

Integrating Innovation and Technology in Higher Education to Foster Student Entrepreneurship

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship is increasingly viewed as a vital engine of economic growth, innovation, and employment. As such, institutions of higher education (HEIs) are now tasked with creating learning environments that not only provide theoretical knowledge but also develop entrepreneurial skills in learners. This study aims to examine how an innovation- and technology-oriented model can enhance entrepreneurial outcomes for students in higher education. A qualitative research design was utilized. Data were collected through document analysis of 20 current educational models and 10 semi-structured interviews with educators and entrepreneurship experts, selected based on their experience in entrepreneurship education and technology integration. The results were thematically coded in an attempt to identify a conceptual framework based on experiential learning, cross-disciplinary cooperation, and the use of digital tools. The resulting framework highlights four pillars of central significance: entrepreneurial mindset building, digital technology integration into teaching and learning, encouraging cross-disciplinary collaboration, and building an empowering institutional culture. The study emphasizes that technology should be used not only as a content delivery tool but also as a platform for ideation, experimentation, and problem-solving. Hackathons, innovation laboratories, virtual simulations, and business incubators were mentioned as appropriate applications that best overlap academic learning and real-world entrepreneurial challenges. The research demonstrates that HEIs need to adapt their curricula and learning environments to support technological development and the needs of the new economy. In Sri Lanka, where youth entrepreneurship and innovation are policy priorities, this model provides a tool to scale up entrepreneurial education and promote inclusive, sustainable development. Integrating innovation and technology into academic teaching prepares graduates to create and sustain successful entrepreneurial ventures.

Keywords: entrepreneurship education, higher education, innovation, student engagement, technology integration