

Barriers to alignment of entrepreneurship curriculum towards the development of graduate entrepreneurs in South Africa's higher education

Keywords: Entrepreneurship curriculum, Graduates, Alignment, Curriculum framework, Entrepreneurship education.

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ABSTRACT

Every discipline's curriculum is designed to direct a learning outcome which mostly aims to equip the students with the desired skills and knowledge for the specific discipline. Thus, a curriculum designed for entrepreneurship education is no different. It should serve as a key learning tool that inspires the uptake of entrepreneurship upon graduation. However, several factors have been identified as hindering the effectiveness of the curriculum in developing graduate entrepreneurs who can address the challenges of unemployment in South Africa. Hence, the study examines the barriers that affect the alignment of entrepreneurship curriculum with the goal to develop graduate entrepreneurs in South Africa HE. The primary objective is to identify structural challenges that prevent the development of an effective curriculum aimed at fostering entrepreneurial competencies among graduates. A qualitative approach was adopted to collect data from 60 university students through focus group interviews. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the University of the Western Cape's Research Ethics Committee. The identified key findings revealed barriers to curriculum alignment, including lack of a curriculum framework, low learning engagement, the need for dynamic and practical integration, and limited opportunity-driven learning. The study recommends addressing these barriers to facilitate learning that will result in the development of graduate entrepreneurs.

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INTRODUCTION

For entrepreneurship education to be impactful and foster learning that equips graduates with entrepreneurial skills and knowledge, a well-structured curriculum is needed. A well-structured entrepreneurship education curriculum therefore extends entrepreneurial learning that empowers graduates with practical skills and innovative thinking, thereby shifting their mindset from job-seekers to job-creators (Tiberius et al., 2023; Lee, 2020). The achievement of the mindset change agenda through entrepreneurship relies on a pedagogical framing that enables educators to impart entrepreneurial skills and knowledge, which are linked to venture and job creation (Galvão, Ferreira & Marques, 2018). Essentially, a focused entrepreneurship education program motivates graduates to pursue self-employment, creating jobs and thereby contributing to reducing the high rate of unemployment (Xie, 2024; Mahmood et al., 2021; Shambare & Dong, 2019; Lackéus, 2020; Turcan & Fraser, 2018). Consequently, the development of a well-structured entrepreneurship curriculum plays a vital role in producing graduate entrepreneurs who will make meaningful contributions to national and global development plans, including the South African NDP, the African Union's Agenda 2063, and the United Nations (UN)'s sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Making a case for a structured entrepreneurship education curriculum

As entrepreneurship education in South Africa gains awareness, several factors have been identified to affect the curriculum's capacity to develop successful entrepreneurs (Iwu et al., 2018; Echezona, 2015). Many scholars have explained that these obstacles hinder effective entrepreneurial learning, which stimulates entrepreneurship pursuits among graduates (Chimucheka, 2014; Shambare & Donga, 2019; Iwu et al., 2021; Greenwood, 2021).

Primarily, Rankhumise et al. (2020) and Iwu and Opute (2021) observed that entrepreneurship curriculum is not formally established as a distinct field of study at most universities in South Africa, with only a few instances integrated into non-business programs. Bala (2020), alongside Iwu (2022), contend that to achieve the desired outcome of entrepreneurship education, the curriculum should be structured as a standalone module. Furthermore, Qwabe, Ngibe, and Bingwa (2025) support this view by suggesting that structuring entrepreneurship education as a module in other disciplines will not realistically achieve the aim of developing graduate entrepreneurs. In examining the factors that influence the effectiveness of entrepreneurship curriculum, Omotosho et al. (2021) identify the inadequate acquisition of practical skills and knowledge within the higher education (HE) ecosystem as a significant barrier to producing competent graduate entrepreneurs. Greenwood (2021) and Iwu (2022) reinforce this view, emphasising a persistent disconnect between the curriculum content and the pedagogical strategies in the classroom that hinder the cultivation of an entrepreneurial mindset, as well as the development of essential competencies among graduates. After all, the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education should be measured by its ability to instil entrepreneurial competencies and foster the development of venture-creating graduates (Matlay, 2019).

The need to structure entrepreneurship curriculum continues to attract research attention. The reasons advanced by extant literature include the rising levels of graduate unemployment/unemployability (Iwu et al., 2024), the confusing pattern of pedagogies (Du Toit & Gaotlhobogwe, 2018), and the obvious dearth of trained entrepreneurship educators (Cui, Sun, & Bell, 2021). Fingers have also been pointed at dilapidated

infrastructure (Iwara & Kilonzo, 2022), the lack of association with industry to augment students' practical experience (Jones, 2019), and the non-promising economic standards of countries in the global South as reasons why a structured entrepreneurship education curriculum is crucial. Considering the foregoing, we set out to investigate the barriers that hinder the alignment of entrepreneurship curriculum towards the development of graduate entrepreneurs in South African HE institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The curriculum has long been recognised as a foundational element in shaping educational outcomes, particularly within higher education (HE), as it defines learning objectives, guides instructional delivery, and advances transformative learning experiences (Japee & Oza, 2021; Hutahaeen et al., 2024). As Vreuls et al. (2023) note, curriculum forms the backbone of the educational ecosystem, influencing both policy and practice.

Historically, the concept of curriculum has evolved through the contributions of influential thinkers, including Plato, Aristotle, Comenius, Bobbit, and Froebel, each offering distinct perspectives on its purpose and structure (Wallace, 2019; Mulenga, 2015). A well-designed curriculum not only supports academic development but also enables educators to select appropriate teaching methods that promote equitable access to quality education (Shahjahan et al., 2022; Wilson et al., 2022).

In entrepreneurship education, curriculum outlines intended learning outcomes, and the absence of a well-structured entrepreneurship curriculum is one of the primary reasons for the lack of effective entrepreneurial learning in South Africa (Qwabe et al., 2025). Promoting entrepreneurship curriculum remains fundamental to enhancing future graduates' ability to engage in entrepreneurial learning (Iwu et al., 2020). By enhancing graduates' ability to engage in entrepreneurial learning, this approach equips them with entrepreneurial competencies and knowledge to contribute meaningfully to the nation's development through job creation (Hasmawaty et al., 2020). Nchu (2015) argues that, as South African unemployment experiences exponential growth, entrepreneurship education acts as a strategic intervention to address its economic challenges. Thus, a well-structured curriculum is instrumental in shaping graduates' potential to initiate ventures and engage in entrepreneurial activities.

Barriers to entrepreneurship curriculum effectiveness

The entrepreneurship curriculum has been characterised as a multifaceted paradigm, whose pivotal role centred on advancing entrepreneurial learning. The core aim, as maintained by Tiberius et al. (2023), is to equip graduates with relevant skills and knowledge while emphasising a mindset shift from seeking white-collar jobs to becoming venture creators. The foundation of an entrepreneurship curriculum is to develop innovative ideas, knowledge, and skills; however, Du Toit & Kempen (2018) argue that it also includes information on how students can recognise business opportunities, develop operational procedure plans, create and grow new businesses. Equally, Bridge (2017) and Lahn and Erikson (2016) highlighted that an entrepreneurship curriculum is content-driven, as it facilitates learning that empowers an entrepreneurial attitude, intentions, and mindset. However, the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education is driven by several factors, such

as curriculum design, pedagogical approach, institutional support, and alignment with industry needs, which hinder the production of graduate entrepreneurs (Munyanyiwa & Mutsau, 2015). The principles used in this study demonstrate how the absence of a well-structured curriculum impedes the development of graduates' outcomes.

The entrepreneurship curriculum in South Africa faces several challenges that affect its effectiveness. According to Mulenga (2018), one major factor is the lack of a structured and standalone approach to entrepreneurship education. Often, as echoed by Iwu et al. (2021), the curriculum is integrated into other departments' programs as a supplementary module instead of being treated as a distinct and comprehensive program. Omotosho et al. (2021) highlighted that this fragmented approach has affected the development of students who intentionally enrol in an entrepreneurship program with the objective of becoming entrepreneurs. As a result, the curriculum may fail to provide students with in-depth knowledge and skills, practical exposure, and mentorship necessary for cultivating entrepreneurial competencies and mindset (Leibowitz, 2017).

According to Munyanyiwa and Mutsau (2015), entrepreneurship courses are designed to prepare students with the necessary skills to start, create, and launch new businesses, while also nurturing their abilities as managers, inventors, and entrepreneurs. However, the effectiveness of these learning approaches is limited due to lack of an appropriate pedagogical approach adopted (Pesotsky et al., 2021; Mahadea & Kabange, 2024). In many cases, entrepreneurship education remains predominantly theoretical, with inadequate integration of practical learning methods that are essential for exposing graduates to real-world entrepreneurial competencies (Iwu et al., 2021). Furthermore, the issue of who teaches entrepreneurship remains a significant barrier to the effective delivery of an entrepreneurship curriculum. Ideally, entrepreneurship should be taught by trained lecturers and professors with specialised knowledge in entrepreneurship, as well as experienced mentors and successful businesspeople who can offer practical advice and guidance (Quew-Jones & Rowe, 2022; Ratten & Usmanij, 2020). However, in many cases, institutions assigned this subject to educators without relevant entrepreneurial experience or pedagogical training, which impedes the practicability of the curriculum. Hence, effective entrepreneurship learning requires facilitators who can understand the significance of integrating both theoretical and practical frameworks to offer holistic learning that inspires and equips students with entrepreneurial competencies and mindset.

While Seitz (2017) highlights that the institutional void has contributed to the barrier of effective entrepreneurship curriculum in South Africa, which hinders the development of graduate entrepreneurs. Dzomonda and Fatoki (2019) argue that the lack of prioritisation of entrepreneurship education across various South African universities has led to inadequate strategic planning for its integration into core academic programs. Furthermore, Iwu (2022) identified that some disadvantaged universities in South Africa lack the infrastructure needed to support effective entrepreneurial learning, such as innovative hubs and business labs. Additionally, Shambare & Donga (2019) emphasised the institutional bureaucracy that hinders the implementation of innovative entrepreneurship initiatives as a result of low approval for curriculum amendments.

Furthermore, lack of alignment with industry needs is another barrier that hinders the effectiveness of an entrepreneurship curriculum (Munyanyiwa & Mutsau, 2015). As noted by Lee (2020), the absence of meaningful collaboration among universities, industry, and the government impedes the practicality of entrepreneurship. Without real-world exposure

and active partnership with these stakeholders, students are deprived of experiential learning opportunities that offer a chance for skills and knowledge development. Thus, this study examines how a well-structured entrepreneurship curriculum can effectively bridge the gap and support the development of graduate entrepreneurs.

The significance of a well-structured entrepreneurship curriculum

The importance of a well-structured entrepreneurship curriculum cannot be overstated, as it provides students with an effective entrepreneurial learning experience that equips them with the knowledge, skills, competencies, and mindsets necessary to succeed. Ratten & Usmanij (2020) noted that an effective entrepreneurship curriculum should be offered as a distinct academic discipline, enabling institutions to produce graduates who intentionally aspire to become venture creators. Similarly, Mahmood et al. (2021) highlighted that, given entrepreneurship is fundamentally linked to job creation, a well-designed curriculum facilitates learning that enables students to identify and seize opportunities that contribute to reducing unemployment.

Consequently, Harrington and Maysami (2015) argue that a well-structured entrepreneurship curriculum must carefully consider the adoption of pedagogical approaches. Paek, Guler, and Rogan (2021) similarly highlighted that integrating both theoretical and practical methods of teaching into the entrepreneurship curriculum empowers students with a holistic entrepreneurial learning experience, one that contributes meaningfully to address societal challenges such as low economic growth, unemployment, and poverty alleviation. Furthermore, Ajani (2024) stated that the entrepreneurship curriculum should be delivered by professionals and experts who possess a comprehensive understanding of entrepreneurship and are capable of mentoring students effectively, particularly in areas such as risk management and overcoming the fear of failure. Additionally, Omotosho et al. (2021) and Paek et al. (2021) advocate for an interactive teaching method that includes case studies, a mentorship model and experiential learning, all of which are vital as they boost students' confidence.

While institutional support is essential for providing prioritised resources to build innovation hubs, labs, and incubators, Galvão, Ferreira, & Marques (2018) highlighted that it helps students to prototype, test, and launch ventures. Similarly, Ajani, Khumatake, & Gamede (2023) assert that institutional support will bring curriculum development and flexibility, ensuring the curriculum remains dynamic and offers practical learning that aligns with real-world entrepreneurial challenges. Furthermore, Ajani (2024) noted that the support of the institution reduces the fear of failure when venturing into entrepreneurship as a career and encourages experimentation among students, which propels them to shift from a job mentality to a job creation mentality.

While Lackéus (2020) and Ajani (2024) highlighted that networking with the industry ecosystem enables students to be mentored, gain work-related experience, and secure government funding opportunities, which are crucial for setting up a business, as funding is required. Notably, aligning with the needs will ensure that the course content aligns with market demand, empowers students' employability, and supports the success of start-up businesses (Quew-Jones & Rowe, 2022; Hägg & Gabrielsson, 2020). Consequently, Iwu et al. (2020) emphasise that collaborating with industry can provide students with

opportunities to interact with experts, which can lead to partnerships, investments, and business prospects.

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative approach was employed for data collection, involving two universities in the Western Cape, South Africa. Semi-structured interviews guided the study, utilising a focus group technique to collect data from 60 graduate participants, organised into 12 distinct groups, each comprising five students in a team. All data collected were transcribed and analysed using Atlas.ti software. The participants' academic learning schedules were taken into consideration to avoid conflict prior to participating in the interactive interview. The use of an inductive paradigm and interpretivist method formed the basis of data derived from the interviews (Khatri, 2020). Consequently, due to the employed qualitative method, the exploratory study was designed and followed, which assisted in identifying emerging data on the nature of entrepreneurship curriculum for alignment. Furthermore, the application of a qualitative approach resulted in the initiation of case study strategies.

Sampling

The current study's sample consisted of 60 participants, who were students from selected universities in Cape Town, Western Cape Province, South Africa. Several considerations guided the sample selection. Firstly, the participants were students who had been exposed to entrepreneurship learning and those who had not. Secondly, the participants were students in their third and fourth years of academic study. Lastly, the sample size adopted provides rich insight into the barriers that hinder curriculum effectiveness. Hence, the total sample was organised into twelve groups, and each team comprised five graduates (Table 1).

Table 1. Study samples profile.

Pseudonym	Academic year	Business student and non-business student	Age range (20-24)	Gender
Group 1	4 th	Business	Yes	Male/Female
Group 2	3 rd and 4 th	Business	Yes	Male/Female
Group 3	3 rd and 4 th	Business	Yes	Male/Female
Group 4	4 th	Business	Yes	Male/Female
Group 5	3 rd and 4 th	Business	Yes	Male/Female
Group 6	3 rd and 4 th	Business	Yes	Male/Female
Group 7	3 rd and 4 th	Business	Yes	Male/Female
Group 8	3 rd and 4 th	Business	Yes	Male/Female
Group 9	3 rd and 4 th	Non-business	Yes	Male/Female
Group 10	3 rd and 4 th	Non-business	Yes	Male/Female
Group 11	3 rd and 4 th	Non-business	Yes	Male/Female
Group 12	3 rd	Non-business	Yes	Male/Female

Approval of the study

The study approval was sought and granted by the University of the Western Cape (UWC) Research Ethics Committee. Ethics is a memorandum of understanding that guides the relationship between the researcher and the participants during research, ensuring the

safety of all participants, their right to privacy, anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, and the avoidance of deception, as well as justice and voluntary participation. In accordance with the ethical agreement, the study ensures that the participants signed the consent letter.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The study focused on evaluating the nature of the entrepreneurship curriculum in South Africa for alignment. Below presents the analysis of the transcribed interviews.

Identification codes

To ensure clarity and consistency in referencing, each of the twelve focus groups was assigned a unique identification code. In order to distinguish participants from business and non-business programs, the code system was designed. To illustrate the codes for easy identification, **CODEG1–8BST** represents business students, while **CODEG9–12NST** denotes non-business students.

This segmentation facilitates systematic analysis and is presented in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2. Identification codes.

Groups	Academic Program	Codes
Focus group 1	CODEG1BST	Business students
Focus group 2	CODEG2BST	Business students
Focus group 3	CODEG3BST	Business students
Focus group 4	CODEG4BST	Business students
Focus group 5	CODEG5BST	Business students
Focus group 6	CODEG6BST	Business students
Focus group 7	CODEG7BST	Business students
Focus group 8	CODEG8BST	Business students
Focus group 9	CODEG9NBST	Non-business student
Focus group 10	CODEG10NBST	Non-business student
Focus group 11	CODEG11NBST	Non-business student
Focus group 12	CODEG12NBST	Non-business student

THE RESULTS

As highlighted in Figure 4.1 below, the question regarding the curriculum framework in the structure of entrepreneurship education across the selected universities for impactful learning was posed. Out of 12 focus groups that participated (100%), seven (58.3%) indicated that the entrepreneurship curriculum is a module-based approach and a non-disciplinary module. Four groups (33.3%) revealed that entrepreneurship is not offered as a distinct field of study. Besides, one group (8.3%), from a non-business faculty, stated that

knowledge of the entrepreneurship curriculum is unfamiliar to students in their faculty. The participants' responses will be presented using the code in Table 2.

CODEG1BST: *At this institution, students enrolled in business programmes receive entrepreneurship education through a module-based structure, specifically designed and embedded within the business curriculum.*

CODEG3BST: *As graduates of the business programme, we observed that entrepreneurship education is not integrated into our module curriculum*

CODEG11NBST: *As graduates from non-business programmes, we observed that entrepreneurship education was not integrated into our departmental or faculty curriculum.*

Research findings suggest that a lack of structuring entrepreneurship curriculum as a distinct field and cross-faculty module, especially in non-business fields, may hamper graduate entrepreneurship. Based on the participants' viewpoints, it was evident that the entrepreneurship education curriculum framework lacked the integration of the curriculum as a field of study and a shared curriculum across other fields of study.

In consideration of the question on curriculum activities, which centres on the essential characteristics of the entrepreneurship curriculum for effectiveness. The entire group of participants (100%) emphatically highlighted the lack of curriculum activities that provide practical learning and meaningful experiences, such as brainstorming of business ideas, identifying opportunities, developing business plans, participating in simulations, and engaging in real-world business settings. For instance, an examination of graduates who participated in entrepreneurship education revealed that these students demonstrated active engagement in learning; however, there was clearly a shortfall in curriculum activities to equip them with sufficient entrepreneurial skills, knowledge, and an innovative mindset, enabling them to thrive as graduate entrepreneurs.

CODEG5BST: *We recognise that the foundation of every learning depends on the quality and effectiveness of the curriculum. However, within the context of entrepreneurship curriculum, we often encounter challenges, particularly the inability to face real-life problem-solving scenarios due to a teaching approach rooted in theoretical activities, which hinders the innovative concepts and practices of entrepreneurship learning.*

CODEG9NBST: *Undoubtedly, the curriculum is the seedbed of every learning; however, the current curriculum does not effectively enhance the learning experience necessary for graduates to thrive as entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurship curriculum tends to focus on foundational concepts of entrepreneurship, which offer an overview that lacks depth and practical application. As a result, students often leave without a comprehensive understanding of what it takes to start-up and manage a business.*

Despite their engagement, a significant gap remained between the educational content offered and the competencies acquired for entrepreneurial success. Based on the participants' perspectives, the significant gap identified in curriculum activities was the explicit absence of creative learning opportunities, such as mentorship, work-integrated programs, and case and project activities that empowered graduates to thrive as entrepreneurs.

While the question regarding how dynamic and practical-oriented the entrepreneurship curriculum is, 75% of respondents indicated that the entrepreneurship education curriculum lacked adaptability and is marked by real-world inadequacies. According to their views, adaptability and integration of real-world applications are integral aspects of every effective curriculum that aims to develop graduate entrepreneurs. While 25% indicated that the entrepreneurship curriculum lacks practical learning. However, the absence of these elements limited the development of an entrepreneurial mindset among the graduates.

CODEG2BST: *Frankly speaking, the entrepreneurship education we were exposed to was predominantly grounded in textbook-based knowledge, often disconnected from the hands-on learning essential for developing entrepreneurial intentions. This overreliance on theoretical concepts significantly hampers our ability to cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset.*

CODEG8NBST: *One of the participants critically remarked that the entrepreneurship education taught was only theoretical, which deprived them of gaining real-world experience. She rhetorically questioned, “How can you expect us to thrive in business when there is a huge disconnection between academic content and practical learning?”.*

In evaluating the entrepreneurship education curriculum activities in which graduates participated, it is imperative to note, with evidence, that the learning activities were predominantly traditional-oriented and did not adequately focus on promoting entrepreneurial capabilities. The inadequacy of the current curriculum in offering dynamic and practical-oriented learning hinders the effectiveness of the curriculum for graduates seeking to acquire 21st-century competencies, including problem-solving skills and analytical thinking. The above responses suggest that the entrepreneurship curriculum remains heavily centred on academic knowledge rather than the development of practical skills and knowledge.

Furthermore, a question on how the structure of the curriculum provides opportunity-driven learning. Notably, 83.3% of respondents indicated that the curriculum to which they were exposed did not effectively promote the ability to recognise and pursue entrepreneurial opportunities. Note that the defining of an effective entrepreneurship curriculum is the ability to equip graduates with entrepreneurial skills that identify and capitalise on business opportunities. While 16.7% indicated that the entrepreneurship curriculum is fundamentally designed to empower graduates to recognise and utilise emerging opportunities, however, graduates find themselves entrenched in a mindset that prioritises conventional, traditional job-seeking pathways rather than embracing entrepreneurial ventures and innovation practices.

CODEG2BST: *Within this group, one participant acknowledged the potential for promising opportunities within the module yet admitted to not having personally experienced such learning. Interestingly, graduates who participated in these opportunity-driven learning experiences were still seeking paid employment, which raises critical questions regarding the effectiveness and practical impact of the opportunities offered through the module.*

DISCUSSION

The nature of the curriculum determines the aspect of developing graduate entrepreneurs, as this learning is significant and links to job creation (Lee, 2020). In this study, the feedback from the majority of participants highlights that the current curriculum framework lacks structural coherence as a distinct field of study and remains excluded primarily from non-business programmes. This identified factor has hindered effective entrepreneurial learning that motivates graduates to pursue entrepreneurship as a career. This study aligns with Iwu et al. (2021) and Greenwood (2021), who similarly argue that the absence of a dedicated and integrated curriculum framework significantly impedes the delivery of a comprehensive and effective entrepreneurial learning experience, which is crucial in producing graduate entrepreneurs. Bala (2020) and Iwu (2022) emphasised that a well-structured curriculum that structures entrepreneurship as a field of study and integrates it into non-business programs, yields positive learning outcomes, developing skilled and knowledgeable graduates who will become job creators.

In evaluating the nature of entrepreneurship curriculum, the absence of learning engagement in entrepreneurship education was highlighted as an impediment to the development of graduate entrepreneurs. The majority of students who have been exposed to an entrepreneurship learning highlighted that the curriculum lacks practical engagement which offers the graduates the opportunity to brainstorm business ideas, recognise opportunities, develop business plans, participate in simulations, and engage in real-world business settings. This approach, which enables graduates to learn entrepreneurship, remains inadequate in advancing innovative learning, as the learning is predominantly theory-oriented. This is in line with the results of Omotosho et al. (2022) and Greenwood (2021), who similarly emphasised that theory-driven entrepreneurship education dominates entrepreneurship education in South Africa. Furthermore, this assertion resonates with the study results of Mahadea & Kabange (2024) and Iwu et al. (2021), who emphasised the significance of active engagement in entrepreneurial learning in developing graduate entrepreneurs.

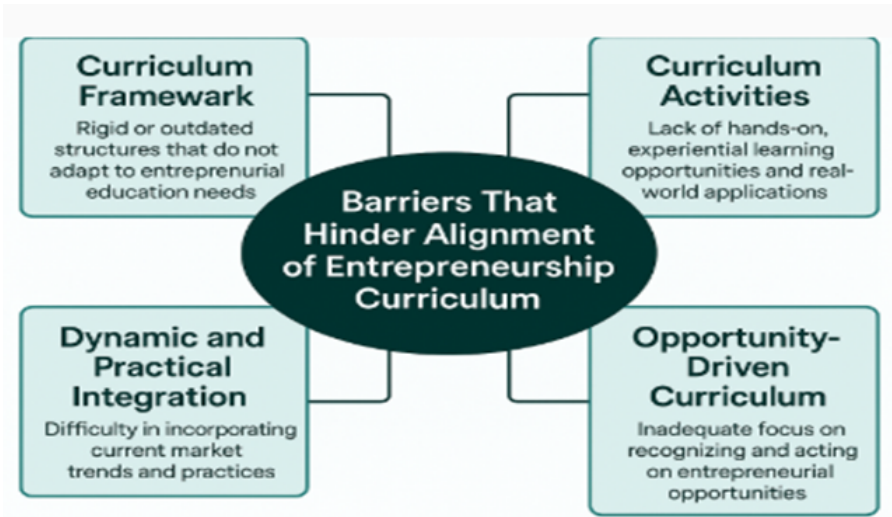
In identifying the dynamic and practical learning the curriculum offers for effective learning, the study found that five groups revealed the absence of dynamic and practical learning within the curriculum. Moreover, three groups maintained that the significant impact hindered graduates from recognising opportunities to develop critical and problem-solving skills. This signified that the entrepreneurship learning curriculum limited the prioritisation of practical engagement that equipped graduates, which is essential for preparing graduates for real-world challenges, as highlighted in the results of these authors (Hoffman, 2020; Cui et al., 2021; Iwu, 2022). As a result, a lack of a dynamic and practical-oriented curriculum offers graduates ineffective learning that fails to nurture an entrepreneurial mindset and skills.

The entrepreneurship curriculum, containing opportunity-driven learning, was highlighted, and several graduates from various groups maintained that the entrepreneurship education encountered was predominantly theoretical, failing to balance the learning with practical experience. However, 10 participants made it known that they were not motivated in the learning process and only used entrepreneurship as a complementary module, positioning themselves to read, write, and pass the examination. This is in line with Cui et al. (2021), who emphasised that an effective curriculum should provide learning opportunities to equip graduates with entrepreneurial skills and knowledge that lead to job creation.

The summary of the study

In the Figure 1 below, we present the barriers to the effectiveness of entrepreneurship curriculum as this study revealed.

Figure 1. Barriers to alignment of entrepreneurship curriculum.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The study’s findings revealed that most participants identified the entrepreneurship curriculum as lacking a distinct discipline where students can enrol to acquire entrepreneurship education. Moreso, this curriculum is not integrated into a non-interdisciplinary module, which deprives non-business students of the opportunity to instil entrepreneurial skills and knowledge. This gap impedes the entrepreneurship education curriculum’s potential to produce entrepreneurial graduates in South Africa. Furthermore, it restricts the entrepreneurship education curriculum from offering engaging, dynamic, practical, and opportunity-driven entrepreneurial activities. However, curriculum alignment should include entrepreneurship education as a discipline within the business faculty and be embedded as an interdisciplinary module in a non-business context program. Such an approach would enable the delivery of innovative and skills-oriented learning that prepares graduates more adequately for entrepreneurial engagement.

Study Limitation

Like any other scholarly investigation, this study is subject to certain limitations, which, in turn, have highlighted valuable avenues for future research. The study encountered difficulties and delays in obtaining online approvals to conduct research at three universities in Cape Town, which impacted the number of institutions involved. Due to this constraint, the study was limited to two universities, from which 60 participants were interviewed. This sample size reached saturation, thereby meeting the eligibility criteria

for inclusion in the research.

Recommendations

A tailored curriculum is significant to entrepreneurship learning, which thus furthering is the development of graduate entrepreneurs and cannot be overlooked. The study highlighted that the absence of entrepreneurship education as a full-fledged discipline is a significant factor affecting early exposure to entrepreneurial learning, thereby impeding entrepreneurship intention and interest. Therefore, the researchers recommend that an entrepreneurship education curriculum be implemented as a field of study. Institutionalising entrepreneurship education as a field of study would significantly enhance its visibility and accessibility, positioning it as an attractive and viable academic choice for prospective students. Moreover, it will produce graduate entrepreneurs, just like other disciplines, and they will be positioned to contribute to economic competitiveness, development, and wealth creation.

Furthermore, extending the entrepreneurship curriculum into non-business programs is imperative; therefore, the study recommends embedding the curriculum as an interdisciplinary module tailored for non-business disciplines. This approach promotes entrepreneurial exposure to graduates from various fields of study, thereby identifying those with entrepreneurial mindsets and intentions.

Entrepreneurship curriculum activities were emphasised in this study as lacking, which hinders graduates' exposure to entrepreneurship learning that develops skills and knowledge geared toward equipping students to transform ideas into sustainable ventures. The study recommends the intentional integration of experiential learning into the curriculum to provide students with a broad understanding (beyond the classroom) and the motivation for entrepreneurship uptake.

Statement of disclosure

The authors have reported no potential conflicts of interest.

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