

## Evaluating the significance of franchising entrepreneurial learning in higher education: a longitudinal study from two European Universities

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## **Abstract**

This study delves into franchising education at HEIs and its advantages for students. It investigates its impact on knowledge and perceptions, preparing students for entrepreneurial careers and enhancing their job market competitiveness.

Franchising is pivotal in contemporary entrepreneurship, offering aspiring entrepreneurs mentorship and risk reduction while enabling established entrepreneurs to expand efficiently. Hence, students must acquire franchising knowledge integral to their entrepreneurial learning.

Existing literature extensively covers franchising. However, a noticeable gap exists concerning franchising education and its effects on entrepreneurship students. The research underscores the scarcity of franchising entrepreneurial learning in higher. Additionally, the literature reveals the necessity of collaboration between academia and the business sector in designing and delivering this course, considering the essential knowledge and skills required by lecturers of franchising courses.

The longitudinal study spanned seven years based on two rounds of research at the University of Luxembourg (Public) and Vern University (Private) involving 203 students who attended the franchising course and assessed changes in knowledge and attitudes toward franchising through pre- and post-course surveys. The first study round occurred at Vern University, and the second at the University of Luxembourg.

This study's results underscore the Franchising course's significance in shaping students' understanding and views regarding franchising. Overall, the course effectively promotes entrepreneurial learning outcomes, evident from the positive shifts in students' knowledge and attitudes toward franchising upon its completion.

The study underscores the importance of franchising education in HEIs, aiding students in making informed entrepreneurial decisions and gaining a competitive advantage in the job market. Further Research can explore different groups of students and reasons for varying attitudes towards franchising in private and public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

**Keywords:** Franchising, Franchise curriculum, Entrepreneurial learning, Higher Education

## **Introduction**

For centuries, public higher education has been dominant and more significant. Private higher education has been expanding quickly worldwide over the past few decades (Khawaja, Qureshi and Sokić 2022), and its importance is increasingly clear globally (Levy, 2012). Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are classified as either public or private (Qureshi and Khawaja, 2021), and this binary division (Levin, 2005) is fundamental in higher education (Enders and Jongbloed, 2007).

Private HEIs, also called fully autonomous alternative providers, operate for profit, do not receive any grant from the Government and are “responsible for their own funding” (Altbach, 1999, p.2).

The most straightforward and simple understanding of a private higher education institution is that of an organisation with private ownership and funding, while a public higher education Institution is an organisation with state ownership and funding (Qureshi and Khawaja, 2021, Qureshi,2023). Regarding functionality, both public and private HEIs are equivalent, differing only in ownership or funding (Duczmal, 2006).

Franchising is pervasive in various aspects of our lives and business endeavours. It provides a pathway for aspiring entrepreneurs to start a business with the mentorship and support of experienced entrepreneurs, mitigating risks through shared responsibilities. Additionally, established entrepreneurs can optimise costs by transforming their business units into franchises and offering them to the public or their employees.

Risk-sharing in franchise models also enables individuals less inclined to take risks to engage in entrepreneurial activities, broadening the pool of potential entrepreneurs. While risk-taking has traditionally been considered a fundamental characteristic of entrepreneurs, franchise business offers space for those with varying risk appetites to explore and participate in entrepreneurial ventures.

Franchising has evolved beyond traditional roles in retail and services and has assumed an essential role in commercialising Higher Education (HE). Franchising as an international academic partnership benefits all main stakeholders involved.

Entrepreneurial learning encompasses formal and informal processes that cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset, knowledge, skills, and abilities for life and work (Oganisjana & Matlay, 2012).

In Higher Education Institution (HEI), it plays a vital role in developing essential skills and knowledge required for success in today's dynamic business environment. It fosters innovative thinking, creativity, and the ability to recognise business opportunities. Through entrepreneurial education, students acquire teamwork, communication, leadership, and resource management skills, which are essential for entrepreneurship and various aspects of their professional and personal lives (Peschl et al., 2021).

Integrating franchise education into the curriculum of an HEI further broadens students' horizons and fosters creativity and entrepreneurial initiative. This integration also strengthens collaboration between academia and the business sector, creating opportunities for employment, mentorship, and networking. Franchise education offers practical experiences through exploring franchise offerings, analysing case studies, and engaging in discussions with guest lecturers from the franchise sector (Cumberland et al., 2019). These experiences provide valuable insights into the franchise business model and its application in different stages of business.

Despite the growing importance of franchise education, there remains a gap in research exploring its impact on students studying business or entrepreneurship. This study aims to address this gap by investigating the influence of franchise education on students, providing valuable insights for both entrepreneurial education and practice. Additionally, the research contributes to the existing knowledge of the franchise ecosystem and its position within the entrepreneurial context. By gaining a better understanding of the impact of franchise education, this study also aims to advance entrepreneurial education and practice, ultimately fostering a more comprehensive and informed approach to entrepreneurship in the modern business landscape.

## **Literature Review**

The literature review section provides an in-depth analysis of franchising dynamics, highlighting its multi-layered characteristics, global prevalence, and entrepreneurial benefits. It then explores the integration of franchising in higher education, examining its role in curricula, influence on entrepreneurial thinking, and existing challenges. Additionally, it addresses the scarcity of franchise education within higher education institutions, emphasising collaborative solutions and the imperative of enhancing entrepreneurial education.

## **Franchise Industry's Potential and Economic Significance**

Franchising exhibits multi-layered characteristics and a wide-ranging presence, with their advantages notably outweighing the associated risks. The franchise model provides a proven path to success, reducing the risk compared to starting a business from scratch. Furthermore, it offers entrepreneurs a support system and transfer of know-how, particularly during the two most sensitive stages of the business life cycle, such as start-up and growth.

When analysing the distinctive characteristics of the franchise business model, it is crucial to consider its broad multisectoral foundation. Franchise business encompasses more than 300 different sectors (CNBC, 2023), operating in a multicultural environment with a global reach deeply rooted in diverse markets with varying levels of development and local customs. It is estimated that over 50% of global retail sales occur through franchising, with a new franchise location opening every 8 minutes worldwide (Makan, 2020).

When discussing the diversity and dynamics of the franchise business sector, we can discuss various types, reasons for entering and relationships between franchisors and franchisees, including formats, models, and business sectors. In addition to being multi-sectoral, it is multicultural too, due to its global presence and multi-contextual as its foundations intersect with psychology, sociology, entrepreneurship, marketing, law, human resource management, and more (Kukec, 2019). Furthermore, its multidisciplinary nature is evident in the fact that it is considered a marketing technique, a retail channel, a distribution channel (Matthews et al., 2006), a way of internationalizing business, an organizational form, a form of entrepreneurial association (Alon, 2021), a strategic resource for growth (Stanworth et al., 2004), a legal category (Shane, 2005), and more.

Regarding the power of franchising in the world, China, the United States, Brazil, and Taiwan are among the leaders in the global franchise market, boasting a significant number of franchise brands (Franchising in China, 2023; IFA, 2023; ITA, 2020; TCFA, 2023). India stands out as the world leader in the number of franchise systems, with a projected 30% annual growth rate by 2025 (Marya, 2023). Europe, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and Spain are prominent players in the franchise sector, each with many brands (Alpeza et al., 2015). On the other hand, Croatia had a more moderate development in franchising until recent years, facing various barriers (Alpeza et al., 2015). However, since 2020, the Croatian franchise sector has experienced a remarkable 168% growth rate (CFCG, 2023).

Regardless, franchising is rapidly growing in developed markets and particularly in new markets such as China, India, Taiwan, South Korea, Eastern Europe, and others. It represents a synonym for globalisation. This type of business has deep roots in developed countries' economic and political history. It holds significant importance for every economy regarding employment, economic modernisation, knowledge and technology transfer, sustainable entrepreneurship development, and increased tax and customs revenues. (Kukec, 2019)

However, employment is not the most crucial outcome of the franchise business. Another significant parameter is the number of sales outlets, primarily representing the number of franchisee-owned businesses, many of which are new entrepreneurial ventures. Thus, franchise business directly generates new entrepreneurial ventures and contributes to the economy of each country in which it develops.

The franchise industry is ready for further growth and success with a focus on established operations, innovation, technology, mentorship, and customer experience (IFA, 2003). It offers numerous opportunities for entrepreneurs with the proper knowledge, entrepreneurial mindset, confidence, dedication, and support to fulfil their entrepreneurial dreams. Moreover, franchise businesses have a success rate of over 92% in the first two years of operation for new entrepreneurs and 85% after five years, making it the most sustainable way to start a business (FranNet, 2021). In 2019 the strength of the global franchise market was estimated at \$3.71 trillion (Gitnux, 2019). All these statistics highlight the incredible potential offered by the franchise business sector.

### **Franchising in Higher Education**

Franchising has expanded its traditional roles in retail and services, and it is now an integral part of the internationalisation of HEI too. In international academic franchise agreements, HEIs provide the curriculum, learning materials, quality assurance and, most important, the right to award a degree. (Altbach, 2023). Students often receive degrees from both the international franchisor and the franchisee, resulting in joint validation, all while residing in their home country. As a result, the partner institution gains an international dimension and benefits from a globally recognised institution's perceived quality of education. Additionally, this development has boosted the economic rationale for international academic franchising and increased the international recognition of academic awards while significantly reducing student costs (Altbach, 2023).

Universities' international activities have considerably expanded over the past two decades (Altbach, 2007), with a notable increase in recent years. The phenomenon of franchise agreements among HEIs from different countries is becoming increasingly common. For instance, British, American, and Australian universities have formed franchise agreements with institutions in foreign countries to offer their degrees abroad. Some agreements represent multinational partnerships, such as a partnership between a British university and an Indian institute to offer degrees in Oman (Altbach, 2023).

Considering the complexity presented, it is clear why franchising, with its widely applicable advantages and intricate structure, deserves and should be included in entrepreneurial education. The global presence of franchising and its interconnection with various business sectors, significantly influencing employment, underscores the need to recruit employees with specific franchise business knowledge. Therefore, incorporating franchise education within entrepreneurial education at universities, aiming to transfer new knowledge to students, which will ultimately facilitate their employment and provide a competitive advantage in the job market on the one hand, and serve as a valuable asset for starting their own businesses on the other hand, should be a highly relevant topic for all entrepreneurial education programmes.

### **Importance of Entrepreneurial Education**

Entrepreneurial education (Erkkilä (2000) plays a significant role in fostering entrepreneurial thinking. Research by the European Commission highlights that individuals who have received entrepreneurship education and practice demonstrate a greater inclination towards entrepreneurship, improved employability, as well as higher levels of creativity and innovation. Moreover, such individuals are more likely to become entrepreneurs (EC, 2012). This research indicates the positive impact of franchising education on the development of entrepreneurial skills and intentions and suggests the active role of youth in society and the economy.

*Entrepreneurial education* can be defined as a process that provides individuals with concepts and skills to identify opportunities in their environment. This type of education develops vision, self-confidence, and the knowledge necessary to act where others may not dare or see possibilities (Harrison, Leitch, 2008).

The increase in entrepreneurial education at all levels over the past decade has confirmed the justification for its inclusion in higher education (Baggen et al., 2021).

At the same time, considering the significant representation of the franchise business sector under the umbrella of entrepreneurship and its importance and sustainability, this research was initiated, and its results speak to the importance of franchise curriculum within entrepreneurship education at the higher education level.

### **Franchising Entrepreneurial Learning**

Through curricula on franchising, as a significant segment of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial education, young people can gain insights into the specificities and advantages of this business model. This type of education enables students to acquire knowledge about different sectors and international business, as well as develop the skills necessary for successful operation in the franchise sector. Simultaneously, it broadens their perspectives and strengthens their self-confidence for starting a business based on a tested business model, education, risk-sharing, and the support and mentorship that are the backbone of this mode of operation, contributing to the development of entrepreneurial potential among young people (Lackeus, 2015).

The emphasis on the multidisciplinary of franchise business requires a comprehensive curriculum encompassing various topics, including marketing, management, economics, finance, law, human resources, etc. Education must be realistic and include simulations of actual business situations to develop practical skills and competencies. This approach emphasizes that it is not only necessary what is learned but also how it is learned. Through active learning and group activities, students develop analysis, synthesis, and evaluation skills, which contribute to stronger motivation and higher-order thinking (Harris and Bacon, 2019).

Active engagement of students in various activities, such as reading, participating in discussions, watching relevant films, conducting research, writing, and delivering presentations, while also inviting guest lecturers who are actively involved in franchise businesses and making field visits is of paramount importance for the students but also for this kind of curriculum. These diversified activities enhance learning and memory retention and contribute to developing students' attitudes, values, and skills. This affirmation of their own strengths and acquisition of knowledge empowers students, boosts their self-confidence, and enhances their self-efficacy, consequently improving their prospects in the competitive job market (Ćorić et al., 2012).



Within the realm of high-quality entrepreneurship education, which encompasses franchise business education, it is essential to ensure that students are exposed to lecturers who possess personal entrepreneurial experience and comprehensive knowledge of the franchise business model, pedagogical expertise, and instructional capabilities. This combination of attributes allows lecturers to create an environment that facilitates students' active learning experiences, incorporating real-world examples and interactive activities. Integrating lecturers' personal entrepreneurial experiences with practical pedagogical approaches provide students with valuable opportunities to actively engage in practical experiences, resulting in superior learning and enhanced memory retention (Ćorić et al., 2012).

### **The Scarcity of Franchise education in HEIs**

The incorporation of franchise education into university programmes remains limited, despite the global presence of franchise businesses and the numerous advantages they offer to the economy, businesses, individuals, and institutions. Research conducted by Cumberland et al. (2019) reveals that only 25% of the top 50 undergraduate programmes in the United States include courses on franchise business. This translates to a mere 25 franchise curricula across 14 universities. Among these universities, 9 (64%) are public institutions, while 5 (36%) are private universities (Cumberland et al., 2019).

Several HEI that offer franchising courses have been identified within the scope of researching secondary data sources for this paper in Australia. University of New South Wales from Sydney has a franchising course at the postgraduate level. Griffith University from Brisbane offers Franchising courses for the undergraduate level. The University of Sydney offers a Franchising course for a bachelor's degree (University of Sydney, 2023) and Bond University, where franchising is an elective course at the postgraduate level (Bond University, 2023).

The number of European universities offering franchise curricula remains very small. For instance, In France, three Universities offer a Franchise curriculum: Université de Rennes provides the Master's programme titled "Master of Marketing - Franchising, Retail and Service Chains.". University Haute-Alsace has a Master's Degree in Franchise and Network Business Marketing and Engineering and a School of Management in Lyon with a Master's Degree in Animation and Development of Franchise Networks.

The University of Luxembourg, included in this study, has been offering the compulsory course "Franchising in the Global Environment" since 2015 as part of its

Master's programme in Entrepreneurship and Innovation. The University of London offers the study of franchising within its Postgraduate Law LLM programme. The Faculty of Economics at Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek, Croatia, currently offers franchise business as part of its undergraduate programme. Similarly, the private Vern University in Zagreb has been offering franchise business as an elective course within its Entrepreneurial Economics programme since 2012, also covered in this research.

The impetus for creating franchise curricula primarily comes from franchisors with a pressing need for new franchisees or employees. Rast et al. (2020) highlight that only three universities in the United States offer franchise studies as a primary subject. Surprisingly, the reason for this low prevalence of franchise curricula is not clearly explained. The fact that this is the case even in the USA, where franchise business is highly developed and significantly contributes to employment and gross domestic product, is surprising.

Despite the extensive body of literature on franchising in general, there is a scarcity of literature addressing the inclusion of franchise education in HEI (Cumberland et al., 2023). According to Cumberland et al. (2019), the limited presence of franchise education in entrepreneurial education at universities maybe attributed to a lack of qualified lecturers to teach the subject, as well as a lack of knowledge and awareness among lecturers about the importance of learning about the franchising for students' careers, whether in employment or entrepreneurial ventures, as well as for the business community and society as a whole. (Cumberland, 2023).

Universities often address this issue by collaborating with franchise associations or other stakeholders in the franchise industry to provide this form of education. One example of such collaboration is creating the Franchise Accelerator programme, resulting from a partnership between two major universities in the USA and a franchise corporation (Cumberland, 2023). In addition to this project, other similar initiatives include the Titus Franchise Center at Palm Beach Atlantic University, The Tariq Farid Franchise Institute at Babson College, and the Rosenberg International Franchise Center at the University of New Hampshire. The impetus for these collaborations primarily stems from franchisors or national franchise associations to create a new pool of talent for future franchisees or employees. The same holds true in Europe.

Additionally, as previously noted, a challenge in franchising education is the scarcity of experienced lecturers who are well-versed in this business model and capable of

imparting their knowledge to students. This further underscores the need for academia to collaborate with the franchise sector, providing a foundation for implementing an active learning process in franchising courses.

### **Conclusion of the Literature Review**

In conclusion, the extensive and diverse nature of franchising, its global reach, and its potential for fostering employment and entrepreneurship underscore the need for its integration into entrepreneurial education. The significance of franchising entrepreneurial learning in higher education emphasises the growing importance of integrating franchising education into university curricula. This integration aligns with the evolving landscape of entrepreneurship and the increasing recognition of franchising as a viable pathway for business expansion and innovation.

Despite its economic significance, franchise education remains limited in HEIs due to various challenges, including a lack of qualified educators. Collaborative efforts between academia and the franchise industry are essential to address this gap and prepare students for the dynamic business landscape. Incorporating franchising into education equips students with practical skills and a competitive edge, promoting entrepreneurship and innovation.

### **Methodology**

The longitudinal quantitative study was employed to investigate the impact of franchising education on students' knowledge, perceptions, career preparation, and job market competitiveness.

The research was carried out over seven years at two European universities: The University of Luxembourg (Public) and Vern University (Private) in Zagreb, Croatia. The study timeframe encompassed the years 2015 to 2018 at Vern University and 2016 to 2022 at the University of Luxembourg, with an interruption in data collection due to the Pandemic (COVID-19).

Multiple data collection points were used to collect data at two-time points - before starting the programme (baseline) and after programme completion. The first set of primary data collection occurred between 2015 and 2018 at Vern University for an undergraduate programme, and the second round of data collection was completed from 2018 to 2022 for a two years Master Programme with a delay in collection data due to CoVID-19.

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At the University of Luxembourg, the Franchising course was compulsory during the first year of the Master Programme in Entrepreneurship and Innovation at the Faculty of Law, Economics, and Finance. The course consists of 54 workload hours, of which 24 go to block lectures during three working days and is worth 2 ECTS points.

On the other hand, at Vern University, the course was elective, and it has been offered to different groups of students: full-time students and part-time at the third year of study Economics of Entrepreneurship and Vern's Erasmus students. The delivery of teaching is contingent on the choice of the course and the group of students. The course consists of 52 workload hours, of which 40 go to lectures during one semester, and is worth 4 ECTS points.

The target population was students of franchising courses enrolled to study undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in HEIs offering franchising education. A sample of two universities, one offering an undergraduate programme (Vern University-Private) and another Master programme (The University of Luxembourg-Public). The research involved 203 students who attended the Franchising course, with 72 students from Vern University and 131 from the University of Luxembourg. Both universities in this research shared a lecturer who was vital in incorporating the franchising course into both institutions' curricula. This Lecturer holds a doctorate in Entrepreneurship and Innovation from the International Center for Entrepreneurial Studies at the Faculty of Economics, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University in Osijek, Croatia (FIP, 2023). The Lecturer was included in 2023 Seosamba's list of 100 global franchise influencers (Seosamba, 2023). Furthermore, the Lecturer is an entrepreneur and franchisor, President of the Croatian Franchise Association and a member of the European Franchise Federation Policy Board (EFF, 2023).

The primary data was collected at two points at a pre-semester and at the end of the semester, administered by the course lecturer. The survey included five key questions addressing the students' knowledge of franchise business, recognition of franchise brands, the attractiveness of the topic for entrepreneurship students, the perceived impact of franchise business knowledge on entrepreneurial career choices, and their opinion about the relevance of franchise business knowledge for future job market positioning.

Additionally, the research collected demographic information, including gender, and recorded the university affiliation of the respondents, distinguishing between Vern

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University and the University of Luxembourg, as well as the classification of the universities as private or public. At Vern University, the research distinguishes between two groups of students: regular students and Erasmus students.

The data obtained from the surveys and demographic information served as the basis for analysing the impact of franchising education on students' perceptions and career aspirations.

The following relevant set of research questions and objectives developed for this study.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the current state of franchising education at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and how extensively is it integrated into the curriculum?
2. What specific learning outcomes toward franchising are observed before and after the completion of the franchising course?
3. How does students' attitude toward franchising change after completing the course, and how does this influence their entrepreneurial aspirations?
4. What are the perceived advantages and challenges of incorporating franchising entrepreneurial learning in HEI's' programmes from the perspectives of students?
5. How does exposure to franchising entrepreneurial learning impact students' readiness to enter the job market and their overall competitiveness in various professional domains?
6. What are the key differences in learning outcomes between students in private and public universities regarding franchising education?

### **Research Objectives**

- To assess the current state of franchising education at Higher Education
- To examine the impact of franchising education on students' knowledge acquisition, attitudes, and perceptions related to entrepreneurship.
- To compare and analyse the specific learning outcomes related to franchising education before and after students complete the franchising course, focusing on knowledge gained, skills developed, and attitudes shaped.
- To identify and analyse the
- the perceived benefits and challenges of incorporating franchising education into HEIs' offerings, as perceived by students.
- To analyse how franchising education equips students with practical skills, strategic thinking, and operational insights necessary for pursuing entrepreneurial careers.

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- To investigate the role of franchising education in enhancing students' job market readiness by instilling confidence, practical competence, and a broader understanding of market dynamics, thereby improving their overall competitiveness in various employment sectors.
- To compare and contrast the learning outcomes observed among students in private and public universities concerning franchising education, aiming to identify any significant differences in knowledge acquisition, skills development, and attitude changes within these two institutional contexts.

Through these research questions and objectives, the study aims to provide insights into the effectiveness of franchising education at HEIs regarding its impact on students' knowledge acquisition, career preparation, and competitiveness in the job market. In addition, they provide a clear roadmap for investigating the various dimensions of franchising education's impact and the differences that might arise between students from different types of universities such as public and private.

### Data Analysis

The methodology of this study involved the presentation of categorical data using absolute and relative frequencies. Numeric data were described using the arithmetic mean and standard deviation. The normality of the distribution of numeric variables was tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. Differences between two independent groups were tested using the Mann-Whitney U test, while differences among normally distributed variables for three groups were tested using the Kruskal-Wallis test. Additionally, differences in repeated measurements were tested using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. All p-values were two-tailed, and the significance level was set at 0.05. Statistical analysis was performed using the IBM SPSS Statistics software (Version 26.0, IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA).

The research methodology employed in this research aims to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness and significance of integrating franchise education in HEI.

### Ethical Considerations

We secured informed consent from all participants explaining the study's purpose and procedures. Data collected from respondents were kept completely private and entirely confidential. All of the respondents in the study had their understanding of the study's aims and objectives. All aspects of the data transfer, storage, and usage were strictly regulated according to "The *European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity*." Respondents were informed that completing the survey was optional, and they voluntarily agreed and participated.

## Results

Upon examination of the data related to participants' gender, it can be observed that 52.7% are male, while 47.3% are female. Furthermore, regarding the type of students, 64.5% identified as students from Luxembourg, 20.2% as students from Vern, and 15.3% as students from Erasmus. As for the type of Higher Education Institution (HEI), 35.0% identified with private institutions, while 65.0% identified with public universities.

Table 1 and Chart 1 presents the average indicators of differences between the responses of students before and after attending the Franchising course at HEI.

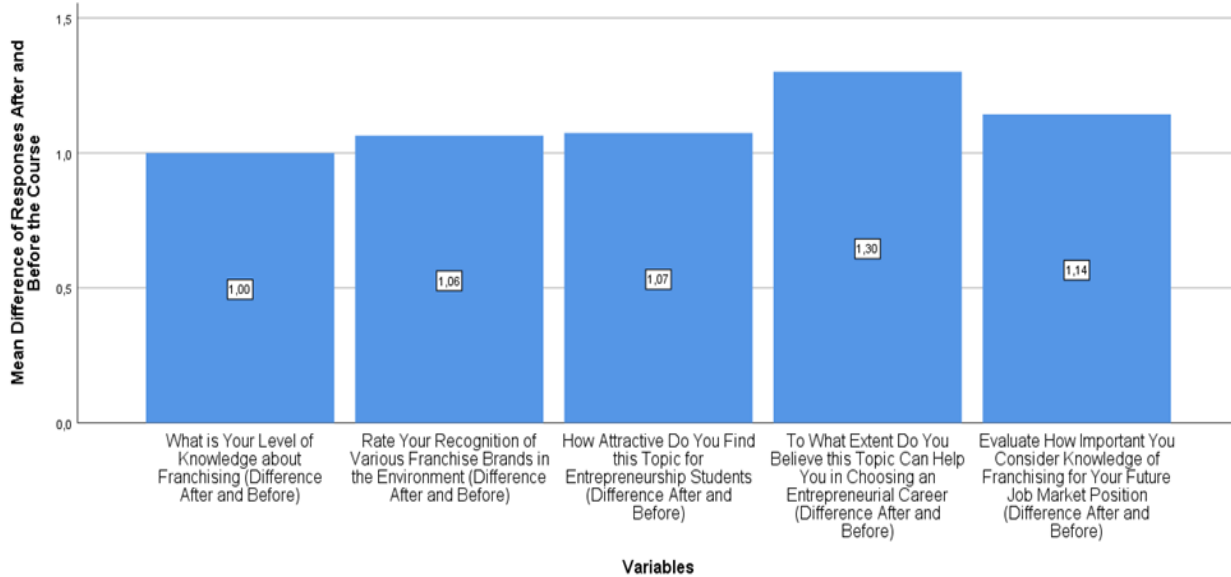
**Table 1: Average indicators of differences between the second and first measurements**

	$\bar{x}$	Sd	Min	Max
What is Your Level of Knowledge about Franchise Business Model (Difference After and Before)	1,0000	,90104	-1,00	3,00
Rate Your Recognition of Various Franchise Brands in the Environment (Difference After and before)	1,0640	,69712	,00	3,00
How Attractive Do You Find this Topic for Entrepreneurship Students (Difference After and Before)	1,0739	,67447	-1,00	2,00
To What Extent Do You Believe this Topic Can Help You in Choosing an Entrepreneurial Career (Difference After and Before)	<b>1,3005</b>	,66254	,00	3,00
Evaluate How Important You Consider Knowledge of Franchise Business for Your Future Job Market Position (Difference After and Before)	1,1429	,83505	,00	4,00

Regarding the students' knowledge about franchising, the average difference was 1.0000, indicating a moderate increase in knowledge after completing the course. The standard deviation of 0.90104 suggests that the responses varied to some extent among students, with some experiencing a more significant knowledge improvement.

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**Chart 1**



Regarding recognising various franchise brands in their environment, the average difference was 1.0640, implying a positive change in students' ability to identify franchise brands. The relatively low standard deviation of 0.69712 indicates a more consistent student perception regarding this aspect.

Regarding the attractiveness of the topic, the average difference was 1.0739, suggesting a general increase in its appeal after the course. The standard deviation of 0.67447 indicates moderate variability in students' opinions about the topic's attractiveness.

For the question related to how the topic could help them in choosing an entrepreneurial career, the average difference was 1.3005, showing a considerable positive impact of the course. The standard deviation of 0.66254 indicates a relatively uniform perception among students regarding this aspect.

Assessing the importance of franchising knowledge for their future job market position, the average difference was 1.1429. The relatively higher standard deviation of 0.83505 suggests a broader range of responses, reflecting varying opinions among students on the significance of this knowledge.



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Table 2 shows the ranks of the participants concerning the initial and final indicators. Based on this, it can be observed that all variables have positive ranks, indicating that the indicator values are higher after the course.

**Table 2:** Ranks

		N	Mean rank	Sum of ranks
What is Your Level of Knowledge about Franchise Business Model (Difference After and Before)	Negative ranks	9 <sup>a</sup>	45,50	409,50
	Positive ranks	144 <sup>b</sup>	78,97	11371,50
	Equal	50 <sup>c</sup>		
	Total	203		
Rate Your Recognition of Various Franchise Brands in the Environment (Difference After and before)	Negative ranks	0 <sup>a</sup>	,00	,00
	Positive ranks	163 <sup>b</sup>	82,00	13366,00
	Equal	40 <sup>c</sup>		
	Total	203		
How Attractive Do You Find this Topic for Entrepreneurship Students (Difference After and Before)	Negative ranks	1 <sup>a</sup>	57,50	57,50
	Positive ranks	166 <sup>b</sup>	84,16	13970,50
	Equal	36 <sup>c</sup>		
	Total	203		
To What Extent Do You Believe this Topic Can Help You in Choosing an Entrepreneurial Career (Difference After and Before)	Negative ranks	0 <sup>a</sup>	,00	,00
	Positive ranks	186 <sup>b</sup>	93,50	17391,00
	Equal	17 <sup>c</sup>		
	Total	203		
Evaluate How Important You Consider Knowledge of Franchise Business for Your Future Job Market Position (Difference After and Before)	Negative ranks	0 <sup>a</sup>	,00	,00
	Positive Ranks	153 <sup>b</sup>	77,00	11781,00
	Equal	50 <sup>c</sup>		
	Total	203		

a. Indicator after the course < Indicator before the course

b. Indicator after the course > Indicator before the course

c. Indicator after the course = Indicator before the course

Table 3 presents the results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for each variable. The test's significance level ( $p$ ) is less than 0.05 for all observed indicators. With a confidence level of 95%, it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant difference in all observed indicators between the initial and final measurements. Specifically, the indicator values are significantly higher after the course.

**Table 3: Test statistic <sup>a</sup>**

	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
What is Your Level of Knowledge about Franchise Business Model (Difference After and Before)	-10,319 <sup>b</sup>	,000
Rate Your Recognition of Various Franchise Brands in the Environment (Difference After and before)	-11,598 <sup>b</sup>	,000
How Attractive Do You Find this Topic for Entrepreneurship Students (Difference After and Before)	-11,632 <sup>b</sup>	,000
To What Extent Do You Believe this Topic Can Help You in Choosing an Entrepreneurial Career (Difference After and Before)	-12,252 <sup>b</sup>	,000
Evaluate How Important You Consider Knowledge of Franchise Business for Your Future Job Market Position (Difference After and Before)	-11,047 <sup>b</sup>	,000

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on negative ranks.

Results of the analysis using the Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis test indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in the participants' responses concerning the gender of the participants, as the significance level ( $p$ -value) exceeds 5% ( $p > 0.05$ ).

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**Table 4: Ranks**

	Type of students	N	Arithmetic mean of ranks
What is Your Level of Knowledge about Franchise Business Model (Difference After and Before)	Luxemburg	131	91,71
	Vern	41	109,29
	Erasmus	31	135,85
	Total	203	
Rate Your Recognition of Various Franchise Brands in the Environment (Difference After and before)	Luxemburg	131	108,11
	Vern	41	90,13
	Erasmus	31	91,89
	Total	203	
How Attractive Do You Find this Topic for Entrepreneurship Students (Difference After and Before)	Luxemburg	131	102,39
	Vern	41	97,68
	Erasmus	31	106,08
	Total	203	
To What Extent Do You Believe this Topic Can Help You in Choosing an Entrepreneurial Career (Difference After and Before)	Luxemburg	131	100,33
	Vern	41	98,40
	Erasmus	31	113,82
	Total	203	
Evaluate How Important You Consider Knowledge of Franchise Business for Your Future Job Market Position (Difference After and Before)	Luxemburg	131	97,94
	Vern	41	107,77
	Erasmus	31	111,53
	Total	203	

For the question: "*What is Your Level of Knowledge about Franchise Business Model (Difference After and Before)*", the mean rank values are 91.71 for students from Luxembourg, 109.29 for Vern students, and 135.85 for Erasmus students. The highest mean rank is observed for students from the Erasmus program, indicating that they experienced the most significant increase in their knowledge of franchise business after the course.

Similarly, for the question "*Rate Your Recognition of Various Franchise Brands in the Environment (Difference After and before)*", the mean rank values are 108.11 for students from Luxembourg, 90.13 for Vern students, and 91.89 for Erasmus students. Again, the highest mean rank is observed for students from Luxembourg, indicating that they had the highest level of perception of franchise brands in their surroundings after the course.

**Table 5: Test statistic** <sup>a, b</sup>

	Kruskal-Wallis H	df	Asymp. Sig.
What is Your Level of Knowledge about Franchise Business Model (Difference After and Before)	16,646	2	,000
Rate Your Recognition of Various Franchise Brands in the Environment (Difference After and before)	4,963	2	,084
How Attractive Do You Find this Topic for Entrepreneurship Students (Difference After and Before)	,468	2	,791
To What Extent Do You Believe this Topic Can Help You in Choosing an Entrepreneurial Career (Difference After and Before)	1,923	2	,382
Evaluate How Important You Consider Knowledge of Franchise Business for Your Future Job Market Position (Difference After and Before)	2,071	2	,355

a. Kruskal Wallis Test

b. Grouping Variable: Type of students

The same pattern is observed for the questions "*How Attractive Do You Find this Topic for Entrepreneurship Students (Difference After and Before)*" and "*Evaluate How Important You Consider Knowledge of Franchise Business for Your Future Job Market Position (Difference After and Before)*". Students from the Erasmus program have the highest mean rank values, suggesting that they found the course content more appealing and believed it would be more helpful in choosing an entrepreneurial career compared to students from other programmes.

Table 5 provides the results of the Kruskal-Wallis H test, which was used to determine if there are any statistically significant differences in the responses of students from different programmes for each question. The significance values (Asymp. Sig.) are shown for each question. For the question "*What is Your Level of Knowledge about Franchise Business Model (Difference After and Before)*", the p-value is less than 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating that there is a statistically significant difference in responses among the students from different programmes. This finding supports the observation from Table 4 that students from the Erasmus program had the highest increase in their knowledge of franchising after the course.

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**Table 6: Ranks**

	Type of HEI	N	Mean rank values	Sum of ranks
What is Your Level of Knowledge about Franchise Business Model (Difference After and Before)	private	71	121,94	8658,00
	public University	132	91,27	12048,00
	Total	203		
Rate Your Recognition of Various Franchise Brands in the Environment (Difference After and before)	private	71	90,80	6447,00
	public University	132	108,02	14259,00
	Total	203		
How Attractive Do You Find this Topic for Entrepreneurship Students (Difference After and Before)	private	71	101,40	7199,50
	public University	132	102,32	13506,50
	Total	203		
To What Extent Do You Believe this Topic Can Help You in Choosing an Entrepreneurial Career (Difference After and Before)	private	71	104,20	7398,50
	public University	132	100,81	13307,50
	Total	203		
Evaluate How Important You Consider Knowledge of Franchise Business for Your Future Job Market Position (Difference After and Before)	private	71	108,61	7711,50
	public University	132	98,44	12994,50
	Total	203		

Table 6 displays the ranks and mean rank values for each type of higher education institution (private and public universities) in response to different questions related to students' knowledge and perception of franchising before and after the Franchising course. The table includes the number of participants (N) for each type of institution, the mean rank values, and the sum of ranks.

For the question " *What is Your Level of Knowledge about Franchise Business Model (Difference After and Before)*", students from private institutions have a higher mean rank value of 121.94, compared to 91.27 for students from public universities. The sum of ranks for this question is 8658.00 for private institutions and 12048.00 for public universities. These results indicate that students from private institutions experienced a more significant increase in their franchising knowledge after the course compared to students from public universities.

**Table 7: Test statistic <sup>a</sup>**

	Mann-Whitney U	Wilcoxon W	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
What is Your Level of Knowledge about Franchise Business Model (Difference After and Before)	3270,000	12048,000	-3,743	<b>,000</b>
Rate Your Recognition of Various Franchise Brands in the Environment (Difference After and before)	3891,000	6447,000	-2,216	<b>,027</b>
How Attractive Do You Find this Topic for Entrepreneurship Students (Difference After and Before)	4643,500	7199,500	-,119	,905
To What Extent Do You Believe this Topic Can Help You in Choosing an Entrepreneurial Career (Difference After and Before)	4529,500	13307,500	-,442	,659
Evaluate How Important You Consider Knowledge of Franchise Business for Your Future Job Market Position (Difference After and Before)	4216,500	12994,500	-1,249	,212

a. Grouping Variable: Type of HEI

Regarding the question "*Rate Your Recognition of Various Franchise Brands in the Environment (Difference After and before)*", students from private institutions have a mean rank value of 90.80, while students from public universities have a mean rank value of 108.02. The sum of ranks is 6447.00 for private institutions and 14259.00 for public universities. This suggests that students from public universities had a higher level of perception of franchise brands in their surroundings after the course compared to students from private institutions. A similar trend is observed for the remaining questions in Table 6. Students from private institutions generally have higher mean rank values and lower sum of ranks, indicating a higher increase in their perceptions and attitudes toward franchising after the course.

Table 7 provides the results of the Mann-Whitney U test, which was used to determine if there are any statistically significant differences in the responses between students from private and public universities for each question. The significance values (Asymp. Sig. 2-tailed) are shown for each question. For the questions " *What is Your Level of Knowledge about Franchise Business Model (Difference After and Before)*" and " *Rate Your Recognition of Various Franchise Brands in the Environment (Difference After and before)*" the p-values are less than 0.05 ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating that there are statistically significant differences in responses between students from private and public universities. This supports the findings from Table 6, suggesting that the type of higher education institution may impact students' knowledge and perception of franchising after the course.

## Discussion

The present research gains a deeper understanding of franchising education at HEI and its benefits for students. Using a set of specific questions, the study explored students' knowledge and perceptions of franchising before and after completing the course. The findings from the study provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of franchise education in fostering entrepreneurial knowledge and attitudes among students, as well as how the type of higher education institution may influence the outcomes. Gender did not significantly influence the outcomes of this research.

The results from Table 4 and Table 6 highlight noteworthy trends. Students from both private and public universities experienced increased knowledge and perception of franchising after the course, as evidenced by higher mean rank values for most questions in both cases. However, the magnitude of change varied between the two groups. Students from private university generally showed higher mean rank values and lower sum of ranks, indicating a more significant improvement in their knowledge and attitudes toward franchising compared to students from public university.

These results suggest that the Franchising course was particularly effective in enhancing entrepreneurial learning outcomes for students attending private university. One of the possible reasons may lie in the fact that participants at the private university were students from the 3rd year of undergraduate studies, while in Luxembourg, participants were Master's programme students who have completed their studies and are more experienced and older, possibly having already encountered the idea and specifics of franchising, taking into account that

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Luxembourg attracts a large number of residents, as well as students from neighbouring countries (France, Germany, Belgium, UK, Netherlands) with well-established franchise market (Alpeza et al., 2015) this topic was not new to them.

The second reason may be attributed to the fact that at the private Vern University, the Franchising course was elective, implying that students with less knowledge of franchising may have been drawn to this course. In contrast, at the University of Luxembourg, the course is mandatory for all students, which could explain the differing outcomes.

Overall, the results indicate that students from the Erasmus program had the highest average rank suggesting that they perceived the Franchising course to have the most considerable positive impact on their career choices. Luxembourg students had a moderately positive impact, while Vern students had the lowest rank implying a slightly lower perception of the course's effect on their career choices.

The reason for this difference may lie in the fact that Erasmus students were in their third undergraduate year, still not fully connected with the job market, which could have made them more enthusiastic about the Franchising course and its potential impact on their future careers. On the other hand, Luxembourg students, being older, maybe more familiar with franchising, and some of them already working, might have been less enthusiastic. As for the Vern full students' results could be understood in the context of an undeveloped franchise market in Croatia at that time (Alpeza et al., 2015). They might not have seen many opportunities in this segment, which could have influenced their perceptions and attitudes toward the course. The lack of viable franchise options in their environment might have contributed to their relatively lower levels of enthusiasm and perceived usefulness of the Franchising course.

Interestingly, the Mann-Whitney U test results in Table 7 revealed statistically significant differences in responses between students from private and public universities for two specific questions: "*What is Your Level of Knowledge about Franchise Business Model (Difference After and Before)*" and "*Rate Your Recognition of Various Franchise Brands in the Environment (Difference After and before)*". These findings may suggest that the type of higher education institution can play a role in influencing students' perceptions of franchising after the course. But in this case, it is more likely that the reason for this difference is the previously mentioned variation in prior knowledge levels and study years rather than the type of HEI.



Generally, it is plausible that the varying educational approaches and environments in private and public universities contributed to these outcome variations. Private universities often exhibit greater flexibility in collaborating with the business environment. They are more inclined to implement innovative learning and teaching methods than public universities. However, in this research, both universities shared a lecturer who demonstrates his significant engagement in franchising (FIP, 2023), making him an essential stakeholder in the franchise ecosystem (Seosamba, 2023), but also precisely the correct type of lecturer for franchising course who applied active teaching/learning methods (Ćorić et al., 2012) with guest lecturers and field visits which helped students acquiring more knowledge and understanding of franchising (Cumberland et al., 2019).

## **Conclusion**

The findings from this research emphasize the importance of Franchising courses in shaping students' knowledge and perceptions of the franchise business model. Overall, the course appears to be effective in fostering entrepreneurial learning outcomes, as indicated by the positive changes in students' knowledge and attitudes toward franchising after its completion.

Additionally, the study highlights the potential influence of the type of higher education institution on students' learning outcomes. Students attending private institutions showed more significant improvements in their knowledge and perceptions of franchise business than their public university counterparts. This suggests that private institutions' educational environment and approach may be better suited to enhance entrepreneurial learning.

Nevertheless, the variation in perceptions among the different student groups can be attributed to factors such as their stage in the education journey, their level of exposure to the job market, and the local business environment's maturity in terms of franchising. These contextual factors might have influenced their overall perceptions of the Franchising course and its potential benefits for their future careers.

The empirical results reported herein shed light on the implications and limitations of the present study on franchising education. Firstly, it is evident that previous literature is scarce on the subject, hindering the ability to compare and contextualise the results effectively. To address this, educational institutions and researchers

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should prioritise developing more comprehensive and up-to-date franchising programmes, bridging the gap in the existing knowledge.

Secondly, the study acknowledges the limited inclusion of franchising in university curricula, resulting in a scarcity of data from success stories and hindering a more in-depth analysis of the outcomes. As a solution, universities should recognize the importance of franchising education and consider incorporating it into their programmes, among other aspects, to create more diverse data sets for future research.

Additionally, the survey's limitations concerning potential response bias from students indicate the need to further explore the factors influencing their responses. To mitigate this bias, future research should consider conducting more extensive student perspective surveys, examining their attitudes towards the course, and exploring external influences that may affect their answers. Understanding the influence of cultural context and origins on students' attitudes towards franchising is crucial for tailored and practical education. The scarcity of existing literature poses challenges for comprehensive discussions, requiring further research. Expanding participation of universities in franchising education can provide valuable insights. Addressing response bias ensures more reliable results, advancing our understanding of franchising education's benefits.

The successful outcomes of the franchising course attributed to the lecturer's profound connection with the franchise ecosystem underscore the significance of collaborations between academia and the business community. To enhance the effectiveness of franchising education, universities should actively seek partnerships with industry experts and practitioners.

To strengthen the empirical evidence, comparative studies between different types of higher education institutions can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of franchising education. By comparing private and public universities or international and local institutions, best practices can be identified, optimizing the design and delivery of franchising courses.

Finally, policymakers should take note of the positive implications of franchising education on students' attitudes and knowledge. Encouraging the integration of franchising courses into higher education institutions can foster a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation, contributing to economic growth and development.

In conclusion, by addressing these implications and limitations, the field of franchising education can evolve, better preparing students for the challenges and opportunities of the dynamic business world. Through continuous research, collaboration, and curriculum development, universities can also play a pivotal role in nurturing the next generation of successful entrepreneurs.

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