

The Influence of Action-Oriented Andragogy on Entrepreneurial Intentions among University Students in Kenya: Implications for Competency-Based Higher Education

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Abstract

Entrepreneurship education has increasingly become a strategic intervention to address graduate unemployment, stimulate innovation, and promote sustainable economic development. Despite substantial investment in entrepreneurship programmes within universities, graduate participation in entrepreneurial ventures remains comparatively low, suggesting that conventional instructional approaches may be inadequate in developing entrepreneurial competencies. This study investigated the influence of action-oriented andragogy on entrepreneurial intentions among final-year undergraduate students in Kenyan public universities and examined the implications of the findings for the emerging Competency-Based Higher Education (CBHE) agenda. Guided by Experiential Learning Theory and the Theory of Planned Behaviour, the study adopted a positivist philosophy and a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. Data were collected from 322 final-year undergraduate business students drawn from 29 public universities using a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Version 24. The findings revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between action-oriented andragogy and entrepreneurial intentions. Action-oriented pedagogy emerged as the strongest predictor of entrepreneurial intentions ($\beta = 0.918, p < 0.001$), while the integrated model explained 82.3% of the variation in entrepreneurial intentions (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.821$). Although entrepreneurship curricula were well established, mentorship programmes, business incubation, industry engagement, and entrepreneurial ecosystems remained comparatively underdeveloped. The study concludes that universities should move beyond curriculum delivery towards learner-centred, experiential pedagogies that integrate authentic learning, mentorship, and university–industry collaboration. Such pedagogical transformation offers a practical pathway for implementing Competency-Based Higher Education while strengthening graduate employability, innovation, and enterprise creation.

Keywords: *Action-oriented andragogy, Entrepreneurship education, Entrepreneurial intentions, Experiential learning, Competency-Based Higher Education, Kenya.*

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1.0 Introduction

Entrepreneurship has become a critical driver of innovation, employment creation, economic resilience, and sustainable development across both developed and developing economies. As labor markets become increasingly dynamic and technology-driven, universities are under growing pressure to prepare capable graduates not only to secure employment but also to create employment through innovation and enterprise development. Consequently, entrepreneurship education has evolved from being an elective academic subject to a strategic component of higher education policy aimed at developing entrepreneurial mindsets, fostering innovation, and enhancing graduate employability (Kuratko, 2005; Nabi et al., 2017).

In Kenya, entrepreneurship occupies a central position in national development strategies, including Kenya Vision 2030, where enterprise development is recognized as a key mechanism for industrialization, wealth creation, and youth employment. In response, universities have mainstreamed entrepreneurship education across undergraduate programs, established entrepreneurship centers, innovation hubs, and incubation facilities, and introduced various initiatives intended to encourage venture creation among graduates. Despite these efforts, graduate entrepreneurial activity has remained below expectations, with many university graduates continuing to prefer salaried employment over self-employment. This disconnect raises important questions regarding the effectiveness of prevailing approaches to entrepreneurship education (Government of Kenya, 2007).

Emerging scholarship suggests the challenge lies not merely in including entrepreneurship courses in university curricula but in the pedagogical approaches used to teach entrepreneurship. Traditional lecture-based instruction often emphasizes theoretical knowledge acquisition while offering limited opportunities for students to develop entrepreneurial competencies through authentic experience. Entrepreneurship is

inherently experiential and behavioral, requiring learners to recognize opportunities, solve real-world problems, collaborate with others, interact with entrepreneurs, manage uncertainty, and reflect on practical experiences. Consequently, action-oriented andragogy has emerged as an important pedagogical paradigm that emphasizes learner-centred, experiential, and practice-based learning as the foundation for developing entrepreneurial competence (Neck & Greene, 2011; Rasmussen & Sørheim, 2006).

The growing emphasis on action-oriented learning coincides with the global transition towards Competency-Based Higher Education (CBHE). Unlike traditional higher education models that primarily evaluate knowledge acquisition, competency-based education focuses on the demonstration of measurable competencies through authentic learning experiences, workplace engagement, reflective practice, and performance-based assessment. These principles closely mirror the philosophy underpinning action-oriented entrepreneurship education, making entrepreneurship programmes an important model for pedagogical transformation within universities. As Kenya prepares for the transition to competency-based higher education, there is an increasing need for empirical evidence demonstrating how learner-centred pedagogies contribute to the development of graduate competencies.

Although numerous studies have reported positive relationships between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intentions, many have conceptualized entrepreneurship education as a single educational intervention, typically measured by students' participation in entrepreneurship courses. Comparatively little attention has been devoted to understanding how specific action-oriented andragogical practices such as experiential learning, collaborative learning, mentorship, industry engagement, business simulations, and reflective practice influence entrepreneurial intentions, particularly within Sub-Saharan African higher education

contexts. Furthermore, limited empirical evidence exists linking entrepreneurship pedagogy with the emerging competency-based higher education agenda in Kenya (Bae et al., 2014; Nabi et al., 2017).

“Action-oriented andragogy provides a practical pathway for advancing Competency-Based Higher Education (CBHE) by shifting emphasis from knowledge acquisition to the development and demonstration of entrepreneurial competencies”

This study addresses these gaps by investigating the influence of action-oriented andragogy on entrepreneurial intentions among final-year undergraduate business students in Kenyan public universities and considering the implications for CBHE. By shifting attention from curriculum content to pedagogical quality, it offers practical insights for university leaders, curriculum developers, policymakers, and quality assurance agencies.

The paper therefore presents entrepreneurship education as an integrated learning ecosystem in which action-oriented pedagogy, authentic assessment, mentorship, university–industry collaboration, and institutional support jointly develop entrepreneurial competence and provide a practical framework for CBHE.

Literature Review

Entrepreneurship education has evolved from a predominantly theoretical discipline into a practice-oriented field that seeks to cultivate entrepreneurial competencies, innovation, and

venture creation. Initially, entrepreneurship programmes focused on transmitting business knowledge through conventional classroom instruction. However, growing evidence suggests that knowledge acquisition alone is insufficient to develop entrepreneurial behaviour. Contemporary scholarship therefore advocates for learner-centred pedagogies that enable students to acquire entrepreneurial competencies through authentic experiences, experimentation, reflection, and engagement with real business environments (Mwasalwiba, 2010; Neck & Greene, 2011).

Within this evolving paradigm, action-oriented andragogy has emerged as an effective instructional approach for adult learners. Rooted in adult learning principles, action-oriented andragogy emphasises active learner participation, experiential learning, collaborative problem-solving, mentorship, reflective practice, business simulations, project-based learning, and direct interaction with entrepreneurial ecosystems. Rather than viewing learners as passive recipients of knowledge, this approach positions them as active participants in constructing entrepreneurial competence through practical engagement. Such pedagogical approaches are particularly relevant in university settings, where learners possess prior experiences that enrich the learning process and facilitate the application of theoretical concepts to real-world entrepreneurial contexts (Knowles et al., 2015; Kolb, 1984; Rasmussen & Sørheim, 2006).

Entrepreneurial intention, defined as an individual's conscious commitment and willingness to establish a new business venture, remains one of the strongest predictors of entrepreneurial behaviour. Since entrepreneurial activity is generally intentional rather than accidental, entrepreneurial intention has become the most widely used outcome variable in entrepreneurship education research. Numerous studies have demonstrated positive associations between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intentions; however, the magnitude of this relationship varies considerably

depending on pedagogical design and institutional context. Evidence increasingly indicates that programmes incorporating experiential learning, mentorship, networking, industry partnerships, and business incubation produce stronger entrepreneurial outcomes than programmes relying primarily on lectures and examinations (Ajzen, 1991; Bae et al., 2014; Liñán & Chen, 2009; Nabi et al., 2017).

Competency-Based Higher Education (CBHE) shifts university education from content coverage to demonstrable competencies, authentic assessment, learner-centred instruction, and measurable graduate outcomes. Entrepreneurship education illustrates this approach because competencies such as opportunity recognition, innovation, decision-making, teamwork, resilience, and value creation develop through authentic experience. Action-oriented andragogy therefore offers a practical framework for operationalising CBHE reforms (Rasmussen & Sørheim, 2006).

Theoretical Foundation

This study is anchored on Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which collectively provide a robust framework for explaining how action-oriented andragogy influences entrepreneurial intentions.

Experiential Learning Theory, advanced by David Kolb, posits that learning is a continuous process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. The theory conceptualizes learning as a cyclical process comprising four interrelated stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Within entrepreneurship education, this framework suggests that entrepreneurial competence develops when learners actively engage in authentic entrepreneurial experiences, critically reflect upon those experiences, conceptualize new knowledge, and apply that knowledge in new situations. Action-oriented

andragogy directly operationalizes these principles by promoting experiential projects, business simulations, mentorship, field attachments, and collaborative learning activities that transform theoretical knowledge into practical entrepreneurial capability (Kolb, 1984).

The Theory of Planned Behavior, developed by Ajzen, explains entrepreneurial intention as a function of three determinants: attitudes towards entrepreneurship, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Entrepreneurship education influences these determinants by enhancing students' confidence, improving perceptions of entrepreneurial feasibility and desirability, and strengthening self-efficacy through practical learning experiences. Action-oriented pedagogies expose learners to successful entrepreneurial role models, provide opportunities for problem-solving and venture creation, and cultivate confidence in entrepreneurial decision-making. Consequently, students become more likely to develop positive entrepreneurial intentions and view entrepreneurship as a viable career option (Ajzen, 1991; Liñán & Chen, 2009).

Together, ELT and TPB explain the pathway from action-oriented andragogy to entrepreneurial intention: ELT explains how authentic experience develops competence, while TPB explains how competence shapes attitudes, perceived control, subjective norms, and ultimately intention.

Research Gap

Despite extensive scholarship on entrepreneurship education, important gaps remain. Many studies measure participation in entrepreneurship courses rather than the pedagogical practices through which competencies are developed, leaving limited evidence on the effects of experiential learning, mentorship, collaboration, industry engagement, and authentic assessment on entrepreneurial intentions (Bae et al., 2014; Nabi et al., 2017).

Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa, and particularly Kenyan public universities, is also limited. Findings from developed economies may

not transfer directly because institutional resources, support ecosystems, and labour-market conditions differ.

Finally, few studies connect entrepreneurship pedagogy to Kenya's emerging CBHE agenda. This study responds by examining action-oriented andragogy and entrepreneurial intentions in Kenyan universities and showing how learner-centred entrepreneurship education can support competency-based reform.

2.0 Materials and Methods

This study adopted a positivist research philosophy, which assumes that social phenomena can be objectively measured using empirical methods and statistical analysis. The positivist paradigm was considered appropriate because the study sought to examine the relationships between measurable constructs of action-oriented andragogy and entrepreneurial intentions using quantitative data.

A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was employed to capture students' perceptions at a single point in time. The design enabled the researcher to examine the extent to which action-oriented andragogical practices influenced entrepreneurial intentions among university students while providing findings that could be generalised across Kenyan public universities.

The target population comprised final-year undergraduate business students enrolled in 29 public universities in Kenya. Final-year students were considered the most appropriate respondents because they had substantially completed the entrepreneurship curriculum and were therefore better positioned to evaluate the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education. Using Cochran's sample size determination formula, a sample of 322 students was selected through proportionate sampling to ensure adequate representation across participating universities (Cochran, 1977).

Primary data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire consisting of Likert-scale items measuring the study constructs.

The questionnaire captured respondents' perceptions of action-oriented andragogical practices and entrepreneurial intentions. Prior to the main survey, the instrument was pilot-tested to establish its reliability and validity. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, while construct validity was evaluated through expert review and factor analysis. The reliability coefficients exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70, confirming the instrument's suitability for data collection (Pearson & Lumpkin, 2011).

Data were analysed using SPSS Version 24. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were used to summarise respondents' perceptions of action-oriented andragogy. Inferential statistics comprised Pearson's Product Moment Correlation to establish the strength and direction of relationships among variables and multiple regression analysis to determine the predictive influence of action-oriented andragogy on entrepreneurial intentions. Statistical significance was evaluated at the 95% confidence level ($p < 0.05$).

The study adhered to established ethical research principles. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all respondents, confidentiality was assured, and responses were anonymised throughout the study. Ethical approval and the necessary research authorisations were obtained before commencement of data collection.

3.0 Results and Discussion

The study sought to determine the influence of action-oriented andragogy on entrepreneurial intentions among university students in Kenya. Descriptive findings indicated that respondents generally perceived entrepreneurship education in their universities to be moderately to highly action-oriented. Students reported positive exposure to collaborative learning, practical assignments, classroom interaction, and entrepreneurial problem-solving activities. However, comparatively lower ratings were

observed for structured mentorship programmes, business incubation initiatives, and sustained university–industry engagement, suggesting that while entrepreneurship curricula are well established, the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem within universities remains underdeveloped.

Correlation analysis revealed a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between action-oriented andragogy and entrepreneurial intentions. Greater exposure to experiential, learner-centred practices was associated with stronger intentions to pursue entrepreneurial careers, reinforcing the value of authentic participation over exclusively theoretical instruction.

To establish the predictive influence of action-oriented andragogy, multiple regression analysis was conducted. The overall regression model was statistically significant and explained 82.3% of the variation in entrepreneurial intentions (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.821$), indicating substantial explanatory power. This high coefficient of determination suggests that the combined pedagogical and institutional variables included in the study effectively explain students' entrepreneurial intentions.

Among the predictor variables, action-oriented andragogy emerged as the strongest determinant of entrepreneurial intentions ($\beta = 0.918$, $p < 0.001$). The findings indicate that improvements in learner-centred pedagogical practices—including experiential learning, collaborative projects, business simulations, reflective learning, mentorship, and authentic assessment—are associated with significant increases in students' entrepreneurial intentions. The magnitude and statistical significance of this relationship underscore the critical role of pedagogy in shaping entrepreneurial outcomes within higher education.

The findings indicate that entrepreneurship education should function as an integrated ecosystem rather than a stand-alone course. Curriculum knowledge is more likely to translate

into confidence, competence, and motivation when reinforced through mentorship, practicing entrepreneurs, industry partnerships, innovation hubs, incubation centers, and institutional support.

Overall, action-oriented andragogy significantly enhances entrepreneurial intentions and supports the transition to CBHE by emphasizing authentic experiences, learner engagement, and demonstrable competencies needed in changing labor markets.

Discussion

Action-oriented andragogy significantly predicted entrepreneurial intentions among Kenyan university students. Experiential learning, collaborative problem-solving, reflection, mentorship, and authentic entrepreneurial experiences strengthened intentions, supporting the view that entrepreneurship is learned most effectively through participation and experience (Nabi et al., 2017; Neck & Greene, 2011; Rasmussen & Sørheim, 2006).

This result supports Experiential Learning Theory: entrepreneurial projects, practical assignments, simulations, and collaboration help students transform experience through reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation into competence and confidence. Universities should therefore immerse learners in authentic entrepreneurial contexts (Kolb, 1984).

The results also support the Theory of Planned Behavior. Practical experience can strengthen attitudes, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms by improving self-efficacy, confidence, and perceptions of entrepreneurship's feasibility and desirability. Mentors, practicing entrepreneurs, and peers further demonstrate that entrepreneurship is attainable, thereby strengthening intention (Ajzen, 1991; Liñán & Chen, 2009). Although entrepreneurship curricula are established across Kenyan public universities, students reported weaker exposure to mentorship, incubation, university–industry partnerships, and institutional support. Curriculum reform alone is therefore insufficient; curriculum, pedagogy,

mentorship, innovation infrastructure, industry engagement, and support services must operate as an integrated ecosystem.

The model's strong explanatory power (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.821$) indicates that universities can substantially shape entrepreneurial intentions through deliberate pedagogical design. Although personal and socio-economic factors also matter, investment in innovative teaching is strategically important for graduate employability, innovation, and economic development.

The study extends earlier research that treats entrepreneurship education as a single intervention by showing that how entrepreneurship is taught matters alongside what is taught. Action-oriented andragogy translates theoretical knowledge into competence and intention, offering practical direction for curriculum design (Bae et al., 2014; Nabi et al., 2017).

The findings further demonstrate the complementarity of ELT and TPB: ELT explains competence development through experience, while TPB explains its translation into entrepreneurial intention. Their integration provides a coherent framework for future research (Ajzen, 1991; Kolb, 1984).

4.0 Conclusion

The study concludes that action-oriented andragogy provides a practical pathway for advancing Competency-Based Higher Education (CBHE) by shifting emphasis from knowledge acquisition to the development and demonstration of entrepreneurial competencies. Kenyan public universities should integrate authentic entrepreneurial experiences, mentorship, innovation hubs, industry partnerships, and competency-based assessment into their programmes to strengthen students' entrepreneurial confidence and readiness. The findings reinforce the complementary relevance of Experiential Learning Theory and the Theory of Planned Behaviour in explaining how practical learning may shape entrepreneurial intentions.

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Nevertheless, because entrepreneurial intention does not necessarily result in business creation and the study employed a cross-sectional design, future longitudinal research should examine whether action-oriented entrepreneurship education translates into actual venture creation, enterprise sustainability, and employment generation.

4.0 Implications for Competency-Based Higher Education

The findings are directly relevant to Kenya's transition to CBHE, which prioritizes measurable competence demonstrated through authentic performance. The strong influence of action-oriented andragogy indicates that learner-centred pedagogies can provide an effective pathway for developing such competence.

First, universities should complement conceptual instruction with business simulations, innovation challenges, consultancy projects, internships, community enterprises, and student-led ventures. Assessment should similarly move beyond knowledge recall to the application of knowledge in authentic entrepreneurial problems.

Second, universities should strengthen entrepreneurial ecosystems through mentorship, incubation, innovation hubs, industry and alumni partnerships, and entrepreneurial networks. These structures extend competency development beyond the classroom and provide continuing opportunities for enterprise development.

Third, faculty need continuing development to serve as facilitators, coaches, mentors, and learning designers. Priority areas include experiential and project-based teaching, authentic assessment, digital learning, mentorship, and industry engagement.

Fourth, programme learning outcomes should align with labor-market competencies, while entrepreneurship should be embedded across disciplines through interdisciplinary innovation, design thinking, collaborative problem-solving, and enterprise-based learning.

Finally, regulatory and quality assurance frameworks should evaluate not only curriculum content but also pedagogical innovation, authentic

assessment, industry engagement, graduate competencies, and institutional learning ecosystems.

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