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## Aligning Entrepreneurship Curriculum and Pedagogy for Graduate Entrepreneur Development: A Systematic Literature Review and an OBE-ELT Analytical Framework

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### Abstract

Despite growing attention to entrepreneurship education, the alignment between entrepreneurship curricula and pedagogy approaches remains inconsistent, limiting higher education institutions' ability to develop graduates with the skills and competencies required for entrepreneurship. While earlier studies have explored individual curriculum components or pedagogical approaches, limited research has integrated these elements into an analytical framework. To systematically identify, evaluate, and synthesise empirical studies on entrepreneurship curriculum and pedagogy, a comprehensive Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was adopted. In line with the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, 12 eligible studies were analysed to identify the theoretical perspectives, pedagogical practices, and curriculum determinants underpinning entrepreneurship education. The findings revealed that constructivist learning theory, cognitive learning theory, Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) constitute the principal theoretical foundation supporting curriculum-pedagogy alignment. Building on these findings, the study proposes an OBE-ELT analytical framework that integrates curriculum design, experiential pedagogy, entrepreneurial motivation, real-world learning activities, and graduate entrepreneur development. The framework explains how curriculum design and pedagogy practices can be systematically aligned to strengthen entrepreneurial competencies and graduate development. Furthermore,

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the study contributes to the entrepreneurship education literature by offering a synthesised analytical framework that advances understanding of curriculum-pedagogy alignment while providing practical guidance for curriculum designers, educators and higher education institutions.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship Education, Curriculum Alignment, Pedagogy, Graduate Entrepreneurs, Outcome-Based Education (OBE), Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), Higher Education, Conceptual Framework

## 1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship curriculum has become an important tool that promotes effective learning, enabling students to cultivate the necessary entrepreneurial skills and mindsets to address long-term societal issues, including unemployment, restricted wealth generation, and financial dependency (Iwu et al., 2024; Nzembayie et al., 2024). While pedagogical strategies are essential, Ayandibu (2025) and Nwachukwu et al. (2026) assert that the curriculum serves as a structured framework that promotes the development of the knowledge, skills and practical abilities necessary for graduates to engage in entrepreneurial endeavour. This is particularly important in South Africa, where high unemployment and persistent skills mismatches necessitate educational programmes that prepare students not only for employment but also for venture creation and economic independence (Bridge, 2017; Lahn & Erikson, 2016). Consistent with this imperative, government-funded initiatives such as Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) have emphasised the need for skills-based and competency-based programs that prepare graduates for work and self-employment (SETA, 2022). Similarly, Amjad et al. (2020) and Bell and Bell (2020) have argued that a well-structured curriculum and pedagogical practices foster creativity, innovative thinking, problem-solving, analytical reasoning, self-efficacy and entrepreneurial confidence.

Nonetheless, despite the perceived potential, data on substantial graduate involvement or positive outcomes within the national entrepreneurship ecosystem remain scarce (Tewari & Ilesanmi, 2020). This shortfall persists because the alignment of curriculum structure and delivery has not consistently translated into entrepreneurial competencies and real-world skills (Nwachukwu et al., 2026; Nzembayie et al., 2024; Udeozor et al., 2025). As Iwu (2022) and Udekwe and Iwu (2024) assert, entrepreneurship curriculum delivery remains predominantly theoretical, while pedagogical practice frequently lacks experiential exposure in various South African universities, hindering opportunities for skills development and practical problem-solving experience crucial for entrepreneurial preparedness. As a result, graduates may acquire conceptual knowledge without developing the applied competencies, confidence, and entrepreneurial mindsets necessary to navigate the complexities of venture creation (Rodrigues, 2023). Thus, this persistent disconnect underscores the need to integrate an analytical framework capable of explaining how entrepreneurship curricula and pedagogical practices can be systematically aligned to support the development of graduate entrepreneurs.

### 1.1. Entrepreneurship Curriculum and Pedagogy

While curriculum and pedagogy are inherently interdependent because they operate as two dimensions of the same educational process, curriculum refers to the articulation of the intended learning outcomes, while pedagogy encompasses the instructional strategies and learning

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processes through which intended outcomes are actualised (Ngoasong, 2022). Analysing the design and scope of the desired learning outcome shows that the curriculum is developed as a program framework (Japee & Oza, 2021), whereas pedagogy is typically understood as the training method through which these outcomes are achieved (Rodrigues, 2023). The entrepreneurship curriculum and pedagogical methodologies offer a comprehensive learning experience that equips graduates with the essential practical skills and knowledge required to initiate and maintain new enterprises (Matlay, 2019). Moreover, Ajani (2024) and Lackéus (2020) highlight that these components foster critical thinking and innovative capabilities, enabling learners to identify and seize opportunities for business start-ups. Thus, these positions enable graduates to effectively translate their competencies into entrepreneurial realities through venture creation, thereby contributing to job creation and reducing unemployment (Hägg & Gabrielsson, 2020).

## **1.2. Alignment of Entrepreneurship Curriculum and Pedagogy**

The alignment of curriculum-pedagogy in entrepreneurship education encompasses the conceptual alignment that specifies the learning content and shapes the teaching method (Boldureanu et al., 2020; Iwu et al., 2024). These two elements operate as complementary dimensions of entrepreneurship education, collectively creating an educational environment that develops entrepreneurial mindsets, competency and knowledge (Nzembayie et al., 2024). Hence, the conceptualisation of these components is essential for developing entrepreneurially competent graduates through meaningful entrepreneurial activities.

## **1.3. Theoretical Frameworks Pertinent to the Study**

The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) identified theories that support the study's aim. Among these, Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) emerged as the most appropriate theoretical foundations for explaining the alignment between curriculum design, pedagogical practices and graduate entrepreneur development (Peschl et al., 2021; Pradhan, 2021).

The OBE theory focuses on the achievement of clearly defined learning outcomes that guide the designed curriculum content, learning activities, instructional strategies and assessment practices (Pradhan, 2021). As a learner-centred educational approach, OBE specifies the knowledge, skills, competencies, and graduates' attributes expected upon completion of a programme of study (Asim et al., 2021; Driscoll & Wood, 2023). The key elements on which the OBE framework was built were the Learning activities, Learning assessments and Learning outcomes.

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) explains how entrepreneurial competencies are developed through experience, reflection, conceptualisation and experimentation (Ferreira, 2020; Motta & Galina, 2023; Peschl et al., 2021). According to Kolb (2014), learning occurs through a continuous four-stage cycle comprising concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. Within this context, these stages enable learners to transform experience into entrepreneurial knowledge and competence practice (Monllor et al., 2024; Oo et al., 2023; Perusso et al., 2020).

Separately, OBE and ELT provide valuable insights into entrepreneurship education. OBE aligns learning outcomes, curriculum, pedagogy, learning activities, and assessment, while ELT explains how entrepreneurial competencies are developed through experiential learning.

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Together, they offer a comprehensive framework for developing graduate entrepreneurs. (Driscoll & Wood, 2023). While the integration provides a more comprehensive analytical lens through which entrepreneurial competencies are acquired via authentic learning experiences (Monllor et al., 2024; Sultono et al., 2025).

Drawing on this integration-theoretical perspective, the study proposes an analytical construct to examine the alignment between the entrepreneurship curriculum and pedagogy. First, the curriculum dimension of OBE facilitates the evaluation of curriculum design and intended entrepreneurial learning outcomes within the programme competencies. Second, the pedagogical construct enables the examination of the experiential learning process that fosters entrepreneurial competence, consistent with ELT. Finally, the integration of these two theoretical perspectives informed both the analytical framework proposed in this study and the design of the systematic literature review used to identify and synthesis the relevance evidence.

## **2. Methodology**

As indicated by the study's overarching aim to develop graduate entrepreneurs, this research seeks to analyse the underlying framework or model that informs the entrepreneurship curriculum and its corresponding pedagogical approaches. This analysis enables the identification of factors that impede the effective alignment of these elements in cultivating graduate entrepreneurs. To achieve this objective, a systematic review methodology was employed. The review included peer-reviewed journal articles published in English between 2017 and 2025 that examined entrepreneurship curriculum, pedagogy, curriculum alignment, Outcome-Based Education, Experiential Learning Theory or graduate entrepreneur development. To extract the useful publications, all journals not written in English, studies lacking empirical relevance, non-peer-reviewed materials, and publications beyond the specified period were excluded. To ensure that the current literature was covered, only studies published within the past eight years were selected. In the preliminary stage, 250 articles were identified. Duplicated records were removed before titles, publication years, and abstracts were screened to assess the relevance of the study's objective. Subsequently, full-text reviews were conducted for shortlisted publications. Finally, 12 articles emerged from the systematic application of the eligibility criteria rather than from a predetermined, targeted number of publications.

### **2.1. Research Design**

A systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted to synthesise the existing evidence on the alignment of entrepreneurship curriculum and pedagogy for the development of graduate entrepreneurs. Unlike traditional narrative reviews, a systematic literature review was conducted using a transparent, rigorous, and replicable process to identify, select, appraise, and synthesise the relevant studies. Furthermore, the transparent review protocol enhances the reproducibility and credibility of the findings.

The review followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to ensure explicit methodological reporting across the search, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion stages (Shamseer et al., 2015; Wijaya et al., 2024). The objective is not to summarise the previous literature but to identify recurring theoretical perspectives, curriculum alignment strategies, pedagogical approaches, and learning processes

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that informed the development of integrated analytical frameworks grounded in Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and Experiential Learning Theory (ELT).

Given the fragmented nature of research on entrepreneurship curriculum alignment, an SLR was considered the most appropriate design because it enables the systematic integration of evidence from multiple empirical and conceptual studies while revealing patterns, knowledge gaps and opportunities for future curriculum development.

## 2.2. Search Strategies

The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) employed a structured search strategy to identify peer-reviewed studies examining the alignment between entrepreneurship curricula and pedagogy for the development of graduate entrepreneurs. The search was conducted using major academic databases and scholarly search platforms, including ScienceDirect, Scopus, Google Scholar, and Web of Science, which provide a broad range of resources for entrepreneurship, education, and higher education research (Gusenbauer & Haddaway, 2020). These databases are widely recognised as appropriate sources for identifying high-quality peer-reviewed literature for systematic reviews (Kraus et al., 2022).

To retrieve relevant studies, the keyword combination and Boolean operators were used. The primary search terms included *entrepreneurship education*, *entrepreneurship curriculum*, *curriculum alignment*, *pedagogy*, *Outcome-Based Education (OBE)*, *Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)*, and *graduate entrepreneurs*. While OBE and ELT were included in the search strategy based on their relevance to entrepreneurship education and curriculum alignment, the review was not restricted to these frameworks. Other theoretical perspectives identified in the literature were also considered. OBE and ELT were ultimately selected because they demonstrated the strongest alignment with the study's objectives and the evidence synthesised from the reviewed literature. These keywords were combined using Boolean operators (AND/OR) to refine the search (Wijaya et al., 2024). The search string examples include:

- ("entrepreneurship education" AND "Outcome-Based Education")
- ("entrepreneurship curriculum" AND pedagogy AND "Experiential Learning Theory")
- ("graduate entrepreneurs" AND "curriculum alignment")
- ("entrepreneurship education" AND higher education AND "experiential learning")

The search was confined to English-language, peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2017 and 2025 to engage in contemporary development of entrepreneurship education while ensuring the relevance of the evidence-based approach. The reference lists of the added studies were assessed to identify additional relevant publications that may not have been retrieved via the electronic database searches (Page et al., 2021).

## 2.3. Eligibility Criteria

In this SLR, explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were formulated before the screening process to ensure consistency in methodology and to minimise selection bias (Wijaya et al., 2024). The inclusion criteria focused on studies published in peer-reviewed academic journals, written in English, published between 2017 and 2025, and centred on entrepreneurship education within higher education institutions. Furthermore, studies that explicitly examined

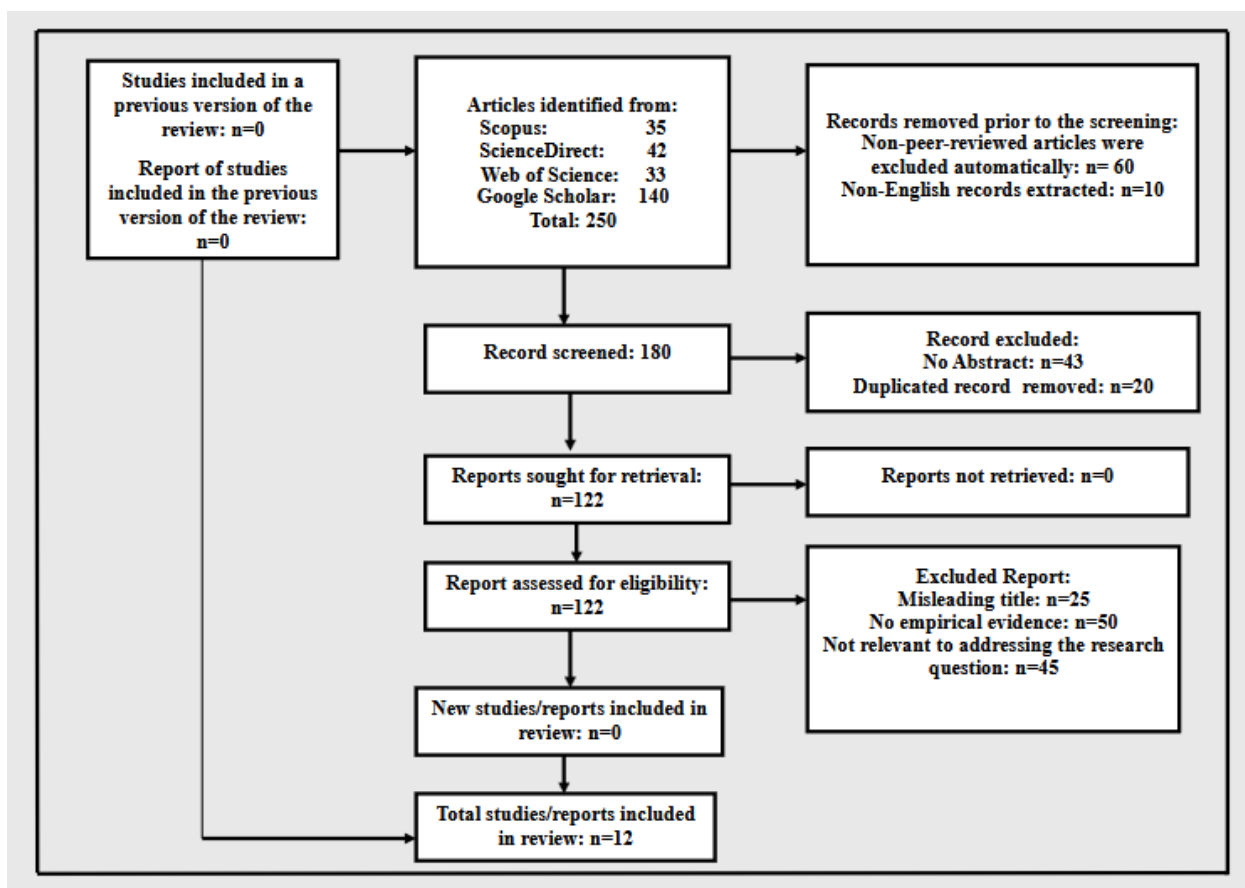
entrepreneurship curriculum, pedagogy, curriculum alignment, Outcome-Based Education (OBE), and Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) were included, which provided sufficient conceptual or empirical evidence relevant to graduate entrepreneur development. While the exclusivity criteria centred on publications on entrepreneurship outside higher education, not published in English, lacked sufficient methodology, and publications that did not directly address the alignment of entrepreneurship curriculum and pedagogy were not relevant to the objective of the review (Page et al., 2021).

## 2.4. Study Selection Process

The study selection process adhered to the PRISMA framework to ensure transparency and reproducibility. All retrieved records from the e-database search were imported for screening, and all duplicate records were excluded before proceeding to the title and abstract level. While the remaining studies were examined against the predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Full-text publications that satisfied the eligibility criteria were reviewed comprehensively. Although a large amount of literature was identified during the initial search on entrepreneurship education, only 12 studies met the eligibility criteria and directly addressed the review objectives of examining the alignment between the entrepreneurship curriculum, pedagogy, and graduate entrepreneurs' development. Therefore, the reasons for exclusion at each stage were summarised in the PRISMA framework (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1. PRISMA FRAMEWORK



Source: PRISMA protocol adapted from Page et al. (2021)

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## 2.5. Data Extraction

A structured data extraction approach was undertaken to maintain consistency across all the selected studies. Data extracted from each article include the author(s)' names, date of publication, geographic context, research objectives, theoretical framework, methodological approach, key findings, and implications for the entrepreneurship curriculum and pedagogy. While it is worth noting that particular attention was given to identifying evidence on Outcome-Based Education (OBE), Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), curriculum alignment, pedagogical strategies, entrepreneurship competencies, and graduate entrepreneur development.

## 2.6. Content Analysis

A qualitative content analysis was utilised to synthesise the results from the selected studies. Each article was given several comprehensive readings to identify recurring concepts, theoretical perspectives, pedagogical approaches, curriculum alignment strategies and entrepreneurship development outcomes. The extracted information was coded and organised in thematic categories that reflect common patterns across the literature.

Through an iterative procedure of comparison and synthesis, the thematic analysis identified five interrelated themes: curriculum design, pedagogical practices, entrepreneurship motivation, entrepreneurial learning, and graduate entrepreneur development. The relationships among these themes informed the development of the proposed analytical framework for Outcome-Based Education and Experiential Learning.

## 3. Empirical Outcomes

The systematic literature review identified entrepreneurship curriculum design as a central theme influencing graduate entrepreneur development. Across the reviewed studies, the entrepreneurship curriculum was consistently characterised as competency-oriented, with an emphasis on experiential learning, authentic assessment, and industry engagement (Bell, 2021; Du Toit & Kempen, 2020; Lee, 2020). Although individual studies differed in emphasis, there was a broad consensus that curriculum effectiveness depends on its alignment with pedagogical practices that foster entrepreneurial competency. Similarly, researchers like Donaldson et al. (2021), Hägg and Gabrielsson (2020), and Olutuase et al. (2023) have examined the link that connects entrepreneurship curricula and pedagogical techniques for equipping graduate entrepreneurs through effective practical learning and the promotion of entrepreneurial skills and competencies. Consequently, this research demonstrated that diverse conceptual perspectives utilised theories such as self-determination theory, cognitive and experiential learning theories, and entrepreneurship-education assessment for the framework analysis.

Different theoretical frameworks have also been adopted to evaluate how a well-designed entrepreneurship curriculum and pedagogy contribute to the development of entrepreneurial skills among graduates, using behaviourism, humanism, and action learning, as highlighted by several scholars (Bell, 2021; Nzembayie et al., 2024). The frameworks that further explained the importance of aligned curriculum and pedagogy are Outcome-Based Education (OBE), the entrepreneurial ecosystem framework, entrepreneurial competencies models, and curriculum adaptation frameworks (Bell & Bell, 2020; Japee & Oza, 2021; Ncube, 2022; Ngoasong, 2022). The examination of these studies helped identify the diverse models, frameworks, and

determining factors that have been applied to align curriculum and pedagogy in the delivery of entrepreneurship education.

TABLE 1. TWELVE ARTICLES APPLICABLE FOR THIS STUDY

| Author's Name and Year    | Objective                                                                                                                                                                | Theory Adopted                                                                                       | Determinant                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bell (2021)               | Examine to understand how entrepreneurship educators can align their teaching philosophy with effective pedagogical practice.                                            | Behavioural theory (BT), Constructivist theory (CT), Cognitive theory (CT), and Humanism Theory (HT) | Strengthen educators' pedagogical choices and effective practice                                                                    |
| Bell & Bell (2020)        | The study aimed to bridge theory and practice learning by integrating constructivism, objectivism, and Kolb's experiential learning                                      | Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)                                                                   | It identified the need to integrate theoretical and practical applications into entrepreneurship learning to enhance quality.       |
| Donaldson et al. (2021)   | Examined pedagogical engagement that influences graduates' entrepreneurial intentions.                                                                                   | Self-determination theory (SDT)                                                                      | Pedagogical innovation leads to student motivation.                                                                                 |
| Du Toit & Kempen (2020)   | The study found that insufficient pedagogical training and resources hinder effective entrepreneurship instruction, leading to inconsistent practices.                   | Constructivist Learning Theory (CLT)                                                                 | Developed a practical curriculum                                                                                                    |
| Hägg & Gabrielsson (2020) | Examined pedagogical approaches in entrepreneurial education.                                                                                                            | Cognitive Learning Theory (CLT) and Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)                               | Diversified theory for effective practical learning.                                                                                |
| Japee & Oza (2021)        | Examined enhancement of curriculum design and evaluation through Outcome-Based Education.                                                                                | Outcome-Based Education (OBE)                                                                        | Student-Oriented learning                                                                                                           |
| Lee (2020)                | The study explored how university students engage and learn within entrepreneurship education (EE) curricula and pedagogical frameworks.                                 | Constructivist Learning Theory (CLT)                                                                 | It revealed the need to align pedagogical methods with the development of entrepreneurial identities among students.                |
| Ncube (2022)              | The study assessed the implementation of EE, its role in developing entrepreneurial competencies, and its potential to address youth unemployment through self-reliance. | Entrepreneurial Competencies Theory (ECT) and EE Effectiveness Evaluation Models (EEEEEM)            | Highlighted the incoherent nature of entrepreneurship, insufficient competence of educators and underscored the need for alignment. |

|                         |                                                                                                                                |                                               |                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ngoasong (2022)         | The study examined factors influencing curriculum adaptation.                                                                  | Curriculum Adaptation Theory (CAT)            | Highlighted effective adaptation of the curriculum, blended learning attributes, and systemic implementation challenges. |
| Nzembayie et al. (2024) | Examine effective learning that foster entrepreneurial mindset                                                                 | Action-Learning theory (ADT)                  | Action learning, engagement and iterative                                                                                |
| Olutuase et al. (2023)  | Assess the extent to which EE programs are aligned with contextual realities for effective competencies and skill development. | Evaluation of Framework Theory (EFT)          | Entrepreneurship education, competencies, effectiveness and entrepreneurial development and skills.                      |
| Xu et al. (2023)        | Investigated the impact of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial intention.                                            | Self-Efficacy Theory and Event System Theory. | Entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, entrepreneurial experience, and entrepreneurial intention.    |

Source: own compilation/calculations based on data extracted from the 12 articles included in the systematic review (n=12)

#### 4. Results of Systematic Literature Review

Research indicates that the alignment of entrepreneurship curricula and pedagogical strategies is shaped by multiple factors, including learning outcomes, teaching approaches, and assessment practices. Bell (2021), Du Toit and Kempen (2020), and Lee (2020) found that the alignment of these elements contributes to curriculum fit and strengthens the development of entrepreneurial competencies. The related framework is reviewed critically to understand how a well-structured curriculum and pedagogy promote interactive learning experiences that empower graduates with entrepreneurial skills and competencies (Nwachukwu et al., 2026). While numerous studies have examined interventions aimed at aligning entrepreneurship curricula with contemporary pedagogical demands, such as formally structuring entrepreneurship as a discipline, integrating it into non-business programmes, providing early exposure to entrepreneurship education, bridging theoretical knowledge with practical application, establishing supportive institutional systems, and ensuring that lecturers possess specialised expertise in entrepreneurship (Bell, 2021; Du Toit & Kempen, 2020; Lee, 2020). All these measures are implemented to ensure that graduates receive an education that equips them with the entrepreneurial skills, knowledge, and competencies necessary for successful venture creation.

The comprehensive review of the literature showed that constructivist learning theory and cognitive theory are the most commonly used theoretical models for studying the alignment of the entrepreneurship curriculum and pedagogy to promote the development of graduates for entrepreneurial uptake. Moreover, several of these studies employed a single theoretical framework or model to evaluate the alignment of entrepreneurship curricula and pedagogy (Bell, 2021; Donaldson et al., 2020; Du Toit & Kempen, 2020; Lee, 2020; Japee & Oza, 2021; Ngoasong, 2022; Nzembayie et al., 2024; Olutuase et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2023). In contrast, other studies adopted multiple frameworks or models to investigate the effectiveness of entrepreneurship curricula and teaching methods in achieving alignment (Bell, 2021; Hägg & Gabrielsson, 2020; Ncube, 2022). Several reasons can be provided for incorporating multiple frameworks or variables when examining curriculum and pedagogy alignment. However,

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researchers argue that many existing models and frameworks are too fragmented to adequately contextualise the alignment of curriculum and pedagogy effectiveness (Hägg & Gabrielsson, 2020). Furthermore, as many of the existing curriculum and pedagogy models and frameworks proposed in prior research address only a limited range of the determinants influencing alignment, Nabi et al. (2017) highlighted that theoretical frameworks in entrepreneurship education are often disjointed and that more robust theoretical grounding is needed to understand the alignment between curriculum framework and learning processes.

#### **4.1. Curriculum Framework**

The curriculum framework comprises standards and competencies that serve as a roadmap, shaping entrepreneurship programmes and supporting systematic learning and graduate development (Iwu et al., 2024). A well-designed framework is therefore essential for producing graduates with the skills and competencies required for effective entrepreneurial practice. Without such structure, nurturing students who aspire to specialise in entrepreneurship becomes challenging. The entrepreneurship curriculum, in turn, encompasses the specific content, learning experiences, and activities designed to develop entrepreneurial competencies (Iwu et al., 2021). Within this framework, entrepreneurship education should be engaging, opportunity-driven, and sufficiently flexible to accommodate interdisciplinary programmes (Iwu, 2022; Nwachukwu et al., 2026). Such a framework can enhance the development of students' entrepreneurial talents and competencies.

##### *4.1.1. Curriculum Activities*

Curriculum activities indicate the extent to which an entrepreneurship curriculum delivers meaningful and engaging educational value beyond traditional theory-driven instruction (Lee, 2020; Xu et al., 2023). Therefore, it is recognised as a key determinant of how effectively entrepreneurship education fosters practical learning and prepares graduates for entrepreneurial practice, forming a foundational component of curriculum development by defining required competencies and learning outcomes that influence the design of teaching, learning and assessment activities. While considering this approach, students whose practical learning is denied may be disadvantaged in acquiring real-world problem-solving skills, gaining practical experience, and cultivating entrepreneurial mindsets and attitudes, compared to traditional classroom methodologies (Japee & Oza, 2021). Such activities enhance learners' readiness for entrepreneurial practice and increase the curriculum's relevance to both student and industry needs.

##### *4.1.2. Curriculum Characteristics – Opportunity-Driven*

Curriculum characteristics refer to the structured elements, such as learning outcomes, competencies, instructional activities, and assessments, that guide the execution of learning tasks. It ensures that curriculum design supports the expected outcomes of entrepreneurial skills and knowledge, encompassing competency foundations, structural coherence, and functional components that shape entrepreneurial knowledge and skills. According to Xu et al. (2023), curriculum characteristics represent the quality and relevance of the curriculum structure used to support learning activities and outcomes in entrepreneurship education. However, the OBE framework plays a vital role in shaping the designed curriculum, that equip an entrepreneurial mindset, such as opportunity recognition, creativity, problem-solving, and practical engagement.

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## 4.2. Theoretical Foundation

The qualitative content analysis of the twelve included studies identified several theoretical perspectives that underpin the alignment of entrepreneurship curriculum and pedagogy. Although the reviewed studies utilised different theoretical lenses, recurring patterns emerged regarding how entrepreneurship education should be designed to facilitate the development of graduate entrepreneurs. The analysis indicated that Constructivist Learning Theory (CLT) and cognitive learning theory (CLT) were the most frequently adopted perspectives, followed by Outcome-Based Education (OBE), Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), Self-Efficacy Theory (SET), Human Capital Theory (HCT), and Entrepreneurial Intentional Model (EIM) (Bell & Bell, 2020; Japee & Oza, 2021; Ncube, 2022; Ngoasong, 2022; Xu et al., 2023).

The findings suggest that entrepreneurship education is increasingly conceptualised as an active, learner-centred process in which entrepreneurial competencies are developed through purposeful curriculum design and authentic learning experiences rather than solely through knowledge transmission (Bell & Bell, 2020; Passarelli & Kolb, 2023). While Constructive and Cognitive perspectives explain how students construct entrepreneurial knowledge, Outcome-Based Education provide a framework for defining intended graduates' competencies, and Experiential Learning Theory explains the pedagogical process through which those competencies are acquired through experiences, reflections, conceptualisations and experimentation (Japee & Oza, 2021; Passarelli & Kolb, 2023; Pradhan, 2021).

The diversity of theoretical perspectives identified across the reviewed studies further demonstrates that no single theoretical perspective can adequately explain the complexity of the entrepreneurship curriculum and its pedagogical alignment, thereby supporting the development of the OBE-ELT analytical framework as an integrative approach (Nwachukwu et al., 2026). Consequently, the synthesis of the reviewed literature informed the development of the proposed analytical framework, which integrates Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and Experiential Learning Theory to provide a comprehensive explanation of how curriculum design and pedagogical practices collectively support the development of graduate entrepreneurs (Japee & Oza, 2021; Passarelli & Kolb, 2023).

## 4.3. ELT Pedagogy and Skill Development

The consolidation of the twelve reviewed studies demonstrated that Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) is one of the influential pedagogical perspectives for illustrating how entrepreneurship education develops entrepreneurial competencies (Karami & Tang, 2019). Across the reviewed studies, ELT appeared explicitly only in two articles, indicating that its application in entrepreneurship education research remains limited. Nevertheless, several studies have shown that learner-centred pedagogical approaches integrate authentic entrepreneurial experiences with structured reflection, conceptual understanding, and practical application. Rather than viewing entrepreneurship education solely as the transmission of theoretical knowledge, the reviewed evidence indicates that entrepreneurial competencies are more effectively developed through active engagement in experiential learning.

Drawing from the reviewed articles, the analysis identified three interrelated pedagogical dimensions through which ELT contributes to entrepreneurship education: (i) experiential pedagogy design, (ii) reflection and meaning making and (iii) active application and

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experimentation. Collectively, these dimensions explain how experiential learning enables students to transform classroom knowledge into entrepreneurial competencies while supporting the achievement of intended learning outcomes.

#### *4.3.1. Experiential Pedagogical Design*

This entails the use of strategical instruction to offer practical learning that enables students to acquire skills and competencies. It involves the use of simulations, practice-based exercises, case studies, role-play, and project-based learning, which enhance student learning through strategic teaching delivery in an active and reflective real-world environment (Bell & Bell, 2020). Hands-on learning fosters learners' development and builds confidence in displaying theoretical knowledge (Donaldson et al., 2021; Morris, 2020).

#### *4.3.2. Reflection Activities*

In ELT, reflective ability plays a significant role in skill development (Nzembayie et al., 2024). It ensures that learning engagement provides opportunities for reflection that help to analyse skills and knowledge, identify areas of strength and weakness, and apply experience in real-life lessons for personal growth (Hägg & Gabrielsson, 2020). This reflective process strengthens metacognitive skills and supports lifelong learning.

#### *4.3.3. Active Application and Experimentation*

In experiential learning, an active, hands-on approach to gaining knowledge and skills is paramount (Roberts, 2018). Through the cycle of action, feedback, and adjustment enhances their capacity for innovation, adaptability, and independent problem-solving (Amjad et al., 2020; Oo et al., 2023; Taneja et al., 2022). Bell (2021) and Bell and Bell (2020) suggest that experiential learning includes foundational (case studies, simulations, and problem-based learning), applied (industry projects, mentoring, and guest entrepreneur engagement), and authentic practice (internships, work-integrated learning, and venture creation). This progression demonstrates that experiential learning can be adapted to different learning outcomes and curriculum contexts. Collectively, these findings reinforce the complementary relationship between ELT and OBE. This indicates that ELT provides the pedagogical process for developing entrepreneurial competencies, while OBE ensures alignment with intended graduate outcomes and assessment. This, therefore, informs the proposed OBE-ELT analytical framework.

### **4.4. Development of the Proposed OBE-ELT Analytical Framework**

The synthesis of the twelve reviewed studies identified motivation as a critical contextual factor influencing the effectiveness of entrepreneurship curriculum and pedagogy (Donaldson et al., 2021). Across the reviewed literature, motivation was consistently associated with students' entrepreneurial confidence, opportunity recognition, self-efficacy and willingness to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Donaldson et al., 2021). The findings indicate that motivation is not developed through curriculum content alone but is strengthened through authentic learning experiences, mentorship, early entrepreneurial exposure and supportive institutional environments.

The review further revealed that the entrepreneurship curriculum fosters entrepreneurial motivation by incorporating experiential learning opportunities, work-integrating learning, industry engagement, and mentorship, while simultaneously enhancing educators' capacity to facilitate entrepreneurial learning (Udekwe & Iwu, 2024). Collectively, these findings suggest

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that motivation provides the contextual foundation for the development of entrepreneurial competencies.

#### *4.4.1. Explanation of the Proposed OBE-ELT Analytical Framework*

As illustrated in Figure 2, the proposed framework consists of five interrelated components that collectively explain how entrepreneurship curriculum and pedagogy contribute to the development of graduate entrepreneurs (Nwachukwu et al., 2026; Passarelli & Kolb, 2023). Although presented sequentially, each component functions as a continuous, iterative process in which curriculum design, pedagogy, assessment, and graduate outcomes continually inform one another (Pradhan, 2021).

Outcome-Based curriculum design forms the foundation of the framework by defining the entrepreneurial competencies and learning outcomes expected from entrepreneurship education (Pradhan, 2021). Curriculum alignment ensures that pedagogical strategies and assessment practices remain directly linked to these intended outcomes (Driscoll & Wood, 2023).

Experiential pedagogical implementation represents the instructional process through which students actively engage in entrepreneurial learning. Consistent with experiential learning theory, experiential pedagogical strategies include business simulation, problem-based learning, industry projects, mentoring, work-integrated learning, and venture creation activities that enable students to translate theoretical knowledge into entrepreneurial practice (Kolb, 2014; Motta & Galina, 2023; Passarelli & Kolb, 2023).

Reflection, feedback, and authentic assessment provide the mechanisms that reinforce entrepreneurial learning. Continuous reflections enable students to evaluate their experience, while authentic and constructive feedback supports competency development and provides evidence of achievement of intended learning outcomes (Driscoll & Wood, 2023; Kolb, 2014).

The interaction of these components contributes to graduate entrepreneur development, reflected in enhanced entrepreneurial knowledge, opportunity recognition, innovation capability, self-efficacy, problem-solving ability, an entrepreneurial mindset, and readiness for venture creation, intrapreneurship, or other forms of entrepreneurial engagement (Bell & Bell, 2020; Nwachukwu et al., 2026; Passarelli & Kolb, 2023).

Finally, the framework incorporates a continuous curriculum improvement process in which evidence obtained from assessment outcomes, reflective practices and continuous feedback informs the identification of gaps and improvement needs, guiding curriculum and pedagogical revisions, implementation enhancements and subsequent monitoring and evaluation. This continuous feedback loop ensures that entrepreneurship education remains responsive to changing industry needs, institutional priorities and graduate employability requirements (Driscoll & Wood, 2023; SETA, 2025).

#### *4.4.2. Analysis of Task Characteristics*

The reviewed studies identified task characteristics as an important factor in entrepreneurship education. This finding informed the inclusion of task characteristics as a core component of the proposed OBE-ELT analytical framework. Within Experiential Learning Theory, task characteristics are defined by their capacity to create authentic or stimulated entrepreneurial experience through fieldwork, stimulation, laboratories, action learning, case studies, and

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practical projects that actively engage learners and promote entrepreneurial motivation and cognitive development (Bell, 2021; Donaldson et al., 2020; Du Toit & Kempen, 2020; Lee, 2020; Japee & Oza, 2021; Udekwe & Iwu, 2024; Xu et al., 2023). The review further revealed that experience-based tasks such as business planning, pitching, market research, and prototyping help learners to connect theoretical knowledge with entrepreneurial practice. Consequently, entrepreneurship curriculum and pedagogy should incorporate coherent, practice-oriented learning task that aligns intended learning outcomes with authentic entrepreneurial competencies, thereby reducing the gap between classroom learning and entrepreneurial practice (Ngoasong, 2022; Nzembayie et al., 2024).

#### *4.4.3. Development of Graduate Entrepreneurs*

The reviewed studies identified graduate entrepreneur development as a principal outcome of aligning entrepreneurship curriculum and pedagogy through Outcome-Based Education and Experiential Learning Theory. The findings indicate that graduates develop entrepreneurial knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviour through authentic learning experiences supported by mentorship, work-integrated learning, early entrepreneurial exposure, and educators' expertise (Bell & Bell, 2020; Olutuase et al., 2023). These pedagogical mechanisms collectively strengthen entrepreneurial capacity by enabling students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts.

The synthesis further revealed that effective entrepreneurship depends on educators who are competent in experiential pedagogies and capable of facilitating active, learner-centred engagement. According to Japee and Oza (2021), entrepreneurship curriculum that integrate structured experiential learning, skilled facilitators, supportive learning environments, and authentic entrepreneurial activities are more likely to cultivate graduates who possess the confidence, competence, and commitment required for entrepreneurial practice.

#### **4.5. Conceptual Integration of the Proposed OBE-ELT Analytical Framework**

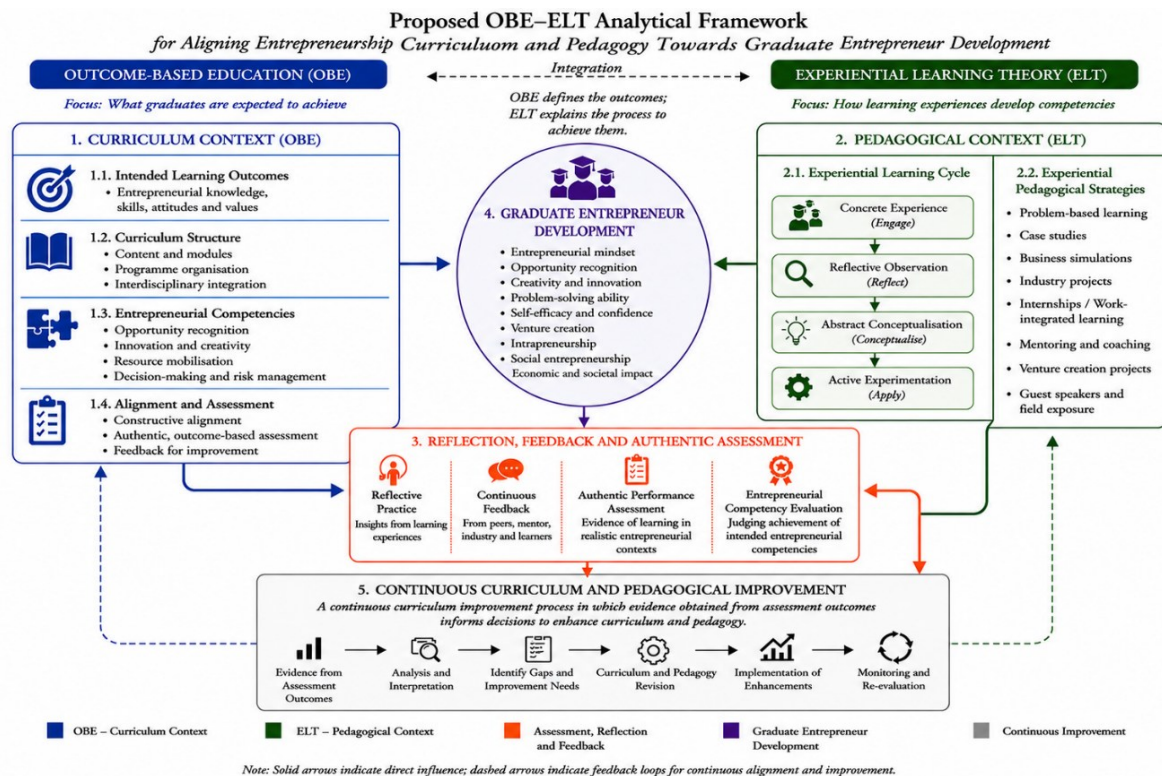
The synthesis of the reviewed studies provides the conceptual rational for integrating Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) within the proposed analytical framework. The findings demonstrate that effective entrepreneurship education depends on aligning clearly defined entrepreneurial learning outcomes with experiential pedagogical practices that enable students to develop entrepreneurial competencies through authentic learning experiences. While OBE establishes the intended graduates' outcomes and guides curriculum alignment, ELT provides the pedagogical processes through which these outcomes are achieved through concrete experiences, reflective observations, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation.

The review further revealed that effective teaching, reflective practice and active application constitute the core pedagogical mechanisms underpinning entrepreneurial competency development (Du Toit & Kempen, 2020; Japee & Oza, 2021; Lee, 2020; Xu et al., 2023). These pedagogical processes are reinforced through coherent curriculum design, authentic learning activities, appropriate task characteristics and constructive curriculum alignment, collectively enhancing the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education and supporting graduate entrepreneur development (Bell, 2021; Donaldson et al., 2020).

The proposed framework also highlights the complementary roles of motivation and task characteristics in strengthening experiential learning. Early entrepreneurial exposure,

mentorship, educators' expertise, and work-integrated programs create supportive conditions that foster entrepreneurial confidence and readiness, while authentic learning tasks facilitate the transfer of entrepreneurial knowledge into practice. Collectively, these interrelated components provide a coherent explanation of how curriculum design and pedagogy can be systematically aligned to develop graduates with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours required for entrepreneurial practice, as shown in Figure 2 below.

FIGURE 2 PROPOSED OBE-ELT ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK



Source: authors' compilation

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Theoretical Contributions of the Proposed OBE-ELT Analytical Framework

The findings of this systematic literature review extend entrepreneurship education by providing a synthesised analytical framework that integrates Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) to explain the alignment among the entrepreneurship curriculum, pedagogy, and graduate entrepreneur development (Bell, 2021; Donaldson et al., 2020; Japee & Oza, 2021; Ngoasong, 2022; Nzembayie et al., 2024; Olutuase et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2023). While previous studies have examined entrepreneurship curriculum design, experiential learning and entrepreneurial competency development independently, the present review demonstrates that these dimensions are most effective when considered as complementary and mutually reinforcing educational processes (Du Toit & Kempen, 2020; Lee, 2020).

The findings are broadly consistent with the systematic review by Motta and Galina (2023), which concluded that experiential learning plays a central role in entrepreneurship education by promoting active engagement, reflection and authentic learning experiences. However, whereas Motta and Galina primarily synthesised experiential learning approaches, the present

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study advances the literature by integrating these pedagogical processes within an Outcome-Based Education framework (Iwu et al., 2024; Ncube, 2022; Nwachukwu et al., 2026). This integration explains not only how entrepreneurial competencies are developed but also how curriculum design, learning outcomes, pedagogy and assessment can be systematically aligned to support graduate entrepreneur development in South Africa.

Similarly, the findings complement the broader systematic literature review conducted by Sultono et al. (2025), which analysed a substantially larger body of entrepreneurship education literature and identified dominant theoretical perspectives and emerging research trends. Rather than seeking to provide a comprehensive mapping of the entire entrepreneurship education field, the present review adopted a focused synthesis of studies that explicitly examined entrepreneurship curriculum alignment and pedagogical practices. Consequently, the proposed analytical framework offers a more targeted conceptual explanation of how curriculum alignment can be operationalised through the integration of OBE and ELT (Ngoasong, 2022; Nzembayie et al., 2024).

The principal theoretical contribution of this study, therefore, lies not in introducing new educational theories but in synthesising existing theoretical perspectives into a coherent analytical framework that explains the relationships among curriculum design, experiential pedagogy, authentic learning activities, entrepreneurial motivation and graduate entrepreneur development. By conceptualising these elements as an interconnected educational system rather than isolate curriculum components, the framework provides a stronger theoretical foundation for future empirical investigations into entrepreneurship curriculum alignment.

## **5.2. Practical Implications for Entrepreneurship Curriculum and Pedagogy**

The proposed OBE-ELT analytical framework offers practical guidance for curriculum designers, educators and South Africa's higher education institutions seeking to strengthen entrepreneurship education. By integrating Outcome-Based Education with Experiential Learning Theory, the framework provides a structural approach for aligning intended learning outcomes, curriculum content, pedagogical strategies, and assessment practices to support graduate entrepreneur development.

For curriculum designers, the framework emphasised the constructive alignment of entrepreneurial competencies with curriculum content, learning activities, and assessment. For educators, it advocates progressive, authentic, experiential learning through case studies, simulations, problem-based learning, industry projects, mentoring, work-integrated learning, and venture creation, supported by reflective practices to strengthen entrepreneurial competencies.

The framework also informs institutional quality assurance by encouraging continuous evaluation of graduate outcomes, stakeholder feedback, and curriculum review to ensure that entrepreneurship programs remain responsive to changing industry needs. Overall, it offers a practical roadmap for systematically aligning entrepreneurship curriculum and pedagogy to develop entrepreneurial graduates across diverse higher education institutions.

## **5.3. Implications for Higher Education and Graduate Entrepreneurs' Development**

The findings of this study have broader implications for South Africa's higher education institutions seeking to produce graduates equipped to thrive in a dynamic entrepreneurship

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ecosystem. The proposed OBE-ELT analytical framework demonstrates that graduate entrepreneur development requires a systematic alignment of curriculum design, experiential pedagogy, authentic assessment, and continuous curriculum improvement. Beyond preparing graduates to establish new ventures, the framework supports the development of entrepreneurial competencies applicable across employment, innovation, intrapreneurship and social entrepreneurship. Consequently, higher education institutions can utilise the framework to strengthen curriculum quality, enhance graduate employability and contribute to sustainable economic and societal development.

#### **5.4. Limitations and Future Research**

The study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the review was restricted to English-language, peer-reviewed studies identified through Scopus, Web of Science, Direct Science and Google Scholar. Consequently, relevant studies published in other languages or indexed in other databases may have been excluded. Second, although the systematic selection process yielded twelve studies that met all predefined inclusion criteria, the proposed analytical framework represents a conceptual synthesis rather than an empirically validated model. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within the scope of the selected literature.

Future research should empirically test the proposed OBE-ELT analytical framework across diverse higher education contexts to examine its applicability and effectiveness in strengthening entrepreneurship curriculum alignment and graduate entrepreneur development. Comparative studies across disciplines, institutional settings, and national contexts would further enhance understanding of how curriculum design and experiential pedagogy interact to develop entrepreneurial competencies.

#### **6. Conclusion**

By adopting a systematic literature review approach, this study identified, evaluated and critically analysed empirical research evidence on the alignment of entrepreneurship curriculum and pedagogy for graduate entrepreneur development in South Africa. Through the rigorous application of predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, the review identified the key theoretical perspectives, pedagogical practices, and curriculum determinants that influence entrepreneurship education. Based on this synthesis, this study proposed an analytical framework integrating Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) to provide a comprehensive conceptual explanation of how curriculum design and pedagogical practices can be systematically aligned to develop entrepreneurial graduates in South Africa higher education institutions.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

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### **Data Availability**

Data supporting the conclusions of this study can be made available upon reasonable request from the corresponding author.

### **AI Use**

The author(s) affirm that any use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools in the preparation of this manuscript was strictly limited to language editing, grammar, readability, and technical writing support. Such use has been fully and transparently disclosed. AI tools were not used to generate, analyse, or interpret the research data, to select the studies included in the systematic literature review, to develop the analytical framework, or to draw the study's conclusions. The authors further confirm that all cited sources are

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authentic, accurately referenced, and independently verified by the authors. Full responsibility for the content, accuracy, and integrity of this article remains with the authors.

### **Ethics Statement**

This study received ethical approval from the relevant institutional Research Ethics Committee prior to commencement. Although this research was conducted as a Systematic Literature Review based exclusively on published literature and did not involve direct data collection from human participants, the study was undertaken in accordance with the institutional requirements for ethical approval. The review was conducted in line with recognised principles of research integrity, transparency, and ethical scholarship, and all sources included in the review have been appropriately acknowledged and cited.

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