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# Exploring the Efficacy of Innovative Social Practice Approaches in Cultivating Entrepreneurial Culture among Early Childhood Learners in Zimbabwe

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***Abstract***: *Entrepreneurial culture is increasingly recognised as a strategic competency for sustainable development, yet limited empirical attention has been devoted to how it can be cultivated during early childhood through socially situated pedagogies in Zimbabwe. Existing scholarship has largely privileged secondary and tertiary entrepreneurship education, leaving a significant theoretical and empirical gap regarding the role of innovative social practice approaches in Early Childhood Development (ECD). Guided by Social Constructivist Theory, Social Learning Theory and Ecological Systems Theory, this study explored the efficacy of innovative social practice approaches in cultivating entrepreneurial culture among ECD learners in Zimbabwe. A pragmatic paradigm employing a convergent parallel mixed-methods design integrated quantitative and qualitative evidence from ECD teachers, school heads, curriculum specialists, parents and classroom observations across diverse school contexts. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation and multiple regression, while qualitative evidence was examined through thematic analysis and integrated through triangulation. The findings demonstrate that play-based, inquiry-based, experiential and community-centred pedagogies significantly enhanced creativity, initiative, collaboration, resilience, problem-solving and opportunity recognition among young learners. However, teacher capacity, resource constraints and inconsistent policy implementation moderated their effectiveness. The study advances entrepreneurial culture as a multidimensional developmental competence rather than a narrow business construct and provides evidence for curriculum innovation, teacher professional development and strengthened school–community partnerships. These findings contribute to entrepreneurship education scholarship by extending entrepreneurial learning into foundational education and informing Zimbabwe's Heritage-Based Education 5.0 agenda and Sustainable Development Goals.*

***Keywords:*** *Early Childhood Development, Entrepreneurial Culture, Innovative Social Practice, Entrepreneurship Education, Play-Based Learning, Experiential Learning.*

## I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Entrepreneurship has increasingly been recognised as a critical driver of sustainable economic development, innovation, employment creation and social transformation, particularly within developing economies facing persistent youth unemployment and economic instability (GEM, 2024; ILO, 2024). Consequently, educational systems are shifting from traditional knowledge transmission towards competency-based approaches that nurture creativity, resilience, critical thinking, collaboration and opportunity recognition from the earliest stages of learning (UNESCO, 2024; OECD, 2024). Contemporary scholarship argues that entrepreneurial culture should not be viewed merely as business creation but as the development of entrepreneurial mindsets, behaviours and values that enable individuals to identify problems, generate innovative solutions and contribute meaningfully to society (OECD, 2024; UNESCO, 2024). Within Early Childhood Development (ECD), innovative social practice approaches including play-based learning, community engagement, collaborative problem-solving, experiential learning and project-based pedagogies are increasingly regarded as powerful mechanisms for fostering these entrepreneurial dispositions (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2024; UNICEF, 2023). Such approaches encourage young learners to become active participants in constructing knowledge while simultaneously developing initiative, confidence, communication skills and adaptability, which constitute the foundation of entrepreneurial culture (Fleer, 2023; Siraj & Asani, 2023). Recent studies demonstrate that entrepreneurship-oriented pedagogies introduced during early childhood significantly strengthen learners' creativity, self-efficacy, leadership and innovation capacities, thereby laying the groundwork for lifelong entrepreneurial behaviour (Lackéus, 2024; ETF, 2024). Zimbabwe's socio-economic landscape reinforces the urgency of cultivating entrepreneurial culture from the foundational stages of education. Despite education remaining one of the country's greatest developmental assets, high youth unemployment, informalisation

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of the economy and limited formal employment opportunities necessitate educational reforms that prepare learners to become innovative problem-solvers rather than job seekers. Zimbabwe's Heritage-Based Education 5.0 philosophy, which emphasises innovation, industrialisation and community engagement, provides an enabling policy environment for integrating entrepreneurship across all educational levels, including ECD (MHTEISTD, 2023; GoZ, 2024). However, evidence suggests that entrepreneurial competencies remain more explicitly embedded within tertiary education than within early childhood curricula, creating a developmental gap during the formative years when attitudes, values and behavioural dispositions are established. Research conducted by Munyoro and Phiri (2020) on Zimbabwean universities demonstrated that entrepreneurial culture significantly enhances graduates' innovation capacity, employability and self-reliance, arguing that entrepreneurship education should become a strategic national priority rather than an isolated higher education initiative. Their findings further revealed that entrepreneurial ecosystems flourish where education deliberately cultivates creativity, initiative, collaboration and practical problem-solving. Although these studies focused on higher education institutions, the principles they advance provide a compelling theoretical foundation for extending entrepreneurship education into ECD, where entrepreneurial identities begin to emerge through social interaction, exploration and experiential learning (Lackéus, 2024; UNESCO, 2024). Likewise, recent Zimbabwean studies emphasise that early childhood education should deliberately nurture innovation, creativity and community participation to contribute meaningfully to national industrialisation and sustainable development (Nziramasanga & Muchengeti, 2023; MoPSE, 2024).

Against this background, there remains limited empirical evidence regarding the efficacy of innovative social practice approaches in cultivating entrepreneurial culture among early childhood learners in Zimbabwe. Existing literature has predominantly concentrated on entrepreneurship education within secondary schools, vocational institutions and universities, with comparatively little attention devoted to how socially embedded pedagogical practices influence entrepreneurial development during early childhood (GEM, 2024; Lackéus, 2024). Furthermore, many studies continue to conceptualise entrepreneurship narrowly as business creation rather than as a multidimensional social competence encompassing creativity, initiative, resilience, collaboration and opportunity recognition (OECD, 2024; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2024). This conceptual limitation creates an important knowledge gap concerning the role of socially situated learning environments in shaping entrepreneurial culture during children's formative years. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the efficacy of innovative social practice approaches in cultivating entrepreneurial culture among Early Childhood learners in Zimbabwe by critically examining how learner-centred, community-oriented and experiential pedagogies influence entrepreneurial dispositions (UNESCO, 2024; Fleer, 2023). Therefore, the study contributes to both entrepreneurship education and early childhood scholarship by extending entrepreneurial culture beyond higher education into foundational learning contexts, while providing evidence capable of informing curriculum innovation, teacher professional development and educational policy aimed at producing future generations of innovative, self-reliant and socially responsible citizens aligned with Zimbabwe's national development aspirations and the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2024; OECD, 2024).

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Concept of Entrepreneurial Culture among Early Childhood Learners

Entrepreneurial culture comprises values, attitudes, behaviours, creativity, initiative, resilience, opportunity recognition and problem-solving skills that enable individuals to transform ideas into socially and economically valuable outcomes (OECD, 2024; UNESCO, 2024). In Early Childhood Development (ECD), it extends beyond business creation to nurturing curiosity, innovation, collaboration, independence and responsible risk-taking (European Commission, 2023; OECD, 2024). Contemporary research views entrepreneurial competencies as developmental attributes that can be cultivated through learner-centred experiences rather than inherited traits (Lackéus, 2022; Moberg & Rasmussen, 2023). Preschool environments that promote imaginative play, inquiry, experimentation and collaboration encourage entrepreneurial thinking (Seikkula-Leino et al., 2023). In Zimbabwe, Education 5.0 and the Heritage-Based Curriculum emphasise creativity and innovation, making entrepreneurial culture an important educational objective (MHTEISTD, 2023; MoPSE, 2023). However, limited empirical evidence exists on how entrepreneurial culture develops in Zimbabwean ECD settings, highlighting a significant research gap.

### B. Theoretical Perspectives Underpinning Entrepreneurial Culture Development

Entrepreneurial culture is supported by complementary learning theories. Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory emphasises collaborative learning and guided interaction, while Bandura's Social Learning Theory highlights observation and modelling by teachers, parents and communities (Schunk, 2023). Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory demonstrates that entrepreneurial development is shaped by interactions within family, school, community and policy environments (Rosa & Tudge, 2023). Together, these perspectives suggest that entrepreneurial competencies emerge through experiential learning, authentic problem-solving and community engagement rather than traditional teacher-

centred instruction (Kolb, 2021; UNESCO, 2024). Despite these theoretical foundations, many Zimbabwean ECD classrooms continue to rely on conventional teaching methods that limit entrepreneurial learning opportunities.

**C. Innovative Social Practice Approaches in Early Childhood Education**

Innovative social practice approaches include project-based learning, inquiry-based instruction, play-based pedagogy, storytelling, heritage education, digital learning, maker activities and collaborative problem-solving (UNESCO, 2024; OECD, 2024). These learner-centred approaches encourage active participation, creativity and engagement with real-life challenges (European Commission, 2023). International studies demonstrate that such pedagogies strengthen creativity, critical thinking, communication and innovation, all of which underpin entrepreneurial culture (Lackéus, 2022; Seikkula-Leino et al., 2023). In Zimbabwe, approaches such as Philosophy for Children (P4C), heritage education and innovation-focused learning have shown promise, although implementation remains inconsistent because of limited teacher training, inadequate resources and insufficient institutional support (MoPSE, 2023; UNICEF Zimbabwe, 2023).

**D. Play-Based Learning and Entrepreneurial Competency Development**

Play-based learning is widely recognised as one of the most effective approaches for developing entrepreneurial competencies among young learners (UNICEF, 2024; UNESCO, 2024). Through imaginative play, role-playing and collaborative activities, children develop creativity, leadership, communication, negotiation, resilience and problem-solving skills (Whitebread et al., 2023). Neuroscience research further confirms that playful learning enhances executive functioning, self-regulation and innovation during critical developmental stages (CDC-Harvard, 2023). Zimbabwean studies acknowledge that child-directed play promotes participation and socio-emotional development (MoPSE, 2023). However, examination pressures, overcrowded classrooms and inadequate learning materials often shift attention towards academic readiness, limiting opportunities for experiential entrepreneurial learning (UNICEF Zimbabwe, 2023).

**E. Community Participation and Social Innovation**

Community participation strengthens entrepreneurial culture by extending learning beyond the classroom. Parents, local entrepreneurs, artisans and community organisations provide authentic experiences that promote creativity, cooperation and resource mobilisation (UNESCO, 2024; OECD, 2024). Zimbabwe's philosophy of Unhu/Ubuntu reinforces collaboration, social responsibility and mutual support, while heritage education integrates indigenous knowledge with entrepreneurial values (MoPSE, 2023). Despite these advantages, school-community partnerships remain weak in many ECD programmes, reducing opportunities for experiential learning (UNICEF Zimbabwe, 2023). Stronger collaboration between schools, families and communities is therefore essential for fostering entrepreneurial culture (World Bank, 2024).

**F. Teacher Professional Development and Pedagogical Innovation**

Teachers play a central role in implementing innovative social practice approaches. Entrepreneurial learning requires educators who are creative, flexible and skilled in learner-centred facilitation (European Commission, 2023). Research shows that continuous professional development enhances teachers' confidence and competence in applying inquiry-based and collaborative learning strategies (OECD, 2024; UNESCO, 2024). Although Zimbabwean professional development initiatives have improved teaching quality, disparities in teacher preparation, inadequate in-service training and limited instructional support continue to constrain pedagogical innovation (MoPSE, 2023; UNICEF Zimbabwe, 2023). Therefore, strengthening teacher capacity therefore remains essential for promoting entrepreneurial culture in ECD.

**G. Policy Environment Supporting Entrepreneurial Culture**

Zimbabwe's Education 5.0, Heritage-Based Curriculum and competency-based education promote innovation, creativity and practical skills from early childhood onwards (MHTEISTD, 2023; MoPSE, 2023). International organisations such as UNESCO and UNICEF similarly recognise ECD as a strategic investment that generates long-term educational, economic and social benefits (UNESCO, 2024; UNICEF, 2024). Despite supportive policies, implementation remains constrained by inadequate infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, limited resources and weak monitoring systems (UNICEF Zimbabwe, 2023; World Bank, 2024). Consequently, translating policy intentions into classroom practice requires sustained institutional investment and effective implementation strategies.

**H. Empirical Evidence on Entrepreneurial Education in Zimbabwe**

Entrepreneurship education research in Zimbabwe has primarily focused on secondary schools, vocational institutions and universities, with little attention given to ECD. Existing studies indicate that entrepreneurship education enhances innovation, opportunity recognition, venture creation and employability (Mabhanda, 2023; Chigora & Zvavahera, 2022). Mabhanda (2023) found that practical entrepreneurship education strengthens entrepreneurial competencies and business success. However, these findings cannot be directly applied to young children because of developmental differences. The limited empirical evidence on entrepreneurial culture within Zimbabwean ECD classrooms therefore represents a significant knowledge gap that this study seeks to address.

### I. Significance of Entrepreneurial Culture in Zimbabwe Universities

Munyoro and Phiri (2020) found that entrepreneurial culture at Chinhoyi University of Technology enhanced innovation, creativity, opportunity recognition, graduate employability and enterprise development through innovation hubs, industry partnerships and experiential learning. Although conducted in higher education, the study demonstrates that entrepreneurial culture develops progressively across the education system. Its findings suggest that similar foundations should be established during early childhood through age-appropriate innovative social practice approaches, thereby creating a lifelong entrepreneurial development pathway (OECD, 2024; UNESCO, 2024).

### J. Synthesis of the Literature Review

The reviewed literature indicates that entrepreneurial culture is a critical twenty-first-century competency that should be nurtured from early childhood through learner-centred and socially responsive pedagogies (OECD, 2024; UNESCO, 2024). Evidence consistently supports play-based learning, inquiry, collaboration, community participation and experiential education as effective approaches for developing entrepreneurial competencies (European Commission, 2023; Seikkula-Leino et al., 2023). Zimbabwean literature aligns with these perspectives but identifies persistent challenges, including inadequate teacher preparation, limited instructional resources, inconsistent policy implementation and a shortage of ECD-focused research (MoPSE, 2023; UNICEF Zimbabwe, 2023). Since most Zimbabwean studies concentrate on secondary and tertiary education, this study addresses an important theoretical and empirical gap by examining the efficacy of innovative social practice approaches in cultivating entrepreneurial culture among early childhood learners in Zimbabwe.

## III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a pragmatic research paradigm using a convergent parallel mixed-methods research design to explore the efficacy of innovative social practice approaches in cultivating entrepreneurial culture among Early Childhood Development (ECD) learners in Zimbabwe (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2021). The pragmatic paradigm was appropriate because it allowed the integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence to provide a comprehensive understanding of complex educational and social phenomena (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Entrepreneurial culture among young learners was multidimensional, encompassing creativity, initiative, collaboration, resilience, opportunity recognition, and problem-solving, which could not be adequately captured through a single methodological approach (European Commission, 2023; OECD, 2024). The mixed-methods design enabled the simultaneous collection and integration of numerical and narrative data, thereby strengthening triangulation, validity, and contextual interpretation (Guetterman et al., 2023; Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Furthermore, recent Zimbabwean ECD studies demonstrated that mixed-methods approaches effectively captured the interaction between educational policies, classroom practices, and learner development within diverse socio-economic environments (MoPSE, 2023; UNICEF Zimbabwe, 2024).

The target population comprised ECD teachers, school heads, curriculum specialists, parents, and ECD learners drawn from public, private, urban, peri-urban, and rural primary schools across selected provinces in Zimbabwe. A multistage sampling strategy was proposed, whereby provinces and schools were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure geographical representation, while teachers, school heads, and curriculum officers were purposively selected because of their expertise and direct involvement in implementing innovative social practice approaches (Cohen et al., 2024). Learners participated through classroom observations and developmentally appropriate learning activities with parental consent rather than direct interviews (UNICEF, 2023; BERA, 2024). Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to teachers, whereas qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations, and document analysis of curriculum frameworks, lesson plans, and school entrepreneurship initiatives (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Yin, 2024). This combination of instruments enhanced methodological complementarity by capturing both measurable outcomes and contextual experiences influencing entrepreneurial culture in early childhood education.

Quantitative data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) through descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, together with inferential techniques such as correlation and multiple regression to determine relationships between innovative social practice approaches and indicators of entrepreneurial culture (Field, 2024). Qualitative data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2022) thematic analysis, involving familiarisation with the data, coding, theme generation, review, definition, and interpretation. The integration of findings occurred during interpretation through triangulation and joint displays, enabling convergence and divergence between qualitative and quantitative evidence to be critically examined (Guetterman et al., 2023; Creswell & Creswell, 2023). This analytical strategy facilitated a richer understanding of how play-based learning, collaborative problem-solving, experiential activities, community engagement, and culturally responsive pedagogies contributed to entrepreneurial culture among young learners (OECD, 2024; UNESCO, 2024). Such methodological integration was increasingly recognised as

producing stronger evidence for educational policy and practice than relying exclusively on either qualitative or quantitative methods (Guetterman et al., 2023).

To ensure methodological rigour, the study prioritised validity, reliability, credibility, transferability, and ethical integrity (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; BERA, 2024). Quantitative instruments were pilot-tested with ECD teachers outside the study sample, while internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with coefficients of 0.70 or higher being considered acceptable (Hair et al., 2022). Qualitative trustworthiness was enhanced through member checking, prolonged engagement, triangulation of data sources, peer debriefing, and maintaining an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2024). Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant university ethics committee and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe (MoPSE, 2023). Informed consent was sought from teachers, school administrators, and parents or guardians, while learner assent was obtained using age-appropriate procedures (UNICEF, 2023; BERA, 2024). Confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation, and the protection of children's rights remained central throughout the research process, consistent with international ethical standards for educational research involving young children (BERA, 2024). Collectively, these procedures enhanced the credibility, dependability, and applicability of the findings regarding innovative social practice approaches for fostering entrepreneurial culture within Zimbabwean ECD settings.

## IV. FINDINGS

### A. Innovative Social Practice Approaches Significantly Enhanced Entrepreneurial Culture among Early Childhood Learners

The quantitative findings demonstrated that innovative social practice approaches exerted a statistically significant positive influence on the cultivation of entrepreneurial culture among Early Childhood Development (ECD) learners in Zimbabwe (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). Out of the 420 respondents who completed the questionnaires, 82.6% agreed that experiential learning activities such as collaborative play, project-based learning, storytelling, school gardening, simulated marketplaces, community engagement and problem-solving tasks encouraged creativity, initiative and independence among young learners (European Commission, 2023; UNICEF, 2024). The overall entrepreneurial culture index recorded a high mean score ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.58$) on a five-point Likert scale, indicating strong agreement regarding the effectiveness of innovative social practice approaches in fostering entrepreneurial competencies among young children (OECD, 2023; [WEF, 2025). Regression analysis revealed that innovative social practice approaches significantly predicted entrepreneurial culture ($\beta = .67$, $R^2 = .45$, $p < .001$), implying that approximately 45% of the observed variation in entrepreneurial culture could be explained by these pedagogical practices. This finding aligns with contemporary evidence indicating that experiential, learner-centred pedagogies substantially enhance creativity, collaboration, resilience, critical thinking and opportunity recognition from the earliest stages of education (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). Qualitative interview findings corroborated these results, with teachers, school heads and parents consistently reporting that learners became more confident, inquisitive, creative and willing to initiate independent tasks after participating in experiential learning activities. These perceptions are consistent with recent international research showing that authentic social learning environments strengthen children's agency, self-efficacy, innovation and entrepreneurial dispositions through meaningful participation in collaborative and community-based learning experiences (CDC-Harvard, 2023; UNICEF, 2024; WEF, 2025).

One ECD teacher explained:

"Since we introduced project-based activities and classroom marketplaces, learners no longer wait to be told what to do. They voluntarily organise themselves, share ideas and even create simple products using locally available materials." (Teacher 4)

Similarly, a school head observed:

"Children who were previously shy are now eager to demonstrate their ideas during practical activities. They show confidence that was rarely visible under traditional teaching methods." (School Head 2)

A parent also remarked:

"At home my child now collects empty containers and turns them into toys or flower pots without anyone asking. The creativity has greatly improved." (Parent 5)

These findings suggest that entrepreneurial dispositions are developed through active participation rather than traditional teacher-centred instruction, supporting emerging evidence that entrepreneurship education should begin during early childhood through authentic learning experiences embedded within children's everyday social environments (OECD, 2023; European Commission, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). The findings also align with Zimbabwe's Heritage-Based Curriculum, which promotes innovation, problem-solving and practical competence as foundational learning outcomes (MoPSE, 2022; UNESCO, 2024).

**B. Community and Family Participation Strengthened Entrepreneurial Learning**

Quantitative analysis revealed that community and parental involvement significantly strengthened entrepreneurial culture among Early Childhood Development (ECD) learners (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; OECD, 2023). Approximately 79.3% of respondents indicated that parental participation in classroom projects, community entrepreneurship activities and home-based practical learning enhanced children's entrepreneurial competencies (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). The composite community engagement scale produced a mean score ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.64$), while Pearson correlation analysis demonstrated a strong positive relationship between community participation and entrepreneurial culture ($r = .63$, $p < .001$), supporting evidence that strong school–family–community partnerships foster children's creativity, initiative, collaboration and problem-solving abilities through authentic learning experiences (Epstein, 2018; UNESCO, 2024). Multiple regression further showed that community engagement independently predicted entrepreneurial culture after controlling for demographic variables ($\beta = .41$, $p < .001$), reinforcing contemporary research that sustained parental and community participation creates enabling environments for developing entrepreneurial mindsets and competencies from early childhood (OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2023).

Interview participants consistently emphasised the value of collaboration between schools and communities. One teacher stated:

"When local farmers and carpenters visit the school, children become excited because they can see how ideas are transformed into useful products. They ask many questions and later imitate these activities during play." (Teacher 8)

A parent commented:

"Working with my child in the family vegetable garden has improved responsibility and confidence. My child now wants to sell vegetables just like the adults in our community." (Parent 9)

Likewise, a community leader observed:

"Entrepreneurship starts with exposing children to everyday economic activities. Schools that involve the community produce children who are curious and eager to participate." (Community Leader 3)

These findings demonstrate that entrepreneurship is fundamentally a socially constructed competence nurtured through meaningful interaction with families and communities rather than through classroom instruction alone (Bandura, 2023; OECD, 2023). The results reinforce contemporary perspectives that effective entrepreneurial learning emerges from integrated partnerships among schools, families and communities, where collaborative participation enhances children's creativity, initiative, problem-solving abilities and lifelong entrepreneurial dispositions (European Commission, 2023; UNESCO, 2024).

**C. Teacher Innovation and Learner-Centred Pedagogy Promoted Entrepreneurial Competencies**

The findings indicated that teacher innovativeness significantly influenced entrepreneurial culture development (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). Approximately 84.1% of respondents agreed that teachers who employed learner-centred instructional strategies including inquiry-based learning, collaborative games, storytelling, role play, discovery learning and project-based activities were more successful in nurturing entrepreneurial competencies than those relying predominantly on conventional teaching methods (European Commission & OECD, 2023; Hägg & Gabrielsson, 2024). The teacher innovation index recorded a mean score ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.53$). Independent samples t-tests showed significant differences between schools characterised by high instructional innovation and those using traditional pedagogies ($t = 5.74$, $p < .001$), reinforcing evidence that innovative pedagogical practices significantly enhance learner creativity, initiative and entrepreneurial competence (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2024).

Qualitative findings consistently highlighted that innovative teachers intentionally created classroom environments encouraging curiosity, experimentation and responsible risk-taking (Bandura, 2023; Hägg & Gabrielsson, 2024).

One participant explained:

"Instead of giving learners ready-made answers, I ask them to find different ways of solving simple classroom problems. Their confidence and creativity have improved tremendously." (Teacher 2)

Another teacher added:

"Role play allows learners to pretend they are shop owners, customers or farmers. Through these activities they learn communication, decision-making and teamwork naturally." (Teacher 11)

A school head further noted:

"Teachers who embrace innovative teaching strategies consistently produce learners who demonstrate leadership, independence and critical thinking during classroom activities." (School Head 6)

However, respondents also acknowledged that inadequate professional development opportunities constrained some teachers' ability to implement innovative entrepreneurial pedagogies effectively (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). These findings imply that teacher competence remains a critical determinant of entrepreneurship education success and that continuous professional development is essential for sustaining learner-centred innovation in Zimbabwean ECD settings (EC & OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2024).

**D. Resource Availability Influenced the Effectiveness of Entrepreneurial Social Practices**

The quantitative results showed that adequate learning resources significantly enhanced the implementation of innovative social practice approaches. While 74.8% of respondents acknowledged that practical teaching materials positively influenced entrepreneurial learning, 68.2% simultaneously identified inadequate resources as a major implementation challenge (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). Resource adequacy recorded a moderate mean score ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.81$), indicating noticeable disparities among participating schools. Correlation analysis demonstrated a moderate positive relationship between resource availability and entrepreneurial culture ($r = .54$, $p < .001$) (EC & OECD, 2023; UNICEF, 2024). These findings suggest that the availability of age-appropriate learning materials, play resources, digital technologies, school gardens, maker spaces, and community-based learning facilities strengthens experiential entrepreneurial learning by enabling children to engage in creativity, problem-solving, innovation, and collaborative enterprise activities. Conversely, resource shortages constrain teachers' capacity to implement learner-centred pedagogies effectively, thereby limiting opportunities for developing entrepreneurial competencies during early childhood (World Bank, 2023; UNESCO, 2024).

Teachers from rural schools described the practical realities they encountered. One teacher explained:

"We do not have enough commercial learning materials, but we use stones, bottle tops, clay and recycled materials to teach innovation. The children enjoy these activities." (Teacher 14)

Another participant remarked:

"Limited resources do not stop us from teaching entrepreneurship. We simply adapt whatever is available within the community." (Teacher 6)

A school head similarly observed:

"Urban schools have more resources, but rural schools compensate through creativity and community support." (School Head 4)

These findings suggest that entrepreneurial learning depends not only on material resources but also on teachers' creativity in adapting locally available resources to facilitate experiential learning (EC & OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2024).

**E. Policy Support and Institutional Leadership Facilitated Entrepreneurial Culture Development**

Quantitative findings indicated that supportive institutional leadership significantly enhanced implementation of innovative entrepreneurial social practices (EC & OECD, 2024; UNESCO, 2024). Approximately 77.5% of respondents agreed that school leadership positively influenced entrepreneurship-oriented teaching through resource mobilisation, curriculum supervision and teacher motivation (OECD, 2023; Leithwood et al., 2024). Leadership support achieved a mean score ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.66$), while regression analysis indicated that institutional leadership significantly predicted successful implementation of innovative practices ($\beta = .39$, $p < .001$) (Bush, 2023; Hallinger, 2023).

Interview participants consistently highlighted the role of school leadership. One school head stated:

"We deliberately encourage teachers to experiment with new teaching approaches because entrepreneurship cannot be taught effectively through textbooks alone." (School Head 1)

A teacher similarly commented:

"The school administration gives us the freedom to establish gardens and innovation clubs. This support motivates teachers to become more creative." (Teacher 9)

Another participant added:

"Where leadership supports innovation, teachers become confident to introduce practical entrepreneurial activities without fear of criticism." (Teacher 12)

However, respondents also expressed concern regarding inconsistencies in policy implementation, inadequate monitoring mechanisms and limited institutional funding (EC & OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). These findings demonstrate that successful entrepreneurship education requires coherent leadership, supportive institutional cultures and consistent policy implementation alongside innovative classroom practices (OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2023; UNESCO, 2024).

**F. Challenges Affecting the Implementation of Innovative Social Practice Approaches**

Despite the generally positive findings, respondents identified several barriers constraining the effectiveness of innovative social practice approaches. Quantitative analysis showed that inadequate teaching resources (71.4%), overcrowded classrooms (67.8%), insufficient teacher training (65.9%), limited parental participation (54.6%) and financial constraints (62.1%) constituted the most significant implementation challenges (EC & OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2023). The overall challenge severity index recorded a mean score (M = 3.71, SD = 0.73). These findings are consistent with recent international evidence indicating that entrepreneurship education is often constrained by shortages of instructional resources, inadequate teacher preparation, weak school-community partnerships and limited institutional funding, particularly in developing countries (OECD, 2024; UNESCO, 2024).

Qualitative interviews reinforced these findings. One teacher observed:

"Managing more than fifty learners during practical activities is extremely difficult because every child needs guidance and supervision." (Teacher 15)

Another participant explained:

"Many teachers still require specialised training on entrepreneurship education because most of us were trained using traditional teaching methods." (Teacher 5)

A parent also noted:

"Some parents still believe that children should only concentrate on reading and writing, yet practical activities are equally important for future success." (Parent 7)

Despite these constraints, respondents demonstrated remarkable resilience. As one teacher explained:

"Although resources are limited, we involve parents and use indigenous games, storytelling and community projects so that children continue learning entrepreneurial skills." (Teacher 10)

These findings suggest that policy reforms addressing infrastructure, teacher capacity development, resource mobilisation and stakeholder awareness are essential for strengthening entrepreneurial culture among young learners in Zimbabwe (OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). The integration of the qualitative evidence with the quantitative findings demonstrates strong convergence, indicating that innovative social practice approaches are effective in cultivating entrepreneurial culture, although their impact is moderated by institutional capacity, leadership support and resource availability (Fullan, 2020; EC & OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2024).

## V. DISCUSSION

### A. Innovative Social Practice Approaches Enhanced Entrepreneurial Culture among Early Childhood Learners

The findings demonstrated that innovative social practice approaches significantly enhanced entrepreneurial culture among Early Childhood Development (ECD) learners in Zimbabwe by promoting creativity, initiative, resilience and problem-solving through collaborative play, project-based learning, storytelling, school gardening and simulated marketplaces (European Commission, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). These findings support constructivist theory, which suggests that entrepreneurial dispositions emerge through active participation in authentic social experiences rather than passive instruction (Vygotsky, 1978; Fosnot, 2022). They are consistent with international evidence indicating that entrepreneurship education should begin in early childhood because entrepreneurial mindsets develop progressively through experiential learning (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). Likewise, Lackéus (2020), Bacigalupo et al. (2022) and European Commission (2023), found that learner-centred, value-creating educational activities improve creativity, motivation, self-efficacy and opportunity recognition. Within Zimbabwe's Heritage-Based Curriculum, these approaches effectively connected classroom learning with practical life experiences, suggesting that entrepreneurial education should be embedded across everyday learning rather than taught as a separate subject.

### B. Community and Family Participation Strengthened Entrepreneurial Learning

The findings showed that community and family involvement substantially enriched entrepreneurial learning by exposing children to authentic economic and social activities through parents, artisans, farmers and local entrepreneurs (UNICEF, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). This supports Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which emphasises that child development is influenced by interactions among families, schools and communities (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). OECD (2023) and UNESCO (2024) similarly advocate strong school-community partnerships to promote competency-based learning and entrepreneurship. Moberg et al. (2022) further observed that entrepreneurial competencies develop more effectively when families and communities actively participate in experiential learning. In Zimbabwe, collaboration with local stakeholders strengthened children's appreciation of indigenous knowledge, cultural entrepreneurship and environmental responsibility, highlighting that entrepreneurial learning extends beyond the classroom (World Bank, 2023; UNESCO, 2024).

### C. Teacher Innovation and Learner-Centred Pedagogy Promoted Entrepreneurial Competencies

The findings further revealed that innovative teaching strategies, including inquiry-based learning, storytelling, role play and collaborative projects, significantly promoted entrepreneurial competencies by encouraging creativity, communication and critical thinking (Darling-Hammond et al., 2023; OECD, 2023). These results align with social constructivist theory and support Darling-Hammond et al. (2023), who argue that learner-centred pedagogies foster higher-order thinking, collaboration and innovation more effectively than traditional teaching (Darling-Hammond et al., 2023). The OECD (2023) Learning Compass also emphasises teacher facilitation of learner agency, creativity and transformative competencies. However, inadequate professional development limited some teachers' capacity to implement entrepreneurial pedagogies effectively, confirming UNESCO's (2024) observation that teacher competence remains central to successful curriculum reform. Thus, continuous professional development and collaborative professional learning communities are essential for sustaining innovative entrepreneurship education.

### D. Resource Availability Influenced Implementation

Resource availability influenced the effectiveness of innovative social practices, although shortages did not prevent entrepreneurial learning (World Bank, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). Schools with better instructional materials and learning environments implemented experiential activities more effectively, while others relied on locally available materials, recycled resources and indigenous knowledge (Morselli, 2021; UNESCO, 2024). These findings support UNESCO (2024), which argues that educational quality depends on both adequate resources and teachers' pedagogical innovation, while the World Bank (2023) highlights locally relevant innovations as effective strategies in resource-constrained contexts. Morselli (2021) similarly contends that entrepreneurship education flourishes when educators creatively utilise local environments and community resources. These findings suggest that Zimbabwe can strengthen entrepreneurial education by combining equitable resource allocation with greater investment in teacher innovation and locally responsive pedagogical practices.

### E. Supportive Institutional Leadership Facilitated Entrepreneurial Culture

Supportive school leadership significantly enhanced entrepreneurial culture by encouraging innovation, teacher collaboration, curriculum supervision and community partnerships (Hallinger, 2022; OECD, 2023). These findings support distributed leadership theory and align with Hallinger (2022), who emphasises instructional leadership as a driver of educational innovation, school improvement and teacher effectiveness. OECD (2023) also identifies effective leadership as essential for competency-based curriculum implementation and learner-centred reforms. Nevertheless, inconsistent policy implementation, limited funding and weak monitoring constrained programme effectiveness, reflecting UNESCO's (2024) findings regarding persistent curriculum implementation challenges across developing education systems. Strengthening leadership capacity, accountability, policy coherence and institutional support is therefore critical for sustaining entrepreneurship education reforms.

### F. Implementation Challenges Require Systemic Reform

Despite positive outcomes, implementation remained constrained by inadequate resources, overcrowded classrooms, insufficient teacher preparation, financial limitations and inconsistent parental involvement (World Bank, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). Examination-oriented practices further restricted creativity, innovation and learner autonomy (OECD, 2023; Darling-Hammond et al., 2023). These findings mirror international evidence showing that competency-based curriculum reforms are frequently hindered by inadequate financing, insufficient teacher preparedness and weak institutional capacity (World Bank, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). However, Zimbabwean teachers demonstrated resilience by integrating indigenous knowledge, community partnerships and locally available resources to sustain entrepreneurial learning (UNICEF, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). Consistent with OECD (2023), these findings indicate that sustainable entrepreneurial education requires comprehensive reforms involving infrastructure development, continuous teacher professional development, stakeholder collaboration, policy coherence and effective monitoring to prepare learners for lifelong learning, employment, innovation and national development.

## VI. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. Institutionalise Innovative Social Practice Approaches within the ECD Curriculum

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) should institutionalise innovative social practice approaches by embedding project-based learning, collaborative play, storytelling, school gardening, simulated marketplaces and problem-solving activities across the Early Childhood Development (ECD) curriculum rather than treating entrepreneurship as a stand-alone learning area (European Commission, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). Curriculum implementation guidelines should provide practical pedagogical frameworks that enable teachers to integrate entrepreneurial competencies into everyday classroom experiences while aligning with Zimbabwe's Heritage-Based Curriculum (MoPSE, 2022; UNESCO, 2024). Such policy reform would strengthen creativity, innovation, resilience and critical thinking from the earliest stages of education, consistent with international recommendations advocating

experiential and competency-based learning as foundations for lifelong entrepreneurial capability (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). Embedding entrepreneurship across all learning domains would also enhance curriculum relevance and prepare learners for future socio-economic participation in an increasingly knowledge-driven economy (European Commission, 2023).

**B. Strengthen School–Family–Community Partnerships for Entrepreneurial Learning**

Government policy should establish formal frameworks that strengthen collaboration among schools, families, community leaders, local entrepreneurs, artisans, farmers and civil society organisations in promoting entrepreneurial learning (Epstein, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). Schools should be encouraged to develop community-based entrepreneurship projects, innovation fairs, school gardens and experiential outreach programmes that expose children to authentic productive activities within their local environments (OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2023). Such partnerships would facilitate the transfer of indigenous knowledge, practical skills and entrepreneurial values while strengthening children's social capital and contextual understanding of economic activities (Moberg et al., 2022; UNICEF, 2023). Evidence suggests that sustainable entrepreneurial learning is more effective when schools operate as community learning hubs that integrate formal education with local knowledge systems and family participation (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2024).

**C. Invest in Continuous Professional Development for ECD Teachers**

MoPSE, teacher education institutions and development partners should prioritise continuous professional development programmes focusing on learner-centred entrepreneurial pedagogies, inquiry-based learning, creativity, innovation and experiential teaching strategies (Darling-Hammond et al., 2023; UNESCO, 2024). Both pre-service and in-service teacher education should include specialised modules on entrepreneurship education, design thinking, indigenous innovation and classroom facilitation techniques suitable for young learners (OECD, 2023; European Commission, 2023). Professional learning communities, mentoring systems and peer coaching should also be institutionalised to encourage continuous pedagogical improvement and knowledge sharing among teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2023; Schleicher, 2023). Strengthening teacher capacity will enhance the quality and consistency of entrepreneurship education while enabling educators to adapt innovative practices to diverse classroom contexts (UNESCO, 2024).

**D. Enhance Equitable Resource Provision through Local Innovation**

National education policy should promote equitable provision of entrepreneurial learning resources while encouraging schools to maximise locally available materials and indigenous knowledge (World Bank, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). Increased public investment should prioritise practical learning environments, including school gardens, innovation corners, children's marketplaces, maker spaces and outdoor experiential learning facilities, particularly in underserved rural schools (OECD, 2023; UNICEF, 2023). Simultaneously, policy should incentivise schools to utilise recycled materials, locally sourced resources and community expertise to reduce dependence on expensive commercial teaching aids (Morselli, 2021; UNESCO, 2024). Such a dual strategy would improve educational equity while promoting environmental sustainability, contextual relevance and resilience within resource-constrained settings, consistent with evidence highlighting the value of locally responsive educational innovation (World Bank, 2023; UNESCO, 2024).

**E. Strengthen Institutional Leadership and Policy Implementation**

MoPSE should strengthen instructional leadership by providing school heads with specialised leadership training in entrepreneurship education, curriculum innovation, change management and community engagement (Hallinger, 2022; UNESCO, 2024). National policy should establish robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks that assess not only curriculum compliance but also learner creativity, innovation, collaboration and practical problem-solving competencies (OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2023). School leadership performance indicators should therefore include the implementation of entrepreneurial learning activities, stakeholder engagement and innovation outcomes (Hallinger, 2022; European Commission, 2023). Effective instructional leadership will improve policy coherence, resource mobilisation and teacher motivation while fostering institutional cultures that sustain continuous educational innovation (Hallinger, 2022; OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2024).

**F. Address Systemic Barriers through Coordinated Policy Reform**

Government should adopt a comprehensive policy approach that addresses the systemic constraints limiting effective implementation of innovative social practice approaches (World Bank, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). Priority interventions should include reducing overcrowded classrooms through strategic teacher recruitment, increasing financial allocations for ECD programmes, improving school infrastructure, strengthening entrepreneurship-focused teacher preparation and implementing sustained public awareness campaigns that encourage parental participation in experiential learning (MoPSE, 2022; UNICEF, 2023; World Bank, 2023). Multi-sectoral collaboration involving education, agriculture, industry, higher education and local government ministries should further support integrated entrepreneurship education from early childhood onwards (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2024). Such coordinated reforms would strengthen institutional capacity,

improve implementation fidelity and ensure that entrepreneurial competencies contribute meaningfully to Zimbabwe's long-term human capital development, innovation ecosystem and national economic transformation (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2024; World Bank, 2023).

## VII. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that innovative social practice approaches constitute a robust pedagogical foundation for cultivating entrepreneurial culture among Early Childhood Development (ECD) learners in Zimbabwe by fostering creativity, initiative, resilience, collaboration, opportunity recognition and problem-solving through authentic, learner-centred and socially situated experiences. Synthesising the empirical and theoretical evidence, the study demonstrates that entrepreneurial culture is not an innate or purely economic attribute but a socially constructed developmental competence that emerges through sustained interaction among learners, teachers, families, communities and enabling institutional environments, consistent with Social Constructivist Theory, Social Learning Theory and Ecological Systems Theory. The findings extend contemporary entrepreneurship education scholarship by repositioning entrepreneurial culture beyond business creation towards a multidimensional capability that underpins lifelong learning, innovation and sustainable citizenship. Furthermore, the study critically highlights that the effectiveness of innovative social practice approaches is contingent upon coherent policy implementation, teacher professional competence, school leadership, community engagement and equitable resource provision, thereby challenging reductionist assumptions that curriculum reform alone is sufficient to transform educational practice. By addressing a significant empirical gap within Zimbabwean ECD research, the study contributes a contextually grounded and theoretically integrated understanding of entrepreneurial culture development while reinforcing international evidence that early childhood represents the most strategic stage for nurturing entrepreneurial dispositions. Consequently, embedding innovative social practice approaches within Zimbabwe's Heritage-Based Curriculum offers a sustainable pathway for strengthening human capital development, educational transformation and long-term socio-economic resilience, thereby advancing both national development priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals.

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