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ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT THROUGH SKILL-BASED EDUCATION: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN UNIVERSITY AND INDUSTRY

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Abstract:

In the evolving landscape of global economies, the role of universities has shifted from being mere centres of academic knowledge to becoming catalysts for innovation and employment. This paper explores how entrepreneurship development, when integrated into skill-based education, can serve as a critical pathway to produce industry-ready graduates. The study investigates the intersection of academic training, practical skill acquisition, and entrepreneurial mindset development to address the persistent gap between university output and industry demands. By analysing models of successful university-industry partnerships and entrepreneurship-driven curricula, the research highlights best practices, challenges, and strategic frameworks that enhance employability and innovation.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship Development, Skill-Based Education, Industry Readiness, University-Industry Collaboration, Graduate Employability, Innovation, Curriculum Design*

Introduction:

The demand for highly skilled, innovative, and adaptable graduates has never been more pressing. Traditional university education, often theoretical in nature, has been criticized for producing graduates who are underprepared for real-world challenges. This disconnect is particularly evident in developing economies where unemployment among graduates remains high despite educational achievements. Entrepreneurship development presents a promising avenue to bridge this gap. Skill-based education emphasizes practical, hands-on learning tailored to meet specific industry needs. When combined with entrepreneurial training, it equips students not only with technical know-how but also with the mindset and capabilities to innovate, solve problems, and even create employment for others. Universities, therefore, have a unique opportunity to serve as incubators of entrepreneurship by embedding such approaches into their curricula.

Research Objectives:

1) To analyse the effectiveness of integrating entrepreneurship development into skill-based education for enhancing graduate employability and industry readiness.
2) To identify key challenges and best practices in implementing entrepreneurship-based curricula within university programs.
3) To propose a strategic framework for universities to develop industry-relevant entrepreneurial education that fosters innovation and job creation.

Literature Review:

Kanwal Rekhi, Nandan Nilekani, Deepak Phatak, The Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay established an incubator

to promote student entrepreneurship, providing resources and mentorship. This initiative aims to shift the culture from

job-seeking to wealth generation and has led to successful startups like iPortia.com.

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Mojibullah Angar, Dr. Vikas Deep, in their paper of Relationship Between Skill Development Programs and Entrepreneurial Behaviour of First-Generation Entrepreneurs in India Participation in skill development programs significantly enhances entrepreneurial skills among first-generation entrepreneurs in Delhi NCR and Haryana, with variations based on gender and region.

Chhabra, M., Dana, L.-P., Malik, S., Chaudhary, N.S. Entrepreneurship Education and Training in Indian Higher Education Institutions: A Suggested framework, effective entrepreneurship education in India includes components like experiential learning, flexible evaluation systems, and holistic mentoring. The study proposes a framework to integrate these elements into mainstream higher education.

Vaibhav Gandhi et al. A Framework to Create Employability Skills for Small and Medium Scale Industry, Journal of Engineering Education Transformations, The paper presents a framework to bridge the skill gap between engineering students and local SMEs, emphasizing industry-institute collaboration to enhance employability and foster entrepreneurship.

Enhancing Employability Skills among Business Students in India, Ritu Saxena, Dr. Nitin Kr Saxena, The study identifies a significant gap between academic training and industry requirements among business students in India, highlighting the need for enhanced soft skills to improve employability.

Role of Entrepreneurship Education Program Triggers and Perceived Social Support in Student's Entrepreneurship Intention Formation, Remi Mitra, Mahendra Sharma, Rajen Purohit, Entrepreneurship education programs significantly influence students' entrepreneurial intentions, with perceived social support enhancing their attitudes and control perceptions towards entrepreneurship.

Methodology:

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of how entrepreneurship development through skill-based education impacts graduate industry readiness. Final-year undergraduate students enrolled in skill-based programs (engineering, business, vocational courses) Faculty members involved in entrepreneurship and skill development training. Industry professionals involved in recruitment and university-industry collaboration. The sample size included 120 students, 20 faculty members and 10 industry experts. Structured Questionnaire (for students) to assess perceptions on the effectiveness of entrepreneurship training, skill acquisition, and job readiness. Semi-Structured Interviews (with faculty and industry experts) to explore qualitative insights into the gaps between university training and industry needs.

Findings:

Statistical Table 1: Student Perceptions of Skill-Based Learning and Entrepreneurship Education

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total (%)
My program emphasizes practical, skill-based learning.	35%	40%	15%	7%	3%	100%
I feel confident in my ability to start a business after graduation.	15%	30%	40%	10%	5%	100%

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Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total (%)
Entrepreneurship education is an important part of my academic program.	50%	35%	10%	4%	1%	100%
My academic program prepares me well for industry challenges.	18%	45%	30%	5%	2%	100%
I have access to sufficient internships or entrepreneurial opportunities.	20%	25%	35%	15%	5%	100%

Interpretation of the Table

45% of students are confident or strongly agree that their academic program prepares them to start a business. However, 40% remain neutral or disagree, indicating a potential gap in hands-on entrepreneurial education. Over 63% of students agree or strongly agree that their academic program prepares them for industry challenges, while 7% disagree. A notable 20% of students report limited or no access to internships or entrepreneurship-focused opportunities, suggesting that universities need to provide more practical exposure.

Challenges in Implementing Entrepreneurial Curricula Key challenges identified by both faculty and industry experts included:

Lack of Collaboration: Universities operate in isolation from industry, limiting the exposure that students have to real-world entrepreneurial practices and networks.

Rigid Curricula: Traditional educational structures make it difficult to introduce and sustain entrepreneurship and skill-based programs. In many cases, programs lack the flexibility needed to adopt new, dynamic teaching methodologies that are more entrepreneurial in nature.

Resource Constraints: Universities often lack adequate resources, such as mentorship networks, incubators, and partnerships with businesses, which are critical for supporting entrepreneurship education effectively.

Best Practices :- Experiential Learning: Universities that offer internships, live projects, and partnerships with businesses reported higher student satisfaction and better industry readiness. Professors recommended integrating more case studies and startup simulations to bridge the theory-practice gap.

Industry Collaboration: Several institutions have developed partnerships with industry experts, alumni entrepreneurs, and startup incubators, creating ecosystems where students can gain real-world insights and mentorship.

Cross-Disciplinary Approach: Some successful programs involved cross-disciplinary learning, where students from various fields (engineering, business, design) collaborated on entrepreneurial projects, fostering innovation and holistic skill development.

Strategic Framework Elements:

Based on the findings from both students and experts, a strategic framework to enhance entrepreneurial education and make graduates more industry-ready can include:

Curriculum Reforms: Develop flexible curricula that integrate entrepreneurial thinking and skill development throughout all years of study. This includes both theoretical learning and practical applications.

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University-Industry Collaboration: Establish robust partnerships with industries and incubators to provide students with access to internships, mentorship, and startup funding. Industry professionals should actively participate in curriculum design and delivery.

Support Systems for Student Startups: Universities should provide dedicated resources such as business incubators, access to seed funding, and structured mentorship programs to help students launch their own startups.

Focus on Soft Skills: Incorporate soft skills training, such as communication, problem-solving, and leadership, to prepare students for the dynamic and unpredictable nature of entrepreneurship.

Conclusion:

This study underscores the transformative potential of integrating entrepreneurship development into skill-based education to bridge the gap between universities and industry. Findings reveal that while there is growing recognition of entrepreneurship as a key driver of employability and innovation, most educational institutions still face challenges like rigid curricula, limited industry collaboration, and insufficient practical exposure. Students show interest in entrepreneurial ventures but often lack confidence due to minimal real-world experience and support systems. To address these gaps, the paper proposes a strategic framework emphasizing curriculum reform, experiential learning, strong university-industry partnerships, and robust entrepreneurial ecosystems on campuses. By embedding entrepreneurship holistically within academic structures, universities can equip graduates not only to meet industry demands but also to become job creators in a rapidly evolving economy.

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