



ENHANCING ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES BY BRIDGING THEORY AND PRACTICE

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Abstract:

Entrepreneurship has emerged as a critical avenue for economic revitalization. Recognizing the transformative potential of entrepreneurship, South African universities have begun to integrate entrepreneurial education into their curricula. Despite its potential to drive economic transformation, entrepreneurial education in South Africa struggles to realize its full impact, leaving many graduates ill-equipped to transition from academic training to practical business ventures. Therefore, this study evaluated the effectiveness of entrepreneurial education programs in South African universities, identifying gaps between theoretical instruction and practical application, and proposed actionable strategies for enhancing curricula, resource allocation, and mentorship initiatives to foster entrepreneurial skills and reduce youth unemployment. This was achieved by using a desktop research method, collecting secondary data from published literature sourced on online databases using keywords relevant to this study. It was found that South African entrepreneurial education programs are limited by outdated methods, inadequate funding, and weak industry alignment, resulting in subpar outcomes compared to global benchmarks. Additionally, South African programs prioritize theory over practical skills, lacking experiential learning and interdisciplinary approaches needed for real-world entrepreneurship. Furthermore, enhancing entrepreneurial education requires experiential curricula, improved infrastructure, faculty training, and accessible mentorship programs to align with market needs. It was recommended that universities should embed experiential learning to align entrepreneurial programs with industry needs. Additionally, universities should shift to hands-on methods like start-up simulations and internships. Lastly, institutions should expand funding, mentorship, and industry collaborations to reduce youth unemployment.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary global economy, entrepreneurship is portrayed as a cornerstone of innovation, job creation, and economic growth¹. Universities worldwide have embraced entrepreneurial education as a strategic tool to address pressing socio-economic challenges. By equipping students with the skills, creativity, and entrepreneurial mindset to establish, operate, and sustain businesses, entrepreneurial education has emerged as a vital intervention for fostering economic resilience and reducing unemployment². In regions such as the United States, China, and Brazil, structured entrepreneurial education programs have successfully nurtured ecosystems where students transition from identifying market gaps to developing innovative, scalable ventures.

South Africa, characterized by persistent economic disparities, high unemployment rates, and youth marginalization, exemplifies a context where entrepreneurial education holds transformative potential. With a youth unemployment rate exceeding 60%, entrepreneurial education offers a pathway for young people to shift from being job seekers to becoming job creators³. Universities, as centres of learning and innovation, are uniquely positioned to catalyse this transformation by aligning their programs with national development priorities such as those outlined in the National Development Plan (NDP)⁴. However, the integration of entrepreneurial education within South Africa's higher education system is fraught with challenges, including inadequate funding, a lack of trained faculty with practical entrepreneurial

¹ Ogunsanya, O., Anwana, E., & Mthembu, N. (2024). University Entrepreneurship Programmes and their Implications for Youth Development in South Africa's Developmental Agenda: Case Studies from KwaZulu Natal. *African Journal of Inter/Multidisciplinary Studies*, 6(1), 1-14.

² Cui, J., Sun, J., & Bell, R. (2021). The impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention. *The International Journal of Management Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S147281171830394X>

³ Musariwa, P., & Tinonetsana, F. (2023). An assessment of university in entrepreneurship training as a means of reducing youth unemployment in South Africa: a case of Durban University of technology. *African Journal of Inter/Multidisciplinary Studies*, 5(1), 1-10.

⁴ Ncanywa, T. (2019). Entrepreneurship and development agenda: A case of higher education in South Africa. *Journal of Entrepreneurship Education*.

experience, and curricula that overemphasize theory at the expense of experiential learning⁵.

Despite these obstacles, parts of success across South African universities highlight the potential of well-structured entrepreneurial education programs. Stellenbosch University's Small Business Academy (SBA) and the University of Cape Town's (UCT) multidisciplinary entrepreneurship initiatives underscore the power of combining theoretical frameworks with practical applications to prepare students for the complexities of modern markets^{6,7}. Programs at UCT combine classroom instruction with collaborative projects involving industry partners, providing students with direct exposure to market realities and opportunities to pitch their ideas to potential investors⁸.

The SBA has been instrumental in fostering local economic development. Graduates of the program report improved business performance, increased employment opportunities within their communities, and greater access to markets⁹. However, like many entrepreneurial programs, the SBA faces sustainability challenges, particularly in securing long-term funding and scaling its impact.

This study investigates the state of entrepreneurial education in South African universities, focusing on its influence on students and its alignment with the nation's economic imperatives. Recognizing the challenges, such as gaps in resource allocation, curriculum design, and

⁵ Boldureanu, G., Ionescu, A. M., & Bercu, A. M. (2020). *Entrepreneurship education through successful entrepreneurial models in higher education institutions*. Sustainability.

⁶ Iwu, C. G., Opute, P. A., & Nchu, R. (2021). *Entrepreneurship education, curriculum and lecturer-competency as antecedents of student entrepreneurial intention*. International Journal of Management Education. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S147281171830288X>

⁷ Tomy, S., & Pardede, E. (2020). An entrepreneurial intention model focusing on higher education. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*. Retrieved from <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/ijeb-06-2019-0370/full/html>

⁸ Kalitanyi, V., & Bbenkele, E. (2019). Measuring university students' perceptions about the role of self-efficacy on entrepreneurial intentions in Cape Town. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Emerging Economies*, 5(2), 214-232.

⁹ Cronje, J. P. (2015). *The contribution of coaching and mentoring to development of the participants in the Small Business Academy programme of the University of Stellenbosch Business School* (Doctoral dissertation, Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University).

industry collaboration, the study seeks to explore actionable solutions for enhancing the impact of entrepreneurial education. By fostering entrepreneurial competencies, universities can play a pivotal role in addressing South Africa's socio-economic challenges, creating a generation of resilient and innovative graduates equipped to contribute to sustainable economic development.

The paper is divided into five sections: Section I introduces the context, rationale, problem statement, purpose, and objectives of the study; Section II presents a literature review covering global and South African perspectives on entrepreneurial education, theoretical frameworks, and key implementation challenges; Section III identifies gaps in existing laws and policies concerning the integration of sustainability into entrepreneurial education; Section IV proposes legal approaches and practical recommendations to address these challenges; and Section V concludes the paper by summarizing key findings and reflecting on the implications for enhancing entrepreneurial education in South African universities.

1.1 Background of the Study

Entrepreneurial education is increasingly viewed as a transformative tool for shaping the capabilities of university students to respond to the complexities of modern economies. Globally, there has been a paradigmatic shift in higher education from knowledge transmission to competency development, with entrepreneurship education positioned at the centre of this evolution¹⁰. In many leading education systems, entrepreneurship is no longer taught as a standalone module but is embedded across disciplines through problem-solving activities, venture creation labs, start-up competitions, and collaborative industry projects¹¹. These innovations reflect the recognition that entrepreneurship thrives not merely on theoretical understanding but on active engagement, reflection, and iterative learning.

¹⁰ Ghafar, A. (2020). Convergence between 21st century skills and entrepreneurship education in higher education institutes. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 9(1), 218-229.

¹¹ Morris, T. H. (2020). Experiential learning—a systematic review and revision of Kolb's model. *Interactive learning environments*, 28(8), 1064-1077.

In South Africa, however, the operationalization of such an approach is still in its infancy. The academic space has traditionally prioritized content-heavy syllabi, research output, and examination performance, often sidelining the development of entrepreneurial competencies such as risk-taking, creativity, and resilience¹². Furthermore, university programs have yet to fully embrace inclusive, real-world learning environments that empower students to prototype ideas, navigate market feedback, and adapt solutions in dynamic economic contexts. The persistence of rigid institutional frameworks, assessment models detached from business realities, and bureaucratic limitations has made it difficult for South African universities to institutionalize entrepreneurship as a lived practice rather than a conceptual pursuit¹³.

Another critical dimension to this background is the increasing emphasis on higher education's accountability for producing work-ready graduates. Stakeholders such as the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), and the private sector are calling for academic programs to align more directly with the labour market and national development strategies¹⁴. Within this context, entrepreneurship education is expected not only to build individual capacity but also to function as a mechanism for economic redress and social mobility, particularly among youth and previously disadvantaged communities.

However, South African universities remain largely fragmented in their approach to implementing entrepreneurship across faculties, often lacking a coherent vision or institutional strategy. This fragmentation has led to inconsistent student experiences and unequal access to entrepreneurial resources, such as incubation hubs, mentorship, and

¹² Ndofirepi, T. M. (2020). Relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intentions. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*. Retrieved from <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s13731-020-0115-x>

¹³ Iwu, C. G., & Shambare, R. (2023). *Delivering Entrepreneurship Education in Africa: New Perspectives*. Emerald Publishing. Available at: Emerald Insight

¹⁴ Argiolas, A., & Benamar, S. (2024). "Chapter 8: How universities enable sustainable solutions to persistent social problems in Africa: the case of a Pan African university alliance". In *Sustainable Universities and Colleges*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing. Retrieved Oct 30, 2024, from <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781035314737.00015>

funding opportunities¹⁵. Moreover, the absence of a shared pedagogical philosophy for entrepreneurship education, rooted in South Africa's socio-economic realities, has resulted in curriculum models that are either imported or misaligned with the lived experiences of students.

The background to this study is thus situated in a national and institutional imperative to reimagine entrepreneurship education, not as a theoretical supplement to business studies, but as a core strategic function of universities that can bridge the gap between higher education and economic inclusion. By drawing on global pedagogical shifts and contextualizing them within the constraints and possibilities of the South African university system, this study responds to an urgent call for curriculum innovation, policy alignment, and systemic transformation.

1.2 Problem Statement

Although South Africa has made policy strides in promoting entrepreneurship within higher education, there is still no unified framework guiding how entrepreneurial education should be implemented across universities. The absence of a national standard has resulted in disjointed practices, with some institutions advancing dynamic, practice-based models, while others deliver entrepreneurship through outdated theoretical content with little coherence or measurable impact¹⁶. This inconsistency not only limits the effectiveness of individual programs but also weakens the broader systemic contribution of universities to national economic transformation goals.

Moreover, while the Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) initiative has been introduced to encourage entrepreneurship among students and staff, there is limited empirical evidence on how universities have operationalized its objectives or how they measure success beyond enrolment numbers and module

¹⁵ Saeed, S., Yousafzai, S., Yani-De-Soriano, M., & Muffatto, M. (2018). The role of perceived university support in the formation of students' entrepreneurial intention. In *Sustainable entrepreneurship* (pp. 3-23). Routledge.

¹⁶ Passaro, R., Quinto, I., & Thomas, A. (2018). *The impact of higher education on entrepreneurial intention and human capital*. Journal of Intellectual Capital. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40008-020-00195-4>

offerings¹⁷. The lack of institutional monitoring frameworks and performance indicators makes it difficult to evaluate whether entrepreneurial education is contributing meaningfully to graduate employability, business creation, or innovation outcomes.

A further issue is the limited articulation between university entrepreneurship programs and external ecosystems such as municipal enterprise agencies, sector-specific incubators, and local development hubs. Many universities operate in isolation, resulting in missed opportunities for place-based entrepreneurship that leverages local resources and addresses community needs¹⁸. Without structured mechanisms for knowledge exchange, mentorship, and post-graduation support, students often disengage from entrepreneurship after completing their studies, weakening the long-term impact of educational interventions.

This study is therefore concerned with the structural, institutional, and ecosystem-level gaps that prevent entrepreneurial education from reaching its full transformative potential in South African universities. It seeks to identify where breakdowns occur in the transition from policy to practice, and how universities can strengthen program design, implementation, and ecosystem alignment to develop more effective and inclusive entrepreneurial pathways.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to critically examine the effectiveness of entrepreneurial education within South African universities in addressing the country's socio-economic challenges, particularly high unemployment rates and slow economic growth. By analysing the strengths and limitations of current entrepreneurial education programs, this research seeks to identify practical and evidence-based strategies for enhancing the design and implementation of entrepreneurship curricula.

¹⁷ National University Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Baseline Report. (February 2020). https://edhe.co.za/wp-content/uploads/National-University-Entrepreneurship-Ecosystem-Baseline-study__Interactive-Report-Feb-2020.pdf

¹⁸ Olutuase, S. O., Brijlal, P., & Yan, B. (2023). Model for stimulating entrepreneurial skills through entrepreneurship education in an African context. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 35(2), 263-283.

The study seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, thereby equipping students with the skills, creativity, and entrepreneurial mindsets necessary to succeed in complex and competitive business environments.

The findings of this study are expected to benefit multiple stakeholders. Universities and educators stand to gain actionable insights into how to develop more dynamic and impactful entrepreneurship programs. By improving curricula, fostering mentorship opportunities, and building stronger partnerships with industry, higher education institutions can better prepare students to navigate real-world challenges and foster innovation.

Policymakers and government agencies responsible for education and economic development will also benefit from this research. By highlighting the systemic barriers that hinder effective entrepreneurial education, such as resource constraints and inadequate industry collaboration, the study provides a basis for crafting policies that promote institutional support, resource allocation, and entrepreneurial ecosystem development. These improvements align with South Africa's broader goals of economic transformation and inclusive growth as outlined in the NDP.

Students and aspiring entrepreneurs are direct beneficiaries of enhanced entrepreneurial education programs. By gaining access to comprehensive, practical, and well-supported entrepreneurship education, they will be better equipped to transition from academic training to successful business ownership, thereby reducing dependency on traditional employment avenues and contributing to economic sustainability.

Additionally, private sector stakeholders, including industry partners and venture investors, stand to benefit from a more robust pipeline of innovative and well-prepared entrepreneurs. Collaborations with universities can foster the development of start-ups and small businesses that address market needs while driving regional and national economic growth.

Ultimately, this study seeks to provide a framework for fostering an entrepreneurial culture that benefits individuals, communities, and the nation at large. By addressing the challenges within South Africa's entrepreneurial education landscape, the research contributes to empowering youth, reducing unemployment, and advancing the country's socio-economic development goals.

To critically evaluate the effectiveness of entrepreneurial education programs in South African universities, with a focus on identifying gaps between theoretical instruction and practical application, and to propose actionable strategies for enhancing curricula, resource allocation, and mentorship initiatives to foster entrepreneurial skills and reduce youth unemployment.

The article is divided into the following section, the introduction is the first part while the second section focused bridging global theory and local practice: a critical review of entrepreneurial education and ecosystem development in south African universities. The selected case studies are discussed under third section while the gaps in existing laws/policies concerning integrating sustainability is the fourth section. The last aspect of the manuscript focuses on the legal approaches for addressing the challenges, recommendations and conclusion.

2.0 BRIDGING GLOBAL THEORY AND LOCAL PRACTICE: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION AND ECOSYSTEM DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

2.1 Entrepreneurial Education: A Global Overview

Entrepreneurial education has emerged as a pivotal force in shaping innovation, self-reliance, and economic transformation across the globe. In diverse contexts such as the United States, China, and Brazil, universities have integrated entrepreneurship-focused tracks into their academic frameworks. These tracks are not merely adjuncts to traditional education but are often deeply embedded in institutional strategies aimed at fostering a new generation of innovative leaders². Such programs frequently emphasize the identification of market gaps and the

cultivation of sustainable business ecosystems, ensuring relevance to contemporary economic and social challenges.

The curriculum design in these regions reflects a comprehensive approach, blending theoretical foundations with practical applications. For instance, structured modules often prioritize critical entrepreneurial competencies, including creativity, resilience, and risk-taking, alongside technical skills such as financial modelling and business plan development. The implementation of experiential learning models is a distinguishing feature, as highlighted by [7], who underscore the integration of internships, start-up simulations, and real-world problem-solving into the curriculum. These approaches aim to simulate the complexities of entrepreneurship, enabling students to develop reflective and iterative learning habits essential for navigating volatile business environments.

The UCT serves as a case in point, employing a multidisciplinary curriculum that nurtures innovative capacities across diverse fields. Programs at UCT combine classroom instruction with collaborative projects involving industry partners, providing students with direct exposure to market realities and opportunities to pitch their ideas to potential investors⁸. This model exemplifies the potential of entrepreneurial education to bridge academic theory and practical application, preparing graduates for leadership roles in the global economy.

In the African context, entrepreneurship education is increasingly seen as a tool for addressing systemic challenges such as unemployment and economic inequality. Nigerian universities have made significant strides in embedding entrepreneurship into their curricula. However, many programs suffer from contextual misalignment, where imported pedagogical models fail to address the unique socio-economic realities of local communities⁷. This underscores the need for localized and culturally resonant strategies that align with the lived experiences and aspirations of African students.

2.2 Theoretical Framework on Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education is underpinned by a rich theoretical foundation that informs its pedagogical design and objectives. Among the most influential frameworks is Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which examines how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control influence entrepreneurial intentions⁶. This theory highlights the importance of cultivating positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship through supportive learning environments, mentorship, and exposure to successful entrepreneurial role models. Programs that incorporate TPB principles have been shown to enhance students' confidence, self-efficacy, and readiness to engage in entrepreneurial activities¹⁹.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory offers another critical lens, proposing a cyclical model of learning that includes concrete experiences, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. This framework aligns closely with the goals of entrepreneurship education, as it encourages students to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world challenges, thereby internalizing entrepreneurial concepts¹¹. For example, Stellenbosch University's SBA integrates experiential learning through mentorship, project-based assignments, and exposure to real-life business scenarios. These elements bridge the gap between academic instruction and the practical realities of running a business, fostering a deeper understanding of entrepreneurial dynamics⁶.

Self-efficacy theory further enriches this discourse by emphasizing the role of perceived capability in shaping entrepreneurial behaviour. Well-designed educational interventions can significantly boost self-efficacy, particularly when they include hands-on experiences and supportive mentorship²⁰. Research corroborates these findings, advocating for experiential methodologies that enhance students' entrepreneurial competence and resilience¹².

2.3 Entrepreneurial Education and Economic Development

Entrepreneurial education plays a transformative role in economic development, particularly in regions grappling with high unemployment

and structural inequalities¹⁸. By equipping students with the skills to identify and exploit market opportunities, such education fosters innovation, job creation, and economic diversification. [20] emphasize the importance of aligning curricula with real-world market dynamics to ensure that graduates can contribute meaningfully to economic resilience and growth.

In South Africa, the concept of the entrepreneurial education has gained traction as a vehicle for economic transformation. Institutions such as the UKZN and Stellenbosch University are not only preparing students for self-employment but also driving systemic innovation through research commercialization and community engagement. [4] highlights the role of these institutions in addressing national development goals, particularly in reducing dependence on traditional employment sectors and fostering inclusive growth.

2.4 Entrepreneurship in the South African Context

A. Government Initiatives Promoting Entrepreneurship

South Africa's government has recognized the critical role of entrepreneurship in addressing unemployment and socio-economic disparities. Initiatives such as the Department of Small Business Development's policies and funding schemes aim to create a conducive environment for entrepreneurial growth. Integrating entrepreneurship into university curricula is a vital step toward achieving these objectives. However, systemic barriers such as inadequate funding, limited industry collaboration, and disparities in access to resources continue to undermine the impact of these initiatives⁵.

B. National Development Plan

The NDP underscores entrepreneurship as a key driver of economic innovation and structural transformation. Public universities are tasked with aligning their programs to national priorities by embedding entrepreneurial education into their core offerings. The EDHE Baseline Study documents how universities are equipping students with the competencies to address South Africa's socio-economic challenges. However, achieving the NDP's ambitious targets requires addressing persistent gaps in faculty training, resource allocation, and industry partnerships.

2.5 Challenges and Gaps in South Africa's Entrepreneurial Education

A. Lack of Trained Faculty

One of the most pressing challenges is the shortage of faculty with practical entrepreneurial experience. Many lecturers rely heavily on theoretical instruction, which fails to adequately prepare students for the realities of entrepreneurship⁴. Addressing this gap requires targeted professional development programs and interdisciplinary teaching methodologies that draw on diverse expertise.

B. Funding Constraints and Institutional Priorities

Funding limitations pose significant barriers to the development of robust entrepreneurial ecosystems within South African universities. [15] highlight how resource constraints hinder the establishment of critical infrastructure such as incubators, mentorship programs, and innovation hubs. Historically disadvantaged institutions are particularly affected, exacerbating existing inequalities and limiting the reach of entrepreneurial education.

C. Curriculum Gaps: Focus on Theory over Practice

The overemphasis on theoretical instruction in many entrepreneurship programs further limits their effectiveness. [5] advocate for experiential learning models that integrate internships, start-up simulations, and real-world problem-solving. Addressing this gap requires not only curriculum reform but also the recruitment of instructors with entrepreneurial expertise.

D. Limited Access to Funding

Access to start-up capital remains a critical challenge for aspiring entrepreneurs in South Africa. Universities often lack dedicated venture funds or partnerships with financial institutions, leaving many students unable to translate their business ideas into reality. There is a need for targeted financial support mechanisms to bridge this gap²¹.

E. Inadequate Industry Collaboration

Limited collaboration between universities and industry stakeholders weakens South Africa's entrepreneurial education ecosystem. Stronger partnerships are essential for aligning curricula with market demands and

providing students with practical exposure²¹. Universities must adopt coordinated strategies to foster these relationships, enabling students to benefit from industry expertise and resources⁵.

2.5 Case Studies and Examples

A. University of Cape Town's Entrepreneurship Programs

The UCT has positioned itself as a leader in entrepreneurial education within South Africa through its holistic approach to fostering innovation and venture creation. UCT integrates entrepreneurial courses across multiple disciplines, ensuring that students from diverse academic backgrounds gain exposure to entrepreneurial thinking. The Raymond Ackerman Academy of Entrepreneurial Development at UCT, for example, focuses on developing entrepreneurial skills in youth who might not otherwise have access to such resources. Its programs emphasize leadership development, creative problem-solving, and financial literacy¹¹.

Key to UCT's success is its partnerships with industry stakeholders, which enable students to engage in real-world projects. For instance, students participate in business challenges where they develop and pitch ideas to potential investors. These experiential components not only provide practical experience but also foster confidence and networking opportunities crucial for start-up success. Furthermore, UCT's focus on sustainable entrepreneurship aligns with broader global goals, as students are encouraged to design ventures that address pressing socio-economic and environmental challenges⁷.

Despite these strengths, challenges persist, including unequal access to resources among students from different socio-economic backgrounds. UCT has responded by offering scholarships and bursaries aimed at levelling the playing field, although the demand for these programs often exceeds available resources.

B. Stellenbosch University's Small Business Academy

Stellenbosch University's SBA is another exemplary model of entrepreneurial education tailored to local contexts. The SBA targets small business owners from disadvantaged communities, combining formal education with mentorship to enhance entrepreneurial

competencies. Its curriculum is structured around core business skills such as financial management, marketing, and strategic planning. Students are required to develop comprehensive business plans, which are reviewed by a panel of experts, including academics and industry leaders⁹.

A distinctive feature of the SBA is its focus on mentorship. Each participant is paired with an experienced business professional who provides guidance and support throughout the program. [6] highlight how this personalized approach enables participants to address specific challenges within their businesses, thereby enhancing the practical relevance of their education. Moreover, the SBA's workshops frequently include case studies of successful South African entrepreneurs, providing relatable examples of overcoming challenges in resource-constrained environments.

The SBA has been instrumental in fostering local economic development. Graduates of the program report improved business performance, increased employment opportunities within their communities, and greater access to markets⁹. However, like many entrepreneurial programs, the SBA faces sustainability challenges, particularly in securing long-term funding and scaling its impact.

C. UKZN Entrepreneurship Programs

The UKZN has made significant strides in entrepreneurial education through initiatives such as the ENSPIRE program. This program adopts a comprehensive approach to nurturing entrepreneurship by integrating mentorship, research commercialization, and industry collaboration¹⁹. ENSPIRE is designed to cater to students from diverse disciplines, promoting cross-sectoral innovation and entrepreneurship.

One of the standout features of ENSPIRE is its emphasis on research-driven entrepreneurship. UKZN has established incubators and innovation hubs where students and faculty collaborate to commercialize research outputs. [4] underscores the importance of these initiatives in bridging the gap between academia and industry, fostering a culture of innovation within the university. Additionally, the program offers

¹⁹ Van der Westhuizen, T. (2023). *Youth Entrepreneurship*. Springer Books.

workshops and seminars led by successful entrepreneurs and industry professionals, providing students with insights into navigating South Africa's unique market dynamics.

ENSPIRE has achieved notable outcomes, including the establishment of several student-led start-ups and the development of scalable business models addressing regional challenges¹. However, the program faces obstacles such as limited funding and disparities in access to resources among students from different campuses. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort to enhance resource allocation and strengthen partnerships with local businesses and government agencies.

2.6 ASAF and EDHE in South Africa's Entrepreneurial University Agenda

In the evolving discourse on higher education and entrepreneurship in Africa, two strategic frameworks, the African Students and Alumni Forum (ASAF) and the EDHE programme, have emerged as critical reference points in the pursuit of entrepreneurial university models. While both frameworks target different constituencies and operate at distinct levels, they converge on the ambition to transform higher education institutions from passive knowledge transmitters into active, entrepreneurial agents of socio-economic development.

The ASAF, supported by the African Union and the European Union, was established to amplify the voices of African students and graduates in shaping education systems that are relevant, inclusive, and future-oriented. ASAF emphasizes graduate agency, mobility, and employability, calling on universities to reform their programs to better equip students with the competencies needed to innovate, adapt, and participate in knowledge economies¹⁴. In this sense, ASAF implicitly promotes an entrepreneurial university ethos, one that empowers students not only to find employment but also to create it.

ASAF's policy recommendations prioritize student-centred learning, cross-border academic engagement, and institutional accountability to student outcomes, including entrepreneurial success¹⁰. Furthermore, ASAF advocates for feedback loops between alumni and universities, where former students' post-graduation experiences are used to reform

curricula²⁷. This creates a valuable yet underutilized opportunity for entrepreneurship education, as alumni entrepreneurs can provide mentorship, funding networks, and real-world insights to current students.

However, ASAF's contributions to entrepreneurship education remain largely aspirational within South African institutions. While universities occasionally consult alumni, formal mechanisms for integrating student-alumni engagement into curriculum development, particularly in entrepreneurship, are often absent or ad hoc. As a result, opportunities to create student-driven entrepreneurship ecosystems informed by real graduate experiences are frequently missed¹³. More critically, ASAF's recommendations are yet to be institutionalized in South African policy or practice frameworks for entrepreneurship education, limiting their operational impact.

In contrast, the EDHE programme, launched by the DHET in 2017, was explicitly designed to embed entrepreneurship in South Africa's university system. EDHE aligns closely with national economic policy priorities, particularly those outlined in the NDP, by positioning universities as catalysts of youth employment and innovation. EDHE's focus is threefold: fostering student entrepreneurship, enhancing the entrepreneurial capacity of academic staff, and developing entrepreneurship-enabling institutional environments⁴.

EDHE has had visible successes, including annual studentpreneur competitions, the development of institutional entrepreneurship hubs, and increased awareness of entrepreneurship across campuses¹. The programme has stimulated faculty engagement in entrepreneurial curriculum design, with some institutions now offering interdisciplinary entrepreneurial modules across non-business faculties¹².

Nonetheless, critical weaknesses remain in how universities translate EDHE objectives into institutional practice. Many universities continue to treat entrepreneurship as a peripheral subject rather than a strategic pillar of their mission. Despite EDHE's encouragement, entrepreneurship often lacks full academic accreditation, dedicated faculty, or integration into core undergraduate offerings⁷. Moreover, institutional support systems, such as mentorship programmes, seed

funding, and post-graduate venture incubation, are not consistently available, particularly at historically disadvantaged institutions¹⁵.

Another concern lies in the uneven implementation of EDHE across the higher education sector. Universities with existing entrepreneurial ecosystems have been better able to absorb EDHE's offerings, while others, especially rural-based institutions, struggle due to staff shortages, lack of funding, and poor industry linkages. This disparity reinforces systemic inequities in student access to entrepreneurship opportunities and undermines the transformative goals of the framework²¹.

Furthermore, both ASAF and EDHE promote the development of the entrepreneurial university, a model popularized by scholars like Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff, where teaching, research, and societal engagement merge to generate economic and social value. Such universities are expected to integrate entrepreneurial thinking into all aspects of academic life, including research commercialization, community engagement, and interdisciplinary teaching¹¹. However, few South African universities have adopted this vision holistically. Most remain trapped in legacy models of academic delivery, with entrepreneurship positioned at the margins rather than embedded across institutional functions⁸.

While ASAF and EDHE offer valuable frameworks for cultivating entrepreneurial universities, their impact depends on robust institutional buy-in, strategic alignment, and operational capacity. ASAF brings a powerful advocacy voice for students and alumni as agents of educational transformation, yet its influence in shaping institutional entrepreneurship strategies is still limited. EDHE, on the other hand, provides a direct, state-backed mechanism for entrepreneurship integration, but its sustainability hinges on resourcing, policy enforcement, and long-term monitoring. Transforming universities into entrepreneurial engines requires more than frameworks, it requires political will, institutional reform, and a paradigm shift in how universities define their role in South African society²⁸.

2.7 Methodology

This study investigates how enhancing entrepreneurial education can contribute to sustainable economic development in South Africa. By aligning entrepreneurial education with the pressing socio-economic challenges of unemployment, inequality, and the need for innovation, the study addresses broader objectives of equipping students with practical entrepreneurial skills, fostering job creation, and promoting inclusive economic growth. A secondary data approach was utilized, relying on existing literature and research findings to analyse the current state of entrepreneurial education in South Africa and its potential for driving sustainable development, rather than conducting primary research in specific institutions^{20,21}. This method enables a comprehensive synthesis of prior studies to provide a deeper understanding of how entrepreneurship education can bridge the gap between theoretical learning and practical application to meet the country's economic needs²⁵.

The secondary data collection focused on reviewing academic literature to evaluate the challenges, gaps, and opportunities in entrepreneurial education across South African universities. Key themes explored included the integration of practical entrepreneurship skills, resource allocation, mentorship programs, and the role of public-private partnerships in strengthening the ecosystem. Relevant academic publications were gathered through systematic searches of electronic databases such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, ResearchGate, and the UKZN's online library. Search terms included "entrepreneurial education in South Africa," "university entrepreneurship programs," "sustainable economic development," and "unemployment and entrepreneurship."

This methodological approach provided critical insights into how universities can optimize entrepreneurial education to foster innovation, address socio-economic challenges, and contribute to sustainable economic growth in South Africa. The findings underscore the need for targeted reforms in curriculum design, resource availability, and industry

²⁰ Healey, N. M. (2017). *Reflections on the value of insider research as a qualitative research methodology*. SAGE Publications Ltd.

²¹ Roulston, K., & Choi, M. (2018). Qualitative interviews. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative data collection*, 233-249.

collaboration to enhance the impact of entrepreneurial education on economic development.

3.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The synthesis of existing literature revealed a misalignment between the strategic intent of entrepreneurial education frameworks and their practical execution in South African universities. This disjuncture manifests most clearly in the continued dominance of theory-based instruction that remains detached from the lived entrepreneurial realities students will face after graduation. Despite widespread policy recognition of entrepreneurship as a vehicle for youth employment and economic inclusion, the operational capacity of universities to deliver transformative, experiential entrepreneurial learning remains limited and inconsistent^{7,12}. The literature exposes a system in which entrepreneurial education is rhetorically endorsed but pedagogically neglected, with most programs falling short of instilling practical entrepreneurial competencies in students.

A recurring finding is the limited institutionalisation of experiential learning across South African entrepreneurship programs. While global benchmarks highlight the centrality of start-up simulations, business incubators, mentorship networks, and venture labs in shaping entrepreneurial graduates¹¹, most South African universities continue to deliver entrepreneurship as a theoretical module within business schools. Even where experiential components are present, such as in the Raymond Ackerman Academy at UCT or the Small Business Academy at Stellenbosch University, their reach is narrow and often donor-dependent^{6,9}. These isolated successes are not representative of a system-wide transformation but rather highlight the gap between institutional potential and structural implementation. This is compounded by a lack of internal mechanisms to evaluate and scale such programs across faculties and campuses.

Moreover, the literature consistently identifies faculty capacity as a fundamental bottleneck. Universities often deploy lecturers without entrepreneurial experience or training to teach entrepreneurship courses, undermining the authenticity and relevance of instruction⁴. Entrepreneurship cannot be effectively taught through lectures alone, it

requires mentorship, modelling, and real-world immersion. However, the siloed academic environment and lack of interdisciplinary teaching approaches continue to restrict the kinds of pedagogical innovation needed to teach entrepreneurship as a mindset and a practice²⁰. Faculty development initiatives remain underfunded and underprioritized, particularly at historically disadvantaged institutions, further entrenching inequalities in access to meaningful entrepreneurial education¹⁵.

Equally significant is the structural funding disparity that limits universities' ability to offer practice-based entrepreneurial learning. Institutions with longstanding donor relationships or ties to the private sector, typically better-resourced urban universities, are more likely to operate entrepreneurship hubs and incubators. By contrast, rural and township-based campuses often lack even basic infrastructure such as co-working spaces, making it nearly impossible to deliver entrepreneurship education that reflects real-world market conditions²². This resource inequity results in a two-tier system in which the most marginalized students, those who might benefit most from entrepreneurial training, are the least likely to receive it. Despite the EDHE framework's emphasis on ecosystem-building and inclusivity, implementation continues to privilege institutional status and geographic location over developmental need¹.

Another finding that emerged is the minimal integration between universities and the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem. While the EDHE program encourages partnerships with industry, NGOs, and government agencies, the operationalisation of such collaborations remains limited. Most institutions lack dedicated liaison structures or partnership offices to facilitate sustained engagement with external stakeholders⁷. Consequently, students are often deprived of internships, mentorships, and access to entrepreneurial networks that could serve as a springboard for their ventures. The private sector, too, remains hesitant to engage with universities due to perceived bureaucracy, lack of agility, and misalignment between academic curricula and market demands¹⁵.

²² Mogotsi, C. K. M. (2022). Barriers to accessing funding for women entrepreneurship technology start-ups in South Africa.

Mentorship, a critical pillar of effective entrepreneurial education, is also inconsistently embedded within South African universities. Programs like UKZN's ENSPIRE and Stellenbosch's SBA have demonstrated that structured, long-term mentorship can significantly enhance students' entrepreneurial confidence and decision-making⁹. However, most mentorship offerings remain informal, short-term, or inaccessible to the majority of students. Mentorship must be systematized, resourced, and integrated into the curriculum if it is to produce lasting developmental outcomes¹².

Further complicating the landscape is the tendency to import entrepreneurial pedagogies from Global North contexts without adapting them to South Africa's socio-economic realities. The literature warns that models reliant on venture capital, tech-driven start-ups, and Western notions of success often fail to resonate with students from rural or economically marginalized backgrounds²³. For entrepreneurial education to be effective in South Africa, it must be contextualized, anchored in indigenous knowledge systems, community needs, and informal sector realities²⁹. However, this localization is rarely pursued in curriculum development or program design, leading to pedagogical disconnects that alienate rather than empower students.

Despite the promise of ASAF and EDHE frameworks, there is little evidence of coherent institutional strategies that use these frameworks as drivers of systemic reform. While ASAF calls for student-centred, inclusive, and cross-border entrepreneurship learning, its impact on South African universities remains largely aspirational¹⁴. EDHE, though more directive in nature, has not succeeded in transforming entrepreneurship into a core academic priority. Entrepreneurship continues to be treated as peripheral, often relegated to elective modules or extra-curricular activities rather than woven into the university's research, teaching, and community engagement missions⁸.

Taken together, these findings paint a picture of a fragmented and underperforming entrepreneurship education landscape. The disconnect

²³ Ajani, O. A. (2024). The role of entrepreneurship curriculum in empowering rural students for socio-economic development in South Africa. *International Journal of Business Ecosystem & Strategy* (2687-2293), 6(3), 214-224.

between national frameworks, institutional practice, and student experience undermines the purpose of entrepreneurship education as a tool for economic redress and innovation. If South African universities are to become entrepreneurial in more than name, they must reconceptualize entrepreneurship as a strategic function, one that demands dedicated resources, cross-sector collaboration, and pedagogical transformation. The evidence shows that the current system, while dotted with promising initiatives, lacks the coherence, commitment, and capacity to produce scalable and sustainable entrepreneurial outcomes. It is not merely the presence of entrepreneurship programs that will transform the economy, it is their relevance, accessibility, and execution that will determine their impact.

4.0 GAPS IN EXISTING LAWS/POLICIES CONCERNING INTEGRATING SUSTAINABILITY

Despite progressive frameworks such as the NDP and the EDHE programme, there remains a noticeable absence of integrated policy mechanisms explicitly linking sustainability objectives to entrepreneurial education in South African universities. Current legislative and policy instruments largely treat sustainability and entrepreneurship as parallel yet disconnected domains, with limited convergence in implementation. For instance, while the DHET supports initiatives for entrepreneurship in universities, there is no legislative requirement mandating the infusion of environmental, social, and governance considerations into entrepreneurship curricula. As a result, entrepreneurial education often overlooks critical issues such as green innovation, social enterprise development, and circular economy principles which are elements that are central to sustainable development and urgently needed in a country facing ecological degradation and widening socio-economic inequality.

A significant policy gap lies in the absence of national guidelines or accreditation standards for sustainability-focused entrepreneurial programs. The Council on Higher Education, which oversees program quality and curriculum alignment, has not yet developed benchmarks that incentivize or mandate the incorporation of sustainability goals into entrepreneurship teaching and learning. Consequently, the integration of sustainability remains ad hoc, dependent on individual institutional vision, donor-driven projects, or isolated faculty initiatives. This

fragmented approach inhibits systemic transformation and undermines efforts to position universities as agents of inclusive, sustainable development. Moreover, historically disadvantaged institutions, already constrained by funding and capacity limitations, are particularly affected by this policy vacuum, as they lack the structural support needed to innovate sustainably and equitably.

Additionally, there is a lack of coherent alignment between higher education policies and broader national sustainability agendas, such as South Africa's commitments to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the National Climate Change Response Policy. Entrepreneurial education is rarely situated within these frameworks, despite its potential to drive localized sustainable solutions through student-led ventures. Policy independence between the Department of Higher Education and Training, the Department of Environmental Affairs, and economic development agencies further exacerbate the problem, preventing the cross-sectoral collaboration necessary for policy coherence. Without an integrated policy architecture that embeds sustainability within the legal and operational frameworks guiding university-based entrepreneurship, efforts to cultivate socially responsible, environmentally conscious entrepreneurs will remain fragmented and insufficiently scaled.

5.0 LEGAL APPROACHES FOR ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES: RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the systemic shortcomings identified in the preceding section, namely, the lack of legal mandates for sustainability integration, absence of national curriculum standards, policy fragmentation, unequal institutional capacity, and the disjunction between entrepreneurship and environmental imperatives, South Africa must undertake deliberate legal and policy reform. A foundational step is the revision of the Higher Education Act to include explicit provisions mandating the integration of sustainability principles into entrepreneurship curricula. Such provisions should be supported by amendments to the National Qualifications Framework Act, empowering the South African Qualifications Authority and the Council on Higher Education to accredit entrepreneurship programs based on sustainability benchmarks. Embedding environmental and social governance considerations as

normative academic standards would elevate sustainability from a peripheral concern to a central pillar in entrepreneurial education, thus institutionalising long-term structural change.

In coordination, a robust interdepartmental legislative framework is necessary to bridge the regulatory independence between higher education, economic development, and environmental governance. This could be achieved through the establishment of a national Sustainable Entrepreneurship Council, backed by legal mandate, comprising representatives from the DHET, the Department of Environmental Affairs, and the Department of Small Business Development. The council's mandate would include the formulation of integrated policies, the harmonisation of legal instruments, and the coordination of funding mechanisms aimed at sustainability-focused entrepreneurial training. Such institutional synergy is vital for aligning national developmental priorities with global frameworks like the Sustainable Development Goals, while also operationalising them within the university ecosystem.

Moreover, addressing the uneven access to sustainability-focused entrepreneurial education, especially in historically disadvantaged institutions, requires a legal framework for redistributive funding. Amendments to the Higher Education Funding Framework should legally prioritise allocations for sustainability innovation hubs, green incubators, and entrepreneurship capacity-building in under-resourced universities. These legal reforms would ensure that funding is not only equitable but also conditional on demonstrable efforts to integrate sustainability across teaching, research, and community engagement. The South African Constitution's equality clause (Section 9) and the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act offer a legal foundation for such targeted interventions, by framing unequal access to sustainability education as an issue of structural inequality and developmental justice.

Lastly, legal approaches must centre institutional accountability and monitoring. The adoption of a legally binding Sustainability Impact Reporting Framework for higher education institutions, modelled on corporate environmental and social governance disclosure mandates, would compel universities to report on the implementation and outcomes of sustainability-oriented entrepreneurial programs. This

framework could be embedded within the annual reporting obligations required by the Higher Education Act and overseen by an independent regulatory body. Such transparency mechanisms would enable benchmarking, enhance institutional credibility, and provide the evidence base needed for continuous improvement. In essence, only a coherent, multi-scalar legal architecture, spanning curricular mandates, interdepartmental coordination, redistributive funding, and enforceable accountability, can address the entrenched challenges and elevate South African universities into engines of sustainable, inclusive economic transformation.

5.1 Future Research

The evolving landscape of entrepreneurial education in South Africa presents a fertile ground for future research, with numerous areas requiring critical exploration to address existing gaps and improve the effectiveness of current programs. One priority area is the longitudinal impact of entrepreneurial education on students' career trajectories and business outcomes. Long-term studies that track graduates over several years would provide valuable insights into the sustainability of entrepreneurial ventures, the effectiveness of specific pedagogical approaches, and the factors influencing entrepreneurial success in the South African context. This research could also help identify the barriers that graduates face post-university, offering guidance for refining educational and support mechanisms.

Another promising avenue for future research involves examining the role of experiential learning in shaping entrepreneurial mindsets and competencies. While experiential learning models have been widely recommended, more empirical studies are needed to evaluate their impact in diverse South African contexts. Comparative analyses between programs that emphasize experiential components and those that rely on traditional theoretical instruction could highlight best practices and inform curriculum design. Additionally, studies exploring how different experiential learning activities, such as start-up simulations, internships, and business challenges, affect specific entrepreneurial skills would provide granular insights for program improvement.

The intersection of entrepreneurial education and inclusivity warrants further investigation. Research should focus on understanding how existing programs cater to students from historically disadvantaged backgrounds and marginalized communities. Questions regarding access, representation, and equity within entrepreneurial education need to be addressed, particularly in relation to funding opportunities, mentorship availability, and resource distribution. Future studies could also examine the impact of tailored interventions, such as community-based entrepreneurship programs or targeted scholarships, in bridging socio-economic disparities.

The role of faculty in entrepreneurial education is another critical area for future inquiry. Studies should investigate the impact of faculty training programs on the quality of instruction and the entrepreneurial outcomes of students. Research exploring interdisciplinary teaching approaches, faculty collaboration with industry, and the integration of entrepreneurial experiences into teaching practices would provide actionable recommendations for universities. Furthermore, understanding the challenges that faculty face in delivering entrepreneurship courses, such as a lack of practical business experience or insufficient institutional support, could guide the development of targeted faculty development initiatives.

Industry collaboration remains a pivotal element in bridging the gap between academic instruction and real-world application, yet it is underexplored in the South African context. Future research should assess the effectiveness of current university-industry partnerships, identifying factors that contribute to successful collaborations. Studies could also explore innovative models for fostering stronger linkages, such as co-designed curricula, shared incubation spaces, and joint funding initiatives. Additionally, understanding the perspectives of industry stakeholders on the readiness of university graduates and the value of these collaborations would provide a balanced view for developing mutually beneficial partnerships.

The role of technology and digital platforms in entrepreneurial education also offers a rich domain for future research. With the rise of online learning and digital tools, there is a need to evaluate how these technologies can enhance the delivery and accessibility of

entrepreneurship programs. Studies could explore the effectiveness of virtual incubators, online mentorship programs, and digital business simulations in fostering entrepreneurial skills. Additionally, research on the integration of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and blockchain, into entrepreneurial education could uncover new opportunities for innovation in this field.

Funding and resource allocation remain persistent challenges for entrepreneurial education in South Africa, necessitating deeper investigation into sustainable financial models. Future research should explore how universities can diversify their funding sources, including partnerships with private sector entities, government grants, and philanthropic contributions. Comparative studies analysing the funding structures of successful entrepreneurial programs in other countries could offer valuable lessons for South African institutions. Moreover, understanding the impact of funding disparities on the quality and reach of entrepreneurial education would highlight areas for policy intervention.

The integration of sustainability into entrepreneurial education is another emerging area that requires scholarly attention. Research should focus on how universities can align their programs with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to foster socially and environmentally responsible entrepreneurship. Case studies of successful sustainable enterprises initiated by university graduates could provide practical insights into incorporating sustainability into the curriculum. Furthermore, investigating the role of sustainability-focused mentorship and funding initiatives in supporting green and inclusive businesses would contribute to this growing field of knowledge.

Policy-related research is critical for understanding the broader ecosystem in which entrepreneurial education operates. Future studies should examine the effectiveness of existing government policies and initiatives in supporting university entrepreneurship programs. Comparative analyses of policy frameworks in countries with strong entrepreneurial ecosystems could offer guidance for shaping South African policies. Additionally, research on the role of universities in influencing policy development and advocacy for entrepreneurship

would provide insights into how institutions can actively contribute to creating an enabling environment for start-ups.

Finally, cross-cultural and regional studies could enrich the understanding of entrepreneurial education in South Africa by placing it within a broader African and global context. Comparative research exploring how entrepreneurial education programs in other African countries address similar challenges could reveal opportunities for collaboration and knowledge exchange. Additionally, investigating regional differences within South Africa, such as variations in program effectiveness across urban and rural universities, would provide a nuanced perspective for tailoring interventions to specific contexts.

By addressing these future research areas, scholars can contribute to the development of entrepreneurial education frameworks that are contextually relevant, inclusive, and impactful. Such efforts will not only advance academic knowledge but also play a critical role in fostering innovation, reducing youth unemployment, and driving economic transformation in South Africa.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that entrepreneurial education in South African universities, while promising in its intent, remains constrained by systemic deficiencies in curriculum design, resource allocation, industry collaboration, and inclusivity. The overemphasis on theoretical instruction, coupled with limited experiential learning opportunities, undermines the ability of graduates to navigate the volatile and competitive entrepreneurial landscape. Despite notable efforts by institutions such as the UCT, Stellenbosch University, and the UKZN, the broader ecosystem of entrepreneurial education fails to address critical gaps that perpetuate youth unemployment and economic inequality.

To achieve its transformative potential, entrepreneurial education must pivot from a predominantly academic exercise to a dynamic, practice-oriented discipline. Universities must overhaul their curricula to prioritize hands-on learning, immersive real-world experiences, and the cultivation of entrepreneurial mindsets that align with South Africa's

unique socio-economic realities. This transition necessitates robust industry partnerships that bring mentorship, internships, and business networks into the fold, bridging the persistent disconnect between academia and market demands.

Equally critical is the need to address structural inequities that hinder access to entrepreneurial resources for historically disadvantaged students. Without targeted interventions, such as equitable funding mechanisms and inclusive program designs, the promise of entrepreneurial education as a tool for socio-economic empowerment will remain unfulfilled. Furthermore, universities must champion policy advocacy efforts that incentivize entrepreneurship at both institutional and national levels, ensuring a supportive regulatory environment and the mobilization of resources to sustain entrepreneurial ventures.

This study affirms that entrepreneurial education is not merely a pathway to job creation but a cornerstone for driving innovation, fostering resilience, and reducing South Africa's dependence on traditional employment sectors. However, achieving these outcomes requires a paradigm shift that redefines the purpose and delivery of entrepreneurial education. By adopting actionable strategies such as curriculum reform, interdisciplinary teaching, and enhanced industry engagement, universities can produce graduates who are not only equipped to start businesses but are also capable of solving complex societal challenges.

The urgency of these reforms cannot be overstated. With South Africa's youth unemployment rates among the highest globally, entrepreneurial education is both a moral imperative and an economic necessity. Universities, policymakers, and industry leaders must collaborate to dismantle the barriers that stifle entrepreneurial potential, creating an ecosystem where innovation thrives, and entrepreneurship becomes a viable, inclusive, and sustainable driver of national development.

In conclusion, this study underscores the pivotal role of entrepreneurial education in shaping South Africa's economic future. While significant challenges remain, the solutions are within reach. By addressing the gaps identified in this research with decisive action and sustained commitment, South African universities can transform entrepreneurial

education into a powerful lever for societal transformation and economic progress.