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Enhancing university entrepreneurship programmes for postgraduate students: A case study in one university in the Eastern Cape

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Orientation: Entrepreneurship education for postgraduate students in South Africa is essential for promoting economic growth and addressing the country's high unemployment rates. Despite its importance, the effectiveness of current programmes in providing practical entrepreneurial skills remains inadequately explored.

Research purpose: This study's aim was to investigate how university entrepreneurship programmes can be improved to better support postgraduate students at a university in the Eastern Cape, South Africa.

Motivation for the study: Relying solely on theoretical entrepreneurship education is insufficient; it is crucial to address the gaps in practical resources and mentorship to build confidence among postgraduate students and support their venture creation.

Research design, approach and method: This qualitative case study, grounded in an interpretivist paradigm, employed semi-structured interviews with postgraduate students, lecturers and managers to gather insights into the strengths and weaknesses of entrepreneurship education.

Main findings: The findings highlight significant gaps in experiential learning for entrepreneurship, including limited access to resources and mentorship. To foster venture creation and entrepreneurial agility, implementing structured mentorship, establishing innovation hubs, facilitating networking, providing expert advice and developing digital support systems is vital.

Practical/managerial implications: Universities should prioritise experiential learning that connects skill development with real-world applications and strong mentorship. By establishing support systems, such as innovation hubs and seed funding, they can enhance postgraduate entrepreneurship education and promote informal entrepreneurship initiatives.

Contribution/value-add: This study emphasises the significance of tailored curricula and ongoing support in postgraduate entrepreneurship education, aiming to improve pathways to successful ventures.

Keywords: entrepreneurship; education; postgraduate; experiential learning; economic growth.

Introduction

Empowering postgraduate students with entrepreneurial skills, knowledge and mindsets is especially crucial, as these individuals are well-positioned to become catalysts for change within their communities (Arifin & Siew 2023; Bauman & Lucy 2021). Research underscores the importance of examining the relationship between entrepreneurship education and postgraduate students' entrepreneurial intentions, behaviours and skills development, while also considering contextual factors, such as university resources, family support and peer networks that influence educational outcomes.

Studying entrepreneurship and innovation within university programmes equips postgraduate students with critical insights and practical skills essential for successfully launching and managing startups. This educational foundation helps students avoid common pitfalls, effectively communicate their ideas, validate product viability and develop comprehensive business

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strategies that enhance their likelihood of long-term success (Konietzko et al. 2020). According to Aithal and Aithal (2023), entrepreneurship education provides learners with the abilities, knowledge and mindset required to identify opportunities, foster innovation and build sustainable enterprises. Importantly, a solid understanding of entrepreneurial principles empowers students to navigate the complexities and challenges inherent in starting and running businesses, thereby contributing not only to their personal development but also to broader economic growth and job creation. This is particularly relevant in contexts such as South Africa's Eastern Cape, where enhancing university entrepreneurship programmes for postgraduate students can play a strategic role in addressing regional unemployment and stimulating local economic development, as highlighted in recent literature (Klutse 2024; Mahmudin 2023).

Across South Africa and, more broadly, in developing regions, high unemployment rates and persistent poverty continue to challenge sustainable development. Universities, primarily through their entrepreneurship programmes, play a pivotal role in addressing these challenges by equipping postgraduate students with the knowledge, skills and mindset necessary to become job creators rather than job seekers. This shift aligns closely with the global agenda of Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8), which promotes inclusive economic growth and decent work opportunities for all (EDHE 2025; USAf 2025). The main aim of this study is to examine the enhancement of university entrepreneurship programmes to better support postgraduate students in one university in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. The specific objectives are to:

- Strengthen student entrepreneurship pathways by expanding access to resources, funding and mentorship for postgraduate students to increase their success rates in launching and sustaining enterprises.
- Develop institutional support structures and partnerships within the university that foster an enabling entrepreneurial ecosystem, including incubation, networking, technology transfer and collaboration with industry and government stakeholders.

Literature review

Theoretical literature

This study employs an integrated theoretical framework drawing on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and Human Capital Theory (HCT) to explore how university entrepreneurship programmes can be enhanced to better support postgraduate students at a university in the Eastern Cape. While TPB emphasises intentions shaped by attitudes, subjective norms and perceived control over entrepreneurial behaviour, SCT focuses on the reciprocal interactions between personal factors, behaviours and environmental influences, highlighting self-efficacy and observational learning. In comparison, HCT centres on the accumulation of knowledge, skills and experiences as essential resources for entrepreneurial success. Despite their differences, all three theories converge on the importance of individual agency and learning in entrepreneurial development, though they differ in emphasis on social context and cognitive versus resource-based factors. This comprehensive approach helps to understand the various factors influencing entrepreneurial development among these students.

Theory of planned behaviour

The TPB (Ajzen 1991) is a widely applied behavioural theory used to predict and understand intentions across various domains, including entrepreneurship. Within entrepreneurship research, it is frequently employed to examine the formation of entrepreneurial intentions through its core constructs of attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. According to TPB, an individual's intention to pursue entrepreneurial activity is influenced by three interrelated components: attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. Attitude refers to how positively or negatively a student views entrepreneurship, which can be significantly improved through education that exposes students to success stories, practical skills and opportunities for innovation via experiential learning like incubators and business simulations (Atomsa 2024). Subjective norms relate to the social pressures or expectations from peers, family, mentors or institutional culture that can encourage or discourage entrepreneurial engagement. Universities that actively foster an entrepreneurial ecosystem through events, mentorship and peer role models help students perceive entrepreneurship as a legitimate and desirable career option (Bauman & Lucy 2021). Perceived behavioural control concerns the individual's belief in their ability to perform entrepreneurial tasks effectively, which is strengthened by training in business planning, financial literacy and risk management. High perceived behavioural control closely aligns with entrepreneurial self-efficacy, a central aspect of this study. Entrepreneurship education plays a significant role in shaping postgraduate students' entrepreneurial intentions by fostering positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship, aligning social norms and enhancing their perceived behavioural control over entrepreneurial activities (Ajzen 1991; Nguyen, Nguyen & Huynh 2024). While it supports confidence and intention formation, external barriers such as societal scepticism and limited resource access may still impede entrepreneurial behaviour (Balogun 2025).

Social cognitive theory

Social Cognitive Theory, introduced by Bandura (1986), emphasises the dynamic interaction between personal factors, environmental influences and behaviour, providing insight into how entrepreneurial self-efficacy develops among postgraduate students. Observational learning plays a key role, as students often draw inspiration and skills from successful entrepreneurs, faculty and peers who embody resilience and creativity. Entrepreneurship education that includes guest lectures, case studies and exposure to entrepreneurial success stories offers

vicarious learning opportunities, helping students internalise entrepreneurial competencies. Central to SCT is self-efficacy or the belief in one's capability to achieve goals, which is reinforced by hands-on experiences, such as designing business plans, engaging in startup simulations and pitching ideas. These practical engagements strengthen confidence by providing mastery experiences. Mentorship further boosts self-efficacy by offering personalised guidance, encouragement and real-world insights that help students navigate uncertainty and view challenges as manageable. Social Cognitive Theory also highlights the concept of reciprocal determinism, where cognitive beliefs, behaviour and environment continuously influence each other. When universities create supportive environments with resources, such as funding and incubation programmes, they enable students to turn their entrepreneurial confidence into concrete action; conversely, a lack of support can diminish self-efficacy and reduce entrepreneurial engagement. This theory aligns closely with the aim of enhancing university entrepreneurship programmes by underscoring the importance of mentorship, experiential learning and institutional support in shaping entrepreneurial identity and activity.

Human capital theory

Human Capital Theory, as proposed by Becker (1964), offers a macro-level perspective by emphasising that investments in education and skill development increase individual productivity and contribute to broader economic growth. Regarding entrepreneurship education, HCT suggests that individuals invest in acquiring knowledge and skills such as financial literacy, strategic thinking, opportunity recognition and business planning to increase their productivity and economic potential (Becker 1975). This investment is critical for entrepreneurial success and improved employability. While HCT primarily focuses on the individual-level accumulation of human capital as a driver of economic outcomes, entrepreneurship education also contributes to broader societal and economic development, especially in regions like the Eastern Cape, where unemployment and structural barriers restrict traditional job opportunities (Matshekga 2013; Obananya, Anah & Okeke 2023). Through fostering entrepreneurial competencies, universities can drive local enterprise development, encourage self-employment and contribute to regional economic revitalisation. Importantly, HCT emphasises the importance of practical training through activities, such as internships, business simulations and startup competitions, which enable students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings, thereby enhancing both competence and confidence. In this way, HCT complements the study's focus on entrepreneurship education as a driver of personal development and economic empowerment, highlighting how universities can address challenges such as poverty and unemployment by investing deliberately in skills-based and innovation-focused learning environments.

Empirical literature

Enhancing university entrepreneurship programmes to support postgraduate students' entrepreneurial skills is crucial, particularly in contexts such as universities in the Eastern Cape. Modern entrepreneurship education advocates for integrating entrepreneurial concepts across various disciplines with a cross-curricular and project-based learning approach. This method enables postgraduate students to engage with real-world business challenges, fostering problem-solving abilities essential for entrepreneurial success (Arifin & Siew 2023).

Mentorship programmes tailored specifically for postgraduate students provide vital guidance from experienced entrepreneurs, helping to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Collaborations with local businesses and community organisations further enrich these programmes by offering additional resources and expertise, creating a practical entrepreneurial ecosystem within the university environment (Brush 2021). To maximise effectiveness, instructors require professional development and training to build competence and confidence in delivering entrepreneurship education. Successful programmes blend theoretical knowledge with hands-on experiences, such as internships and startup incubators, to cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset, identity and self-efficacy among postgraduate students (Bauman & Lucy 2021).

The entrepreneurial mindset – encompassing resilience, creativity and risk-taking – plays a significant role in shaping postgraduate students' identity as entrepreneurs and boosting their belief in their capabilities to launch ventures. Practical experiences, including entrepreneurship competitions, internships and real-world projects, enhance this self-efficacy, empowering students to confidently pursue entrepreneurial activities (Cui, Wang & Zhang 2021; Ferreira-Neto, Alves & Silva 2023). Peer and mentor support appear as influential factors in shaping students' entrepreneurial intentions, highlighting the importance of a supportive network within entrepreneurship programmes (Santos & Liguori 2020).

Institutional support remains vital, with access to funding, co-working spaces and networking opportunities acting as enablers for student ventures. It is also important to recognise that postgraduate students possess diverse academic and professional backgrounds, requiring entrepreneurship programmes to offer flexible, customised modules that align with their specific needs and aspirations (Wang, Liu & Zhou 2021; Wei & Lin 2022). Interdisciplinary collaboration in entrepreneurship education stimulates innovation by bringing together students from different fields to solve complex problems creatively (Bae et al. 2021).

Given these elements, enhancing postgraduate entrepreneurship programmes involves integrating experiential learning, strengthening mentorship, improving institutional support, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and customising curricula to fit postgraduate learners' unique profiles. Such enhancements can substantially improve entrepreneurial outcomes and better prepare postgraduate students for successful entrepreneurial careers (Fayolle, Gailly & Lassas-Clerc 2020; Muñoz & Kibler 2019).

Research methods and design

This methodological approach builds on an earlier study, which examined postgraduate entrepreneurship education using a similar qualitative case design at the same institution (Chagi, Ncanywa & Asaleye 2025). The current research, however, extends that work by incorporating a deeper exploration of entrepreneurial mindset, identity and self-efficacy through an integrated theoretical framework. This study adopts a qualitative research design to examine the enhancement of university entrepreneurship programmes to better support postgraduate students in one university in the Eastern Cape, South Africa.

Research paradigm, approach, and design

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the enhancement of university entrepreneurship programmes aimed at better supporting postgraduate students at a university in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. Specifically, it employs a qualitative case study approach, which is well-suited for in-depth exploration of social phenomena within their natural context (Swedberg 2020). This approach enables a detailed investigation into how entrepreneurship education influences postgraduate students' entrepreneurial mindset, identity formation and self-efficacy within the unique environment of a university located in a region marked by high unemployment rates and limited entrepreneurial infrastructure. By concentrating on a single university, the study seeks to produce rich, contextualised insights into the dynamic relationship between educational strategies and student development. The case study method thus offers a comprehensive understanding of individual student experiences alongside institutional practices, aligning closely with the study's aim to examine how entrepreneurship education can be enhanced to better support postgraduate students.

Population and sampling

The target population consists of postgraduate students enrolled in entrepreneurship courses at the selected university. To ensure rich, multidimensional data, purposive sampling was used to select participants who have direct experience with entrepreneurship education. The sample includes 10 postgraduate students drawn from various academic disciplines and levels of participation in entrepreneurship activities, facilitating exploration of differences in mindset and self-efficacy development. Seven entrepreneurship lecturers and seven university managers were interviewed to gain insights into pedagogical practices, curriculum design, policy frameworks, resource allocation and institutional support. This purposive sampling strategy is consistent with the study's qualitative case study design and aims to gather detailed, experience-based narratives that provide theoretical and contextual relevance (Patton 2015). Including perspectives from students, educators and administrators ensures a holistic view of the influences shaping entrepreneurial mindset and identity within the university setting.

Research instruments

The primary research instrument used in this study was semi-structured interviews, selected for their capacity to combine conversational flexibility with structured inquiry into key aspects of entrepreneurship education among postgraduate students (Naz, Gulab & Aslam 2022). This method enabled open, yet focused dialogues with participants, allowing them to share their personal experiences, perceptions and insights regarding the entrepreneurship programmes offered at the postgraduate level. The interview guide was carefully crafted to explore crucial areas, such as the specific skills deemed essential for entrepreneurial success, participants' experiences within entrepreneurship education initiatives, and the perceived impact of these programmes on their entrepreneurial mindset and intentions. By employing semi-structured interviews, the study gained a deep, nuanced understanding of how entrepreneurship education influences postgraduate students, while also accommodating the emergence of unexpected themes and individual differences in responses. This approach thus contributed to the study's overall aim of generating rich, contextually grounded insights into the effectiveness and challenges of university entrepreneurship programmes in the Eastern Cape.

Data collection procedure

Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews, a qualitative method that effectively balances open-ended inquiry with a focused thematic approach (Adenike 2021). This method enabled the collection of rich, detailed narratives capturing participants' perceptions, experiences and challenges related to entrepreneurship education. The interviews were guided by open-ended questions aligned with the study's objectives, such as exploring how involvement in the university's entrepreneurship programmes shaped students' understanding of entrepreneurship and their entrepreneurial self-efficacy. To address geographic and logistical constraints, interviews were conducted via video conferencing, which increased accessibility while maintaining the depth and quality of qualitative engagement. With participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure precision and reliability during the analysis phase.

Data treatment and analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the interview data, following established qualitative procedures for identifying, examining and reporting patterns within the data (Braun & Clarke 2006). The process began with repeated reviews of the interview transcripts to develop a thorough understanding of the content, followed by open coding to label meaningful segments of text that reflected key concepts, such as entrepreneurial attitudes, mentorship, experiential learning, self-efficacy and institutional support. These initial codes were then grouped into broader themes based on conceptual connections and their recurrence across participants. Prominent themes emerging from the perspectives of postgraduate students, instructors and university managers included the transformation of the entrepreneurial mindset,

the influence of mentorship on identity formation, and institutional barriers hindering entrepreneurship development. Comparative analysis further highlighted role-specific viewpoints, with instructors emphasising pedagogical approaches and managers focusing on policy frameworks and support mechanisms. This iterative and reflexive analytic process incorporated strategies to minimise researcher bias, including triangulation of diverse perspectives and member checking with participants. The use of NVivo software (NVivo, developed by QSR International Pty Ltd, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia) facilitated efficient data management, coding and thematic comparison, thereby strengthening the rigour and trustworthiness of the study's findings (Adenike 2021).

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from Walter Sisulu University Senate Research Ethics Committee on 21 October 2024. The ethical clearance number is FEDREC 2454.

Findings

The findings of this study reveal significant transformative shifts in postgraduate students' entrepreneurial mindset, identity and self-efficacy, which are largely attributed to their active engagement with structured entrepreneurship education. Drawing from insights gathered through 24 semi-structured interviews with postgraduate students, lecturers and university managers at a university in South Africa's Eastern Cape, the analysis highlights how experiential learning, mentorship and institutional contexts collaboratively influence personal and professional development. These findings are interpreted through the integration of the TPB, SCT and HCT, providing a comprehensive framework to understand the role and impact of entrepreneurship education within a region characterised by high unemployment. Table 1 summarises the key themes alongside their theoretical alignment. Participant identifiers are as follows: the codes for postgraduate student participants are PG1-PG10, the codes for lecturers are L1-L7, and codes for managers are M1-M7.

Experiential learning and practical support

Among postgraduate students, the critical importance of experiential learning opportunities and practical support mechanisms within university entrepreneurship programmes is recognised. This is evident in the following responses:

> 'Enactus provides gardening practical skills… students must be provided with enough garden equipment, workshops that provide knowledge about funding mentors to entrepreneurship education workshops.' (PG1)

> 'Incubator program and startup workshops have been incredibly useful… more real-world case studies, internships, and hands-on projects could enhance the learning experience.' (PG3)

> 'Workshops focusing on business plan and model development were particularly useful, and there is a need for more follow-up support after workshops through mentorship programmes or incubators.' (PG6)

> 'Workshops teach important skills like business planning, marketing, and financial management, so more practical training and funding opportunities are needed.' (L2)

These insights underscore the value placed on hands-on, experiential learning as pivotal to entrepreneurial skill development. Aligned with SCT, practical engagement allows postgraduate students to build entrepreneurial self-efficacy by actively navigating real-life challenges, observing successful behaviours, and receiving feedback, which collectively enhance their belief in their capability to undertake entrepreneurial ventures. This process of learning through experience and social interaction fosters personal agency and supports the development of confidence necessary for entrepreneurial success. Literature emphasises that incubators, workshops and startup accelerators provide indispensable resources and create supportive environments that encourage this iterative learning and skill mastery (Bauman & Lucy 2021; Rauch & Hulsink 2019).

The findings highlight that while theoretical entrepreneurship education forms the foundation, its reinforcement through structured practical activities is essential for postgraduate students to build confidence and competence. Students' calls for more tailored practical resources, continued mentorship and sustained funding reflect the need for entrepreneurship programmes to evolve beyond traditional lectures, integrating continuous support mechanisms and active learning pedagogies. Universities aiming to enhance postgraduate entrepreneurship education should prioritise experiential learning frameworks that combine skill acquisition with real-world application and ongoing developmental support.

TABLE 1: Key themes summary and theoretical alignment.

Theme	Description	Supporting theories
Experiential learning and practical support	Experiential learning and practical support emphasises learning through experience and social interaction to build self-efficacy.	Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)
Mentorship, networks and institutional support	Illustrating how social support and guidance from mentors and networks enhance entrepreneurial confidence and persistence	Human Capital Theory (HCT)
Customisation and programme design for diverse postgraduate needs	Focusing on how tailored education influences attitudes, perceived control and entrepreneurial intentions among postgraduates	Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)

Mentorship, networks and institutional support

Mentorship and institutional backing form a core theme shaping postgraduate entrepreneurship success, with students emphasising the need for guidance, networks and accessible resources. Responses that support this theme, include:

> 'The university can better facilitate by integrating entrepreneurship education to enhance students' entrepreneurship skills.' (PG2)

> 'Post-competition support such as funding and scaling mentorship for startups… specialized mentorship, seed funding, industry partnerships.' (PG5)

> 'Workshops would be the primary, most necessary initiative thematic ideas are nurtured because fear and threats arise if confidence drops.' (PG7)
>
> 'Mentorship initiatives and networking events have been highly beneficial, and there is a need for more funding and investment opportunities to expand industry partnerships.' (L1)
>
> 'Match students with industry mentors, along with seed capital, shift more emphasis on digital entrepreneurship, widen funding and mentorship opportunities, and foster inter-disciplinary liaison.' (M6)

These perspectives align with Bandura's (1986) SCT, which identifies social support through mentors and peer networks as a key enabler of entrepreneurial self-efficacy and persistence. The students' highlighting of seed funding and mentorship illustrates the multidimensional nature of institutional support needed for entrepreneurial success. The call for interdisciplinary collaboration reflects a recognition that diverse networks enrich entrepreneurial thinking and resource access (Bae et al. 2021; Santos & Liguori 2020).

The findings demonstrate the critical influence of structured mentorship and robust institutional ecosystems that provide funding, networking and expert advice. Effective mentorship connects students to entrepreneurial role models and practical knowledge, reducing uncertainties in venture creation. Institutional supports such as innovation hubs and seed funding serve to lower entry barriers and encourage risk-taking. Universities that foster rich mentor-student engagements and align institutional resources to entrepreneurial goals strengthen postgraduate students' pathways to business creation. There is also an emerging imperative to digitalise and modernise support systems to align with global entrepreneurial trends.

Customisation and programme design for diverse postgraduate needs

Another key theme involves the customisation of entrepreneurship programmes to address the diverse academic backgrounds, research interests and time constraints of postgraduate students. The following quotations support this theme:

> 'Establish and initiate a specialized unit to facilitate postgraduate entrepreneurship, offer respective career entrepreneurship modules.' (PG4)
>
> 'Programmes where students can work alongside founders, small supportive groups continue using university resources post-graduation.' (PG8)
>
> 'Allocate funds and resources for out-of-classroom practical learning. Postgraduate students tend to work in silos first step is to have societies for postgraduate students.' (M3)
>
> 'Identify sources of funding for SMMEs students can use knowledge for entrepreneurship in their specific fields, partnerships across disciplines.' (M4)
>
> 'More specialized courses or programmes, personalised mentorship more networking events with business owners and investors.' (L2)

These quotes suggest that postgraduate students require entrepreneurship education tailored to their advanced academic and professional contexts. According to the TPB, learning is most effective when it positively influences students' attitudes towards entrepreneurship, enhances their perceived behavioural control, and strengthens their entrepreneurial intentions. Custom modules, specialised mentorship, and flexible scheduling help shape favourable attitudes by addressing the unique needs of postgraduate students, while increasing their confidence and perceived ease in engaging with entrepreneurial activities (Atomsa 2024). Furthermore, interdisciplinary programme design fosters creativity and innovation by combining diverse skill sets, thereby influencing subjective norms and supporting the development of a rich entrepreneurial ecosystem (Muñoz & Kibler 2019; Wang et al. 2021).

The findings advocate for entrepreneurship education that recognises and responds to postgraduate students' heterogeneous needs and strengths. Customised curricula, dedicated support units and ongoing access to university resources beyond graduation increase programme relevance and impact. Promoting collaboration rather than silos enhances innovation and motivation. Such strategic programme design facilitates postgraduate students' entrepreneurial identities and capabilities, preparing them for venture creation that integrates their professional expertise and academic inquiry.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the enhancement of university entrepreneurship programmes targeted at postgraduate students, specifically to improve their entrepreneurial skills, mindset and venture creation capabilities. A qualitative methodology was adopted, using in-depth interviews and participant verbatim accounts from postgraduate students and mentors, aimed at understanding their experiences, needs and perceptions regarding existing entrepreneurship education offerings.

This study contributes significantly to the growing body of knowledge on entrepreneurship education by highlighting the unique challenges postgraduate students face and identifying key areas for programme improvement, such as experiential learning, mentorship, funding access, interdisciplinary collaboration and tailored programme customisation. It addresses a gap in understanding how universities can more effectively structure and support postgraduate entrepreneurship education, particularly within the contextual landscape of South African higher education.

The findings reveal three main research objectives:

- The critical role of experiential learning and practical engagement in entrepreneurship education, evidenced by students' calls for more workshops, incubators and real-world project opportunities that develop applied skills and self-efficacy.

- The importance of mentorship, institutional support and networking opportunities, which emerged as fundamental enablers for entrepreneurial intentions and venture growth, underscoring the value of guidance and resource accessibility.
- The necessity of customised programme design that accommodates the diverse academic and professional backgrounds of postgraduate students through flexible curricula, interdisciplinary collaboration and continued access to university resources post-graduation.

Practically, universities should prioritise the integration of hands-on experiential learning opportunities tailored to postgraduate needs, such as startup incubators, business plan workshops and competitions, while ensuring that ongoing mentorship and funding support are available. Managers must foster robust partnerships with industry and community stakeholders to expand funding pathways and networking platforms for students. Interdisciplinary programme designs that respect postgraduate diversity will create more meaningful and relevant entrepreneurial learning experiences. Establishing dedicated entrepreneurship units with specialised resources can increase programme visibility and impact. These recommendations can guide university administrators, educators and policymakers in strengthening the design and delivery of postgraduate entrepreneurship programmes, ultimately enhancing graduate entrepreneurial outcomes and fostering economic innovation within and beyond university contexts.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

CRediT authorship contribution

Ntomboxolo G. Chagi: Conceptualisation, Data curation, Investigation, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. Thobeka Ncanywa: Conceptualisation, Formal analysis, Methodology, Project administration, Resources. All authors reviewed the article, contributed to the discussion of results, approved the final version for submission and publication, and take responsibility for the integrity of its findings.

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Data availability

Data supporting this study is available from the corresponding author, Thobeka Ncanywa, upon reasonable request.

Disclaimer

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