

Entrepreneurship Education Key in Promoting Entrepreneurial Intent: Undergraduate Students Perspectives

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Abstract

Numerous developing nations are grappling with high unemployment rates, as exemplified by South Africa's 32.1% unemployment rate. This has resulted in a surge in youth unemployment, with graduates also facing a significant 44.3% unemployment rate. It is incumbent upon tertiary institutions to provide entrepreneurship courses to furnish students with the requisite skills and knowledge. Developing countries are lagging in terms of entrepreneurship education programmes that address the challenges posed by the Fourth Industrial Revolution. South Africa is no exception, as there is a dearth of entrepreneurship qualification programmes aimed at cultivating students' capabilities for the entrepreneurial sector. To address unemployment among South African graduates, it is imperative to assess the efficacy of entrepreneurship programmes offered by universities of technologies. The aim of this investigation was to evaluate the effect of entrepreneurship education on the enhancement of students' entrepreneurial skills and aspirations. The study employed a quantitative research paradigm rooted in positivist philosophy. A nonprobability sampling technique was utilized, resulting in a sample size of 269 undergraduate students enrolled in entrepreneurial modules. The findings of the study highlighted inadequacies in the university's entrepreneurship education programmes, particularly in terms of adequately supporting students' entrepreneurial aspirations and providing them with the necessary access to modern technological tools essential for success in a digitally driven business environment. It was suggested in the research that educational establishments should prioritize fostering students' entrepreneurial growth to improve their capabilities and aspirations, thereby contributing more effectively to tackling the rising unemployment levels in South Africa. The paper also emphasizes the significance of creating a supportive atmosphere that encourages entrepreneurial skills and provides students with the essential means to excel in a challenging business envi-

ronment. Universities are advised to revise their entrepreneurship courses to assist students in gaining expertise in entrepreneurship. Alongside enhancing the syllabi, innovative teaching approaches aligned with contemporary industry developments should be utilized.

Keywords

Entrepreneurship Education, Students, Higher Education, University of Technology, Entrepreneurial Intent, South Africa

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship education has emerged as a critical factor in shaping the capabilities of future entrepreneurs, yet, as [Guma and Dahlan \(2019\)](#) highlight, it remains one of the most challenging aspects of higher education worldwide. The lack of robust entrepreneurial programs within higher education institutions (HEIs) has profound implications for global unemployment rates, as noted by [Musara \(2020\)](#). Insufficient access to these programs restricts students' opportunities to develop essential entrepreneurial skills and hampers effective technology transfer. In light of shifting labor market demands, [Nájera-Sánchez, Pérez-Pérez, and González-Torres \(2023\)](#) assert the urgent need for a transformative approach to entrepreneurship education.

Over the past few decades, the landscape of entrepreneurship education has evolved, particularly in developed nations that have begun to align their curricula with the requirements of the fifth industrial revolution (5IR) ([Irawanto & Novianti, 2021](#)). Conversely, many developing countries, including South Africa, lag behind, struggling to adapt their educational frameworks to meet the challenges of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) ([Olaitan & Mavuso, 2022](#)). This disconnect is evident in South Africa's higher education system, which fails to produce a sufficient number of entrepreneurs, as [Ramchander \(2021\)](#) illustrates. Alarmingly, the graduate unemployment rate in South Africa soared to 32.5% by the end of 2020, with over 4.3 million graduates jobless, including 8.2% who held tertiary qualifications ([Ngubane, Mndebele, & Kaseeram, 2023](#)).

Furthermore, [Maphalala and Adigun \(2021\)](#) identify the African continent as the most deficient in entrepreneurship education, with South Africa being particularly affected by the scarcity of effective programs. However, graduates who adeptly apply their entrepreneurial knowledge significantly enhance their chances of sustaining business ventures ([Wang, 2020](#)). Entrepreneurship education not only cultivates an entrepreneurial mindset but also equips students with the ability to recognize and seize opportunities for innovation ([Guerrero & Espinoza-Benavides, 2020](#)). While not all students may become entrepreneurs, the skills and personal development gained through such education can substantially increase their employability. Given that education is crucial for acquiring new skills, pro-

moting entrepreneurship education is vital for preparing students for the challenges of the 4IR (Kruger & Steyn, 2020). Research has consistently demonstrated that entrepreneurship education enhances graduates' job prospects and equips them with the necessary skills to thrive in a competitive job market (Ojule & Olibi, 2024). Thus, this investigation aims to evaluate the impact of entrepreneurship education on the development of students' entrepreneurial skills and aspirations.

2. Literature Review

The compilation of literature below provides comprehensive overview on entrepreneurial education in higher education.

2.1. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT)

In entrepreneurship education, Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) provides a framework for understanding how students' self-efficacy, goals, and beliefs about outcomes influence their career development and entrepreneurial aspirations (Lent & Brown, 2019: p. 154). SCCT explores complex interactions between students and various contextual factors that shape their careers, including cognitive, interpersonal, external, and self-directed elements impacting their professional behavior (Lent et al., 2002). Building on Albert Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory and General Social Cognitive Theory, SCCT was advanced by Lent et al. (2002) to posit that career progression is driven by the interaction of factors such as self-efficacy beliefs, outcome expectations, and goals. Each of these foundational elements that contribute to students' career trajectories is briefly discussed below.

2.1.1. Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Self-efficacy, a key component of SCCT, has garnered significant attention in career literature. Bandura (1986: p. 1390) defined self-efficacy as "people's assessments of their capacities to plan and carry out actions necessary to achieve specified forms of performance." In a recent study, Smolka, Geradts, van der Zwan, and Rauch (2024) confirmed that self-efficacy beliefs empower students in entrepreneurship programs to assess their suitability for various entrepreneurial endeavors during their undergraduate studies. Pham, Lam, and Le (2023) further identified a positive correlation between self-efficacy beliefs and an entrepreneurial mindset, noting that students who believe in their ability to develop entrepreneurial skills are more likely to engage actively in coursework, participate in hands-on projects, and commit to learning innovative skills (Gunawan & Ardyan, 2024). Consequently, students with strong self-efficacy beliefs are more inclined to take initiative, tackle challenges with flexibility, and creatively pursue solutions (Johnson, Adkins, & Chauvin, 2020).

2.1.2. Entrepreneurship Career Model

The entrepreneurial career model underscores the components of education essential for preparing students for entrepreneurial success, including career choices,

socialization, orientation, and development (Dyer, 1994). This model helps educators and researchers determine the appropriate level of entrepreneurship content for curricula, emphasizing three key areas: career socialization, career orientation, and career development (Muofhe & Du Toit, 2011).

2.1.3. Career Socialization

Weidman and DeAngelo (2020) describe career as an element marking an individual's journey through life across aspects such as education, training, and work experience. Career socialization enables students to enhance their learning and training quality, fostering a professional attitude, behavior, and knowledge for specific roles. Through career socialization, students not only gain insight into entrepreneurship but also develop the skills and mindset needed to succeed in entrepreneurial activities (Sonnenschein, 2020). Lacking proper socialization, students may miss critical networking and skill-building opportunities vital for entrepreneurial success (Killingberg, 2024).

2.1.4. Career Orientation

Career orientation pertains to an individual's professional self-concept, shaping their preferred job types and work settings (Struwig & Botha, 1994). Career awareness and guidance programs in education are essential in helping students comprehend the activities specific to entrepreneurial paths (Koekemoer & Crafford, 2019). This orientation enhances students' readiness to start a business, equipping them with foundational knowledge of their chosen entrepreneurial avenue. Conversely, inadequate career orientation can leave students feeling unprepared, alienated, and uncertain, potentially discouraging them from pursuing an entrepreneurial path (Cortellazzo, Bonesso, Gerli, & Batista-Foguet, 2020).

2.1.5. Career Development

Career development within entrepreneurship education is enriched by involving real-world entrepreneurs in academic programs. These industry experts can offer students practical insights and serve as role models, fostering a more applied understanding of entrepreneurial challenges (Gibb, 1994). According to Hynes (1996), although theoretical education forms a crucial foundation, it often leaves students underprepared for real-world entrepreneurship. Traditional methods may lack the practical competencies necessary for students to effectively tackle challenges such as unemployment. Well-implemented career development initiatives help bridge this gap by identifying essential entrepreneurial skills that students can utilize in the job market after graduation, thereby preparing them to succeed in various professional settings (Elo, Pätäri, Sjögrén, & Mättö, 2024).

3. The Scope of University Education

A comprehensive university education equips graduates with both general and specialized knowledge, preparing them to solve workplace problems and conduct scientific research in their chosen fields (Vosloo et al., 2018). Beyond technical

skills, universities also foster critical thinking, creativity, and personal growth, shaping graduates who are resilient and innovative (Urban, 2019). In South Africa, university education covers academic knowledge, personal and professional development, essential entrepreneurial skills, and adaptability, which are crucial for thriving in dynamic work environments (Khanyile, 2018). This well-rounded approach is underscored by studies showing that entrepreneurship-focused programs enhance resources for fostering entrepreneurial capabilities (Garwe, 2020).

The multidisciplinary focus of university education encourages students to integrate diverse fields such as technology, social sciences, and humanities into creative problem-solving (Mahlaole & Malebana, 2021). The scope of university education is also expanding to include 4IR technologies, allowing student entrepreneurs to leverage technological advancements for job creation and income generation (Olaniran & Perumal, 2021). Creating a supportive entrepreneurial atmosphere within universities—through curriculum enhancements, experiential learning opportunities, and industry partnerships—allows students to develop not only theoretical knowledge but also real-world entrepreneurial skills (Ifeoma, 2019). Structured learning units or educational modules are essential components of this approach, as they provide clear goals, objectives, and assessments to ensure practical, outcome-based learning (Havenga, 2021).

South African Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a crucial role in addressing skills shortages by offering programs in high-demand areas, such as management and technology (Jengeta & Phiri, 2021). Entrepreneurship modules within these programs provide students with valuable insights into self-employment, fostering entrepreneurial thinking even for those not directly enrolled in entrepreneurship-focused courses (Akunne, 2020). This exposure allows students to understand and explore self-employment within their chosen fields, equipping them to be adaptable and innovative as they enter the workforce (Maltitz & Lingen, 2022).

4. Entrepreneurship Education as a Tool to Combat Unemployment

Addressing South Africa's high youth unemployment rate necessitates effective, targeted interventions. Research identifies a lack of entrepreneurial skills among graduates as a key barrier to employment, underscoring the importance of entrepreneurship education (Olumuyiwa, Kimweli, & Modise, 2023). By embedding entrepreneurship within university curricula, students can develop the necessary skills and mindset to identify and act on business opportunities, improving their career prospects and driving broader economic benefits (Nhleko & van der Westhuizen, 2022; Somia et al., 2024). When universities foster an entrepreneurial culture, this shift not only enhances individual career outcomes but also contributes to a national ecosystem of innovation and competitiveness (Khoza, 2024).

Entrepreneurship education further allows students to explore business creation, motivation, and feasibility, equipping them with skills in areas such as financial management, business planning, and marketing (Ntshangase & Ezeuduji,

2023). This knowledge is particularly beneficial for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, who may rely on entrepreneurial ventures as a means of social and economic mobility (Motta & Galina, 2023). By engaging in hands-on learning, students acquire resilience and adaptability, which are crucial in identifying and leveraging opportunities irrespective of socioeconomic barriers (Seoke et al., 2023). Additionally, this approach nurtures creativity and resilience, encouraging students to pursue innovative solutions and persevere in the face of obstacles (Dadam & Viegi, 2024).

In providing students with these foundational skills, entrepreneurship education fosters self-reliance and reduces dependence on traditional employment avenues. Research suggests that students who are trained in entrepreneurship are more likely to start their own businesses, thus contributing to job creation and economic diversification (Havenga, 2021). A proactive entrepreneurial mindset focusing on recognizing and seizing opportunities, adapting to change, and overcoming challenges becomes essential in fostering economic independence and self-sufficiency (Ntshangase & Ezeudji, 2023).

To maximize its impact, scholars advocate for entrepreneurship education at all levels, from primary schools to universities, to embed entrepreneurial skills early and effectively (Kunene, 2021). Collaborative efforts involving educational institutions, government agencies, and private businesses are equally vital in aligning educational outcomes with market demands and in providing necessary resources and support for graduates (Geza, Ngidi, Slotow, & Mabhaudhi, 2022; Motta & Galina, 2023). These partnerships not only enrich entrepreneurship education but also build a supportive framework for emerging entrepreneurs, strengthening the economy and addressing unemployment in meaningful ways.

5. Teaching Approach to Entrepreneurship

The manner of instructing entrepreneurial education has a bearing on students' educational choices regarding the establishment of their own enterprises after completion of their studies (Gcabashe & Ndlovu, 2022). Hence the acquisition of practical knowledge about entrepreneurship and engaging in hands-on learning activities such as business simulations and real-world projects is crucial (Mawson, Casulli, & Simmons, 2023). This is because participating in these educational activities enable students to gain a better understanding of the challenges and processes involved in starting and managing a business, potentially motivating them to pursue their own entrepreneurial endeavours (Ferreira, Robertson, & Pitt, 2023).

The structure of entrepreneurial education modules is often criticised for being too theoretical and not closely connected to real-life entrepreneurial experiences. Antonelli et al. (2024) established that syllabuses tend to place a strong emphasis on business theory and concepts while overlooking the practical skills and experiences necessary for aspiring entrepreneurs. A study conducted by (Ripollés & Blesa, 2024) suggests that an entrepreneurial education syllabus should focus on experiential learning such as developing business plans, conducting market re-

search, and managing finances. This is because the structure of entrepreneurial education modules may come under scrutiny for focusing mainly on conventional business skills like accounting and finance, while neglecting critical entrepreneurial skills such as creativity, innovation, and resilience (Janowski & Szczepańska-Przekota, 2024). These essential skills are often overshadowed despite their significance in achieving entrepreneurial success. Ferreira, Robertson and Pitt (2023) also established that syllabuses must also adequately address the evolving nature of entrepreneurship in the digital era, and include crucial topics like e-commerce, digital marketing, and technology integration that are increasingly vital for contemporary entrepreneurs. It is clear that there is a call for a more comprehensive and practical approach to developing syllabi for entrepreneurial education courses, one that prioritises hands-on learning, the cultivation of critical skills, and relevance to the current entrepreneurial environment. Hence the current paper seeks to evaluate the effect of entrepreneurship education on the enhancement of students' entrepreneurial skills and aspirations.

6. The Influence of Entrepreneurship Education on Students

Putri, Rahmawati and Suroto (2019) state that universities can make a key contribution to development by creating a structure that equips students with entrepreneurial skills. Cera et al. (2020) are of the view that university graduates from entrepreneurship education programmes are more likely to have positive attitudes and intentions to become entrepreneurs. Therefore, it is vital that universities develop their internal ecosystems to foster student-driven entrepreneurship (Kummitha & Kummitha, 2021). The findings of a study conducted by Agarwal et al. (2020) found that universities are often committed to changing the learning process and providing students with the knowledge they need to improve entrepreneurship education. Kummitha and Kummitha (2021) affirm that education and training are two critical components of sustainable entrepreneurship and can be achieved by transferring knowledge which is facilitated through education in terms of entrepreneurial intention, skills, competencies, personality change, and, most importantly, attitude change (Agarwal et al., 2020).

Laguna-Sánchez, Segovia-Pérez and Vargas-Pérez (2021) are of the view that the structure of entrepreneurship modules should be designed to provide a student with the key elements of entrepreneurship. HEIs must be aligned to existing enterprises to ensure that the academic structure is suitable for the local issues relating to entrepreneurship but is also relevant in the global context (Rasiah, Somasundram & Tee 2019; Uctu, Essop, & Jafta 2020; Pet'ko et al. 2021; Sun, 2018). Practice-based projects are a vital core component of teaching and evaluation, and the use of guest entrepreneurs offer real-life examples for students (Dinning, 2019; White & Kennedy, 2021). Moreover, entrepreneurial qualifications determine the capital, wealth and prosperity of generations (Dinning, 2019). The above is supported by Dube (2021) that graduates from entrepreneurial studies are often more likely to be successful. However, the limited number of entrepreneurship pro-

grammes hinders the number of future innovative entrepreneurs that can help in reducing the unemployment rates and building a better economy (Garwe, 2020).

Entrepreneurship education in universities plays a key role in shaping students' perspectives and skills by means of the content included in the courses. Lose and Chenteni (2024) affirm that the material in the modules helps students gain a thorough understanding of the entrepreneurial journey, starting from generating ideas to establishing and expanding a business. Module content provides students with the necessary knowledge and skills to launch and oversee a prosperous business by addressing areas such as identifying opportunities, creating business plans, marketing strategies, financial management, and operational procedures (Ayandibu, 2023). Modules should include case studies and industry-based projects to give students a hands-on understanding of the practical aspects of entrepreneurship (Nchu, Tengeh, & Cronje, 2023). This experience can assist students in gaining a more practical understanding of entrepreneurship and equip them to tackle the obstacles of the corporate environment.

Through exposing students to changing business situations and motivating them to create original solutions, the module material can assist students to cultivate a mindset of innovation and creativity. Thinking outside the box is crucial for entrepreneurship since entrepreneurs frequently have to be creative in order to recognise and take advantage of fresh opportunities. Gamede (2023) states that the material covered in a module can assist students in acquiring valuable entrepreneurial skills like communication, leadership, and teamwork. Entrepreneurship education can assist students in acquiring the necessary skills for success in entrepreneurship by including group projects, presentations, and networking opportunities within the module content.

7. Skills Offered through Entrepreneurship Education Programmes

The growing utilisation of technology in all education, training, and development situations has sparked a lot of discussion. Higher Education Institutions are encouraged to ensure that the entrepreneurship skills taught are marketable, and that students understand how digital technology is used for entrepreneurship (Jones, Maas, & Pittaway 2017; Carrim 2022; Radebe & Vezi-Magigaba, 2021). This can be achieved through ensuring that the entrepreneurship education include managerial skills training for continuous innovation and economic growth to be ensured (Denhere & Moloji, 2021). This is because training in business transformation can help to bridge the gap between theory and practice in higher education (Luthuli & Buthelezi, 2021). These skills not only equip students to start and handle their own businesses but also boost their employability by cultivating adaptability and resourcefulness in diverse professional environments (Mokoena, 2023). The effectiveness of the above is seen when entrepreneurship programmes are designed to enable students to be able to play an important role in the economy and start new businesses (Govender, 2021). Cera et al. (2020) add that labour

market also act as a determinant of how the structure for entrepreneurial studies should be formulated to meet precise requirements demand by the labour market

8. The Importance of Entrepreneurship Education in Promoting Entrepreneurial Skills

Entrepreneurship education aids in the establishment of a solid understanding of business fundamentals, including key areas such as marketing, finance, and operations. According to Ferreira, Robertson and Pitt (2023), aspiring students need to grasp knowledge in order to learn the basics of managing a business and then be able to make well-informed choices. In addition, students can develop innovative thinking and gain a new perspective on problem-solving by participating in experiential learning activities and facing real-world entrepreneurial challenges (Abro et al., 2023). Failure to develop these competencies leads to the mismatch between the skills taught in universities and the skills required by the labour market (Voudda & Kakouris, 2023). Kerr, Lings, Terry, Richards and Muirhead (2024) are of the opinion that various university programmes continue to place a strong emphasis on conventional disciplines and theoretical knowledge, frequently ignoring the practical skills that are essential to the workplace and in high demand by employers.

8.1. Technical Skills in the Context of Entrepreneurship

With the advancement of technology, having technical skills is essential in equipping students with the knowledge and tools they need to transform their concepts into profitable businesses as future entrepreneurs (Mahmudin, 2023). Bell and Bell (2023) concur that having technical skills in fields like programming, data analysis, and digital marketing is crucial for creating and executing fresh business concepts. This is because a student who is proficient in programming will be able to develop new software products, while data analysis will enable them to be able to recognise market trends and potential opportunities (Hardini, Khaizure, & Godwin, 2024). Kumar and Anbanandam (2022) also point out that in the current era of technology, businesses rely on technological advancements to drive innovation and improve efficiency. Furthermore, being technically adept allows students to depict themselves as entrepreneurial persons who are inventive and progressive, able to adapt to the changing needs of the market (Omeihe et al., 2021). For instance, a student who possesses strong technical skills can effectively convey their ideas to investors and customers, demonstrating the potential of their business. Moreover, having technical skills allows students to tackle entrepreneurial challenges by applying a problem-solving mindset, coming up with creative solutions to difficult problems (Ntshangase & Ezeuduji, 2023).

8.2. Computer Applications Skills for Entrepreneurship to Meet the Demands of 4IR

Having computer application skills is crucial for entrepreneurs to adapt to the 4IR,

where technologies are starting to merge and create a continuous line between the physical, digital, and biological worlds. According to the study conducted by Seleke and Chukwuere (2023), 4IR-related abilities allow students to use technology to come up with new ideas, add value, and stay competitive in a constantly changing business world. Ntombela and Civilcharran (2023) assert that it is essential for students in the 4IR to have a good understanding of e-commerce platforms and online payment systems. Dlamini (2024) is of the view that online shopping and the digital economy continue to expand, students who possess the ability to create and oversee an online store can benefit from accessing new markets and boosting their earnings. Proficiency in cybersecurity is crucial for venturing into the 4IR to safeguard important business information and systems from cyber risks. Students with expertise in cybersecurity have the ability to establish strong security protocols that protect their businesses and establish credibility with their clients (Baadjie, 2023). Learning these skills, students can improve their entrepreneurial abilities and be better equipped to handle the opportunities and challenges of the 4IR.

8.3. Marketing Skills Needed to Start a Small Business

A crucial marketing skill for entrepreneurs is being adept in digital marketing. The emergence of digital technologies has shifted the focus of marketing from traditional mediums to digital platforms such as social media, search engines, and email (Tyson & Schell, 2024). Students who have a strong understanding of digital marketing are able to advertise their products or services effectively, connect with a wider range of people, and interact with customers in a more individualized way (Chetty & Govender, 2024). That is why it is crucial that students are able to grasp the fundamentals of market research in order to recognize, understand potential customers, evaluate competitors, and establish the demand for their products or services as entrepreneurs (Ferreira, Robertson, & Pitt, 2023). This basic understanding will assist students create focused marketing plans that connect with their desired audience. According to Kumar et al. (2023), marketing skills involve creating an engaging brand narrative, crafting a distinctive logo and visual style, and building a solid brand presence on different marketing platforms. Aliamutu and Mkhize (2024) are of the view that students are able to recognise the significance of market segmentation and targeting in order to customize their marketing strategies for specific groups of customers. This includes the process of recognizing various customer groups with characteristics like age, interests, and actions, and creating marketing tactics that cater to each specific group. Students ought to acquire knowledge in marketing analytics in order to gauge the success of their marketing efforts and to base their decisions on data-driven insights (Ferreira, Robertson, & Pitt, 2023). This involves knowing how to monitor important metrics, interpret marketing data, and improve campaigns for enhanced outcomes.

9. Research Methodology

A positivist approach, grounded in quantitative research methodologies, was

adopted in this study to thoroughly explore and fulfill its objectives. A nonprobability sampling technique was identified as the most appropriate for determining a sample size of 269 undergraduate students enrolled in entrepreneurial courses at the selected university of technology. Data collection focused on third-year students registered in undergraduate programmes within the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics who undertook entrepreneurship modules. This group was targeted due to their familiarity with the curriculum, providing valuable insights into the impact of entrepreneurship education on the development of their entrepreneurial skills and aspirations. Their experiences were crucial in assessing how effectively the entrepreneurship module fostered and integrated these skills within their academic journey. The survey results were analyzed utilizing SPSS, version 28.0, which enabled both descriptive statistical analysis and factor analysis. Descriptive statistics were utilized to summarize the data, and the findings were subsequently presented through cross-tabulations, which facilitated the identification of relationships between variables by illustrating the frequency distribution across various categories. Ethical considerations were rigorously followed; all participants received a comprehensive information letter detailing the study's purpose, objectives, terms, and conditions, ensuring that they were fully informed. This letter emphasized the voluntary nature of participation and clarified that no financial compensation would be provided. Consent forms were collected from students who expressed a willingness to participate in the research. Additionally, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to accurately reflect the perspectives of students regarding the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in enhancing their entrepreneurial skills and aspirations. The inclusion criteria for this study encompassed third-year students who had successfully completed entrepreneurship modules in the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics during their first and second years. The exclusion criterion involved students who had not participated in entrepreneurship studies, as a fundamental aspect of this research is that the students must have been exposed to and completed entrepreneurship modules within the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics.

10. Findings and Results

The aim of this investigation was to evaluate the effect of entrepreneurship education on the enhancement of students' entrepreneurial skills and aspirations.

The data highlights an important trend in perceptions of entrepreneurship education: while a majority of participants (over 60%) acknowledged that entrepreneurship modules helped deepen their understanding of entrepreneurial concepts, a substantial minority (38.3%) expressed doubt about the modules' effectiveness. A chi-square test ($X^2 = 337.078$; $df = 4$; $P = 0.001$) further confirmed that these results are statistically significant, underscoring the divide in perceived value. This finding aligns with the work of [Akinbinu and Chiloane-Phetla \(2022\)](#), who argue for the critical role of universities in advancing entrepreneurship education that not only covers theory but also enhances practical skills and real-world

understanding. These insights suggest an opportunity to refine entrepreneurship curricula to better meet diverse student needs, potentially increasing overall engagement and perceived value.

Table 1. Knowledge enhancement through entrepreneurship modules.

Knowledge enhancement through entrepreneurship modules				
Scale	Frequency	Percent	X ²	P-Value
Strongly Disagree	20	7.4	337.078	0.001
Disagree	83	30.9		
Neutral	1	0.4		
Agree	159	59.1		
Strongly Agree	6	2.2		

Table 1 reveals that a substantial proportion of participants expressed disagreement (124, 46.1%) and strong disagreement (18, 6.7%) regarding the entrepreneurship module's effectiveness in enhancing students' entrepreneurial skills. Conversely, nearly half of the respondents agreed (120, 44.6%) and strongly agreed (6, 2.2%) that these modules do contribute to entrepreneurial skill development. Only one respondent (0.4%) reported a neutral stance on this matter. A chi-square test ($X^2 = 291.167$; $df = 4$; $P = 0.001$) confirmed that these findings were statistically significant, suggesting that respondents generally recognized the module's contribution to entrepreneurial skills development.

Table 2. Development of entrepreneurial skills.

Development of entrepreneurial skills				
Scale	Frequency	Percent	X ²	P-Value
Strongly Disagree	18	6.7	291.167	0.001
Disagree	124	46.1		
Neutral	1	0.4		
Agree	120	44.6		
Strongly Agree	6	2.2		

However, this data also highlights a lack of consensus among participants regarding the extent to which the entrepreneurship module adequately equipped them with essential entrepreneurial skills. This variability may reflect differing expectations or experiences of the module. As [Hargreaves, Sibanda, and Nomlala \(2022\)](#) argue, curriculum design plays a crucial role in shaping the specific entrepreneurial skills students acquire. [Lonappan and Aithal \(2023\)](#) further emphasize that acquiring these skills is essential for students to maximize the benefits of entrepreneurship modules and broaden their perspectives on launching enterprises.

Table 2 shows that a majority of participants expressed disagreement (122,

45.4%) and strong disagreement (19, 7.1%) regarding the entrepreneurship module's effectiveness in stimulating ideas for their own business concepts. Conversely, nearly half of the respondents agreed (122, 45.4%) and strongly agreed (6, 2.2%) that the entrepreneurial education they received aided them in conceptualizing a business idea. The results of a chi-square test ($X^2 = 179.55$; $df = 4$; $P = 0.001$) indicate that these findings are statistically significant, suggesting a mixed perception among respondents about the module's role in fostering entrepreneurial thinking and idea generation.

Table 3. Stimulation of business concepts.

Stimulation of business concepts				
Scale	Frequency	Percent	X^2	P -Value
Strongly Disagree	19	7.1	179.55	0.001
Disagree	122	45.4		
Agree	122	45.4		
Strongly Agree	6	2.2		

These findings underscore a division in participants' views on the module's ability to encourage them to envision their own business concepts, pointing to potential gaps in the curriculum. It appears that the current entrepreneurship education module may lack the depth or specificity needed to adequately prepare students with the skills required to develop viable business ideas. Additionally, the data suggests inconsistencies in how the module is delivered across departments, which may contribute to the varied responses.

These results highlight the importance of a curriculum designed to directly support entrepreneurial activities, as generalized approaches may fail to meet students' specific needs. As [Olutuase, Brijlal, and Yan \(2023\)](#) argue, entrepreneurship education that lacks contextualization may not optimally achieve its intended outcomes. Therefore, refining the module to address both practical skill development and contextual understanding of entrepreneurship could potentially yield a more consistent and impactful experience for students.

Table 3 indicates that a considerable proportion of participants agreed (132, 49.1%) and strongly agreed (6, 2.2%) that the entrepreneurship module contributed to their understanding of the entrepreneurial landscape. The results of a chi-square test ($X^2 = 169.439$; $df = 4$; $P = 0.001$) confirm that these findings are statistically significant, suggesting that many respondents felt the module exposed them to the entrepreneurial environment. However, nearly half of the respondents expressed disagreement (107, 39.8%) and strong disagreement (24, 8.9%) with this statement, indicating a division in satisfaction levels regarding the module's effectiveness. These results suggest that while some students felt the module provided valuable insights, others perceived a lack of comprehensive coverage necessary to fully understand the entrepreneurial landscape—an essential component for those aiming to operate within it.

Table 4. Understanding of the entrepreneurial environment.

Understanding of the entrepreneurial environment				
Scale	Frequency	Percent	X ²	P-Value
Strongly Disagree	24	8.9	169.439	0.001
Disagree	107	39.8		
Agree	132	49.1		
Strongly Agree	6	2.2		

These findings support Kuada's (2022) assertion that entrepreneurship modules often provide only a foundational introduction to entrepreneurship, without adequately addressing the complex and evolving nature of the field. This points to a potential need for curriculum enhancement, ensuring that the module not only introduces basic concepts but also delves into the dynamic aspects of entrepreneurship, thereby preparing students more effectively for real-world entrepreneurial challenges.

Table 4 indicates that a majority of respondents agreed (146, 54.3%) and strongly agreed (5, 1.9%) that the entrepreneurship module contributes to developing an entrepreneurial mindset. A chi-square test ($X^2 = 199.446$; $df = 4$; $P = 0.001$) confirms these findings are statistically significant, suggesting that many participants perceive the module as supportive in fostering an entrepreneurial mindset. However, a substantial portion of respondents disagreed (99, 36.8%) and strongly disagreed (19, 7.1%), reflecting a notable division in opinions. These mixed responses indicate that while some students recognize the module's value in mindset development, others are less convinced of its effectiveness in this regard. This division highlights potential gaps in the curriculum, which may not fully engage or meet the diverse needs of all students in terms of fostering entrepreneurial thinking.

Table 5. Cultivation of an entrepreneurial mindset.

Cultivation of an Entrepreneurial Mindset				
Scale	Frequency	Percent	X ²	P-Value
Strongly Disagree	19	7.1	199.446	0.001
Disagree	99	36.8		
Agree	146	54.3		
Strongly Agree	5	1.9		

These findings align with Saputra, Hernawan, and Dewi's (2024) recommendation that entrepreneurship education should undergo curriculum revisions to more effectively engage students and cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset. A more engaging and comprehensive curriculum could potentially bridge these gaps, ensuring that the module better captures student interest and more consistently promotes entrepreneurial thinking.

Table 5 reveals that a significant proportion of respondents agreed (145, 53.9%) and strongly agreed (3, 1.1%) that the entrepreneurship module helps them discover their entrepreneurial potential and capabilities. A chi-square test ($X^2 = 196.71$; $df = 4$; $P = 0.001$) further confirms that these findings are statistically significant, indicating that many participants believe the module aids in identifying their entrepreneurial strengths and potential. However, a substantial segment of respondents disagreed (99, 36.8%) and strongly disagreed (22, 8.2%) with this statement, revealing a divide in perceived impact. These mixed responses suggest that while some students find the module beneficial for self-discovery of entrepreneurial skills, others do not see the same value, implying that the module may not fully address the diverse needs of all students in this regard.

Table 6. Identification of entrepreneurial potential.

Identification of Entrepreneurial Potential				
Scale	Frequency	Percent	X^2	<i>P</i> -Value
Strongly Disagree	22	8.2	196.71	0.001
Disagree	99	36.8		
Agree	145	53.9		
Strongly Agree	3	1.1		

This aligns with [Gani and Mangesa's \(2024\)](#) view that entrepreneurship modules should be designed to influence students' practical application of content and to enable self-assessment of entrepreneurial potential. [Nuraini et al. \(2022\)](#) further emphasize that identifying personal skills is crucial for effectively applying entrepreneurial knowledge in starting one's business. Thus, the findings indicate a need for module improvements to better facilitate students' self-recognition of entrepreneurial capabilities and ensure content that is applicable and engaging across a diverse student base.

Table 6 indicates that a notable proportion of respondents agreed (134, 49.8%) and strongly agreed (3, 1.1%) that the teaching methods used in the entrepreneurship module are understandable and practical. The results of a chi-square test ($X^2 = 162.063$; $df = 4$; $P = 0.001$) confirmed these findings as statistically significant, suggesting that many participants perceive the teaching methods as both practical and comprehensive.

Table 7. Practicality and comprehensibility of teaching methods.

Practicality and Comprehensibility of Teaching Methods				
Scale	Frequency	Percent	X^2	<i>P</i> -Value
Strongly Disagree	32	11.9	162.063	0.001
Disagree	100	37.2		
Agree	134	49.8		
Strongly Agree	3	1.1		

However, nearly half of the respondents expressed disagreement (100, 37.2%) and strong disagreement (32, 11.9%) with this statement, revealing a lack of full consensus. Although a slight majority (50.9%) viewed the teaching methods positively, the close margin indicates mixed perceptions among participants regarding the effectiveness of these methods. This division implies that while some students find the teaching approaches understandable and applicable, others may feel that these methods do not fully facilitate comprehension or engagement.

These findings align with [Kuada's \(2022\)](#) assertion that ineffective development of learning materials and teaching strategies can hinder students' understanding of entrepreneurship content. Additionally, [Lyu, Shepherd, and Lee \(2024\)](#) argue that the quality and relevance of resources used in entrepreneurship education significantly influence students' grasp of the subject matter. To enhance the module's impact, refining teaching strategies and resources to better meet diverse student needs could foster a more universally practical and accessible learning experience.

Table 7 indicates that a notable number of respondents agreed (132, 49.1%) and strongly agreed (2, 0.7%) that they had the opportunity to interact with successful entrepreneurs during guest lectures as part of their coursework. The results of a chi-square test ($X^2 = 144.993$; $df = 4$; $P < 0.001$) further support the significance of these findings, suggesting that guest lectures were effectively designed to immerse students in the entrepreneurial environment through the insights of experienced entrepreneurs. However, nearly half of the respondents expressed disagreement (93, 34.6%) or strong disagreement (42, 15.6%) with the statement. This divergence in responses highlights a contradiction in perceptions and experiences regarding the presence of entrepreneurs as guest speakers. Consequently, one could infer that the delivery of entrepreneurship modules may vary significantly across different departments.

Table 8. Exposure to successful entrepreneurs.

Exposure to Successful Entrepreneurs				
Scale	Frequency	Percent	X ²	P-Value
Strongly Disagree	42	15.6	144.993	0.001
Disagree	93	34.6		
Agree	132	49.1		
Strongly Agree	2	0.7		

Literature highlights the necessity of involving lecturers or individuals with substantial entrepreneurial experience in entrepreneurship education. Such educators should possess a deep understanding of market dynamics and the behaviors expected of entrepreneurs when navigating various challenges ([Mngoma & Ayonrinde, 2023](#)). Moreover, [Akinbinu and Chiloane-Phetla \(2022\)](#) emphasize that students' interest in entrepreneurship education is heightened when successful entrepreneurs actively engage in the teaching process. The findings of this study

raise significant concern as many participants reported a lack of interaction with entrepreneurs in a guest lecture setting. This gap could hinder the practical understanding of entrepreneurship among students and points to an urgent need for a more consistent and effective integration of entrepreneurial experiences in the curriculum.

Table 8 reveals that a significant majority of respondents agreed (187, 69.5%) and strongly agreed (6, 2.2%) that the entrepreneurship module influences their decision to pursue a career in entrepreneurship rather than opting for traditional employment. The results of a chi-square test ($X^2 = 313.052$; $df = 4$; $P < 0.001$) further affirm the significance of these findings, indicating that respondents perceive entrepreneurship modules as motivating factors in their career choices.

Table 9. Influence on career decisions.

Influence on Career Decisions				
Scale	Frequency	Percent	X^2	P -Value
Strongly Disagree	13	4.8	313.052	0.001
Disagree	63	23.4		
Agree	187	69.5		
Strongly Agree	6	2.2		

Nonetheless, a notable minority disagreed (63, 23.4%) or strongly disagreed (13, 4.8%) with the statement. While the majority of participants appear inclined towards self-employment post-graduation, close to 30% remain unconvinced that the entrepreneurship module significantly impacts their entrepreneurial aspirations. This discrepancy suggests that while there is a strong inclination towards entrepreneurship among respondents, not all perceive the entrepreneurship module as a key influence in shaping that ambition. These findings reflect the entrepreneurial aspirations of respondents enrolled in the entrepreneurship modules. If these ambitions are transformed into viable and sustainable business ventures, they could play a crucial role in addressing the increasing number of postgraduate students entering the job market. [Baggen, Lans, and Gulikers \(2022\)](#) emphasize that entrepreneurship education can significantly mitigate unemployment by equipping individuals with the skills and mindset necessary to create their own opportunities through business ventures.

While a substantial portion of students acknowledge the positive influence of entrepreneurship education on their career paths, the existence of skepticism among nearly 30% of respondents highlights a need for further enhancement of the module to ensure it effectively inspires all students to consider entrepreneurship as a viable career option.

Table 9 indicates that slightly more than half of the respondents disagreed (118, 43.9%) or strongly disagreed (21, 7.8%) with the assertion that the entrepreneurship module incorporates a practical-based project as a fundamental component. In contrast, the results of a chi-square test ($X^2 = 184.576$; $df = 4$; $P < 0.001$) suggest

that the module does, in fact, include a practical-based project as an essential element. However, nearly half of the respondents also expressed agreement (127, 47.2%) and strong agreement (3, 1.1%) with this statement, reflecting a close split in perceptions.

Table 10. Inclusion of practice-based projects.

Inclusion of Practice-Based Projects				
Scale	Frequency	Percent	X ²	P-Value
Strongly Disagree	21	7.8	184.576	0.001
Disagree	118	43.9		
Agree	127	47.2		
Strongly Agree	3	1.1		

This divergence in responses raises significant concerns about the implementation of practical projects within entrepreneurship education. The lack of such projects may hinder students from acquiring the essential skills and practical experience necessary to succeed in the competitive business landscape. [Sibanda and Iwu \(2023\)](#) caution that without exposure to practical projects, students may be ill-prepared for the dynamic and challenging realities of entrepreneurship. Furthermore, without practical engagement, students may struggle to convert their innovative ideas into viable business ventures.

Table 10 reveals that a significant majority of respondents agreed (185, 68.8%) or strongly agreed (9, 3.3%) that higher education should prioritize entrepreneurship education as a strategy to combat the rising unemployment rate among graduates. The results of a chi-square test ($X^2 = 303.833$; $df = 4$; $P < 0.001$) further substantiate this belief, indicating that respondents strongly support increasing emphasis on entrepreneurship education to address graduate unemployment. In contrast, only 64 (23.8) respondents disagreed, with an additional 9 respondents (3.3%) strongly disagreeing with the statement.

Table 11. Higher education should place a high importance on entrepreneurship education to combat the ever-increasing unemployment rates of graduates.

Higher education should place a high importance on entrepreneurship education to combat the ever-increasing unemployment rates of graduates				
Scale	Frequency	Percent	X ²	P-Value
Strongly Disagree	11	4.1	303.833	0.001
Disagree	64	23.8		
Agree	185	68.8		
Strongly Agree	9	3.3		

These findings highlight a consensus among respondents regarding the necessity of placing significant importance on entrepreneurship education within higher education curricula to tackle the escalating unemployment rates. As noted

by Awaah et al. (2023), universities that integrate entrepreneurship into their courses can cultivate students who are not only job seekers but also capable of launching their own ventures. This shift in educational focus has the potential to stimulate economic growth and reduce the number of unemployed graduates. The persistent scarcity of job vacancies in South Africa exacerbates the unemployment crisis among graduates (Kebede, 2023). Consequently, there is a pressing need for graduates equipped with entrepreneurship education to create jobs and contribute to lowering the overall unemployment rate. The empirical findings underscore the urgent requirement for dynamic and targeted entrepreneurial studies aimed at addressing local and national unemployment challenges.

In conclusion, the overwhelming support for enhanced entrepreneurship education among respondents indicates a critical pathway toward equipping graduates with the skills needed to thrive in an increasingly competitive job market and foster economic resilience.

11. Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusions and recommendations in this paper align closely with the research objectives of the study, serving as essential insights that offer a comprehensive understanding of how entrepreneurship education impacts students' entrepreneurial skills, knowledge, and aspirations.

12. Conclusion

This research aimed to evaluate the influence of entrepreneurship education on students' entrepreneurial skills, knowledge, and aspirations. The results indicate a multifaceted scenario in which entrepreneurship education programmes offer certain advantages but also exhibit deficiencies in critical areas, thereby hindering students' full potential in entrepreneurial endeavors. A majority of respondents recognized that entrepreneurship education enhanced their comprehension of the field and contributed to the development of an entrepreneurial mindset, as illustrated in Table 1, Table 4, and Table 5. Nevertheless, a significant number of participants voiced concerns regarding the modules' effectiveness in imparting practical entrepreneurial skills, comprehending the entrepreneurial landscape, and facilitating the growth of their entrepreneurial potential (Table 2, Table 3). For example, nearly half of the participants expressed skepticism about the entrepreneurship module's ability to provide them with applicable skills and knowledge necessary for conceptualizing and executing business ideas. Furthermore, the findings indicate that while almost half of the respondents believe that entrepreneurship education promotes an entrepreneurial mindset and capability, this belief is not universally shared. A substantial portion of participants expressed dissatisfaction with the delivery of the modules, particularly in relation to practical projects and opportunities for interaction with entrepreneurs through guest lectures (Table 8 and Table 10). This variability in the design and implementation of the curriculum adversely affects students' capacity to extract maximum benefit

from entrepreneurship modules and to cultivate confidence in their entrepreneurial abilities.

Finally, a significant majority, as illustrated in **Table 11**, advocate for the integration of more comprehensive entrepreneurship education within higher education institutions as a strategy to mitigate the unemployment rates among graduates. This perspective is consistent with the broader consensus that well-structured entrepreneurship education has the potential to equip graduates with the necessary skills to launch their own businesses, thereby addressing the elevated levels of graduate unemployment in South Africa.

13. Recommendations

To address the gaps identified, the following recommendations are made:

Curriculum Enhancement for Practical Skills Development

Entrepreneurship courses should integrate experiential projects as core components to equip students with the practical skills necessary for navigating real-world business environments. Engaging students in activities such as designing and presenting business concepts, overseeing small enterprises, or tackling simulated entrepreneurial challenges can significantly deepen their practical comprehension. It is vital that course content aligns with hands-on, outcome-oriented learning experiences to enhance students' competencies in entrepreneurship.

Standardization and Consistency in Module Delivery

In light of the varied feedback regarding the effectiveness of entrepreneurship modules across different departments, it is imperative to standardize the content of these modules. By establishing explicit guidelines for learning outcomes and ensuring that all departments provide a cohesive and thorough curriculum, students' experiences can be improved, and educational outcomes can be more effectively assessed. Standardized modules would also guarantee that critical entrepreneurial skills and knowledge are uniformly addressed.

Increased Interaction with Successful Entrepreneurs

Enhancing the frequency of guest lectures from experienced entrepreneurs could significantly improve students' grasp of the practical dimensions of entrepreneurship, thereby bridging the divide between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Such interactions offer valuable insights into real-world business challenges and foster greater student engagement with entrepreneurial concepts. To institutionalize this approach, universities should explore partnerships with local entrepreneurs and businesses that are willing to engage with students on a regular basis.

Development of Entrepreneurial Mindset through Experiential Learning

Research indicates that a considerable proportion of students feel that the module does not adequately foster an entrepreneurial mindset. Implementing experiential learning strategies, such as field excursions, business simulations, and entrepreneurship boot camps, can provide students with immersive experiences in the entrepreneurial process. These experiences would encourage students to think

critically, innovate, and handle real-world challenges, which are essential components of an entrepreneurial mindset.

Integration of Contextualized Content

Entrepreneurship curricula should prioritize the inclusion of case studies and examples that are pertinent to the South African economic and business landscape. By focusing on local economic realities, cultural influences, and market-specific obstacles, the educational experience can be significantly enriched. This approach enables students to connect theoretical concepts with practical, localized applications, thereby enhancing the relevance and applicability of their learning.

Sustained Institutional Commitment to Entrepreneurship Education

For entrepreneurship education to play a meaningful role in mitigating graduate unemployment, higher education institutions must demonstrate a long-term commitment to the ongoing enhancement of these programs. This entails regular evaluations of the curriculum, soliciting feedback from both students and entrepreneurs, and ensuring that the skills imparted are in sync with the evolving entrepreneurial environment. Furthermore, integrating entrepreneurship education as a fundamental component of various degree programs can amplify its influence.

Post-Graduation Support for Entrepreneurs

To effectively bridge the divide between academic training and actual business establishment, universities could implement incubators or mentorship initiatives aimed at graduates who aspire to become entrepreneurs. Such support systems could offer essential resources, expert guidance, and potential funding avenues, thereby assisting recent graduates in launching sustainable businesses and enhancing the practical impact of their entrepreneurship education.

These suggestions underline the importance of experiential learning, coherence across educational modules, and supportive frameworks that extend beyond traditional classroom settings. By embracing these strategies, educational institutions can better equip students to be flexible, innovative, and prepared to embark on entrepreneurial endeavors, ultimately addressing the pressing issue of high graduate unemployment rates in South Africa and nurturing a vibrant entrepreneurial culture among the youth.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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