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Skill-Based Learning and the Entrepreneurial Outlook of Humanities Undergraduates

Dolly Mogra* and Simple Jain**

*Assistant Professor, Dept. of Fashion Technology & Designing, Mohanlal Sukhadia Dept. University, Udaipur, Rajasthan
** Assistant Professor, Extension Education and Communication management, Sardarkrushinagar Dantiwada Agricultural University, Gujarat

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the relationship between skill-based learning and the entrepreneurial outlook of Humanities undergraduates. The study surveyed 230 students from undergraduate colleges affiliated with Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur, using a structured bilingual (English–Hindi) questionnaire. The questionnaire included items to capture students' perceptions of essential entrepreneurial skills, their interest in skill-based education, and their opinions on integrating entrepreneurship into the curriculum. Random sampling method was used for sample selection. The was analysed by using frequency, percentages, Pearson correlation and Chi-square test. Findings reveal that Humanities students recognize the importance of entrepreneurial skills, particularly communication, leadership, and marketing, and express strong support for practical, skill-driven modules in their curriculum. The study emphasizes the emerging entrepreneurial orientation of Humanities undergraduates and calls for curriculum reforms that embed skill-based modules, ensuring closer alignment between academic learning and evolving career trajectories.

Keywords : Entrepreneurship, curriculum, student, skill base learning Entrepreneurship

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurial skills have traditionally been associated with business, management, and technology disciplines. However, in today's rapidly evolving job market, graduates of the Humanities are increasingly required to demonstrate competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, resilience, communication, teamwork, and opportunity recognition (Gibb, 2005; Nabi et al., 2017; Bacigalupo et al., 2016). These transferable skills not only enhance employability but also empower students to contribute as innovators and intrapreneurs across diverse sectors. The interdisciplinary nature of contemporary employment underscores the importance of equipping Humanities students with entrepreneurial mindsets (European Commission, 2013). Accordingly, higher education institutions worldwide are expanding entrepreneurship education beyond business schools, embedding skill-based learning modules across disciplines to prepare students for dynamic and uncertain labour markets (QAA, 2018; OECD, 2015). Despite these reforms, participation of Humanities students in entrepreneurship-

related courses and skill-based learning remains relatively low (Henry et al., 2017). One possible explanation is that students often perceive entrepreneurial skills as less relevant to their academic training or professional aspirations. Entrepreneurial skills are the competencies, traits, and mindsets that allow someone to turn ideas into action, launch new ventures, and effectively manage and grow them whereas Skill-based learning is a method of education and training that emphasizes the practical acquisition of skills through active participation and direct application. In this context, the present study investigates how Humanities undergraduates perceive entrepreneurial skills and how these perceptions influence their engagement with skill-based learning. It further explores preferences for curriculum integration to better align teaching practices with students' expectations. By focusing on Humanities students, this study addresses a crucial gap in entrepreneurship education and contributes to ongoing discussions on employability, adaptability, and holistic skill development.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Entrepreneurship education has increasingly been recognized as a valuable dimension of higher education across disciplines. Gibb (2005) and Nabi et al. (2017) argue that entrepreneurship education fosters adaptability, problem-solving, and resilience, enabling students to navigate uncertain job markets. Bacigalupo et al. (2016) highlight the significance of creativity, teamwork, and financial literacy as transferable competencies that shape entrepreneurial mindsets. The European Commission (2013) also recommends embedding entrepreneurship across all academic programs, including Humanities, to ensure graduates are better prepared for evolving professional landscapes.

Despite such global emphasis, Henry et al. (2017) report that Humanities students exhibit comparatively lower participation in entrepreneurship education. This reluctance may be linked to the perception that entrepreneurial skills are more aligned with business or technical careers. Matlay (2008) and QAA (2018) emphasize that contextualizing entrepreneurship within specific disciplines is essential for improving relevance and acceptance among students.

In the Indian context, several studies reinforce the need for strengthening skill-based learning within Humanities education. Mogra (2022), in her study *"Knowledge Towards Skill Based Courses among Higher Education Students of MohanlalSukhadia University, Udaipur"*, observed that while awareness of skill-based courses is widespread, effective curriculum design and motivational frameworks are crucial to enhancing active student engagement. Similarly, Jain and Mogra (2017), in their work on *"Effectiveness of Skill Development Training on Textile Embellishment"*, demonstrated that structured training not only enhanced students' technical skills but also fostered creativity and entrepreneurial aspirations.

Verma and Singh (2021) also note that entrepreneurship education in Indian universities encourages innovation and risk-taking abilities, particularly when supported by practical projects, internships, and field-based assignments. Collectively, these studies underscore the potential of entrepreneurship education to enrich

Humanities curricula, provided it is delivered in contextually meaningful ways.

Objective:

1. To identify the perceived importance of entrepreneurial skills of Humanities students.
2. To assess students' opinion about integration of entrepreneurship related courses in curriculum.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted across five undergraduate colleges affiliated with Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur, Rajasthan. These institutions offer a wide range of Humanities disciplines, both practical and non-practical, serving a diverse student population from rural, semi-urban, and urban areas of southern Rajasthan. Random sampling method was used for sample selection. Forty six undergraduate Humanities students were selected from each college. Thus the total sample consisted of 230 undergraduate Humanities students. Among the respondents, 62 students were pursuing additional skill-based courses (e.g., drawing, painting, music) from sources outside the university, while 168 students were not enrolled in such courses. Questionnaire method was used for collecting data. A structured bilingual (English–Hindi) questionnaire was developed by researcher. It consisted two sections. Section one assessed the perceived importance of entrepreneurial skills and interest in skill-based education. A list of six entrepreneurial skills were finalised and rated on three point continuum i.e. very important, important and not important. Section second check the opinion of the students regarding integration of entrepreneurship related courses in curriculum. Students were approached personally after obtaining permission from the respective Heads of Departments, and responses were collected in person. The data was coded and analyzed using frequency, percentages, Pearson correlation, and Chi-square test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Perceived importance of entrepreneurial skills of Humanities students

Table 1 presents the data regarding perceived importance of entrepreneurial skills of Humanities undergraduates'. The data show that soft skills communication and negotiation (70%), leadership and team management (62.17%), and marketing and branding (57.83%) were the most important skills required for entrepreneurial success in comparison to financial and budget management (50%) and technical/IT or design skills (44.78%). While legal and regulatory knowledge was considered very important by only 34.78 per cent of respondents that show lower perceived relevance among students. The findings indicated that the students had strong emphasis on interpersonal and managerial abilities over more technical or regulatory skills. The undervaluation of financial, technical, and legal skills by Humanities students reflects that the disciplinary orientation of Humanities education is often centred on critical thinking, cultural analysis, creativity, and human interaction rather than quantitative or technical domains. Consequently, students naturally perceive communication, persuasion, and leadership

as extensions of their academic and personal skill sets, while considering financial management, technical proficiency, and legal knowledge as specialised areas belonging to commerce, business, or science graduates. Many Humanities students may have limited formal exposure to entrepreneurship-related subjects during their course work. Their curricula tend to prioritise theoretical, interpretive, and value-based knowledge, often leaving less space for structured training in business finance, digital tools, or legal frameworks. This limited exposure contributes to a perception that such skills are peripheral or less urgent for entrepreneurial success.

The finding of the study are in line with a research by Henry et al. (2017) who suggested that students often discount the relevance of regulatory knowledge unless it is directly tied to professional practice. As per Bacigalupo et al. (2016) soft skills remain central to students' conception of entrepreneurship, reinforcing the argument for embedding such competencies in Humanities curricula. The findings highlight that student had preferences for practical modules focused on communication, leadership, and marketing within Humanities programs. Integrating these skill areas into the curriculum may significantly enhance entrepreneurial outlooks and student engagement in skill-based, employability driven education. Therefore, the need for curriculum reforms that prioritize soft skills and interpersonal competencies, while simultaneously raising awareness about the importance of financial, technical, and legal knowledge for successful entrepreneurship.

Table 1. Distribution of the respondents as per the perceived importance of entrepreneurial skills n=230

S. No.	Entrepreneurial Skill	Very Important f (%)	Important f (%)	Not Important f (%)
1.	Communication & Negotiation	161 (70.00)	57 (24.78)	12 (5.22)
2.	Leadership & Team Management	143 (62.17)	69 (30.00)	18 (7.83)
3.	Marketing & Branding	133 (57.83)	81 (35.22)	16 (6.95)
4.	Financial & Budget Management	115 (50.00)	92 (40.00)	23 (10.00)
5.	Technical/IT or Design Skills	103(44.78)	97 (42.17)	30 (13.05)
6.	Legal & Regulatory Knowledge	80(34.78)	104 (45.22)	46 (20.00)

Table 2 : Distribution of the respondents as per their interest in skill-based education

Skill-Based Course Interest	Yes (%)	No (%)
Interested in at least one course	62%	38%

This table describes that a majority (62%) of students expressed interest in enrolling in skill-based courses. Students who rated soft skills such as communication and leadership as very important were more likely to show interest in skill-based education. These results align with Matlay (2008), who emphasized that perception of relevance strongly influences participation. Although a majority of students indicated their willingness to enrol in skill-based courses but 38 per cent reported no interest. This disinterest may be attributed to multiple academic, structural, and personal factors. Many students in traditional disciplines-especially in the Humanities and Social Sciences often prioritise theoretical knowledge and examination performance, perceiving skill-based courses as peripheral rather than central to their career progression. Lack of awareness and exposure to the potential benefits of such courses may limit motivation. Students who are unfamiliar with employability gaps or who underestimate the role of practical competencies may not recognise the immediate utility of skills training. Another reason lies in institutional challenges. In several universities, skill-oriented modules are offered as add-ons rather than integrated into mainstream curricula, creating extra workload and time pressure. Consequently, students already burdened with examinations may hesitate to engage in additional commitments. Economic factors also play a role, as some students perceive certification based skill courses as costly or less accessible, particularly when they involve private providers or online platforms requiring digital infrastructure. Therefore, the non participation rate underscores the importance of integrating skill-based education more organically into formal programmes, raising awareness about its relevance, and ensuring that it is both accessible and contextually aligned to diverse student aspirations.

Table 3 : Pearson correlation between students' perceived importance of entrepreneurial skills and their interest in skill-based education **n=230**

Sr. No.	Entrepreneurial Skill	Interest in skill-based education	
		'r'	p-value
1.	Communication & Negotiation	0.45	< .01
2.	Leadership & Team Management	0.38	< .01
3.	Marketing & Branding	0.34	< .01
4.	Financial & Budget Management	0.30	< .05
5.	Technical/IT or Design Skills	0.22	< .05
6.	Legal & Regulatory Knowledge	0.18	> .05

r= correlation coefficient

The data presented in Table 3 indicate a strong positive correlation between students' perceived importance of entrepreneurial skills and their interest in skill-based learning. The strong correlation was observed for communication and negotiation skills (r = .45), emphasizing its central role in entrepreneurship. This shows the pivotal role of interpersonal interaction in entrepreneurial contexts. Entrepreneurs must effectively

pitch ideas, negotiate deals, collaborate with stakeholders, and lead diverse teams' activities that rely heavily on these skills. The alignment of student interest with communication based training suggests that they recognize its utility in both self-employment and corporate settings.

Leadership and team management (r = .38) and marketing (r = .34) also showed significant relationships. These findings can be interpreted as strengthening these abilities enhances the students' capacity to initiate and sustain ventures. Leadership, in particular, is closely associated with opportunity recognition, strategic planning, and vision articulation. Similarly marketing is vital for product positioning, customer acquisition, and brand building which are core components of entrepreneurial activity. In contrast, legal and regulatory knowledge had the weakest and statistically insignificant correlation (r = .18, p > .05) which show that students may undervalue or misunderstand its relevance. This finding highlights a potential awareness gap, which educators can address by contextualizing legal frameworks in entrepreneurial training modules.

Students' opinion about integration of entrepreneurship related courses in curriculum

Table 4 : Distribution of the respondents as per the opinion of the students regarding integration of entrepreneurship related courses in curriculum n=230

Curriculum Opinion	Previously Enrolled in skill based courses (%)	Not Enrolled (%)	Total
Strongly Agree	36 (15.65%)	79 (34.35%)	115 (50.00%)
Agree	18 (7.83%)	51 (22.17%)	69 (30.00%)
Neutral	5 (2.17%)	18 (7.83%)	23(10.00%)
Disagree	2 (0.87%)	14 (6.09%)	16 (6.96%)
Strongly Disagree	1 (0.43%)	6 (2.61%)	7 (3.04%)

Students divided based on prior enrolment in skill-based or entrepreneurship-related courses

STATISTICAL RESULT

Chi-Square (χ^2) = 11.58, df = 4, **p = .020**

The data in Table 4 presents the opinions of students regarding the integration of entrepreneurship-related courses into the academic curriculum and differentiated by whether students had previously enrolled in skill-based or entrepreneurship-related courses. The data highlights that the acceptance of entrepreneurship education and the effect of prior exposure to such courses on student perception. A majority of students (50.00%) strongly agreed with integrating entrepreneurship courses. Enrolment wise distribution shows that 34.35 per cent belonged to the 'not enrolled' group, while 15.65 per cent were from the 'enrolled' group. This indicates that even students without prior exposure recognise the value of entrepreneurship in the curriculum. It might be due to the growing social and economic awareness about self-employment, start-ups, and government initiatives like Start-up

India and Skill India. For those enrolled earlier, the positive response likely stems from first-hand experiences of how skill-based learning enhances employability and practical knowledge. Findings further show that 30.00 per cent students were agree to integrate entrepreneurship related courses in curriculum which included 22.17 per cent of not-enrolled students and 7.83 per cent of enrolled students. The moderate agreement of not enrolled students could be due to uncertainty about course utility without practical exposure. On the other hand, those who had enrolled might have encountered limitations in course delivery, quality, or lack of linkage with market opportunities, leading to a somewhat cautious stance. A very few students (10.00%) remained neutral comprised 7.83 per cent non-enrolled and 2.17 per cent enrolled students. The reason behind indecisiveness might be lack of sufficient information. The 'Disagree' group (6.96%) consisted of 6.09 per cent not-enrolled and 0.87 per cent enrolled students. 3.04 percent students strongly disagreed which included the non-enrolled (2.61%) and the enrolled (0.43%) students. Strong disapproval among non-enrolled respondents may reveal that scepticism about entrepreneurship as a viable career path, financial risks associated with start-ups, or a preference for conventional career trajectories. The very low disagreement among enrolled students highlights that direct exposure reduces misconceptions and enhances perceived relevance.

The chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 11.58$, df = 4, p = .020) shows a statistically significant association between students' opinions on curriculum integration and their actual enrollment in skill-based or entrepreneurship training. This shows that supportive attitudes towards entrepreneurship within the academic framework are positively correlated with proactive engagement in skill-based or vocational learning opportunities. These findings reinforce the importance of embedding entrepreneurship education in Humanities curricula which highlight that students who perceive value in such learning are more likely to seek relevant practical experiences, thereby bridging theoretical knowledge with applied skills. These findings support QAA (2018), which highlighted that supportive academic environments encourage greater student participation in entrepreneurial learning. Jain and Mogra (2017), in their study *"Effectiveness of Skill Development Training on Textile Embellishment"*, found that skill development training significantly enhanced students' creativity and self-reliance. The findings indicated that skill-based programs are not only employment-oriented but also encourage students towards entrepreneurial ventures.

Conclusion

The study reveals that Humanities undergraduates recognize the importance of entrepreneurial skills, particularly soft skills, and show considerable interest in skill-based learning. Students who favor curriculum reforms that integrate entrepreneurship are more likely to participate in practical courses.In the Indian context, recent research has also explored students' knowledge and attitudes towards such courses. These findings highlight the need for Humanities programs to embed skill-based modules, aligning academic learning with evolving career trajectories. A focus on communication, leadership, and marketing, combined with exposure to entrepreneurial

practices, can strengthen students' readiness for diverse professional pathways.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Curriculum Integration: Introduce entrepreneurship-focused modules in Humanities programs.
2. Skill Development Workshops: Provide training in communication, leadership, marketing, and teamwork.
3. Awareness Sessions: Raise awareness about legal frameworks, financial literacy, and regulatory compliance.
4. Student-Centered Programs: Design electives and extracurricular activities based on student feedback.
5. Institutional Collaboration: Partner with businesses, NGOs, and startups for mentorship and internships.

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