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Limitations of Conventional Entrepreneurship Education in Developing Students' Social Entrepreneurship Competencies

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Abstract

Although entrepreneurship education has been widely implemented in higher education, its effectiveness in developing students' social entrepreneurship competencies remains limited. This study aims to examine the limitations of conventional entrepreneurship education in fostering students' social entrepreneurship competencies and to identify areas requiring pedagogical strengthening. Employing a quantitative descriptive survey design, the research involved 120 undergraduate students who had completed entrepreneurship courses, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. The findings indicate that entrepreneurship education is predominantly theory-oriented and classroom-based, with limited opportunities for community engagement and experiential learning. As a result, students' social entrepreneurship competencies, particularly empathy, community leadership, and the ability to identify social problems were generally at moderate to low levels. The results further demonstrate a strong need to reorient entrepreneurship education toward more experiential, community-linked, and socially engaged learning approaches to better support the development of social

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entrepreneurship competencies. This study provides empirical evidence highlighting the limitations of conventional entrepreneurship education and contributes to the ongoing discourse on strengthening social entrepreneurship competencies within higher education through curriculum and pedagogical innovation.

Keywords: Social Entrepreneurship Competencies; Entrepreneurship Education; Experiential Learning; Service-Learning; Higher Education.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship education has become a strategic priority in higher education due to its potential to foster innovation, employability, and economic development. Universities are increasingly expected to prepare graduates who are not only capable of creating businesses but also able to respond to complex social challenges. Empirical studies have shown that entrepreneurship education plays an important role in shaping students' entrepreneurial intentions, mindsets, and career orientations (Alakaleek, 2019; Duong, 2021; Wang et al., 2024). However, despite its widespread adoption, the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in developing socially oriented competencies remains debatable.

A growing body of literature indicates that entrepreneurship education is still predominantly delivered through conventional instructional approaches, characterized by lectures, theoretical discussions, and written assignments. Such approaches tend to emphasize cognitive knowledge acquisition while providing limited opportunities for experiential and practice-based learning (Hartshorn & Hannon, 2005; Jones et al., 2012; Packham et al., 2010). Previous studies in higher education contexts have also shown that conventional instructional approaches tend to limit the development of essential student competencies, including critical thinking and self-efficacy, which are crucial for addressing complex real-world challenges (Sembiring et al., 2023)

Recent pedagogical research has emphasized the need to move beyond traditional teaching methods toward more innovative and experiential learning approaches in entrepreneurship education. Active, collaborative, and project-based learning strategies have been found to enhance students' engagement, creativity, and problem-solving abilities (Balan et al., 2018; Hero & Lindfors, 2019; Macht & Ball, 2016). In the context of entrepreneurship education, learning activities that involve direct entrepreneurial experiences have been shown

to positively influence students' interests and engagement in entrepreneurial activities (Rahmawati et al., 2020). This supports the argument that experiential learning is essential for strengthening competency development beyond theoretical understanding.

Within the Indonesian educational context, empirical evidence indicates that entrepreneurship education is often implemented with limited emphasis on practical and socially engaged activities. A study on vocational education revealed that entrepreneurship learning tends to focus on classroom-based instruction, with insufficient opportunities for students to apply entrepreneurial concepts in authentic settings (Supian et al., 2024). This condition may reduce the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in developing competencies required for social entrepreneurship.

Within this context, the discourse on entrepreneurship education has increasingly shifted toward **social entrepreneurship**, which emphasizes the creation of social value alongside economic outcomes. Social entrepreneurship education aims to develop competencies such as empathy, ethical awareness, social problem identification, collaboration, and community leadership (Huq & Gilbert, 2013; Othman & Wahid, 2014; Yasin & Khansari, 2021). However, evidence suggests that conventional entrepreneurship education has limited capacity to foster these competencies effectively.

Service-learning and other forms of experiential and socially engaged learning have been identified as promising approaches for strengthening social entrepreneurship competencies. By integrating academic learning with community engagement, service-learning enables students to apply theoretical knowledge to real social contexts and develop civic responsibility and ethical sensitivity (Cheng, 2018; McNatt, 2019; Zweekhorst & Essink, 2019). Despite these advantages, service-learning is often treated as a peripheral component rather than a core pedagogical approach within entrepreneurship education.

Another critical issue concerns the development of students' entrepreneurial mindsets and intentions. Research indicates that entrepreneurial competencies and intentions are influenced by factors such as learning motivation, innovativeness, self-efficacy, and human capital development (Aboobaker et al., 2023; Buli & Yesuf, 2015; Saadat et al., 2021; Sahoo & Panda, 2019). Without sufficient experiential and socially oriented learning opportunities, these attributes may not translate into competencies that enable students to recognize and address social problems effectively.

Based on these gaps, there remains a need for empirical studies that examine the limitations of conventional entrepreneurship education specifically in relation to the development of **students' social entrepreneurship competencies**. Many existing studies focus on entrepreneurial intention or business creation outcomes, while fewer investigate competency-related outcomes from a social perspective. Therefore, this study aims to examine the limitations of conventional entrepreneurship education in developing students' social entrepreneurship competencies through a descriptive needs analysis. By providing empirical insights into current learning practices and competency levels, this study contributes to the discourse on strengthening socially oriented entrepreneurship education in higher education.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design using a survey approach. The descriptive design was selected because the primary purpose of the study was to examine the existing conditions and limitations of conventional entrepreneurship education in developing students' social entrepreneurship competencies, rather than to test causal relationships or evaluate the effectiveness of a particular intervention. Descriptive survey research is appropriate for capturing patterns, tendencies, and baseline conditions within a defined population (Creswell, 2014).

Population and Sample

The participants of this study were undergraduate students enrolled in education-related study programs who had completed at least one entrepreneurship course. These students were considered appropriate respondents because they had direct experience with conventional entrepreneurship education and were therefore able to evaluate its contribution to the development of social entrepreneurship competencies.

A purposive sampling technique was applied to select participants who met the predefined criteria. Purposive sampling is commonly used in educational research when specific characteristics of respondents are required to address the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2019). A total of 120 students participated in the study, which was considered sufficient for descriptive analysis and needs assessment purposes.

Instruments and Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed based on relevant literature on entrepreneurship education, social entrepreneurship, and competency-based learning. The questionnaire consisted of four main sections: (1) respondent demographic information, (2) characteristics of entrepreneurship learning practices, (3) students' experiences of social and community engagement within entrepreneurship learning, and (4) self-assessment of social entrepreneurship competencies.

All questionnaire items were measured using a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The use of a four-point scale was intended to minimize neutral responses and encourage clearer positioning of participants' perceptions. This approach is commonly recommended in scale development and survey research to improve response differentiation (DeVellis, 2017).

The questionnaire was distributed online using Google Forms, which allowed efficient data collection and ease of access for respondents.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies and percentages. Descriptive analysis was conducted to summarize students' responses regarding learning practices, levels of social entrepreneurship competencies, and experiences of social engagement within entrepreneurship education. The results were presented in the form of tables and figures to enhance clarity and facilitate interpretation.

Given the exploratory and descriptive nature of the study, no inferential statistical analysis was performed.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in this study was entirely voluntary. Prior to completing the questionnaire, all respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and provided their informed consent. The anonymity and confidentiality of respondents were ensured, and all data collected were used solely for academic research purposes.

Research Location and Time

The study was conducted at a private university in Indonesia during the 2025/2026 academic year. The research context was selected based on its relevance to entrepreneurship

education in higher education and accessibility to respondents who had completed entrepreneurship courses.

RESULTS

Current Practices of Entrepreneurship Education

The results of this study indicate that entrepreneurship education is predominantly implemented through conventional learning practices. A total of 76% of respondents reported that entrepreneurship courses were mainly delivered through lectures and classroom-based discussions. Only 24% of students indicated that they had experienced learning activities involving direct interaction with communities or external stakeholders.

In terms of assessment methods, 69% of respondents stated that course assignments primarily consisted of written reports, while only 31% reported engaging in practice-oriented or field-based activities. These findings suggest that entrepreneurship education remains largely theoretical, with limited opportunities for experiential learning.

Table 1. Summary of Empirical Findings on Students' Social Entrepreneurship Competencies and Learning Practices

Aspect	Indicator	Percentage (%)
Entrepreneurship Learning Practices	Learning dominated by lectures and classroom discussions	76
	Learning involving community or external stakeholders	24
Assessment Methods	Assignments mainly in the form of written reports	69
	Practice-oriented or field-based assignments	31
Students' Social Engagement	Participation in community-based or social activities through coursework	22
	No involvement in community-based activities	78
Social Entrepreneurship Competency Levels	High level of competency	15
	Moderate level of competency	57
	Low level of competency	28
Lowest Competency Indicators	Empathy	Low to moderate

	Community leadership	Low to moderate
	Social problem identification	Low to moderate
Students' Learning Needs	Need for more experiential learning activities	82
	Need for socially engaged learning experiences	79

Table 1 summarizes the empirical findings related to students' learning practices and levels of social entrepreneurship competencies.

Students' Social Engagement Experiences

The findings also reveal a low level of student involvement in social and community engagement activities within entrepreneurship education. Only 22% of respondents reported having participated in activities such as community assistance, mentoring micro or small enterprises, or identifying social problems as part of entrepreneurship coursework. In contrast, 78% of students indicated that they had never been involved in community-based activities related to their entrepreneurship courses.

This result reflects the limited incorporation of socially engaged learning experiences within conventional entrepreneurship education.

Levels of Social Entrepreneurship Competencies

With regard to social entrepreneurship competencies, the results demonstrate that students' competency levels are generally moderate to low. Based on descriptive categorization, 57% of respondents were classified as having moderate levels of social entrepreneurship competencies, 28% were categorized as low, and only 15% demonstrated high levels of competency.

Further examination of competency indicators shows that the lowest levels were observed in empathy, community leadership, and social problem identification. These findings indicate that while students may possess foundational entrepreneurial knowledge, their capacity to apply such knowledge to address social issues remains limited.

Students' Perceived Need for Experiential and Socially Engaged Learning

The final set of results highlights a strong student demand for learning approaches that emphasize experiential and socially engaged activities. A total of 82% of respondents agreed that entrepreneurship education should involve more real-world and community-based experiences. Additionally, 79% of students expressed the view that socially engaged learning activities would help them better understand and develop social entrepreneurship competencies.

These findings underscore the perceived gap between current instructional practices and students' expectations for learning experiences that support competency development.

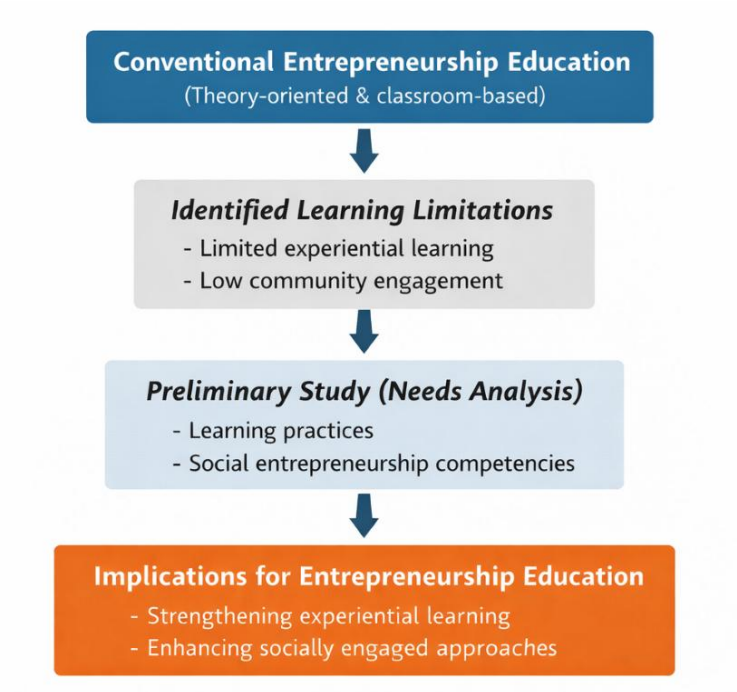


Figure 1. Positioning of the preliminary study in identifying the limitations of conventional entrepreneurship education.

Figure 1 illustrates the positioning of the preliminary study in identifying the limitations of conventional entrepreneurship education and their implications for entrepreneurship education.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that conventional entrepreneurship education has significant limitations in developing students' social entrepreneurship competencies. The dominance of lecture-based and classroom-oriented learning practices confirms concerns

raised in previous studies that traditional pedagogical approaches tend to prioritize theoretical understanding over experiential and competency-based learning (Hartshorn & Hannon, 2005; Jones et al., 2012; Packham et al., 2010). This pattern aligns with empirical evidence showing that conventional instructional models limit the development of critical competencies such as self-efficacy and critical thinking among university students (Sutomo et al., 2023)

The low level of student engagement in community-based activities further highlights the restricted scope of conventional entrepreneurship education. Only a small proportion of students reported participating in socially engaged learning experiences as part of their coursework. This finding is consistent with prior research indicating that entrepreneurship education often lacks structured opportunities for real-world application and social interaction, despite evidence that such experiences enhance learning outcomes (Arnold, 2021; Huq & Gilbert, 2013; Ifinedo & Burt, 2024). The absence of meaningful community engagement limits students' exposure to social realities and constrains the development of socially oriented entrepreneurial competencies.

The results also reveal that students' social entrepreneurship competencies are predominantly at moderate to low levels, particularly in empathy, community leadership, and social problem identification. These competencies are central to social entrepreneurship, as they enable individuals to recognize societal needs, collaborate with stakeholders, and design solutions that create social value. Previous studies have emphasized that these competencies are unlikely to emerge through conventional instruction alone, as they require active participation, collaboration, and reflective learning processes (Hytti & Heinonen, 2013; Scott & Webber, 2008; Warhuus et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the strong student demand for experiential and socially engaged learning approaches underscores a misalignment between current instructional practices and learners' expectations. The findings suggest that students recognize the importance of learning experiences that extend beyond the classroom and allow them to apply entrepreneurial knowledge in authentic contexts. This aligns with empirical evidence showing that entrepreneurial mindset, alertness, and intention are influenced by meaningful learning experiences, learning motivation, and opportunities for innovation and self-efficacy development (Aboobaker et al., 2023; Buli & Yesuf, 2015; Saadat et al., 2021).

From a theoretical perspective, the findings support experiential learning and social entrepreneurship frameworks that emphasize learning through action, reflection, and social interaction. When entrepreneurship education relies heavily on conventional pedagogies, it risks producing graduates who are knowledgeable about entrepreneurship but insufficiently prepared to function as socially responsible entrepreneurs. The present study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence that highlights the need to reorient entrepreneurship education toward approaches that prioritize competency development rather than content transmission alone. (Harmeling, 2011; Rae, 2004).

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The use of self-reported data may introduce response bias, and the descriptive design limits the generalizability of the findings beyond the study context. Additionally, this study did not examine the effectiveness of specific pedagogical interventions. Future research should therefore focus on testing experiential and socially engaged learning approaches using experimental or quasi-experimental designs to examine their impact on students' social entrepreneurship competencies.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that conventional entrepreneurship education has limited capacity to develop students' social entrepreneurship competencies. The findings indicate that entrepreneurship learning remains predominantly theory-oriented and classroom-based, with insufficient opportunities for experiential and socially engaged learning. Consequently, students' competencies—particularly empathy, community leadership, and social problem identification—are generally at moderate to low levels.

The study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence that highlights the gap between current instructional practices and the competency requirements of social entrepreneurship in higher education. By focusing on competency-related outcomes rather than entrepreneurial intention or business creation alone, this research emphasizes the importance of reorienting entrepreneurship education toward approaches that better support socially responsible entrepreneurial development.

Future research is encouraged to move beyond descriptive analysis by empirically testing experiential and socially engaged learning approaches using experimental or quasi-experimental designs. Such studies may provide deeper insights into effective strategies for

strengthening social entrepreneurship competencies and preparing students to address complex social challenges.

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