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## Entrepreneurship development and pedagogical gaps in entrepreneurial marketing education



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### ABSTRACT

In the age of automation and artificial intelligence, the need for sustainable entrepreneurship for job creation has significantly raised. For the development of sustainable entrepreneurship in recent years, business schools worldwide have recognised their roles, and started providing entrepreneurship education (EE). Due to being in emerging phase, the EE at business schools is following pedagogic approaches that are not exclusively developed for entrepreneurship, and hence, not suitable with the practical entrepreneurial needs. This leaves graduates lacking in many types of entrepreneurial skill-sets. One of those key skill-sets is entrepreneurial marketing (EM), which is one of the most dominating problems for SME entrepreneurs for the survival and growth of their businesses. Furthermore, the literature highlights that lack of EM skill-set is also one of the leading causes of entrepreneurial failure. The failure of SME entrepreneurs not only discourages them, but also damages the initiatives taken by the governments and private institutions for entrepreneurship development in the economies. Thus, considering the critical importance of EM education for the development of entrepreneurship, this paper has highlighted the pedagogical gaps in EM education, proposed future research avenues, and made practical implications for business schools' academic authorities to upgrade their pedagogical models.

### 1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship development is increasingly becoming a key concern globally (Ha & Hoa, 2018; Ogbari, Olokundun, Ibiidunni, Obi, & Akpoanu, 2019; Szerb & Trumbull, 2018). One of the major reasons for that is the advancement in technology, automation and artificial intelligence, due to which, many jobs are becoming obsolete in this era. Therefore, many countries are taking a range of initiatives to promote entrepreneurship in their economies (see Klapper, 2014; Otchia, 2019; Pierrakis, 2018). On the contrary, entrepreneurial failure is one of the major concerns for entrepreneurs in SME sector globally. The statistics of many countries show alarming numbers of SME venture failure. For example, in the US, about two thirds of the new enterprises do not survive beyond five to ten years (SBA, 2019); in Australia, 96.8 percent of small businesses either exit or grow very little in the first five years after start-up (Hendrickson, Bucifal, Balaguer, & Hansell, 2015); and in South Africa, 75 percent of new businesses do not survive beyond two years (Olawale & Garwe, 2010; Van Scheers, 2011).

Sustained entrepreneurship creates autonomous jobs and is the driver of regular employment creation as well (Bakhtiari, 2017). To encourage job creation through entrepreneurship, United Nations has also passed a resolution called 'entrepreneurship for development' (2016). According to the resolution, key entrepreneurial skills should be developed among students through entrepreneurship education (EE). Thus, higher education institutions (HEIs) could play a vital role for the development of sustainable

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entrepreneurship in the economies (Franco, Haase, & Lautenschlager, 2010; Klapper, 2014; Libombo & Dinis, 2015; Ncanywa, 2019). HEIs worldwide have recently recognised this role (Manimala, 2017), however, they still lag behind in making suitable pedagogical developments within EE as compared to the practical entrepreneurial needs (Alabduljader, Ramani, & Solomon, 2018; Bakhtiari, 2017; Hanage, Scott, & Davies, 2016; Iwu et al., 2019). This contemporary issue of mismatched pedagogical approaches in EE with practical entrepreneurial needs is also causing graduate entrepreneurial failure (Agostini, 2016; Cant & Wiid, 2017; Garo, 2017; Gummesson, 2014; Hutt & Walker, 2015; Molin & Sjöberg, 2017).

According to Badri and Hachicha (2019), education is one of the most determining variables that affects the graduates' intention to start the new businesses. However, during the start-up phase, there are number of reasons that could result in entrepreneurial failure. Among those, marketing is one of the common and major worries of SME entrepreneurs for the survival and growth of their businesses, particularly during the start-up phase (Cavusgil & Cavusgil, 2012; Harrigan, Ramsey, & Ibbotson, 2012; Krake, 2005; Mitchell, Hutchinson, Quinn, & Gilmore, 2015; Simpson & Taylor, 2002; Westgren & Wuebker, 2019). This SME marketing is generally referred in the literature as entrepreneurial marketing (EM), and Kraus, Harms, and Fink (2010) define it in simple words as "marketing activities with an entrepreneurial mindset" (p. 2). Since, the SME/entrepreneurial marketing is one of the major worries of SME entrepreneurs for survival, therefore, we may assume that resolving the EM issues is significantly considerable for the development of entrepreneurship. Therefore, addressing the future researchers and business school's academic authorities, this paper aims to highlight theoretical, practical and pedagogical gaps in the domain of EM. The purpose is to highlight the need to develop the EM domain and attain its recognition from the academic authorities as a distinctive and essential field of study at business schools worldwide.

The need for developing EM domain and attaining its recognition as a distinctive and essential field of study arose because of a wide practical gap in business education worldwide. The gap could be observed upon reviewing the business education structures of most business schools worldwide that except for entrepreneurship programs, mostly the academic authorities of business schools have not yet acknowledged EM for general business administration programs. Despite having a high importance for SME entrepreneurs, the lack of recognition from academic authorities for EM is alarming. The rationale to include EM in business administration programs is, not all graduates from traditional business administration programs work in large organisations, many also work in entrepreneurial SMEs or have their own entrepreneurial ventures. Thus, it justifies learning EM for all types of business students, which makes the current practical gap a pressing problem that requires immediate attention. The term 'SME entrepreneur' is therefore has been used in a broader meaning that includes owners, decision-makers and managers in SMEs as EM is practiced by all of them. Other than the practical gap, theoretical and pedagogical gaps also exist in EM domain as this domain is still emerging (Amjad et al., 2020b).

## 2. Difference between traditional and entrepreneurial marketing

Since, SME entrepreneurs practice marketing with an 'entrepreneurial' mindset (Kraus et al., 2010), it raises the question that how 'entrepreneurial' marketing is different than traditional marketing (TM) practiced in large organisations? To answer this, Stokes (2000) explains that TM follows top-down approach, that is, it starts with the formal market research, followed by segmentation and choosing target markets, and then positioning the product or service using communication tools. It is mainly practiced by large organisations that have plenty of financial resources to conduct various costly activities like formal market research and mass promotions. On the other hand, SMEs are generally constrained with many types of resources such as financial and technical expertise, that makes the top-down marketing approach not much suitable for them. Therefore, SME entrepreneurs commonly practice EM which follows bottom-up approach, that is, the entrepreneurs first choose the target market or segment, after that, they get to know about the needs and demands of their targeted segment through personal relations, and then serve them in the best possible ways (Stokes, 2000). This approach does not involve costly activities like formal market research or mass promotions. The SME entrepreneurs however rely heavily on their personal networks to collect all types of information (e.g. customers' needs; or product or service feedback); and for product or service promotion (i.e. through word of mouth) (Copley, 2013). Thus, EM is informal, low-cost and ad hoc in nature as compared to the TM which is more formal and costlier.

## 3. The need for suitable curricula and pedagogies for entrepreneurial marketing

In business schools, EM is generally not the part of business administrations programs. However, in entrepreneurship programs EM is a well-recognised subject. Despite that, there is the need for curricula and pedagogical upgradations in EM as this domain is still emerging. Thus, currently taught EM within entrepreneurship programs and its teaching pedagogies need to be understood further.

Practically, EM in SMEs is one of the most dominating problems that entrepreneurs regularly encounter (Cavusgil & Cavusgil, 2012; Krake, 2005; Simpson & Taylor, 2002; Westgren & Wuebker, 2019). EM in SMEs is also different than traditional/administrative marketing in textbooks and the way these are taught at business schools because of limited financial resources available to SMEs (Grünhagen & Mishra, 2008). TM in textbooks were originally developed for large organisations and it widely ignores the marketing distinctiveness of SMEs (Grünhagen & Mishra, 2008; Kraus, Fink, Rössel, & Jensen, 2007). Many scholars argue that the TM definitions, theories and models in textbooks does not apply to the context of SMEs (McCartan-Quinn & Carson, 2003; Moriarty, Jones, Rowley, & Kupiec-Teahan, 2008; Stokes & Wilson, 2010). Blankson, Motwani, and Levenburg (2006) argue that SMEs do not practice conventional textbook marketing because of their distinct marketing style.

Generally, the literature on pedagogic approaches in EE highlight that the current pedagogies are ineffective in matching graduates' skill expectations with their skill acquisition, and therefore, a new approach is needed focusing in SME context (Ahmad &

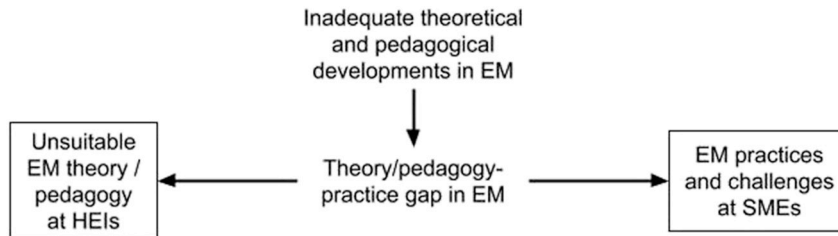


Fig. 1. Reason of theory/pedagogy-practice gap in EM.

Buchanan, 2015; Alabduljader et al., 2018; Cheng, Chan, & Mahmood, 2009; Ismail, Abdullah, & Othman, 2010). Alabduljader et al. (2018) argue that the business schools are having a lack of focus on development of SME oriented curricula, and therefore, recommend the upgradations in EE. Similar to these arguments, many researches specifically on EM also show a clear theory/pedagogy-practice gap in the domain and argue that entrepreneurial SMEs often have different marketing behaviour than that of the archetypal textbook approaches (Hills, Hultman, Kraus, & Schulte, 2010; Maritz, Frederick, & Valos, 2010; Resnick et al., 2011, 2016).

The literature identifies that major reason of this theory/pedagogy-practice gap in EM is the inadequate theoretical developments in the domain (Amjad et al., 2020b; Kucel, Róbert, Buil, & Masferrer, 2016; Minniti, 2016; O'Cass & Morrish, 2015; Plewa, Galán-Muros, & Davey, 2015; Rideout & Gray, 2013; Vanevenhoven, 2013). For instance, in 2002, Morris and colleagues have introduced seven dimensions of EM, that are: proactiveness, innovation focused, risk management, resource leveraging, customer intensity, value creation and opportunity driven. These dimensions are limited in scope and do not encompass many other key aspects of EM, such as, networking (Jones, Suoranta, & Rowley, 2013), entrepreneurial communication (Soegoto, 2018), and legitimacy (Amjad et al., 2020a; Mort, Weerawardena, & Liesch, 2012). Despite that, to date, rarely a significant attempt is found in the literature to extend or modify these dimensions. Amjad et al. (2020b) in their review have also discussed the inadequacy of current EM theory in detail. According to Rideout and Gray (2013), EM is one of those phenomena where practices have raced far ahead of theories and there is a need for research to justify and explain it. This issue has also been highlighted in many international entrepreneurship and marketing conferences during the last decade. According to O'Cass and Morrish (2015), EM is an area with a very limited empirical work being undertaken so far, thus, there is a need for exploration of EM practices. In the light of this discussion, Fig. 1 below illustrates the current theory/pedagogy-practice gap in EM and its reason:

Due to the inadequate theoretical developments in EM domain, the pedagogical gaps could also be seen from the examples of EE programs in many business schools even in developed countries. For example, the US, UK and Australia are although the top three countries for the research in EM domain (Elsevier, 2019), however, the EM courses in these countries are being taught in archetypal ways (i.e., traditional coursework; based on passive learning) (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2015; Alabduljader et al., 2018; Cheng et al., 2009; Ismail et al., 2010). Whereas, the researchers in EE argue that entrepreneurship courses should be designed and delivered with the 'practically oriented' content and teaching pedagogy in mind because practically oriented courses develop significant skills that affect highly on practical entrepreneurial outputs (Piperopoulos & Dimov, 2015). For EM, an active learning pedagogy is needed rather than passive learning, in order to achieve the development of skills (Copley, 2013). This means, the teaching of EM must be in such a way as to maximize the students' acquisition of EM skills and competencies needed to initiate and sustain new ventures (Ahmad & Buchanan, 2015).

Due to this gap, currently the business students are unable to learn the necessary EM skills that are required to survive in the practical entrepreneurial world. Many studies indicate this problem and argue that the business school graduates are found not to understand the process of marketing and lack the skills to a great extent, that are required to survive in the real business world (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2006; Mintzberg, 2009; Pfeffer & Fong, 2004; Raelin, 2007, 2009; Rousseau, 2012; Schoemaker, 2008). Surprisingly, this theory/pedagogy-practice gap in EM, is one of the major causes of very low number of business start-ups as well by the business school graduates (Crossroads report, 2016; Nabi, Holden, & Walmsley, 2010). This consequential flow due to the theory/pedagogy-practice gap in EM is illustrated in Fig. 2 below:

Due to the misfit of TM theories, curricula and pedagogies with SME entrepreneur's practices, the past literature indicates one of the major problems in the entrepreneurship career is facing entrepreneurial failure (Baidoun, Lussier, Burbar, & Awashra, 2018; Bakhtiari, 2017; Garo, 2017; Gummesson, 2014; Hanage et al., 2016; Hutt & Walker, 2015; Molin & Sjöberg, 2017). This is because of the wide range of EM challenges that SME entrepreneurs face (see Amjad et al., 2020a), are different in nature than those of large organisations because of the distinctive marketing approaches and restrained resources in SMEs (Grünhagen & Mishra, 2008). The failure of SME entrepreneurs first affects the failing entrepreneurs and job creation, and second, demotivates upcoming graduates to choose entrepreneurial careers in the first place (Bakhtiari, 2017). Hence, in recent years, fewer entrepreneurs are entering the market and those who enter are having a greater probability to fail and exit (Bakhtiari, 2017; Hanage et al., 2016). This trend is a consequence of perceiving the EM environment as riskier especially for nascent graduate entrepreneurs, and this trend is shared among almost all industries and sectors (Bakhtiari, 2017; Hanage et al., 2016).

Entrepreneurial failure leads new entrepreneurs to become unemployed again resulting in an increase in unemployment rate rather than creating jobs for others and contributing to the economies (Hayward, Shepherd, & Griffin, 2006; Shane, Locke, & Collins, 2012). This overall economic situation also affects the initiatives taken by the governments and private sector for the entrepreneurship development worldwide. Thus, extending Fig. 2, the continuing consequences of the theory/pedagogy-practice gap in

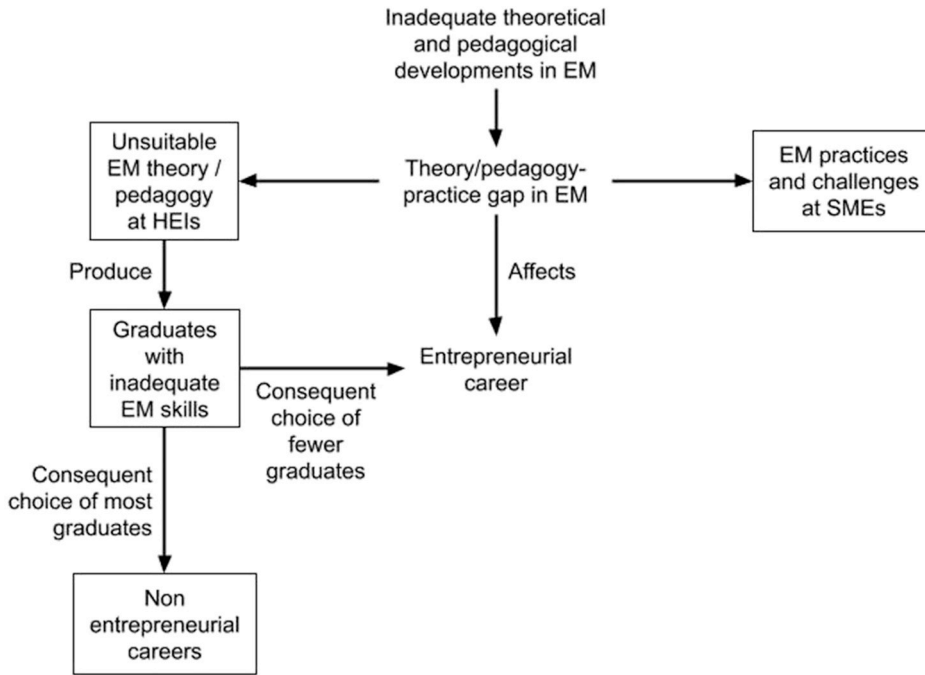


Fig. 2. Consequences of theory/pedagogy-practice gap in EM.

EM are further illustrated in Fig. 3 below:

**4. How to bridge the theory/pedagogy-practice gap in entrepreneurial marketing?**

There is a need to develop both, EM curricula, and suitable pedagogy models to teach EM. As curricula develop after the theoretical developments occur in any domain (Plewa et al., 2015), therefore, researchers are required to contribute in the emerging EM domain. Whereas, pedagogy is the methodology of teaching that needs to be developed by the academic authorities, and it also affects

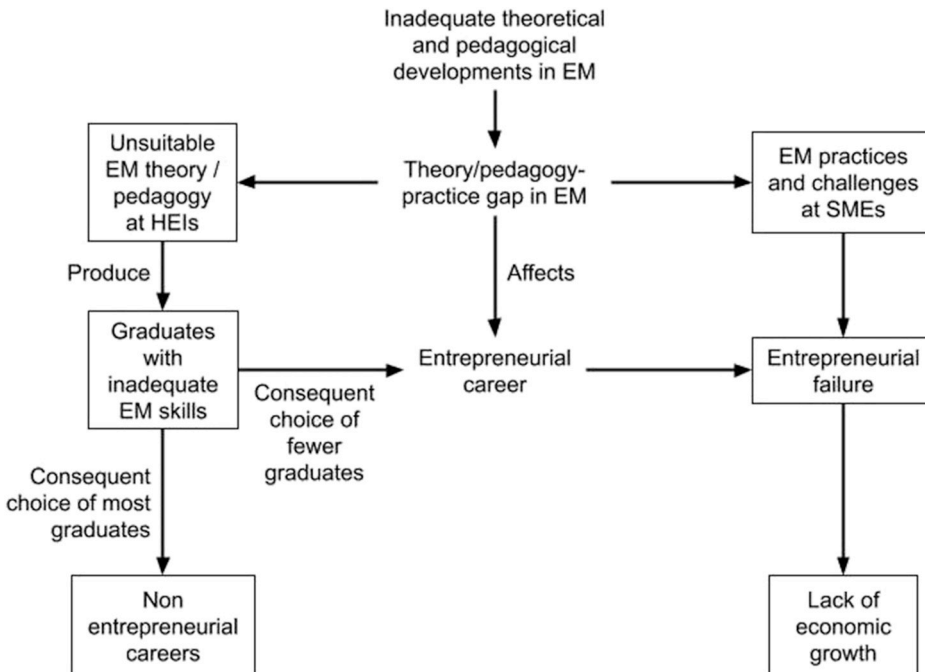


Fig. 3. Further consequences of theory/pedagogy-practice gap in EM.

the practices of the graduates in their careers (Butts, 2017; Medugu, 2017; Oyighan & Dennis, 2016). Thus, along with the theoretical developments, the pedagogical developments are also required, in order to substantially fill the theory/pedagogy-practice gap in the EM domain. Ahmad and Buchanan (2015) argue that the objectives of advancing EM education at business schools worldwide should be reconsidered in such a way as to enhance students' acquisition of skills and competencies needed to initiate and sustain new ventures, rather than solely focusing on functional understanding of entrepreneurship or marketing. Garo (2017) suggests that business schools should play the role of a facilitator in order to provide suitable entrepreneurship pedagogies and proper environment to the students.

Considering, the gaps identified in the previous section between EM theories/pedagogies and practices; and recommendations given by the past literature to further explore the EM practices to make theoretical developments, there is a need to explore the following points by the future researchers:

1. The EM practices of graduate entrepreneurs during the start-up phase of SMEs, in order to make theoretical developments in the domain of EM. This would contribute to bridge the gap between theory and practice of EM.
2. The contemporary EM challenges faced by the graduate entrepreneurs during the start-up phase of SMEs, in order to develop the EM pedagogy model by integrating empirical findings and recommendations of graduate entrepreneurs with recent EE literature (e.g. Ahmad & Buchanan, 2015; Ezeani, 2018; Ferrandiz, Fidel, & Conchado, 2018; Garo, 2017; Kaandorp, van Burg, & Karlsson, 2019; Lloyd, Martin, Hyatt, & Tritt, 2019; Manimala, 2017; Nabi et al., 2017; Piperopoulos & Dimov, 2015; Pouratashi & Zamani, 2019; Smith, Jones, Scott, & Stadler, 2017). This would contribute in bridging the pedagogical gaps in EM education.

The first question would foreground the modern-day EM practices, and this could give theoretical explanations of how EM is being practiced by the entrepreneurs in SMEs as O'Cass and Morrish (2015) have also proposed this investigation. Through the second question, researchers could first discover the contemporary and latest EM challenges along with their root causes, and second, collect the recommendations from graduate entrepreneurs for the development of new EM pedagogies. The graduate entrepreneurs could play the role of key informants (Silk & Kalwani, 1982) as they have exposure to both higher education as well as practical entrepreneurial start-ups. Later, the newly identified contemporary EM challenges and graduate entrepreneurs' recommendations could be integrated with the recent EE literature to develop EM pedagogy models.

Choosing suitable curricula and developing appropriate pedagogy models for EM by the academic authorities would make business schools worldwide produce more and high-quality graduate entrepreneurs. Due to learning through suitable pedagogy models, the graduates would be well equipped with the practical EM skills, and would be better able to compete and survive in the highly competitive entrepreneurial world and contribute to the economies. Thus, developing entrepreneurship through business schools requires researchers, academic authorities and graduate entrepreneurs to play their respective roles, which are illustrated in Fig. 4 below:

### 5. Practical implications

As highlighted by Alabduljader et al. (2018), it is a common observation among business schools worldwide that except for entrepreneurship programs, mostly the academic authorities at business schools have not yet acknowledged EM for general business administration programs. Lodish, Morgan, Archambeau, and Babin (2016); Morrish, Coviello, McAuley, and Miles (2015) argue that in this era, EM is appropriate not only for SMEs but for the large organisations as well. Lodish et al. (2016) in their book *Marketing that works: How entrepreneurial marketing can add sustainable value to any sized company* have justified and explained the relevance of EM in

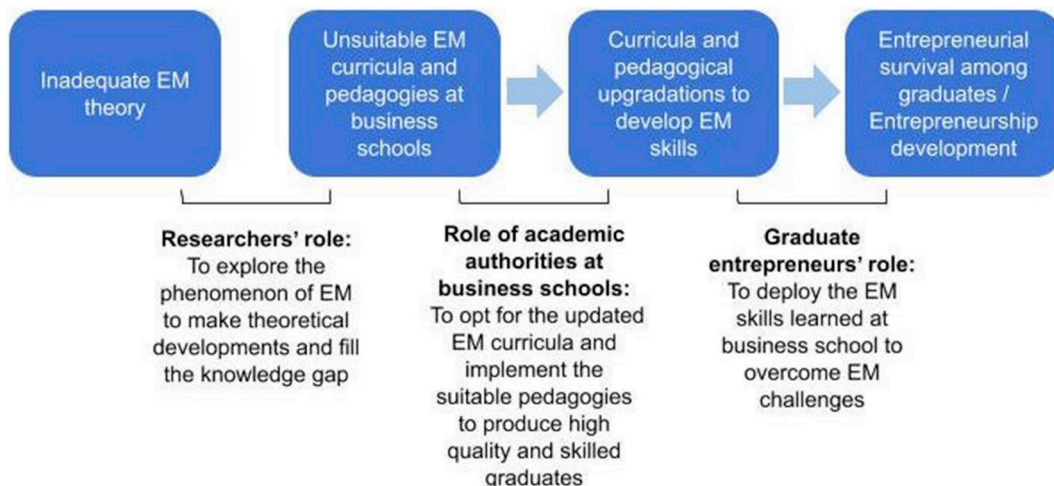


Fig. 4. Roles of each group for the development of entrepreneurship.

large sized organisations. According to Morrish et al. (2015), due to shrinking resources and technologically savvy consumers in this era, both the SMEs and large organisations need to be entrepreneurial. Therefore, this requires EM not only to be part of entrepreneurship programs but a key and compulsory course within all business administration programs as well.

In the context of currently taught large organisation's TM courses in business administration programs, a well-known fact is, not all graduates of business administration programs work in large organisations, many also work in entrepreneurial SMEs or have their own entrepreneurial ventures. This is another rationale that justifies learning EM skills for all types of business students. Thus, academic authorities at business schools need to incorporate EM courses in all business and entrepreneurship programs. This would also increase the impact of EE on a wider range of students, thus, resulting in the development of entrepreneurship significantly through business schools. Moreover, as discussed in detail in earlier sections, the pedagogical choices for EM education must also be reconsidered. EM pedagogies in business and entrepreneurship programs should be developed focusing on active learning and skill enhancement, rather than merely providing the functional understanding.

## 6. Conclusion

Entrepreneurship development is much needed for economic development in this era. One of the most effective ways to develop entrepreneurship is through EE at business schools. This is only possible if the pedagogic approaches used at business schools are updated according to the practical entrepreneurial needs. In order to do that, there is a need for exploration of key entrepreneurial skill-sets in which the graduate entrepreneurs struggle during the start-up phase of their SMEs. One of those skill-sets is EM which has been recognised as one of the most common and dominated problems of graduate entrepreneurs, and moreover, lack of EM skills also found causing entrepreneurial failure.

This paper has first highlighted a wide practical gap, that is, except for entrepreneurship programs, EM generally is not the part of business administration programs at business schools, despite being inevitable for SME entrepreneurs. Then, we differentiated EM from TM; and highlighted the misfit of EM curricula and pedagogies with the practical entrepreneurial needs. This misfit has caused a major theory/pedagogy-practice gap in EM, due to which business school graduates are lacking highly in EM skill-set. There are two reasons for this gap: first, inadequate theoretical developments in EM domain, and second, outdated pedagogical choices in the EM education by business schools world-wide. As a result, this paper has proposed two key areas of future research: first, exploring the EM practices to make theoretical developments, and second, exploring the contemporary EM challenges and integrating them with EE literature to develop EM pedagogy models to bridge the pedagogical gaps in EM education. As for the practical gap, we have recommended academic authorities at business schools to incorporate EM in all types of business programs as this is much needed and would increase the impact of EE on a wider range of students, ultimately developing entrepreneurship in the economies.

Bridging the theoretical and pedagogical gaps in a key entrepreneurial domain like EM; and also making EM a part of business administration programs could make business schools produce high-quality and more graduate entrepreneurs that would be skilled and capable to survive in the practical entrepreneurial world. The survival of graduate entrepreneurs would certainly and significantly help achieving the goal of developing sustainable entrepreneurship in the economies.

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