

Entrepreneurial Intention in Higher Education: The Influence of Entrepreneurship Education and Innovation Capacity

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Abstract

This study aims to understand the entrepreneurial intentions of the students in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) by examining the effect of Entrepreneurship Education (EE) and Innovation Capacity (IC) on intentions of the students. The respondents for this study were students enrolled in different HEIs across Nagaland, and data were collected online using a structured questionnaire distributed through Google Forms. A total of 210 responses were collected and used for final analysis for this study. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed in this study to analyse the collected data to confirm the reliability & validity of the measurement and to check the relationships between the three variables. The findings of the study reveals that EE positively influence both IC ($\beta = 0.238$, $p = 0.010$) and EI ($\beta = 0.289$, $p < 0.001$), and IC was also found to significantly influence EI ($\beta = 0.188$, $p = 0.008$). However, the mediating role of IC between EE & EI was found to be insignificant and weak ($\beta = 0.045$, $p = 0.088$). The findings of this study highlight the importance of promoting and strengthening entrepreneurship related teachings in HEIs. These findings also provide useful insights for educators, institutional leaders, and policymakers who aim to build a supportive environment for young aspiring entrepreneurs.

Keywords: higher education institution, innovation capability, entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurship education

1. Introduction

The Youth Policy of India defines youth in India as an individuals from the age of 15 – 29 years. The youth population is about 37.14 Cr. which is about 27.3% of the country's total population (Government of India, Department of Youth Affairs, 2025). This demographic share of the youth highlights the significance of strengthening higher education and entrepreneurial education in order to effectively harness the potential of the youths. The resent Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education stands at 27.3 % with over 41.3 million students enrolled in undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctorate programs (Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, 2024). These numbers indicates the prospects and difficulties associated with preparing students for significant economic participation. Entrepreneurship education constitutes a systematic initiative to cultivate entrepreneurial awareness, attitudes, and competencies in learners with a blend of classroom instruction, experiential learning, and practical activities (Engle et al., 2011). Higher education institutions significantly contribute to fostering entrepreneurial ambitions, as seen by the consistent growth of entrepreneurship-oriented programs. However, the effectiveness of such programs depends not only on the accessibility but also on the quality and ability to inspire learners (Fan et al., 2024). Existing studies indicates that both theoretical and practical approaches to entrepreneurship education contribute favourable student outcomes (Liang et al., 2025). Particularly, it has been found that entrepreneurship education strengthens critical behavioural and cognitive traits including risk-taking, proactiveness, and innovativeness, all of which are generally considered to be necessary skills for entrepreneurial participation (Khalil et al., 2024). Additionally, the increased entrepreneurship awareness received from entrepreneurial education has been observed to positively influence entrepreneurial intentions among students (Ismail et al, 2025). Keeping this context in mind, the current study aims to understand how Entrepreneurship Education (EE) and students' ability to innovate (IC) shape their intention towards entrepreneurship, from students studying in higher education institutions in Nagaland. More particularly, the study looks at how entrepreneurship education and innovation capacity directly influence students' intention to become entrepreneurs. It also examines whether innovation capacity acts as a link between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention. By studying these connections, the research tries to better understand how learning experiences and students' confidence in their ability to innovate affect their interest in choosing entrepreneurship as a future career path.

2. Conceptual Framework

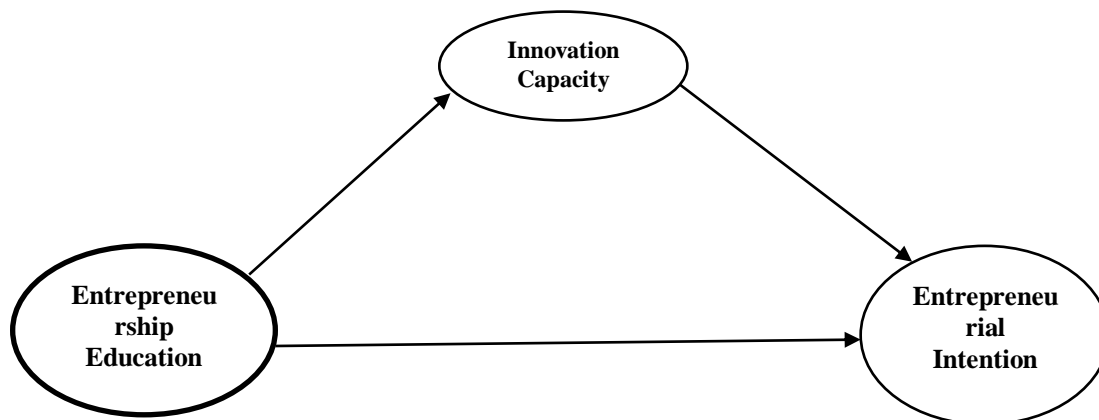


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

3. Literature Review

3.1 Entrepreneurial Education & Intention

Most of the existing research on entrepreneurial intention have looked more on the personality trait of an individual, while less attention have been given to the influence of surrounding environment. However, creating positive and supporting environment for entrepreneurship is important for shaping young people perception towards entrepreneurship (Essel et al., 2020). According to Kallas (2019), people who are more satisfied with the surrounding environment and believe they are well prepared have higher entrepreneurship intention. Higher education plays a vital role as most students mainly get their first exposure to education on entrepreneurship which also develop their interest towards entrepreneurship (Lingappa et al., 2020). The personal attitude and perceived behavior control of the higher education students have positive and significant influence on entrepreneurial intention (Nawi et al., 2022). As stated by Listyaningsih et al. (2024), entrepreneurial motivation and entrepreneurial education has no significant impact on entrepreneurial interest. However, the relationship between entrepreneurship motivation and entrepreneurship education was significantly impacted by entrepreneurship intention. As per their finding, entrepreneurship education is like other lectures and do not develop an interest in entrepreneurship. According to the study conducted by Mensah et al. (2021), entrepreneurial attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control have significant impact in determining college students' entrepreneurial intentions. The higher education should extensively address the trigger components derived from entrepreneurship education programme such as attitude toward entrepreneurship, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control that raises intention toward entrepreneurship (Mitra et al. (2023). Entrepreneurship education should go beyond the four walls of classroom as the instructors play a crucial role in motivating students to have a positive outlook towards entrepreneurship (Nguyen, 2021).

3.2 Entrepreneurial Education, Innovation & Intention

Empirical studies have shown again and again the importance of entrepreneurship education in shaping intention of people towards entrepreneurship, indicating the need for a culture of innovation in the institutions (Tiago et al., 2015). Many researchers have also argued that entrepreneurship education should put more efforts in nurturing creativity, innovation, and problem-solving skills among youths who wish to pursue entrepreneurship (Gutiérrez & Baquero, 2017).

The effectiveness of entrepreneurship education greatly depends on its quality and delivery. Comprehensive evaluation frameworks that consider curriculum design, learning environments, delivery channels, and opportunities for self-innovation provide valuable guidance for strengthening entrepreneurial capabilities within higher education institutions (Zhou & Zhou, 2022). Recent research further stressed on the importance of experiential learning, particularly in science and technology-based entrepreneurship education (Blankesteyn et al., 2024). Higher education also supports sustainable development by promoting green innovation, through collaboration with universities and industries, that encourages green entrepreneurship (Nguyen et al., 2025). Progressive leadership approaches such as instructional, distributed, and transformational leadership can promote creativity, collaboration, and risk-taking among students and faculty (Hojiej, 2024). From a broader policy point of view, active and innovative involvement of bureaucrats and institutional stakeholders is equally important, as bottom-up initiatives usually help in identifying challenges and encourages innovation and entrepreneurial intention (Aviram et al., 2021).

The following null hypotheses were proposed based on the review of literature and conceptual framework above:

- H₀₁: There is no significant effect of Entrepreneurship Education (EE) on Innovation Capability (IC) among students of HEIs.
- H₀₂: There is no significant effect of Entrepreneurship Education (EE) on Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) among students of HEIs.
- H₀₃: There is no significant effect of Innovation Capability (IC) on Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) among students of HEIs.
- H₀₄: Innovation Capability (IC) does not significantly mediate the relationship between Entrepreneurship Education (EE) and Entrepreneurial Intention (EI).

4. Methodology

4.1 Population and Sample

The respondents for this study were students enrolled in higher education institutions (HEIs) across Nagaland. They were specifically chosen because HEI was found to positively influence young people to acquire innovation skills and entrepreneurial intentions (Odike & Nnaekwe, 2019). This phase of education is particularly important, as it is during this time young people decides about their career path (Fuller et al., 2018).

Data were collected from 210 students using simple random convenient sampling method. The final sample size was higher than the minimum requirement for Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM), adequate for testing the above hypotheses and analysing the model.

4.2 Research Instrument

Structured questionnaire was used as the main instrument to collect the data from the students. The questionnaire was developed based on three main constructs, adapting well-established scales in previous research to ensure validity and consistency. Each construct consisted of five items, making a total of fifteen and they were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.”

The three constructs were entrepreneurship education (EE), with items adapted from Westhead and Solesvik (2016); innovation capability (IC), based on the scale developed by Ferreira et al. (2020); and entrepreneurial intention (EI), which used the widely accepted measure created by Turker and Sonmez Selçuk (2009). The original intent of the items were maintained, but some adjustments were made to ensure clarity and make them more suitable for students in Nagaland.

4.3 Collection of Data

Google Form questionnaires were distributed online to collect data from students, which made it more accessible and convenient for the respondents. The questionnaire link was shared through academic networks, student groups, and official institutional channels to reach out to almost every part of the state. Data collection took place over a period of two months, from September to October 2025. A total of 210 valid responses were collected and used for the final analysis. Among the respondents, 103 were male and 107 were female, which is a balanced gender representation.

4.4 Data Analysis

The final data set were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS 4. The analysis involved the following steps:

4.4.1 Assessment of the Measurement Model

- ✓ Factor loadings
- ✓ Cronbach’s alpha
- ✓ Composite Reliability (CR)
- ✓ Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
- ✓ Discriminant Validity (Fornell–Larcker & HTMT)
- ✓ VIF scores

4.4.2. Assessment of the Structural Model

- ✓ Path coefficients and their significance (β , t-values, p-values)
- ✓ Mediation analysis (bootstrapping)

The findings from the analysis are presented below.

5. Data Analysis and Results

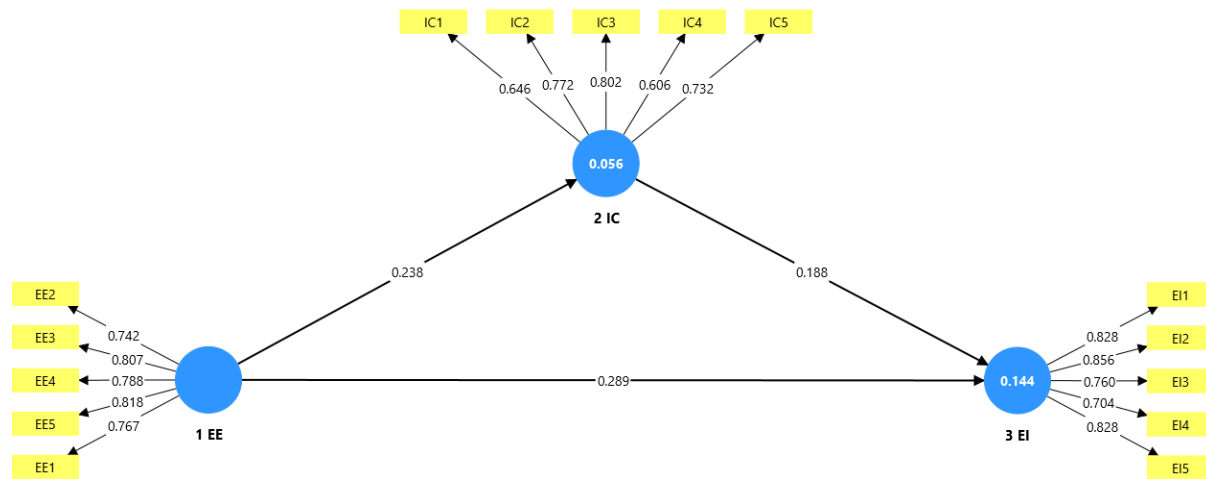


Figure 2. SmartPLS Model Output

5.1. Reliability and validity

All PLS-SEM criteria were followed to check the reliability and validity of the constructs. As shown in Table 1, factor loadings ranged from 0.742 to 0.818 for EE, 0.606 to 0.802 for IC, and 0.704 to 0.856 for EI. All the items had loadings above the recommended threshold of 0.60, which indicates a good reliability and validity of the constructs.

Internal consistency reliability was tested using Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) which is presented in Table 1. All values were found to be higher than the recommended cut-off of 0.70 ($\alpha_{EE} = 0.845$, $\alpha_{IC} = 0.762$, $\alpha_{EI} = 0.856$; $CREE = 0.889$, $CRIC = 0.838$, $CREI = 0.897$), showing that the constructs are reliable.

Convergent validity was also achieved, as all constructs had Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values above the recommended level of 0.50. The AVE values were 0.616 for EE, 0.512 for IC, and 0.636 for EI as shown in Table 1.

Discriminant validity was checked using the Fornell–Larcker criterion and the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio. The square root of the AVE values ($EE = 0.785$, $IC = 0.715$, $EI = 0.797$) were found to be higher than the correlations between the constructs, supporting the

discriminant validity. All the HTMT values were also below the strict threshold of 0.85 (EE–IC = 0.282; EE–EI = 0.380; IC–EI = 0.305), as shown in Table 1. This indicates that all the constructs are clearly different from each other.

Multicollinearity was tested using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values, ranging from 1.30 to 2.38 as shown in Table 1. These values show that there are no collinearity problems in the model.

Therefore, the results confirm that the measurement model has satisfactory reliability and validity, and it is appropriate for further analysis.

Table 1: Summary of Measurement Model Results

Construct	Items	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	√AVE (FL)	HTMT with Other Constructs	VIF Range
EE	EE1–EE5	0.742–0.818	0.845	0.889	0.616	0.785	EE–IC: 0.282 EE–EI: 0.380	1.58–1.98
IC	IC1–IC5	0.606–0.802	0.762	0.838	0.512	0.715	IC–EE: 0.282 IC–EI: 0.305	1.30–1.68
EI	EI1–EI5	0.704–0.856	0.856	0.897	0.636	0.797	EI–EE: 0.380 EI–IC: 0.305	1.63–2.38

5.2. Descriptive Analysis

A descriptive analysis was carried out using the latent variable scores obtained from the PLS-SEM algorithm. The mean and standard deviation for each construct can be found in Table 2. Since latent variable scores in PLS-SEM are standardized, the mean values are close to zero with standard deviations around one. EE (Mean = –0.028, SD = 1.012), IC (Mean = –0.006, SD = 1.083), and EI (Mean = 0.012, SD = 1.049) all show normal standardized variance, which clearly indicates that the sample responses are evenly distributed across the constructs.

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis of Latent Variables (Overall Sample)

Construct	Mean	SD
EE	-0.028	1.012
IC	-0.006	1.083
EI	0.012	1.049

5.3. Structural Model

The structural model was assessed to examine the hypothesized direct relationships among the constructs. The results of the bootstrapping analysis for the direct paths are presented in Table 3. The findings indicate that all the three hypothesized direct relationships were positive, and all of them were statistically significant. First, EE had a significant positive effect on IC ($\beta = 0.238, t = 2.575, p = 0.010$), which supports hypothesis 1. Second, EE was found to have a significant and positive effect on EI ($\beta = 0.289, t = 4.210, p < 0.001$), which indicates that greater exposure to entrepreneurship education is associated with stronger entrepreneurial intentions among students. IC was also found to have positive and significant relationship with EI ($\beta = 0.188, t = 2.646, p = 0.008$), although its effect was comparatively weaker than that of EE. This suggests that while innovation capability contributes to entrepreneurial intention, entrepreneurship related teachings have greater influence in shaping the intention of students.

Table 3. Direct Effects (Path Coefficients)

Path	β (Original Sample)	t-value	p-value	Significance
EE → IC	0.238	2.575	0.010	Significant
EE → EI	0.289	4.210	0.000	Significant
IC → EI	0.188	2.646	0.008	Significant

5.4 Mediation analysis

The mediating effect of IC on EE and EI was found to be statistically not significant ($\beta = 0.045, p = 0.088$) in Table 4. This indicates there is no mediating effect. Therefore, EE influences EI mainly through a direct pathway rather than indirectly through IC.

Table 4. Indirect Effect (Mediation Analysis)

Mediation Path (β)	t-value	p-value	Interpretation
EE → IC → EI	0.045 1.704	0.088	Not significant (weak mediation)

Table 5. Hypothesis testing result

Hypothesis	Statement	Test	Result	P value	Decision
H1	There is no significant effect of Entrepreneurship Education (EE) on Innovation Capability (IC) among students of HITs.	PLS-SEM	$\beta=0.238$	0.010	Rejected
H2	There is no significant effect of Entrepreneurship Education (EE) on Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) among students of HITs.	PLS-SEM	$\beta=0.289$	0.000	Rejected
H3	There is no significant effect of Innovation Capability (IC) on Entrepreneurial Intention (EI) among students of HITs.	PLS-SEM	$\beta=0.188$	0.008	Rejected
H4	Innovation Capability (IC) does not significantly mediate the relationship between Entrepreneurship Education (EE) and Entrepreneurial Intention (EI).	PLS-SEM	$\beta=0.045$	0.088	Failed to reject

6. Discussion

The present study investigated the role of higher education institutions in promoting youth entrepreneurship in Nagaland by examining the direct effects of entrepreneurship education (EE) on innovation capacity (IC) and entrepreneurial intention (EI), as well as the mediating role of IC between EE and EI.

The findings align with existing literature, which consistently shows that institutional support and entrepreneurship education positively shape students' entrepreneurial orientation and intentions. Prior studies indicate that perceived university support enhances entrepreneurial self-efficacy, which in turn strengthens entrepreneurial intention (Abhayarathne, 2021; Mahfud et al., 2020). Similarly, Schaap et al. (2025) demonstrate that HEI initiatives such as curriculum design, incubation programmes, and mentoring play an important role in developing students' innovative and entrepreneurial capabilities, supporting the positive relationships between EE, IC, and EI in this study.

In contrast, the mediation analysis of this study (EE → IC → EI) showed a marginal indirect effect ($p = 0.088$) and low VAF (13.5%). This indicates that, within the Nagaland student sample, EE tends to shape EI primarily through a direct influence rather than through IC.

The very low adjusted R^2 for IC (0.052) shows that Entrepreneurship Education accounts for only a small share of students' innovation capacity which suggest that other influences which were not captured in the present study plays a larger role, similar to the findings of Turker and Sonmez Selçuk (2009).

The strong and significant relationship between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intention highlights an important practical implication: entrepreneurship education in higher education institutions of Nagaland is effective in encouraging the students to pursue entrepreneurship activities. This finding aligns with prior research showing that universities can meaningfully influence entrepreneurial intention through curriculum design, exposure, and role models, even though the development of innovation skills often requires additional support and resources (Khalil et al., 2024).

7. Conclusion

The findings of the study indicate that entrepreneurship education has a positive effect on students' innovation ability and their intention to become entrepreneurs. Which shows that higher education institutions play an important role in encouraging students to think about starting their own businesses. Although students with better innovation skills are more likely to have stronger entrepreneurial intentions, innovation capacity did not significantly act as a link between education and intention. This means that universities are successful at promoting entrepreneurial thinking through teaching and activities, but extra efforts beyond traditional classroom teaching are required to build strong innovation skills among the students.

8. Practical Implications

The findings of this study suggest that higher education institutions in Nagaland should not only concentrate on entrepreneurial education but should give more importance to developing students' innovation skills. Which can be achieved through initiatives like incubation facilities with investment support, introducing industries to the students to build partnership, guidance and motivational talks from innovators, and practical learning activities like real time projects and innovation competitions. All which aligns with the motive of Ministry of Education (MoE), Government of India (GoI), to promote innovation and entrepreneurship within educational institutions (Institution Innovation Council [IIC], n.d.).

9. Limitations and Future Research

This study used cross-sectional research method to collect data from HEI students in Nagaland, so it is difficult ascertain the cause-and-effect relationships. The items in the measurement of innovation capacity may not have fully captured all the important resources students need in Nagaland, such as access to incubation centres, mentorship networks, laboratories, or funding opportunities.

Future research in the Nagaland context should include other personality factors like self-efficacy and perceived feasibility. Researchers should also carry out longitudinal studies to see

how innovation skills and entrepreneurial intentions of the students change over time from different exposures. Future studies can use mixed-method approach for a better and deeper understanding of the relationship between the variables. Future studies may also compare different districts within Nagaland or compare Nagaland with other states that have stronger startup ecosystems. This would help in understanding how local infrastructure, government support, market access, and institutional differences (public vs. private colleges) influence entrepreneurship in the state.

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