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Fostering Entrepreneurial Competencies in Higher Education: Trends, Challenges, Legal Issues and Impacts on Student Success

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ABSTRACT: In an age where innovation and adaptability define economic success, the development of entrepreneurial competencies in higher education has become both a priority and a necessity. While prior research has extensively documented the effectiveness of experiential learning in fostering entrepreneurial mindsets, few studies bridge the expectations of such training with its real-world institutional challenges. This study contributes to that dialogue by examining how structured entrepreneurship education at ISFT Institute affects students' entrepreneurial self-efficacy, business creation rates, and employability. Drawing from a sample of 162 students and combining qualitative and quantitative data, the findings indicate that hands-on learning significantly outperforms traditional theoretical instruction in nurturing entrepreneurial intent. Notably, access to mentorship and industry networks amplifies these effects. However, despite these gains, the study underscores persistent challenges, including limited funding, fragmented policy implementation, and faculty resistance, which create a misalignment between policy ambition and operational reality. The absence of a significant research gap in the literature emphasizes the urgency for translating well-documented strategies into practice. This paper argues that a holistic, interdisciplinary approach—paired with regulatory and institutional reforms is critical to achieving the full potential of entrepreneurship education in higher education institutions.

Keywords: entrepreneurial competencies, higher education, experiential learning, policy-practice gap, student employability.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is increasingly seen as a strategic tool for acquiring personal wealth, reducing unemployment, and fostering national innovation capacity. Numerous studies confirm that individuals with higher education levels are more likely to achieve higher income and job stability [1, 2]. Furthermore, higher education

institutions (HEIs) are now expected not only to educate but also to nurture future entrepreneurs capable of navigating rapidly changing economic landscapes [3, 4].

Entrepreneurial competencies defined as the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable the identification and exploitation of business opportunities have become a crucial focus in higher education [European Commission, 2016]. Students' entrepreneurial intentions are influenced not only by academic training but also by experiential learning, social environment, and family networks [5, 6]. Studies highlight that prior involvement in family businesses or small enterprises builds confidence and cultivates entrepreneurial attitudes such as networking and opportunity recognition [7]. A comprehensive analysis of factors impacting student entrepreneurship often includes socio-demographics, educational context, and personality traits [8]. Among these, social capital particularly support from family and friends emerges as a consistently strong predictor of entrepreneurial behavior [9]. Furthermore, access to mentorship and incubator networks significantly enhances entrepreneurial competencies, making them vital elements of successful entrepreneurship education programs [10, 11]. Several educational models advocate for integrating entrepreneurial training not only in business faculties but across disciplines, especially in STEM and humanities fields, where entrepreneurial potential is often underutilized [12, 13]. Policy initiatives such as the EntreComp framework [14] promote interdisciplinary entrepreneurship education to bridge these gaps and democratize entrepreneurial opportunities for all students.

Numerous studies focus on analyzing the hypothetical possibility of students embarking on the significant journey of starting their own businesses. These studies adopt a broader perspective and encompass various types of variables that can influence this endeavor. These variables can be succinctly summarized into four major categories: fields of study, work experiences, previous lifestyle, and current lifestyle, along with several other contributing factors. The findings of these studies reveal that the field of study in which an individual engages plays the most crucial role in determining their potential for entrepreneurship. While other factors also influence outcomes, it is particularly noteworthy that students' connections to external events, such as having family members or friends who already own businesses, have a significant, though smaller, impact on their entrepreneurial aspirations [15, 16].

Overall, the analysis seems to favor the skill development approach over a focus on personality traits, acknowledging that skill development is often viewed as a crucial element of vocational training. According to this framework, an effective policy encouraging individual entrepreneurship may involve thorough training targeting various stakeholder groups, including parents, educators, and youth workers. This implication notably contrasts with the broader perspective that advocates for a cultural shift to foster an entrepreneurship culture within society. Ultimately, despite their differences, the various approaches may provide converging recommendations that highlight the critical importance of entrepreneurship programs incorporating training in both creative and administrative sectors [17].

Such training programs should cover a wide range of relevant topics, including the creation and internationalization of companies as well as the concept of intrapreneurship. It is essential that this training not only be delivered through standard educational courses; instead, there are significant domain-specific benefits to learning through practical experience. Additionally, these programs should be designed to build network relationships and provide direct support and benefits to new entrepreneurs as they navigate the challenges of starting a business. Another vital consideration in this context is the educational methods for promoting entrepreneurship, which are particularly relevant within higher education institutions, given their increasing recognition as vital components of a regional innovation system [18-20].

In light of this, students must understand what life as an entrepreneur entails at an earlier stage in their educational journey. This is vital since ingrained misconceptions can negatively impact their inclination to pursue entrepreneurship. The perceived feasibility of establishing a new business emerges as an essential factor in this process. For these reasons, it is imperative to encourage the creation of new businesses through the proactive promotion of financial support for startup activities. It is also worth acknowledging that mistakes and failures are intrinsic to the learning process associated with entrepreneurship. Consequently, it is crucial not to excessively penalize errors made during this journey, reflecting a necessary cultural shift within the education and training systems aimed at fostering a genuine learning culture [21-23].

Various studies indicate that there are distinct benefits, both in the realm of entrepreneurship and intrapreneurial career development, to be gained from engaging in prior business endeavors. On a broader level, training demonstrates a significant role in preventing challenges that may arise in entrepreneurial settings, but the effectiveness of such training often hinges on its specific nature [51, 52]. When evaluated in more general terms, it is apparent that training focused on fostering a culture of family and strategic business planning may actually increase the likelihood of criminal offenses, leading to the conclusion that training should be directed towards augmenting specific capabilities while adopting a holistic and comprehensive approach [24-26].

At a more detailed level of analysis, it can be concluded that individuals who have undergone any form of entrepreneurial training will likely be more adept at identifying viable trading opportunities. From a bolder perspective, firms that have engaged in specific prior training may find themselves more inclined to launch new business ventures, with individuals who have completed numerous courses demonstrating stronger entrepreneurial intentions compared to their peers who have not [27, 28]. Given these insights, there is a clear call to action for a campaign promoting entrepreneurship within the higher education framework [29, 30].

Initially, it is essential that any experimental training initiatives are directed toward imparting skills particularly relevant to new franchisees or tailored to minimize technical errors in business operations [31]. Beyond that, it is vital to encourage undergraduate students to contemplate business ventures seriously and to educate them in a way that makes entrepreneurship an integral discipline [32-34]. In support of this, their participation in grade-related activities involving experimental spending may warrant financial backing and potential rewards. By adopting a slightly different approach, there is an opportunity to guide students from the very first year of their studies toward assembling and establishing business plans, which could effectively stimulate them to assimilate a more European entrepreneurial culture and potentially cultivate a more dynamic competitive spirit among countries [35].

Considering the definition of entrepreneurship competencies, specific curriculum development needs to address specific gaps. A contemporary definition of competencies is proposed as encompassing the skills, attitudes, abilities, and knowledge essential for effective behavior in enterprises. Specifically, this includes crucial business skills, problem-solving capabilities, and interdisciplinary competencies. From a broader European perspective, a foundational definition of entrepreneurship identifies the necessity of technical expertise and the determination to recognize or create business opportunities proficiently. The role of higher education in this area is pivotal. Firstly, in the context of teaching, it is noted that principles of entrepreneurship management are not yet fully integrated within educational frameworks [36-38].

Considering the definition of entrepreneurship competencies, specific curriculum development must address particular gaps. A contemporary definition of competencies is proposed as encompassing the skills, attitudes, abilities, and knowledge essential for effective behavior in enterprises. Specifically, this includes crucial business skills, problem-solving capabilities, and interdisciplinary competencies. From a broader European perspective, a foundational definition of entrepreneurship identifies the necessity of technical expertise and the determination to recognize or create business opportunities proficiently. The role of higher education in this area is pivotal. Firstly, in the context of teaching, it is noted that principles of entrepreneurship management are not yet fully integrated within educational frameworks [39].

Thus, two distinct approaches seem necessary: speculative studies or, at most, the involvement of skilled personnel. More tailored markets or illustrative examples should be pursued to fully fund narrowly proposed specialties. The ultimate vision, therefore, aims to transform traditional institutions into dynamic hubs of virtual finance that focus on solid strategic directions. Additionally, this initiative employs a combination of one-handed ornaments creative resources and strategies to generate impactful outcomes. Conversely, the competitive landscape and its challenges often breed chaos, which can lead to recommendations focused on encompassing broader interests.

It is essential to acknowledge that, generally speaking, education is often the pathway to attaining desired entrepreneurial outcomes effectively. Many students build robust reputations in their respective professions by collaborating with external stakeholders. Essential competencies developed during this process include independent work, self-confidence, creativity, critical analysis, communication, resource identification,

organizational needs assessment, negotiation, planning, initiative, leadership, and problem-solving skills. Consequently, to effectively develop entrepreneurial competencies, higher education institutions must actively implement experiential and interdisciplinary approaches, ranging from project-based courses to collaborative partnerships with industry stakeholders. This paper explores how structured entrepreneurship education influences student outcomes, emphasizing the legal, pedagogical, and institutional factors crucial for fostering entrepreneurial development within the higher education sector.

1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Entrepreneurial competencies have become a crucial component of higher education (HE), shaping not only institutional strategies but also student success and employability [40, 41]. However, the development of entrepreneurship education policy and practice in higher education institutions (HEIs) has often been constrained by paradoxical funding mechanisms and regulatory challenges. In the Irish context, HEIs were encouraged to adopt entrepreneurial approaches and generate external income, yet they were simultaneously penalized through budget reductions when they successfully did so. This misalignment in higher education policy highlights the necessity for a more pragmatic, commercially oriented framework that incentivizes innovation and academic entrepreneurship while ensuring sustainable institutional growth. Empirical studies indicate that entrepreneurial engagement varies across disciplines, with faculties in health, engineering, and languages demonstrating higher levels of university-enterprise collaboration (UE as QM) compared to business faculties. This disparity underscores the need for a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to fostering entrepreneurial mindsets across all academic domains.

With public funding constraints becoming more pronounced, HEIs can no longer rely solely on state support. The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 emphasizes the importance of entrepreneurial universities capable of diversifying revenue streams through research commercialization, lifelong learning (LLL), international student recruitment, campus enterprise initiatives, and technology-enhanced learning (TEL). However, these entrepreneurial endeavors necessitate strong institutional leadership, robust legal frameworks, and an enabling ecosystem that empowers students, academics, and university managers to engage effectively with the external economic landscape. This paper, drawing on national studies conducted under the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP), funded by the Higher Education Authority (HEA), examines the evolving role of academic entrepreneurship in higher education particularly in developing student competencies that align with labor market demands. By analyzing emerging trends, institutional challenges, and legal considerations, the study offers insights that are applicable not only to the Irish higher education sector but also to international stakeholders facing similar policy transitions.

1.1 Entrepreneurial Competencies: Definition and Importance

Entrepreneurship is closely related to competences. In the context of an organization, group, or team, they refer to "the capacity of its members to carry out tasks in a more or less successful way, with more or less independence or with a greater or lesser degree of creativity." This understanding influences both the personal and the professional sphere. For individuals, the aim is to acquire those capacities that will help them increase the chances of getting a job or of achieving personal success. From an institutional point of view, the interest is in developing human capital capable of meeting the demand of the labor market, enhancing economic growth and social progress in general.

In recent years, the promotion of entrepreneurial competences has aroused great interest in the university environment. Empirical evidence indicates that there are certain personal qualities, "personal competencies," that distinguish between non-entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs, and condition the business success of the latter. Linking the concept of competence to a discipline or a professional profile goes back to the Anglo-Saxon area. Competences are not only key to the professional development of individuals, but also to their personal growth. Therefore, in the frame of the so-called "lifelong learning," a decision has been set out that recommends that all citizens acquire eight key competences for personal and professional development, and the improvement of employment prospects. The first of them, the "sense of initiative and entrepreneurship," is defined as the capacity "to turn ideas into action." By doing such, it contributes to developing an understanding of the domain

of social entrepreneurship. For organizations, especially universities, to stimulate entrepreneurial skills and knowledge might provide strong implications for business creation and other activities related to the entrepreneurial process. An exploration of five universities and other higher institutions within one country was made. Personal interviews were conducted with 46 students and staff ranging from deans to potential entrepreneurs. There are significant gaps in understanding the development needs and dynamic of staff within institutions that might develop entrepreneurship within students. The roles of the institution in the development of entrepreneurship via staff working with students are unclear. A key challenge for many institutions appears not to be a lack of training or experience, but rather the need to contact the outside world. The level and nature of contact can have a strong influence on entrepreneurial project development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Role of Higher Education in Fostering Entrepreneurial Competencies

Entrepreneurial education has become a strategic priority for higher education institutions (HEIs) worldwide. Scholars argue that the primary objective of entrepreneurial education is to develop students' competencies in opportunity recognition, innovation, and risk management. Research by Fayolle and Gailly [20] emphasizes that structured entrepreneurial education programs significantly impact students' entrepreneurial intentions, while Nabi et al. [3] provide empirical evidence on the correlation between entrepreneurial education and the likelihood of venture creation. The emergence of competency-based frameworks, such as the European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (EntreComp), underscores the growing consensus on key competencies required for entrepreneurial success. Studies reveal that universities play a crucial role in bridging the gap between theory and practice by integrating experiential learning approaches. Rasmussen and Sørheim [6] highlight that project-based learning and startup incubation programs enhance students' practical understanding of entrepreneurship. Similarly, Kuratko [4] stresses the importance of entrepreneurial ecosystems within universities, which include incubators, accelerators, and industry partnerships, in fostering entrepreneurial competencies.

2.2 Trends in Entrepreneurship Education

The evolution of entrepreneurship education has been marked by a transition from traditional lecture-based teaching to experiential and technology-driven methodologies. Research by Pittaway and Cope [41] identifies three dominant paradigms in entrepreneurship education: (1) Learning about entrepreneurship, (2) Learning for entrepreneurship, and (3) Learning through entrepreneurship. The latter, which involves hands-on engagement in entrepreneurial activities, has been shown to have the most substantial impact on skill development. Digital transformation has also influenced entrepreneurship education. Studies by Morris et al. [42] indicate that the integration of digital tools, such as online simulations and virtual reality (VR), enhances students' ability to develop entrepreneurial competencies remotely. The adoption of AI-driven learning analytics is another emerging trend, providing personalized feedback to students and enabling adaptive learning pathways.

2.3 Challenges in Fostering Entrepreneurial Competencies

Despite the growing emphasis on entrepreneurial education, several challenges persist. The literature identifies funding constraints, curriculum rigidity, and faculty resistance as major obstacles [8]. Many universities struggle to secure adequate resources for entrepreneurship programs, limiting their capacity to offer hands-on training and mentorship opportunities. Another significant challenge is the disciplinary gap in entrepreneurial education. Research by Hannon [13] and Nabi et al. [3] highlights that business students tend to receive more comprehensive entrepreneurial training than students in STEM or social sciences disciplines. This disparity calls for a more integrated approach to curriculum design, where entrepreneurial education is embedded across diverse academic programs.

2.4 Legal and Policy Considerations in Entrepreneurship Education

Legal frameworks and policies play a critical role in shaping the entrepreneurial landscape within HEIs. Intellectual property (IP) regulations, startup support policies, and funding mechanisms influence the extent to which universities can foster entrepreneurial activities among students. Siegel and Wright [43] argue that universities with clear IP policies encourage student-led innovations by providing structured pathways for commercialization. Furthermore, public policy initiatives, such as the European Commission's University-Business Cooperation agenda, emphasize the need for stronger collaboration between academia and industry. Studies by Guerrero and Urbano [12] suggest that policy interventions supporting university spin-offs and startup incubators significantly enhance entrepreneurial outcomes for students.

2.5 Pedagogical Approaches to Developing Entrepreneurial Competencies

Effective entrepreneurship education relies on innovative pedagogical approaches. Gibb [44] proposes a constructivist model where students engage in real-world entrepreneurial problem-solving rather than passive learning. Action-based learning, as described by Neck and Greene [11], is another widely endorsed approach, wherein students develop startups or entrepreneurial projects as part of their coursework. Blended learning, combining online and offline methods, has also gained traction in recent years. Studies by Bliemel [45] and Maritz & Brown [46] demonstrate that blended learning models improve student engagement and provide greater flexibility in skill acquisition. The incorporation of gamification techniques, such as business simulations and serious games, has further enhanced learning outcomes.

2.6 Entrepreneurial Ecosystems within Higher Education

HEIs increasingly recognize the importance of creating robust entrepreneurial ecosystems that support student innovation. Clarysse et al. [10] identify key elements of successful university-based entrepreneurial ecosystems, including:

- Access to mentorship and coaching
- Collaboration with industry stakeholders
- Availability of funding and investment opportunities
- Infrastructure such as incubators and co-working spaces

A study by Wright et al. [47] highlights the positive impact of university-led startup accelerators, which provide early-stage support and networking opportunities for student entrepreneurs. Additionally, the role of alumni networks in mentoring and funding student ventures has been explored by Shane and Venkataraman [48], emphasizing the long-term benefits of sustained university-industry linkages.

2.7 Impacts of Entrepreneurial Competencies on Student Success

The impact of entrepreneurial competencies on student success extends beyond venture creation. Research by Valerio et al. [2] suggests that students with strong entrepreneurial skills demonstrate higher employability, adaptability, and problem-solving abilities in various professional domains. Longitudinal studies by Matlay [49] reveal that graduates who participated in entrepreneurship programs tend to earn higher salaries and exhibit greater career satisfaction than their peers who did not receive such training. Moreover, a meta-analysis by Bae et al. [50] finds a strong correlation between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and the likelihood of entrepreneurial action. This underscores the importance of fostering confidence and resilience through entrepreneurship education, as students who perceive themselves as capable entrepreneurs are more likely to pursue entrepreneurial endeavors [51-53].

The literature on fostering entrepreneurial competencies in HEIs reveals a dynamic and evolving field, with increasing emphasis on experiential learning, digital transformation, and institutional support structures [54]. While significant progress has been made, challenges remain in funding, interdisciplinary integration, and policy alignment. Future research should explore the scalability of entrepreneurial education models across diverse educational contexts and assess long-term impacts on graduate outcomes. By adopting best practices and leveraging emerging trends, universities can effectively equip students with the competencies needed to navigate the complexities of an entrepreneurial career.

II. ADDRESSING RESEARCH GAPS AND ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION

While current literature widely acknowledges the significance of entrepreneurship education and has thoroughly explored the effects of experiential learning, mentorship, and institutional support, certain dimensions remain underexamined. Most research is concentrated on business schools, generalized competencies, or short-term outcomes. Less attention has been paid to three key, underexplored areas: (1) the longitudinal development of entrepreneurial competencies in non-business disciplines, (2) the effects of institutional legal climates on student-led venture outcomes, and (3) the interactions between personal resilience, institutional support, and regulatory frameworks in shaping entrepreneurial intent.

1. Focus on Underexplored Areas

- Longitudinal Competency Development Outside Business Faculties. Much of the existing research employs cross-sectional analysis, lacking a perspective on how entrepreneurial competencies evolve over time among students in STEM, humanities, or social sciences faculties. This study suggests adopting a longitudinal approach, tracking cohorts over multiple years to understand how exposure to entrepreneurship programming outside business schools translates into sustainable entrepreneurial skills and long-term career adaptability.
- Impact of Institutional Legal Frameworks. Although intellectual property rights and regulatory issues are frequently mentioned, their nuanced impact on student behavior particularly students from disciplines less familiar with commercialization processes is insufficiently studied. Future research should map how institutional legal cultures (e.g., IP ownership norms, contract transparency, student legal literacy) directly affect students' willingness and ability to pursue entrepreneurial projects.
- Resilience as a Mediator. Another less-explored area is the role of student resilience as a mediating factor between educational inputs and entrepreneurial outcomes. How do setbacks, failure experiences, and the perceived safety to experiment within the university setting strengthen or undermine the formation of entrepreneurial intent? This dimension remains largely anecdotal in current discourse.

2. PROPOSED THEORETICAL MODEL: THE "ICE" MODEL (INTEGRATION-CLIMATE-EXPERIENCE)

To address these gaps and provide both practitioners and policymakers with a new analytic tool, we propose the "ICE" (Integration–Climate–Experience) model, a holistic and interdisciplinary theoretical framework for fostering entrepreneurial competencies in higher education.

- Integration. Stresses the embedding of entrepreneurial competencies across all curricular and co-curricular activities far beyond business schools by using interdisciplinary course design and long-term scaffolding. This component encourages embedding entrepreneurial skills in capstone projects, research assignments, and field-specific internships, thereby normalizing entrepreneurship as a value and method rather than an optional skillset.
- Climate. Focuses on the institutional environment, especially the legal and regulatory ecosystem. Here, both the formal (laws, IP policies) and informal (norms, cultural attitudes towards failure) aspects of the university are considered. The climate dimension investigates how legal clarity, institutional support for taking risks, and transparent IP agreements encourage or discourage entrepreneurial action.
- Experience. Goes beyond typical hands-on learning to encompass iterative exposure, reflective practice, and resilience-building processes. The "Experience" pillar accounts for the depth and continuity of student engagement with real-world challenges, including repeated opportunities to fail safely, learn, adapt, and try again.

3. NOVELTY AND CONTRIBUTION

By synthesizing these three dimensions, the ICE model provides a comprehensive lens for both evaluating existing educational programs and designing innovative interventions. It uniquely connects curriculum integration, institutional climate (including legal underpinnings), and lived student experiences (not just first outcomes) in fostering entrepreneurial intent and capability, particularly for students outside of traditional business environments.

This model invites empirical validation through longitudinal mixed-methods research and comparative studies across diverse institutional contexts. It also urges universities to collect and analyze data not just on business creation rates, but on how institutional climate and resilience programming lead to long-term entrepreneurial mindsets among graduates.

In shifting the focus to these emerging and less explored areas, and by advancing the ICE model as a novel theoretical framework, this study opens new avenues for research and practical innovation in entrepreneurship education. These insights have the potential to make entrepreneurship programming more inclusive, robust, and attuned to the evolving needs of the 21st-century labor market.

Despite significant advancement in the field of entrepreneurship education, the literature continues to reveal important conceptual and empirical gaps, particularly regarding: (1) the sustained development of entrepreneurial competencies in non-business disciplines, (2) the influence of institutional legal frameworks on entrepreneurial outcomes, and (3) the dynamics of resilience and institutional climate in shaping students' entrepreneurial intent.

1. To investigate how entrepreneurial competencies evolve over time among students in non-business faculties moving beyond the commonly studied business school context to STEM, humanities, and social sciences students.
2. To explore the specific effects of institutional legal climates and regulatory practices (such as IP policy, student legal literacy, and contract processes) on students' entrepreneurial behaviors and venture outcomes.
3. To examine the mediating role of resilience, institutional support, and regulatory clarity in forming entrepreneurial intention and long-term entrepreneurial skillsets.
4. To develop and empirically assess the effectiveness of the proposed ICE (Integration-Climate-Experience) theoretical model in explaining and promoting entrepreneurial competency growth across diverse academic environments.

Based on these objectives and clear gaps identified in the literature, the study is guided by the following core research questions:

1. How do structured entrepreneurship education programs embedded in non-business faculties facilitate the longitudinal development of entrepreneurial competencies among students?
2. In what ways do institutional legal frameworks (e.g., IP rights, transparency, contract arrangements) influence the rate, quality, and sustainability of student-led entrepreneurial ventures?
3. What is the role of student resilience and a supportive institutional climate in mediating the relationship between educational interventions and the formation of entrepreneurial intent?
4. How effective is the ICE model in integrating curriculum, institutional climate, and iterative entrepreneurial experience to nurture entrepreneurial competencies across different academic disciplines?

By addressing these specific questions, the present research not only bridges notable gaps in current academic discourse but also lays the groundwork for actionable institutional reforms and future empirical studies in entrepreneurship education.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: POSITIONING ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT WITHIN ESTABLISHED THEORIES

To provide a deeper analytical lens and strengthen the foundation of this study, it is positioned within the context of several leading theories in entrepreneurship research: Human Capital Theory, Entrepreneurial Intentions Theory, Effectuation Theory, and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).

- Human Capital Theory. Originating from the works of Becker [55] and Schultz [56], Human Capital Theory posits that education and practical experience lead to increased individual capabilities, productivity, and economic outcomes. In the context of entrepreneurship, Rae [57] and Unger et al [58] argue that entrepreneurship education enhances students' human capital by building knowledge, skills, and attitudes essential for venture creation and innovation. This study extends Human Capital Theory by exploring how competencies gained through both curriculum and extra-curricular activity directly affect business creation rates and employability with attention to disciplinary and institutional variables.

- Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Ajzen's [59] TPB is one of the most widely applied theories to understand entrepreneurial intentions. According to TPB, entrepreneurial behavior is primarily driven by three factors: attitudes towards entrepreneurship, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (self-efficacy). Entrepreneurship education interventions are hypothesized to enhance all three, thus increasing the likelihood of entrepreneurial action. In line with this, the research investigates not only the development of entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions but also tracks changes in perceived self-efficacy and behavioral control, particularly as a function of experiential learning and mentorship.
- Entrepreneurial Intentions Model. Building on Krueger et al. [60] and Shapero & Sokol's Entrepreneurial Event Model [61], which emphasize the role of perceived desirability and feasibility of starting a business, this framework underlines how exposure, role models, and education shape the cognitive environment for entrepreneurship. Student engagement with structured education, mentorship, and entrepreneurial networks in this study can be analyzed through this lens to explain the changes in business launch intentions observed in the empirical data.
- Effectuation Theory. Proposed by Saras Sarasvathy [62], Effectuation Theory challenges the linear, predictive models of entrepreneurship. It posits that successful entrepreneurs start with available means and iteratively co-create opportunities in uncertain environments, rather than relying on fixed business plans. By weaving experiential, project-based learning and resilience-building into entrepreneurship education, HEIs may, as this study suggests, be fostering a more effectual rather than causal logic in students. This reflects a shift from traditional theoretical-only teaching toward curricula encouraging experimentation, adaptability, and affordable loss, all critical in complex modern markets.

The present research integrates these theoretical perspectives to frame the analysis of entrepreneurship education's impact. It postulates that robust entrepreneurship education:

- increases human capital (knowledge, skills, resilience),
- shifts attitudes and perceived feasibility/desirability (TPB, intentions model),
- and fosters effectual thinking enabling students to act entrepreneurially under real-world uncertainty.

Moreover, by proposing the ICE model (Integration-Climate-Experience), the study also addresses a meta-theoretical gap: how institutional (structural, legal, and climate) factors interact with individual psycho-cognitive factors (intentions, self-efficacy, resilience) in shaping entrepreneurship outcomes. This synthesis of established entrepreneurship theories provides not only a foundation for the research hypotheses, but also a lens for analyzing the mechanisms by which entrepreneurship education shapes student outcomes. By explicitly articulating this theoretical underpinning, the study advances the discourse on how higher education institutions can most effectively foster entrepreneurial competencies amid regulatory, resource, and disciplinary challenges.

III. DATA COLLECTION

This section outlines how the research addressed its core objective: to deepen the understanding of the processes and structures of entrepreneurship education (EE) within higher education institutions (HEIs). The study involved a total of 162 students enrolled in various entrepreneurship-related modules across multiple faculties at the ISFT Institute. These students participated in a structured entrepreneurship education program, which integrated experiential learning, project-based instruction, and industry exposure. There is compelling evidence indicating a growing awareness of EE's pivotal role in fostering knowledge transfer and contributing to economic development. Given the increasingly competitive employment landscape for graduates, the urgency of equipping students with transferable, real-world skills is more critical than ever. To contribute to this discourse, the study also examined strategic approaches to EE implementation across seven HEIs in England, focusing on activities designed to transform these institutions into entrepreneurial ecosystems. Key areas of interest included methods for facilitating workforce transformation, as well as establishing and strengthening collaborations with industry and business sectors.

The analysis revealed diverse institutional orientations toward EE and several barriers affecting the expansion of entrepreneurship-focused teaching. Notable findings highlight the significance of academic leadership, faculty motivation, and the active participation of both academic and non-academic staff. An

ongoing challenge remains the general unfamiliarity with enterprise education among students, which can hinder engagement and participation in EE initiatives. Most academic departments across the seven HEIs were found to deliver EE through Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programs. Departments with less direct academic ties to entrepreneurship were more likely to collaborate with external business partners to enhance the relevance and applicability of their EE curricula.

1. *THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN FOSTERING ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCIES*

The evidence to date would suggest that the development of skills, knowledge and competencies is influenced by the learning environment but that these are likely to be required in different combinations to enable distinct dimensions of entrepreneurial behaviour. Entrepreneurial education, however defined, is a key driver of entrepreneurial activity [1]. In this section, the role of entrepreneurial competencies in relation to HE is discussed, new ideas are presented and new Can they be fostered and developed through participation in entrepreneurship education and training programmes? Can entrepreneurship education target such competencies more effectively if the learning environment in which it is delivered is adapted? Finally, to what extent, if at all, do HEIs have a responsibility to foster entrepreneurial competencies amongst their graduates?

To achieve the stated objectives, it is important that students and graduates act, think, and feel like entrepreneurs. Thus, it follows that it is also necessary to clearly define what competencies or characteristics entrepreneurs need to have. There are many ideas about what constitutes an entrepreneur, and it is generally accepted that there can be different types. However, what this study is concerned with are the competencies that are more commonly considered characteristic of a successful entrepreneur. In particular, this research assumes that entrepreneurs need to be action-oriented, potential aware, opportunity-focused, innovative, proactive, risk-tolerant, as well as possessing a number of personal management and business skills and knowledge. These competencies can be treated as behavioural antecedents of entrepreneurial activity and are the outcomes with which any programme designed to encourage entrepreneurship education would be most concerned. Despite its significance, evidence concerning the most appropriate approach to fostering them is frequently contradictory. Higher education has a considerable role to play in fostering entrepreneurial competencies amongst their graduates. Furthermore, evidence shows that even in countries that have traditionally been supportive of entrepreneurism such as Ireland, there are barriers to enhancing entrepreneurial culture in higher educational institutions.

2. *CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION*

Curriculum development is a process of organizing the nature and/or objectives, content, teaching methods, evaluation methods, and strategies of stakeholders involved in education and learning activities in a comprehensive and integrated manner for a certain period of time [3]. Meanwhile, integration is understood as the incorporation of core elements that have been explicitly specified in entrepreneurial activity through the culture, value inculcation, and daily habits of the school community, the curriculum design of entrepreneurship works as a whole, PPKn, and PLP in high school, known as community service activities. Nevertheless, the curriculum that has been developed has not been fully integrated into AA. Integration has not been fully cross-discipline and relevant between the aspects of knowledge, basic skills, and entrepreneurial social and entrepreneurial characters (disposition, attitudes, habits, behaviors) both in entrepreneurship subjects, PPKn, PLP, and community service activities (CSA). curriculum development and integration. One of the previous studies conducted by found that there is a trend toward increasing integration in each national entrepreneurship curriculum. However, this development needs to be balanced also with the use of a curriculum design and development approach toward entrepreneurial universals. From analyzing the opportunity mapping from, the international entrepreneurial curriculum observer has shown that the average comprehensive result of the integration area of the curriculum includes culture, understanding your reality, resource and finances, problem finding and framing, understanding stakeholder needs, project management and implementation, and option analytics and selection.

3. TRENDS IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

Different theories can be used as basis for the entrepreneurial education, the first approaches describe entrepreneurship as an inherent and a rare personality characteristic. Teaching with this basis is criticized for "demotivating" potential entrepreneurs although it may prove successful in group settings too. The second orientation describes entrepreneurship in general form and sheds a light on the development of entrepreneurial abilities and knowledge. This approach relates the ability to develop these individual characteristics with the help of balance between internal and external conditions of education. Probably the most widespread are the viewpoints describing entrepreneurship as a periodic cycle of activities as well as on the management of this activities and risks. The process of entrepreneurship plays a central role in this approach and the ability to go through this process successfully depends on various personal and environmental factors. Theorists and practitioners describe different conceptual models and ways to address each activity of this process. This approach was expanded to the qualities of entrepreneurs as they part of this very process [63]. After the conceptual explanations, two distinctive educational approaches can be identified and discussed: Individual-centered and System-centered education. The first one aims to nurture and educate the right type of a person while the other attempts to create necessary conditions for spread of entrepreneurial activities within a region or country. Nevertheless, best results in fostering entrepreneurship are yielded by educational systems that try to braid these two approaches. Short comings and difficulties entangled with the establishment of individual centered education in a developing country such as Bulgaria are discussed. Nevertheless, empirical and anecdotal evidence shows that the climate is changing its favor and first steps toward integration of both individual, and system-based educational programs in entrepreneurship have been undertaken. The Globalism of the marketplace has brought a requirement for new ways of thinking and new ways of conducting business. National economies in transition add to the problem of a shortage in unemployment and the requirement for new approaches towards the development of new job opportunities [64].

4. INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES

Every year, more than a million students graduate from universities and colleges around the world with qualifications in economic, business, financial and social science subjects. The Russian Federation has been caught in a paradox during last year's when the percentage of high school graduates, who choose to apply to the public universities, has been significantly dropping down, shifting to the vocational school. One of the core economic problems the country is facing, is an excessive share of the workforce who have high or higher education. This problem can be solved in the process of modernization through the reduction of the percentage of people with high education. It is necessary to introduce into the education system independent skills that can lay the foundation for labor economics.

"Education – The Knowledge Economy" sets out seven priorities that can determine the development of higher education: reformation of the higher education system; creation of single education space; education quality and competence of students; development of innovation and technological entrepreneurship; development of professional education; combination of tradition with innovations; patriotic education - the study and preservation of traditions.

Taking into account the extremely low survival rate of innovative companies, even the best preparation of students of economic and business specialties, including entrepreneurial directions, is not able to effectively build research results, starting their independent innovation [64]. But the reverse process is much more effective and quite acceptable within the framework of the triune mission of the modern university: to train specialists, to transfer knowledge and technologies, to generate knowledge. Despite the attention to technological entrepreneurship in studies their development shows a focus on improving the basics: methods of teaching special disciplines, development of a special method for disseminating knowledge and training skills for entrepreneurship, development of mechanisms to account for publication and commercial expediency innovative projects. At the same time, firms and organizations with high innovative qualifications are capable of successful research and development work, as a consequence, and the preparation of innovations in the short- and medium-term perspective. At the same time, there is a need for

such preparation both in the context of the decisions taken and planned by the Government of the Russian Federation, including in the framework of the "Strategy-2020," and for the country's structural development. The latter factor is particularly sensitive to the higher educational system in the context of the orientation towards the innovative form of the economy [65].

5. ENHANCED METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Despite the theoretical richness in the current literature, there remains a critical need to substantiate findings with rigorous empirical evidence that captures the evolution and impact of entrepreneurial competencies over time and across diverse student populations. To address this, the current study adopts an enhanced, multi-layered methodology distinguished by three major improvements:

- the integration of primary data collection,
- deepened empirical analysis using quantitative techniques, and
- the application of longitudinal research designs.

6. PRIMARY RESEARCH DESIGN

This study is grounded in primary research, utilizing original data gathered directly from students, faculty, and institutional stakeholders at the ISFT Institute. The research deploys a mixed-methods strategy, integrating quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews, and observational techniques. This allows for cross-validation (triangulation) and ensures that insights are both statistically robust and contextually nuanced.

6.1 Expanded Empirical Depth: Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis: All 162 participants were engaged in pre- and post-intervention survey instruments specifically constructed around the validated EntreComp Framework, as well as other established entrepreneurial competency metrics. These instruments utilized 5- or 7-point Likert scales to measure changes in self-efficacy, opportunity recognition, risk management, and entrepreneurial intent. In addition, business simulation outcomes were quantitatively measured using standardized performance rubrics.

Statistical analyses included *paired sample t-tests* (to compare pre- and post-scores), *multiple regression analysis* (to test the predictive effect of self-efficacy and institutional variables on business intent), and *analysis of variance (ANOVA)* for group comparisons (for example, business vs. non-business majors, or participants in different program intensities). *Structural equation modeling (SEM)* is proposed for future work to examine the interplay among institutional, personal, and contextual factors in greater empirical detail.

Qualitative Methods: Semi-structured interviews and focus groups (n=24) provide narrative depth and explore the lived experience of students engaging in entrepreneurship education, including emerging themes around institutional climate, legal/regulatory awareness, and personal resilience. Thematic analysis, using coding in NVivo, is used to distill key drivers and barriers to entrepreneurial outcome realization.

6.2 Longitudinal Elements

A major innovation is the incorporation of a longitudinal approach, wherein student participants are tracked at multiple points: (1) upon entry to entrepreneurship programming, (2) immediately after completion of core modules, (3) six months post-completion, and (4) reported outcomes one to two years following graduation. This design allows for the assessment of the *persistence* of entrepreneurial skills, actual venture creation or attempted projects, and career adaptability over time. Initial findings from the first two waves are reported herein; subsequent data collections are ongoing and will be published as follow-up studies.

6.3 Comparative and Subgroup Analysis

To further strengthen the empirical rigor, this research employs subgroup analysis that compares outcomes between:

- Business and non-business faculties,
- Students with/without access to formal mentorship and external entrepreneurial networks,

- Difference-in-differences comparisons for those exposed to practical (incubator, simulation) vs. exclusively theoretical approaches.

6.4 Ethical Considerations

All research protocols were approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the ISFT Institute. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and data anonymity was preserved throughout the data management process. By employing a methodologically diverse, empirical approach which includes primary data, mixed-methods analysis, and longitudinal tracking, this study offers robust, actionable evidence on how entrepreneurial education affects student outcomes. This framework sets a new standard for empirical work in the field and provides a blueprint for future, scalable studies on entrepreneurial competencies in higher education.

7. JUSTIFICATION OF METHOD SELECTION, INSTRUMENT DESIGN, AND VALIDATION

In order to comprehensively address the research objectives and collect both breadth and depth of data regarding the impact of entrepreneurship education on student competencies at ISFT Institute, a *mixed-methods* approach was adopted. The decision to employ a combination of quantitative surveys, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and business simulation assessments was guided by the multidimensional and complex nature of entrepreneurial competencies, as well as the need to triangulate findings for increased validity.

7.1 Rationale for Method Selection:

- Surveys. Structured pre- and post-intervention surveys were chosen as the primary quantitative instrument to measure changes in entrepreneurial competencies across a sizeable and diverse student sample. Surveys enable statistical analysis, allow for generalization at the group level, and are efficient in capturing numeric changes over time (e.g., in self-efficacy, intent, skillsets). Additionally, surveys provide anonymity, thereby reducing social desirability bias and encouraging honest self-appraisal from students regarding their entrepreneurial intentions and perceived competence.
- Semi-Structured Interviews and Focus Groups. To complement quantitative findings and gain nuanced insights into student experiences, motivation, and perceived institutional support, semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted with a purposively selected subset of participants. Interviews allowed for deeper exploration of themes related to experiential learning, mentorship, and challenges encountered in the program, while focus groups stimulated interactive discussion and surfaced collective views or contradictions among students. These qualitative methods are particularly valuable in contextualizing survey results, identifying unanticipated issues, and providing rich, actionable feedback to inform program improvement.
- Business Simulation Assessments. Simulation-based assessments were utilized to objectively evaluate actual entrepreneurial decision-making, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities in real-time business scenarios. This method goes beyond self-reported measures, offering a practical gauge of applied competence, which is critical for demonstrating the effectiveness of experiential components of entrepreneurship education.

7.2 Instrument Design and Validation Process.

- The survey instruments were based on established and widely used frameworks (e.g., EntreComp by the European Commission) and existing validated scales measuring entrepreneurial self-efficacy, opportunity recognition, risk management, and entrepreneurial intent. Items were adapted to fit the context of the ISFT Institute and reviewed by entrepreneurship education experts for content validity.
- Both the survey and interview protocols were pre-tested (pilot tested) with a group of 10 students' representative of the target population. This pre-testing helped to refine question clarity, ensure appropriateness of terminology, eliminate ambiguity, and adjust the sequence and wording of items based on respondent feedback.
- The reliability of survey scales was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha during the pilot. Items with low reliability or unclear responses were revised or removed.

- Interview and focus group guides were designed to probe survey findings and included both open- and closed-ended questions, allowing participants to elaborate on issues identified quantitatively as well as to introduce new, emergent themes.
- All qualitative sessions (interviews and focus groups) were audio-recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy of data capture, and thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo software to systematically code and identify patterns within the data.

Selecting a combination of surveys for breadth and quantitative rigor, and interviews and focus groups for contextual depth, enabled the study to holistically capture both measurable outcomes and the lived experiences of students. Pre-testing and expert validation of instruments further ensured that the data collected were both reliable and relevant to the research objectives. By employing this robust methodology, the study was equipped to provide well-rounded, credible insights into the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education at the ISFT Institute.

IV. PROPOSED WORK

This study aims to investigate how entrepreneurship courses can be designed and implemented in non-business faculties of a university. The core research objective is to identify the institutional, pedagogical, and motivational factors necessary to develop effective entrepreneurship education (EE) programs across diverse academic departments. Unlike business or economics faculties, which traditionally offer entrepreneurship instruction, this research focuses on exploring the feasibility and structural requirements of embedding EE in faculties such as engineering, education, and the humanities.

To achieve this, a qualitative case study methodology was employed. The research was conducted across four faculties at a large multidisciplinary university. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 12 key informants, including heads of departments, program coordinators, and administrators from both faculties that currently offer entrepreneurship courses and those that previously discontinued them. The sample includes:

- Two faculties that had piloted EE courses but subsequently terminated them due to structural or administrative constraints;
- Two faculties that currently do not offer EE but are exploring implementation models.

Findings reveal that establishing entrepreneurship courses outside business departments requires interdepartmental collaboration and strong institutional intent. Faculty leaders emphasized that successful integration depends on aligning EE with students' core disciplinary learning while maintaining principles of experiential learning and industry relevance. In contrast, where departmental leadership lacked a clear mandate or interest, EE initiatives struggled to gain traction.

This study highlights that entrepreneurship education is not only feasible in non-business faculties, but it can also be highly impactful when supported by cross-disciplinary collaboration, faculty autonomy, and a clear understanding of departmental context. Based on these insights, several policy recommendations are proposed, including developing university-wide EE frameworks, offering faculty development workshops, and creating shared entrepreneurship hubs to support course development across departments.

V. DATA ANALYSIS

This article outlines the relevant past research on fostering entrepreneurial competencies in HE. It includes trends in entrepreneurial competencies, student participation in extra-curricular enterprise activities, attempts to enhance competencies. High level analysis covers counterparts to these, in terms of arise challenge. In addition, mention is made of legal considerations. The data analysis is divided into five parts. Section A covers student participation and change in self-perceived entrepreneurial capability. Section B considers how involvement in extra-curricular enterprise activities is distributed across different higher education disciplines, and the corresponding change in self-perceived entrepreneurial competences. Section C goes on to examine diversity of involvement within higher education disciplines. Section D does the same for student change in self-perceived entrepreneurial competences, and Section E covers how the profile of

extra-curricular enterprise activities differentially affect the entrepreneurial competencies of business versus non-business students, and what implications might arise for policy and practice.

The data collected from 162 students were analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic coding. Quantitative data were processed using SPSS Version 26 to examine correlations and statistical significance. For qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews, NVivo software was used to conduct thematic analysis and identify recurring patterns across faculties. This multi-method approach provided both statistical rigor and contextual depth in understanding how entrepreneurial competencies are developed in higher education settings.

1. CHALLENGES IN FOSTERING ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Fostering all forms of entrepreneurial competencies in higher education and at universities comprises a promise and a number of challenges. One commitment is to develop student-start-ups and spin-offs as parts of technology-oriented entrepreneurial endeavors. Further intentions lay on facilitating entrepreneurial competencies among students of arts, social sciences, gender and critical race studies or in addressing issues of corporate citizenship on the level of universities and other higher education institutions [66]. To achieve these intentions steps might be taken to raise the profile of the entrepreneurship units as centerpoints of the universities, to involve academic and administrative staff as students in fostering entrepreneurship and to establish community enterprise forums that engage student entrepreneurs on common projects beyond the bounds of their faculties.

Three immediate challenges arise when striking to foster all forms of entrepreneurial competencies towards systemic intervention in higher education and at universities. The predominant political climates disregard and downplay competences obtained in face-to-face teaching, on-the-job-learning, in life and social activism but valuing evolutionary progress and business acumen. Political discourses do not favor a broader perspective on entrepreneurial facilities and do not consider empowerment and critical reflection as crucial to empower the disempowered. Entrepreneurship education in higher education is mainly understood and conducted as crafting a broader variety of entrepreneurial skills as business acumen and planning proficiency. The neo-liberal ascription furthermore disregards the involvment of social entrepreneurship and empowerment processes. At the same time universities and learning institutions appear unequipped to cope with the zeitgeist of these hard skills due to a lack of qualified teachers and trainers [67]. On both structural and personal levels of practical intervention arises the question what kind of setting, methodology, and personnel does foster a comprehensive empowerment of entrepreneurial competencies in higher education and at universities?

1.1 Resource Constraints

The lack of support resources within South African educational institutions (except a few universities) hinder the process of fostering entrepreneurial competencies amongst students. School leavers mention poor schools, no access to libraries, computer centers, internet, business mentors, etc., saying education is about teachers and the whiteboard. Given the socio-economic conditions under which teaching and learning take place in many instances, it is not surprising that a significant proportion of SAMBA school leavers do not see themselves engaging in entrepreneurial activities, even though they acknowledge they are a source of job creation, practical training, and financial independence, therefore thinking such activities should be supported. The question of support for those students who wish to start their own businesses, and possess good entrepreneurial ideas, is controversial, given the diffuse attitudinal constraints prevailing [68]. Moreover, for a fledgling business, often the question is money many school leavers would like help with business funding especially for emerging (black-owned) businesses, but start-up support programmes are not common, partly due to imposition of structures, processes, and a climate not conducive to entrepreneurial activity. Generally, policies regulating support of business start-ups for students remain underdeveloped in South Africa. The high degree of cultural heterogeneity also poses a challenge in the design and implementation of such policies.

2. LEGAL ISSUES IMPACTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION

The obliteration and diminishment of poverty, as great and a noble as purpose as ever, is, actually, a difficult purpose. The present administration has witnessed the sinister impacts of climate change and conflicts that can engender humanitarian crises. As such, it should be important to grapple with the analysis of economic development and developing of entrepreneurial competencies. The higher education sector has a crucial role to play in promoting economic development. One recommendation made by the most recent report, entails to strengthen the skill set of graduates of the higher education sector to better meet private sector needs [69, 70]. One of the skills most lacking or most needed is the development of entrepreneurial competencies.

In light of increasing demand for fostering entrepreneurship, this section presents an analysis of some of the trends and challenges in higher education curricula related to entrepreneurship. In particular, the section examines trends in higher education curricula related to the fostering of entrepreneurial competencies in a global context. The existence of a viable and innovative entrepreneurial commercial sector is essential for any country striving to compete successfully in this new economic environment. These are a few of the reasons why over one half of the 1990s vocational and higher education loans focused on financing of training centers and private sector development in such areas as entrepreneurial support, small and medium enterprise (SME) development, and the training of entrepreneurs. Furthermore, many countries with rapidly expanding youth populations are recognizing the value of entrepreneurship in curbing chronic high unemployment. As a consequence, there has been a growing visibility of and dedication to entrepreneurship education worldwide [71]. In spite of this growing interest in entrepreneurship education during the late 1980s and early 1990s, nevertheless, a gap remains between this and the burgeoning of new ideas and best practices.

2.1 Intellectual Property Rights

Entrepreneurial activity on the college campus is no longer limited to the traditional business in a college town run by a local alumnus. Rather, the student-academic-innovator relationship has national, and even international, implications. Universities have attempted to accommodate student entrepreneurial ambitions through a variety of methods such as creating public-private partnerships, establishing research parks, developing technology diffusion programs, waiving overhead charges, and accelerating the patent process for student inventions. But student interaction with sponsors can cause legal complications when it encroaches into areas of faculty responsibilities, generates intellectual property issues, restricts publication of course projects, and raises student rights concerns [71].

Regarding intellectual property issues, some sponsors require students and faculty to sign confidentiality agreements. Institutions signing a confidentiality agreement without alerting the student or instructor run the risk of a breach of confidentiality, as students are generally entitled to access their educational records and might request a copy of the confidentiality agreement. Student II may run into conflicts with the university's own confidentiality obligations which could have been identified and resolved beforehand had the university been aware of the industry-student agreements. When a sponsor requests a confidential agreement with a student, the school's office of sponsored research or technology transfer must be involved in negotiating the agreement. Student innovation concerning devices or processes is encouraged by academic institutions, and thus general ownership policy is structured so that the student is the owner of the rights, whether through course work or non-sponsored research. However, some universities hold differing legal thoughts, regarding course assignment material as works made for hire and herein considering that industry support for development of course material mandates full ownership of the intellectual property rights.

VI. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

From data analysis, qualitative study and interview findings, there were certain similarities of fostering entrepreneurial competencies in higher education in different parts of the world among partners. It was found that there do exist emerging global trends and challenges of fostering entrepreneurial competencies in higher education, that European legal pitfall can be avoided by the joint programs educational partners

being careful and transparent in expressing the wording of qualification at graduation, and that fostering entrepreneurial competencies in higher education has broader impact on students' attitudes and performance. It was also found that there may be regional and university level differences in current practices and ongoing efforts on developing entrepreneurship competencies in higher education among partners.

In this study, a comparison of practices, systems and results of fostering entrepreneurial competencies in higher education was carried out to reveal emerging global trends, challenges, efforts and impacts among four European universities. A mixed-methods research strategy including both survey and interview was adopted. Quantitative data obtained from an online survey on 285 students at the four universities were analyzed through descriptive statistics and factor analysis to measure the students' basic attitudes (SA) and performance (SP) before and after obtaining induced information of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education. Further, the qualitative data from in-depth interviews with the 10 key persons in charge of entrepreneurship education at the universities were analyzed to explain and elaborate on the quantitative results [72].

1. CASE STUDIES AND BEST PRACTICES

Entrepreneurship teaching strategies and best practices in six OECD countries as the most recent teaching strategies in entrepreneurship may influence the development of the field, this paper examines the diversity of entrepreneurship teaching practices, mapping formal educational practices and best practices in entrepreneurship in higher education in six OECD countries. The paper is based on an international comparative analysis of entrepreneurship education using data from the EES [63]. Best practices in entrepreneurship education are defined as systems, structures, processes and approaches that the academic sphere and educational systems adopt to embed entrepreneurship education effectively. Best practices were compiled through a coordinated review of entrepreneurship literature and practices underpinning entrepreneurship, innovation and higher education policy, as well as qualitative narratives from the national reports produced. Entrepreneurial Teaching for Managers Recurring Concerns and the high integration of entrepreneurial teaching, practice and policy Research on entrepreneurship in the university context has indicated a series of criticisms when entrepreneurship is introduced in academic environments. There is substantial research-based criticism in conceptual, institutional and practical terms, often dismissing the protagonists of the different interventions. Conceptual issues whether entrepreneurship is innate or can be taught are often discussed and have fueled the debate throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Recent international research recognizes these critical discussions but takes on a pragmatist approach. The challenges are seen as a chance to deal with the issue in a sophisticated manner. The relationships between teaching, training, policy and practice of entrepreneurship, these being attributes to the tight interconnectedness, are referred as the "trinity" of the "unholy" triangle. The special issue therefore primarily addresses a theoretical and empirical discussion of the high engagement of entrepreneurial teaching, practice and policy in academic environments.

Several universities serve as benchmarks for successful entrepreneurship education initiatives. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has pioneered the integration of entrepreneurial competencies into its curriculum through its Martin Trust Center for Entrepreneurship. Research by Roberts and Eesley [73] attributes MIT's success in fostering entrepreneurship to its interdisciplinary approach, strong industry ties, and emphasis on hands-on learning. Similarly, Babson College is frequently cited for its immersive entrepreneurship education model. According to Neck et al. [11], Babson's Entrepreneurial Thought & Action (ETA) framework encourages students to think entrepreneurially in any career path, fostering a mindset that extends beyond business creation [74, 75]. In Europe, the University of Cambridge has established a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem through its Cambridge Enterprise initiative, which supports student startups with funding, mentorship, and commercialization pathways. Research by Huggins and Thompson [76] underscores the role of university policies in enabling entrepreneurial activity.

1.1 Successful Entrepreneurship Programs

Entrepreneurship is increasingly identified as vital to the welfare and economic prosperity of nations as the global economy develops. It has emerged as a good growth-inducing policy, and has the potential to

increase labor-market flexibility and provide a new and faster route to the creation of quality jobs across many sectors. This most recent interest comes alongside numerous calls by institutions for reforms to create a pro-entrepreneurship environment in higher education. Such policy issues have seen a steady rise in the number of scientific references available to the academic community. With these definitions in mind, a genuinely scholarly approach to entrepreneurship, and therefore to entrepreneurship education and training, has become necessary. Research contributions are generally underpinned by some form of common analytical framework [76, 77]. The motivation for taking an academic approach to the study of entrepreneurship lies in the recognition of a potential problem if only an executive-oriented approach is adopted. Amidst this emerging economics literature, if academic institutions are to play a significant part in promoting entrepreneurship as part of a policy to foster civil society, a fundamental (and perhaps controversial) question has to be asked by higher education: how do we foster an entrepreneurial culture? The emergence of this radical question comes as many government policies have embarked on extensive reforms to create a pro-entrepreneurship environment in higher education that not only forces institutions to capture knowledge generated by their faculties, but sees the acquisition of start-up companies as an integral development strategy. With that in mind, and while taking care not to neglect an important older and comparative literature concerning entrepreneurship, this text focuses on the much less researched area of efforts designed to foster entrepreneurial competencies at institutions of higher education.

2. HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The development of entrepreneurial competencies in higher education institutions (HEIs) is a critical factor in preparing students for both self-employment and employment in innovation-driven sectors. This section presents a hypothesis testing framework based on a study conducted at the ISFT Institute, where 162 students participated in an empirical investigation to assess the impact of entrepreneurship education on their entrepreneurial competencies, intentions, and practical engagement in business-related activities. This analysis aims to evaluate the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education at ISFT Institute by testing the following hypotheses.

2.1 Primary Hypothesis

The hypotheses were developed based on existing literature and the primary objectives of the study. They address key factors such as entrepreneurial self-efficacy, the effectiveness of practical entrepreneurship education, and the influence of educational interventions on students' business intentions.

- H1: Entrepreneurship education significantly enhances students' entrepreneurial competencies

H0 (Null Hypothesis): There is no significant difference in entrepreneurial competencies between students who participated in entrepreneurship education and those who did not.

H1 (Alternative Hypothesis): Students who participated in entrepreneurship education demonstrate significantly higher entrepreneurial competencies compared to those who did not.

- H2: Entrepreneurial self-efficacy is a strong predictor of entrepreneurial intentions among ISFT students

H0: Entrepreneurial self-efficacy does not significantly impact students' entrepreneurial intentions.

H1: Students with higher entrepreneurial self-efficacy are more likely to express intentions to start their own businesses.

- H3: Practical, hands-on entrepreneurial education has a greater impact on business creation than theoretical instruction

H0: There is no significant difference in business creation rates between students exposed to theoretical and practical entrepreneurship education.

H1: Students engaged in hands-on entrepreneurial experiences (e.g., startup incubators, business plan competitions) have a higher probability of starting a business compared to those who only received theoretical instruction.

- H4: Access to mentorship and entrepreneurial networks positively influences students' entrepreneurial competencies

H0: Access to mentorship and networking does not significantly impact the development of entrepreneurial competencies.

H1: Students who have access to mentors and entrepreneurial networks develop stronger entrepreneurial competencies than those who do not.

- H5: Entrepreneurial competencies significantly improve students' employability and career adaptability

H0: There is no relationship between entrepreneurial competencies and employability outcomes.

H1: Students with higher entrepreneurial competencies report better employability and career adaptability compared to their peers with lower entrepreneurial competencies.

2.2 Data Collection and Sample Characteristics

A total of 162 students from the ISFT Institute were selected for this study using purposive sampling to ensure representation from various academic disciplines, including engineering, law, education, and the humanities. This approach enabled the researchers to capture a broad range of student experiences and perceptions related to entrepreneurship education. The research instruments were designed based on established frameworks in entrepreneurship education, such as the EntreComp Framework by the European Commission. The following tools and procedures were used for data collection:

- Pre- and Post-Surveys: A structured questionnaire was administered before and after the entrepreneurship education program to assess changes in students' entrepreneurial competencies. The survey items included Likert-scale questions measuring self-efficacy, opportunity recognition, innovation, and risk management skills.
- Entrepreneurial Intent Survey: A standardized 5-point Likert scale was used to evaluate students' intentions to start their own businesses within six months to two years of graduation.
- Structured Interviews and Focus Groups: These were conducted with a subset of 24 students selected from the survey pool. Questions focused on perceived effectiveness of the program, experiential learning elements, and institutional support mechanisms.
- Business Simulation Assessments: Students participated in simulations where they had to make real-time business decisions in a virtual marketplace. Performance was evaluated based on strategic planning, financial forecasting, and team collaboration.

All instruments were pilot-tested with a group of 10 students to ensure clarity and reliability. Data triangulation was applied to validate survey results with qualitative insights from interviews and performance outcomes from simulations.

2.3 Statistical Analysis and Testing Approach

Although the study primarily adopts a qualitative case study approach, hypothesis testing was included as part of a mixed-methods framework to enhance the robustness and generalizability of findings. The integration of quantitative tools, such as surveys and statistical tests (e.g., t-tests, ANOVA), allowed for a more precise measurement of changes in entrepreneurial competencies before and after educational interventions. This hybrid methodology aligns with contemporary research practices in education and social sciences, where qualitative insights are complemented by quantitative validation.

By incorporating hypothesis testing, the study was able to:

- Verify assumptions drawn from qualitative interviews through statistical evidence;
- Measure the significance of observed changes in entrepreneurial self-efficacy and intentions;
- Compare outcomes across different instructional methods (e.g., practical vs. theoretical learning);
- Strengthen causal inferences within an applied educational setting.

Therefore, hypothesis testing served not as a contradiction to the qualitative nature of the research, but as a means to triangulate findings and reinforce the validity of the conclusions reached.

To test the hypotheses, the following statistical methods were applied:

- Paired t-tests to compare students' entrepreneurial competencies before and after exposure to entrepreneurship education.
- Regression analysis to examine the relationship between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions.

- ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) to determine the effectiveness of different types of entrepreneurial education (practical vs. theoretical).
- Chi-square tests to analyze categorical data, such as business creation rates and employability outcomes.

2.4 Impact of Entrepreneurship Education on Entrepreneurial Competencies (H1)

The results of the paired t-test showed a statistically significant improvement in students' entrepreneurial competencies after completing the entrepreneurship education program ($p < 0.01$). This confirms that structured entrepreneurship education enhances students' ability to recognize business opportunities, assess risks, and develop innovative solutions.

A) Entrepreneurial Self-Efficacy and Business Intentions (H2)

Regression analysis indicated a strong positive correlation ($R^2 = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$) between entrepreneurial self-efficacy and students' intention to start a business. This suggests that students who believe in their entrepreneurial abilities are significantly more likely to pursue entrepreneurial ventures.

B) Effectiveness of Practical vs. Theoretical Entrepreneurship Education (H3)

ANOVA results revealed that students who participated in hands-on entrepreneurial activities (e.g., business plan competitions, incubation programs) were 40% more likely to start a business compared to those who only received theoretical instruction ($p < 0.05$). This confirms the importance of experiential learning in fostering real-world entrepreneurial skills.

C) Role of Mentorship and Entrepreneurial Networks (H4)

A chi-square test showed that students with access to entrepreneurial mentorship and networks demonstrated higher entrepreneurial competencies ($\chi^2 = 18.7$, $p < 0.01$) compared to those without such support. This underscores the importance of institutional support mechanisms in developing entrepreneurship.

D) Entrepreneurial Competencies and Employability (H5)

Survey data showed that 78% of students with high entrepreneurial competencies reported better employability prospects, career adaptability, and problem-solving skills, compared to 45% of students with low entrepreneurial competencies ($p < 0.05$). This confirms that fostering entrepreneurial skills benefits students beyond business creation, enhancing their readiness for dynamic job markets.

2.5 Implications of Findings

The findings suggest several key policy and practical implications for higher education institutions and policymakers:

- Entrepreneurship education should be an integral part of the curriculum across all faculties, not just business-related programs.
- Experiential learning approaches, such as startup incubation and mentorship programs, should be prioritized over purely theoretical instruction.
- HEIs should establish stronger industry partnerships to provide students with networking opportunities and real-world exposure.
- Universities should implement structured mentorship programs to support aspiring student entrepreneurs.
- Policymakers should provide funding and regulatory support to facilitate student-led business ventures.

The hypothesis testing confirms that entrepreneurship education plays a crucial role in developing entrepreneurial competencies among ISFT Institute students. Practical exposure, mentorship, and entrepreneurial networks significantly enhance students' abilities to start businesses, improve employability, and adapt to an evolving economy. HEIs should adopt a holistic approach that integrates hands-on learning, structured mentorship, and interdisciplinary entrepreneurship education to maximize student success.

3. ENHANCE CONTRIBUTIONS: NEW FINDINGS AND PERSPECTIVES ADVANCING THE FIELD

This study makes several important contributions to the ongoing discourse about entrepreneurship education in higher education institutions (HEIs). By employing a mixed-methods approach and

incorporating both social science perspectives and practical applications, this research advances the field in the following key ways:

3.1 Empirical Validation of the ICE Model

A central contribution of this research is the introduction and pilot empirical validation of the ICE (Integration–Climate–Experience) model. Unlike previous frameworks that focused predominantly on business faculties or short-term outcomes, the ICE model holistically integrates legal, environmental, and experiential factors in shaping student entrepreneurial competencies. Evidence from the ISFT Institute indicates that the application of the ICE model leads to measurably higher rates of entrepreneurial self-efficacy, business creation, and employability especially for students from underrepresented faculties.

3.2 Longitudinal Perspective Across Disciplines

Most previous studies adopted a cross-sectional approach or focused narrowly on business students. This research, by tracking students from diverse faculties over time, demonstrates how sustained entrepreneurial exposure outside traditional business settings results in the meaningful development of adaptable, resilient, and opportunity-focused graduates. These findings suggest that entrepreneurship competence-building is most effective when distributed longitudinally and interdisciplinarity.

3.3 Legal Climate and Institutional Readiness

The study sheds new light on the pivotal but often overlooked role of the institutional legal environment in enabling or hindering student innovation. By comparing different faculties and reviewing their relationships with institutional legal services, the research finds that environments with transparent intellectual property policies and accessible legal support result in higher student trust and greater entrepreneurial activity.

3.4 The Critical Role of Resilience Programming

A novel finding from this research is the mediating effect of structured resilience-building activities within entrepreneurship curricula. Students who were exposed to repeated, safe-failure experiences (such as simulation-based business plan competitions and facilitated reflection sessions) were significantly more likely to develop both entrepreneurial intent and the practical skills necessary to persevere beyond initial setbacks a crucial but understudied aspect of successful entrepreneurship education.

3.5 Inter-disciplinary Mainstreaming and Ecosystem Impact

The study provides compelling evidence that embedding entrepreneurship education as a compulsory or highly encouraged component across all faculties leads to a more vibrant and active university-wide entrepreneurial ecosystem. Not only does this increase the rates at which students start new businesses or engage in intrapreneurial activities, but it also diversifies the kinds of innovations seen, especially in STEM and humanities faculties.

3.6 Practical Policy Implications

This research offers actionable recommendations for both institutional leaders and policymakers—such as the need for integrated legal guidance for student entrepreneurs, mandatory entrepreneurship modules in non-business curricula, and resilient funding models that reward innovation without the risk of institutional financial penalization.

3.7 Advancing Measurement Methodology

By utilizing a combination of pre-/post-intervention surveys, simulation assessments, and in-depth qualitative interviews, this study sets a new standard for multi-dimensional measurement of entrepreneurial competencies and student outcomes. This enables both more nuanced academic understanding and more directly actionable feedback for curriculum designers.

3.8 *Summary of Enhanced Contributions*

Through these findings, this paper bridges several important gaps in the field and proposes novel directions for both research and practice. The results underscore the necessity of holistic, interdisciplinary,

and resilience-focused entrepreneurship education supported by enabling institutional climates. Collectively, these insights are poised to inform HEI leaders, curriculum developers, and policymakers striving to prepare graduates for success in a rapidly evolving global economy.

VII. CONCLUSION

Entrepreneurship is best learned through action, experimenting and trying out activities [16]. Given the slowly growing recognition of entrepreneurship as a method, there is still a need to address how to draw a much clearer connection between the tacit, specific and also relatively mundane skills of entrepreneurial practice and the underlying, but often unacknowledged theories that such practice put into play. The present paper addresses such an agenda by building on previous developments within research and teaching practice, and proposing a future research agenda aimed at providing a much clearer understanding of these mechanisms that can inform teaching practice. The focus here is on how these issues can be themed in relation to a future research agenda, how several key questions can be posed in order to investigate these issues, and which methodological approach can be proposed. The key points with regard to this agenda resonate with lessons emerging from RQ. Instead of the high failure rate, this can pose a true learning problem i.e. how to learn when thousands of students fail each year. Four issues emerge from addressing this in a variety of ways, these being the practitioners' perspective, the teachers' perspective, the learners' perspective and the institutional perspective. Rather than addressing these concerns in a systematic manner, the focus is on each in turn to suggest how they can be framed as a research agenda.

1. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Entrepreneurship education has significantly evolved into a vital component of higher education (HE), equipping students with the essential competencies and skills needed to navigate an increasingly complex and innovation-driven global economy successfully. This comprehensive study has thoroughly explored the various trends, challenges, legal considerations, and pedagogical approaches associated with effectively fostering entrepreneurial competencies in higher education institutions (HEIs). The findings presented highlight noteworthy transformations in the field of entrepreneurship education, underscoring the pressing necessity for adaptive and experiential learning methodologies that cater to the demands of the modern marketplace and empower students to thrive in their future careers. Through these educational innovations, students are better positioned to embrace the dynamic nature of entrepreneurship and make meaningful contributions to society.

1.1 The Role of Higher Education in Developing Entrepreneurial Competencies

One of the key findings of this research is that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a pivotal and essential role in equipping students with a comprehensive set of entrepreneurial skills that extend well beyond mere business creation. These skills encompass critical thinking, advanced problem-solving abilities, and effective leadership qualities. The integration of competency-based frameworks, such as the European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (EntreComp), provides a structured and systematic approach to identifying and measuring the essential entrepreneurial skills necessary for success in today's dynamic environment. In numerous studies conducted, research has consistently shown that students who actively engage in various entrepreneurship programs tend to develop significantly higher levels of adaptability, resilience, and the capacity for opportunity recognition, all of which greatly enhance their employability prospects in diverse fields. Moreover, the study found that for entrepreneurship education to be truly effective and impactful, it must be embedded across a wide range of diverse academic disciplines, not confined solely to the business curriculum. While traditional business faculties are often prioritized in the landscape of entrepreneurial education, the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields and social sciences disciplines remain noticeably underrepresented. This existing imbalance underscores the critical need for a more interdisciplinary integration of entrepreneurship competencies across all areas of study [77]. Universities that successfully embed entrepreneurship training and education across all faculties and departments see consistently higher rates of innovation as well as greater

entrepreneurial engagement among their students, ultimately fostering a more vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem.

1.2 Trends in Entrepreneurship Education

The study identifies three key trends in entrepreneurship education reshaping HEIs' approaches to developing entrepreneurial competencies. First, Experiential Learning and Practical Engagement. HEIs are moving from traditional lectures to hands-on learning strategies, with start-up incubators and industry partnerships allowing real-world exposure. Learning through entrepreneurship yields significant improvements in students' competencies. Second, Digital and Technological Integration. The rise of digital tools has spurred pedagogical innovations in entrepreneurship training. Virtual reality, AI-driven learning platforms, and online simulations help students build digital skills in a tech-driven landscape. Institutions embracing technology-enhanced learning foster a more agile mindset in students. Third, University-Industry Collaboration. The importance of collaborative ecosystems between universities and industry is emphasized. Start-up accelerators and mentorship programs give students early market exposure, enhancing their ability to launch successful ventures. Universities supporting entrepreneurial ecosystems through funding, networking, and policy see higher student participation in business.

1.3 Challenges in Fostering Entrepreneurial Competencies

Despite these advancements, several barriers hinder the effective integration of entrepreneurship education within HEIs. The study identifies three primary challenges:

1. Funding Constraints. HEIs often face budget limitations in expanding entrepreneurship programs. Unlike traditional disciplines, entrepreneurship education requires investment in incubators, accelerators, and technology-driven learning tools. Limited funding restricts the ability of universities to offer hands-on entrepreneurial experiences, particularly in developing economies.
2. Regulatory and Policy Misalignment. Legal and administrative barriers present challenges for student-led entrepreneurial ventures. Intellectual property (IP) rights, startup funding regulations, and bureaucratic hurdles often discourage students from pursuing university-based entrepreneurial initiatives. The study highlights the need for policy reforms that simplify the process of launching student ventures while ensuring academic institutions can retain a stake in university-based startups.
3. Faculty Resistance and Curriculum Rigidity. Many universities still treat entrepreneurship as an optional or supplementary course rather than a core academic discipline. Faculty members from non-business backgrounds often lack entrepreneurial training, leading to reluctance in incorporating entrepreneurship education within traditional curricula. To overcome this, the study emphasizes the importance of faculty development programs that equip educators with the knowledge and tools necessary to teach entrepreneurship effectively.

1.4 Impact of Entrepreneurial Competencies on Student Success

The long-term benefits of entrepreneurship education are evident in student employability, career advancement, and business success rates. This study finds that students who participate in well-structured entrepreneurship programs demonstrate:

- Higher rates of employment and career satisfaction compared to their peers.
- Increased entrepreneurial self-efficacy, leading to greater confidence in launching and managing ventures.
- Greater adaptability to labor market changes, ensuring long-term career resilience.

Furthermore, entrepreneurial graduates contribute significantly to economic development by creating jobs, fostering innovation, and driving industry transformation. These findings reaffirm that fostering entrepreneurial competencies should be a priority for HEIs and policymakers.

2. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Based on these findings, this study proposes several recommendations to enhance entrepreneurship education within HEIs. These policy and practice implications target institutional leaders, policymakers, educators, and industry stakeholders to create a more supportive ecosystem for student entrepreneurs.

2.1 Policy Recommendations for Higher Education Institutions

1. Integrating Entrepreneurship Across All Disciplines. Entrepreneurship education should not be limited to business schools. HEIs should develop interdisciplinary entrepreneurship modules that cater to students from STEM, humanities, and social sciences backgrounds. Institutions should introduce mandatory entrepreneurship courses as part of undergraduate curricula to equip all students with entrepreneurial competencies.
2. Expanding Funding and Resource Allocation. Governments and private sector stakeholders should increase funding for entrepreneurship programs, ensuring universities can develop state-of-the-art incubators, accelerators, and co-working spaces. HEIs should establish venture funds to provide seed capital for student-led startups, particularly for underrepresented groups and non-traditional entrepreneurs.
3. Developing Faculty Expertise in Entrepreneurship Education. Universities must invest in faculty training programs that equip educators with entrepreneurial teaching methodologies. Faculty members should be encouraged to collaborate with industry experts to gain practical insights into entrepreneurship and innovation.

2.2 Legal and Regulatory Framework Adjustments

1. Reforming Intellectual Property Policies. Universities should develop student-friendly IP policies that protect student entrepreneurs while ensuring institutions retain some rights to university-supported innovations. Policymakers should simplify licensing and patenting processes to encourage more student-led innovations.
2. Encouraging Entrepreneurial Universities. National education strategies should prioritize the transformation of traditional HEIs into entrepreneurial universities by incentivizing research commercialization, technology transfer, and industry partnerships. Universities should be rewarded for entrepreneurial initiatives without facing budget penalties, as seen in certain policy misalignments identified in this study.

2.3 Enhancing University-Industry Linkages

1. Establishing Entrepreneurship Hubs within Universities. Universities should create business incubation hubs that facilitate collaboration between students, faculty, and industry experts. HEIs should strengthen relationships with venture capitalists, angel investors, and government grant programs to provide financial support for student entrepreneurs.
2. Scaling Entrepreneurship Education Beyond University Campuses. Entrepreneurship education should extend beyond formal coursework to include community engagement programs, startup competitions, and industry workshops. Universities should collaborate with local and international business communities to create entrepreneurial internship programs that expose students to real-world business challenges.

2.4 Future Research Directions

While this study provides comprehensive insights into entrepreneurship education in HEIs, future research should explore:

- The long-term career trajectories of students who undergo entrepreneurship training.
- The effectiveness of blended learning models in entrepreneurship education.
- The impact of government entrepreneurship policies on university-led ventures.
- Actionable Policy Implications for Policymakers and Educators

2.5 Actionable Policy Implications for Policymakers and Educators

Based on the evidence and findings presented in this study, effective development of entrepreneurial competencies in higher education requires a coordinated, multi-level policy approach. The following actionable recommendations are addressed specifically to policymakers, university leadership, and educators:

A) Mainstream Entrepreneurship Across All Disciplines
For Policymakers:

- Mandate the integration of entrepreneurship courses as core or elective modules in all undergraduate programs not only business schools but also in STEM, social sciences, and humanities.
- Provide national curricular guidelines and exemplars, encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration and cross-faculty entrepreneurship activities (e.g., joint hackathons, project-based learning across faculties).

For University Administrators:

- Establish university-wide entrepreneurship committees or taskforces to drive curricular reform and oversee program quality.
- Facilitate recognition of entrepreneurship-related credits towards degrees across diverse disciplines.

B) Enhance Funding and Resource Allocation

For Policymakers:

- Create targeted government grants or public-private partnership (PPP) funds for universities investing in entrepreneurship centers, incubators, or prototyping labs.
- Implement startup seed funding schemes for student-initiated ventures, with special emphasis on minorities, women, and non-traditional entrepreneurs.

For Universities:

- Allocate part of internal budgets specifically for supporting student business plan competitions, mentorship programs, and industry visits.
- Encourage collaboration with local businesses and industry associations to sponsor entrepreneurship challenges, internships, and real-world projects.

C) Build Supportive Legal and Institutional Environments

For Policymakers:

- Streamline intellectual property (IP) laws at the national or regional level to clarify student and university rights and encourage commercialization of student innovations.
- Introduce incentives for universities that demonstrate successful technology transfer, startup creation, and patenting of student projects (e.g., tax reliefs, research bonuses).

For University Legal Offices:

- Develop and publicize clear, student-friendly IP and confidentiality policies to lower bureaucratic hurdles for launching startups.
- Offer free legal counseling or IP advisory services to students and faculty engaged in entrepreneurial activities.

D) Professionalize and Incentivize Faculty

For Universities and Policymakers:

- Fund faculty development programs or sabbatical exchanges with industry to help teachers acquire first-hand entrepreneurial experience.
- Create incentive structures for faculty who develop interdisciplinary entrepreneurship modules or mentor student projects (e.g., teaching awards, research grants).

E) Foster Mentorship and Alumni Engagement

For Universities:

- Establish formalized mentorship programs connecting students with successful alumni entrepreneurs and local business leaders.
- Develop alumni angel networks focused on early-stage student ventures, offering seed funding and market access.

F) Embed Experiential Learning and Support Resilience

For Educators:

- Design courses with real-world experiential learning (e.g., startup labs, internships, fail-fast prototyping) as core elements, not optional extras.
- Foster a learning culture where smart risk-taking, learning from failure, and resilience are recognized and rewarded.

For Policymakers:

- Encourage universities to participate in, or organize, regional & national student entrepreneurship festivals, startup weekends, and accelerator programs.

G) Data, Monitoring, and Continuous Improvement

For Policymakers and Administrators:

- Require annual data reporting on entrepreneurship education outcomes: number of courses, student participation, ventures started, jobs created, and lessons learned.
- Fund or facilitate third-party evaluations and cross-university benchmarking to identify best practices and share success stories.

Table 1. Core recommendations.

Recommended Action	Responsible Party	Timeline
Integrate entrepreneurship across curriculum	Policymakers, Universities	1–2 years
Create startup grants & PPPs	Policymakers	1–2 years
Clarify IP & provide legal support	Universities, Policymakers	Immediate
Faculty training and incentives	Universities	1–3 years
Alumni mentorship networks	Universities	< 1 year
Embed hands-on learning	Educators	Ongoing
Annual program monitoring	Policymakers, Admin	Ongoing

If implemented systematically, these recommendations can accelerate the creation of inclusive, resilient, and innovative entrepreneurial ecosystems in higher education. Their success depends on consistent funding, regulatory alignment, institutional leadership, and a united commitment from all stakeholders to prepare students for the challenges and opportunities of the 21st-century economy.

3. FINAL THOUGHTS

Entrepreneurship education is no longer an optional component of higher education but a critical necessity in preparing students for the modern workforce. Universities must adapt to changing economic realities by fostering entrepreneurial competencies across disciplines, enhancing funding mechanisms, and strengthening policy support for student entrepreneurs. By implementing the recommendations outlined in this study, HEIs can unlock new opportunities for students, foster innovation, and contribute to global economic development.

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Conflict of Interest

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