that’s sort of the more trained teacher who actually understands how to develop these little minds is so important.

Yes, very, very important. Because if they don’t get that quality education at that stage, there’s no point in us complaining when the matric results come out, because they never got the foundation.

IV

Agreed, 100%. Queeneth, have you ever done any other entrepreneurship programmes before this one?

IE

No, I haven’t. It’s my first time.

IV

Okay, cool. So have you done any other online courses, even not in the entrepreneurship space, just different online learning? Have you done any of that before?

IE

No, this is a first.

IV

Brilliant. Okay, cool, that’s so cool to hear. So tell me, what do you think of learning online? How did you find this experience?

IE

It was really convenient, because I think at some point along the line, my laptop’s keyboard died, but I could use my cell phone to actually get everything done, which is really awesome. And when there was… when I was not doing anything, I could always just go online and start doing my assignments, or reading, and I…

Or when I was sitting in the hospital room and waiting for the doctors to come through, I could actually just complete my assignments during that time, instead of wasting my time on social media.

IV

Brilliant. So talk me through a little bit of your experience with the course. What was it like?
IE It was really great. I actually was telling a friend of mine that this is what they should be offering in matric, because I think if you’re not necessarily into business, and you just come across this, you can understand it, and I’m sure it was also not dummed to a point where someone in, like, primary school can do it.

It was neutral. You could just get in there, read it. It was exciting. There was no big words, there was no jargon used or it was really easy to read.

And it was very interesting. It’s almost like they took out all the important stuff in a textbook. You know when someone highlights everything out? It’s almost like they took all the highlighted part that you should focus on, and they got rid of all the unnecessary information, which was quite exciting. So I didn’t… everything was quite… it was informative, it was insightful, something that you want to just carry on reading.

IV That’s fantastic to hear. So do you think that, if you think about your entrepreneurial capabilities or skills before the course started. Tell me, you know, what do you think they were, and did the course change some of them, and was there some development that you could tell me about?

IE Yes, like I said, I had this idea, but it was so difficult putting it on paper. It was… I knew I had to start with a project plan, I knew I had to do certain things, but it… it just outlined it out properly for me, step by step.

Like, we started somewhere, and it was a journey that eventually become the actual story, so what was in my mind slowly just came through and I could tweak the business here and there, because yes, I had this thing in mind, but there were certain aspects that I still needed to go back and research.

And going through the course, I… it offered me that, especially the HR part. That was quite new to me, which was also quite good. But I felt like there was not much African… not African, let’s just say more relevant stories, stories that I’d hear about in climates such as South Africa. It doesn’t necessarily have to be within the South African context, but maybe in a country that is like South Africa.

So the stories were more… I think there’s one story that I remember of these few guys that were based in the US, but I think I would have loved to hear more stories of people doing stuff within South Africa. It makes it more relevant. Because when it starts going abroad, it’s like, okay, it’s so far away from me. They’ve got much more opportunities.

I want to know about those that have limited resources, like those that are within similar spaces as me.

IV That’s great feedback, and I totally agree with you. So I think that leads me to the next question: what were your challenges that you experienced on the course? I mean obviously I think what you just said is like relatability to local context is very important. Were there any other challenges that you experienced while you were doing this course?

IE Yes, I also felt like the cost could have been segmented according to, like, maybe when we sign up, if you’re in the digital space, then maybe you click on… like, you should skew the programme into specific… how can I put it? Into specific…

IV [Overtalking] industry-specific?

IE Yes, industry-specific. Because now when you start going techno on me, I start getting intimidated, or I shut down. Yes, I could be listening, but I’m not really there. I’m so totally intimidated. I mean, technology’s awesome. It’s the future and ICT, but it’s very different when it’s… it depends on your industry, you know?
IV: Okay, yes, yes. Okay, that’s a good point. That’s great feedback. I think there is an opportunity to connect with others in your industry. Did you notice anybody else on the course that you felt like you could have had more opportunity to connect with?

IE: Not really, because I saw there was 87 of us, and I also found that the chat group became… it was too much. It was too much, and people were talking about things that I knew nothing about. I felt like there was so many other people I would have loved to have engaged with, but because there were so many people, it was, like, how do I then filter down from 87?

How do I know that this person is… they shouldn’t necessarily be within the same industry as me, but something similar, or something that… technology’s good, but what can they offer me?

IV: Sure. That’s a valid point. Well, then can you…? You said to me the HR module was quite an eye-opener for you.

00:10:23

What were the other highlights that you experienced on the course?

IE: Can I mention one thing before I get… before my preggy brain takes over? The data consumption. I know, as an entrepreneur, I think I took on this journey, now that I actually went on maternity leave, I’m actually not employed at the moment. But the data consumption was… it was so, like… I really wanted to read… like, hear the TED talks or what… the YouTube stuff, but when I saw that it actually takes up so much data, it just…

But eventually, I got, like a social media data thing, which was quite helpful. But every week, when I just thought about it, I was, like, oh no. They were quite informative, though, but I preferred the reading, because I had data issues.

IV: Okay. That’s a good point and I [overtalking].

IE: But they were very informative. But I wanted to hear about it, but it was just… it was too much.

IV: Okay, that’s a good point. Okay, well and so what would you say were your highlights for the course?

IE: I think the content of the course. It was so, so informative. It was… like, I needed a recap on a whole lot of things because, yes, I haven’t been back in school in a while, and it just offered me that. It wasn’t too much of a clutter. It was direct, it was straight to the point. Like, this is what it is.

00:11:51

And I really, really enjoyed the content. I actually wish I had a little book that I could just make notes every now and then in my little business. It will be like my little Bible. It was, very, very, very informative. The content was amazing. I will…

IV: What was your favourite of the modules? Which was your favourite bit of content?

IE: The favourite? Can I be biased and go to the marketing section and the positioning and…? Because that’s what I know.

IV: And you thought that was good content? Considering you know, you know, you have a marketing background, what was…? Did you find that the content was… if you were to put yourself in somebody else’s shoes who’s not from a marketing background, do you think that that content [overtalking]?

IE: I would say the HR, because I knew nothing about it, and it’s very important, because that’s… it’s the legal stuff, actually. As much as it’s HR, it’s legal, so if you don’t adhere to it, you might get into trouble. It’s simple things like going to register the people that work for you.

Yes, I’m sure… I don’t know why I never thought of it, but it was a good reminder. Like, hey, you’re thinking about the business, what about the HR aspect of it?

IV: Yes, and it’s important in your… I mean, it’s important in all businesses, but in the ECD-related stuff, you know, relationships are so important.
So it’s going to be a big part of your business, is your HR management.

Definitely. So I enjoyed that part.

In terms of comparing where your business was before the course started, and now that it’s completed, the course is completed, what comparisons can you make? Like, if you look at what your business… you idea was at the… before the course, and now you look at the business now, what do you see that’s different?

Everything is in place now. It was all just a big clutter, and most of it was in my head. And it was difficult for me to put it all on paper. But now everything is written out, everything is documented, everything is in order, so that’s where I am now. Whereas before, most… I mean, if I was going to be hit by a bus, nobody would actually be able to carry this through. But now everything is documented, everything is… there’s a business plan.

Everything is just done accordingly, which is quite important. I had struggled with taking, like I said, all the stuff in my mind, and putting it… documenting it. I didn’t… it was quite intimidating for me. Like, where do I start?

And I also found that the little templates that were sent through was also quite helpful, because yes, I knew what I needed to do, but where do I start? Which one do I start with?

Yes, okay, that’s fantastic. That’s excellent feedback. So I’m going to ask you whether you found that the programme content, its activities, do you think that they were inclusive?

The activities were… they were great. They really did keep us on our feet, because sometimes you wouldn’t really read some of the stuff, and then you go back to the activity, and there’s that part that you didn’t read. So it worked together. It actually… it was quite cool. I was, like, oh my goodness.

And then they had to ask me the question or the part that I didn’t read. So it was really, really awesome.

Oh, that’s great. And then do you think that the programme, so its contents and its activities, do you think it was innovative?

Definitely. I think we can’t be going through the old-school way of learning, where we’ve got a whole textbook just to go through, and we need to take out the important stuff. Like, let’s stick to the most important parts, the stuff that we actually need, instead of just going on and on and actually just… let’s just stick to what’s important and take that out of the module.

And I found that within the content. We just stuck… it was just… it was straight to the point.

That’s fantastic. Great. I’ve got one more question, then I’m going to ask you if you have any questions for me. And that is, what do you think could be improved upon?

You’ve mentioned that we could include some more South African context and you were talking about the data usage being quite high. Is there anything else you think could be improved upon?

I’m just going to elaborate more on the African context. It’s from a motivational point of view, I think that would… because I don’t think quotes are going to help. You know when it’s that last week or those last two weeks, you get your motivation from reading case studies of those in and around you, which I felt I had to go back and do some research of similar stories or similar start-ups as those that I was running.

And it would be nice to actually have read about that. Or maybe actually do it as homework, or yes, maybe do it as homework, for people to go out there and research more, because it’s… I had to do that to actually try and be motivated and see if this is actually
viable, because now you’re thinking, yes, they’ve given me feedback, but has anyone else
done this out there?
   Or how is it going? Maybe actually that would be nice research for someone who’s
   with… who’s doing the course. Like, go and get someone who’s doing something similar in
   South Africa, or maybe in another country that’s similar to South Africa.
IV  Great. That’s [overtalking].
IE  And maybe… yes, maybe not just channel the activities to do this. Let them… let
   people explore, let them come up with exciting things. I’m sure we can learn so much from
   other people, as well. Like, some of the innovative stuff that they would actually find out, or
   similar projects that they would find out that’s happening out there that could help their
   project as well.
00:17:27
IV  Brilliant. That’s great. Cool. Queeneth, have you got any questions you want to ask
   me?
IE  Is it SETA-accredited. Not SETA, oh my goodness. Is it NQF accredited? It would be
   nice if it was. Even it was NQF Level Four.
IV  No, it would be amazing. What we’ve been doing is trying to avoid too much of the
   bureaucracy around the business education stuff. And so what we’re offering is much more of
   a plug-and-play kind of a course, as opposed to the accredited course. So one of the things
   that would… if we were to accredit it, which is something we are looking towards doing,
   there would be a lot more testing involved.
   And I… and you’ll probably… I don’t know if you agree with me, but people who are
   wanting to start a business are not wanting to take tests; they’re wanting to do something that
   is going to work in their business from the time that they’ve read it or do it, as opposed to
   needing to submit assignments and get marks and that kind of stuff.
IE  Yes.
00:18:29
IV  So that’s where we’re at with our thinking. But there is a certificate of completion that
   you will get, which is from both Startup School and Investec. So it can be used on your CV,
   definitely.
IE  Oh, okay. Can I suggest something?
IV  Yes.
IE  Maybe because there’s only just that prize money that’s that R100,000 and you’re
   thinking there’s 87 of us, what are the chances? Maybe you can actually offer a bursary,
   because I mean this made me want to study further. It made me want to go back to school and
   actually study business. So maybe even offer a bursary.
IV  That’s a great suggestion. I definitely will take that. Definitely. That sounds great.
   Just so you know, the applications for the prize money, there’s only 40 people that applied
   and got through to the completed application process. So it’s a much smaller group of people
   that are competing for that money.
   And then the other thing that is important to remember is that in the competition
   arena, what’s more important than the money is the exposure to various investors and role-
   players, and that networking that comes with it. So I’m hoping that that’s going to show to be
   a lot more valuable than the money.
IE  Yes, okay, yes, true.
IV  But yes, I… thank you so much for your time and I really enjoyed this conversation.
   I’m so excited about… so now tell me more about having this baby.
00:20:07
Are you going now? Is it a schedule caesarean, or what’s the plan?
IE  I’m going to go schedule a caesarean, because nothing’s happening, so I’m just going to see my doctor and schedule a caesarean.
IV  Okay, so how long…? So are you… how many weeks overdue are you, then?
IE  I’m 38 weeks, but we said that after 38 weeks, we’re going to try and schedule a caesarean.
IV  Okay, alright, cool. That’s so exciting. And do you have other kids?
IE  Yes, I’ve got a four-year-old daughter, and I think that’s where the whole education part stood out for me. Because I’m from a village, and I had to go, like… I’m from a village in Mpumalanga, and I had to go four hours away and be separated from my mom as a four-year-old, just to get quality education.

And I just… I think it also comes from there. It’s that I want to close… it shouldn’t be happening. No child should have to leave their parents just to get primary education. And I understand where my mom was coming from, but I mean, we are at a different place. We’ve grown as a country, it shouldn’t be the case.

00:21:14

We should be having these kind of stuff in the communities, and now that I’ve been exposed to all… I’ve worked for a few schools. I’ve worked for Vega[?], and it’s a few private schools. And most of the things that I’ve learned while working there was a culture shock, because there’s certain things that, I mean, as… if you had certain difficulties or barriers to learning, you were a write-off as… in the schools that I came from.

And I came here and I found out that there’s psychologists that offer this and that, and I wanted to bring that back to my community and make a difference there, as well.
IV  That’s fantastic. I know it will be a success, so I wish you all of the best for it, and you now have my email address, so please shoot me an email if you think of anything after this conversation, if there’s anything else you want to give me feedback on, please feel free to. And then we will hopefully see you on the 7th of September at the digital closing ceremony.

We’ll do a proper invite and we’ll do it all via basically the same platform that you and I are talking on now. We’ll bring the whole cohort in, so it’ll be all 80 of us, plus some of the mentors, and the guys from Investec will do, like, a closing speech and all that kind of stuff. And we’ll do the announcement of the prize winners at that event.
IE  That’s awesome. Can I mention one thing?
00:22:38

I had made a bit of a note and I just went back to it now.
IV  Yes.
IE  I don’t know if you know Vusi Thembekwayo.
IV  Rings a bell. Thembekwayo.
IE  He’s a motivational speaker, but he’s also… he’s an international speaker, and I don’t know, he breaks it down for most entrepreneurs, like young entrepreneurs that expect things to happen overnight, and he’s quite relevant within the South African context, so I think it would be nice to even include maybe one of his talks.
IV  That would be amazing. Do you mind popping me his name in an email?
IE  Okay, I’ll do that.
IV  Is he from a marketing background? I seem to remember that’s where his…
IE  I think that’s where he started from.
IV  Yes, okay. No, that’ll be great. I’d love to do some research on him and see what he’s done and where we can bring him into the content.
IE  Awesome. Alright, thanks, then.
IV  Queeneth, thank you so much, and I wish you all of the best.
I’m so excited for you, and be safe, and healthy and your little one, I’m sure, is going to be an absolute joy.

IE    Oh, awesome. Thank you so much for your time.
IV    It’s an absolute pleasure, and we’ll chat soon.
IE    Alright then, bye.
IV    Cheers.

00:23:48