

Research Project Summary

Title: Academic Entrepreneurship and Sustainability: A multiple case study of University incubated Startups in Brazil

Research Aim:

This research investigates the role of university startups in Brazil in driving sustainable development through innovation and entrepreneurship. By analyzing the relation these ventures have with the economy, the society, and the environment, the study seeks to understand how these startups align with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and navigate the challenges of integrating sustainability into their business models.

Context and Relevance:

As Brazil emerges as a hub for entrepreneurial activity, university startups play a vital role in fostering innovation and economic growth. However, the extent to which these ventures incorporate sustainability strategies and contribute to long-term societal benefits remains an open question. This research is particularly relevant in addressing how academic entrepreneurship can be leveraged to create sustainable solutions while overcoming structural barriers such as funding constraints, regulatory complexities, and ecosystem limitations.

Methodology:

The study employs a qualitative multiple-case study approach, focusing on startups incubated within five university-based incubators in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Data collection is conducted through structured interviews with startup founders and then with incubator managers for triangulation of the data. Additionally, secondary data analysis also is completed. The research examines business models, stakeholder engagement, sustainability strategies, and impact measurement practices.

Key Guiding Questions:

1. How do Brazilian university startups integrate sustainability into their business models and decision-making processes?
2. What are the main challenges and barriers they face in achieving economic, social, and environmental impact?
3. How do entrepreneurial ecosystems, including incubators and universities, support or hinder sustainability-oriented startups?
4. What role do stakeholders, such as investors, policymakers, and customers, play in shaping sustainability strategies?
5. How do these startups measure and communicate their impact, and what frameworks are most effective in assessing their contributions to the SDGs?

Expected Contributions:

This research contributes to the academic discourse on sustainable entrepreneurship, innovation, and entrepreneurial ecosystems by providing empirical insights from the Brazilian context. It highlights best practices, identifies gaps in support mechanisms, and offers policy recommendations to enhance the role of university startups in sustainable development. The findings aim to inform universities, policymakers, and investors on how to create more effective support structures for sustainability-driven entrepreneurship.

Conclusion:

By bridging the gap between academic research and practical entrepreneurial challenges, this study seeks to foster a deeper understanding of how university startups can be catalysts for sustainable innovation. The research will provide actionable insights for young entrepreneurs, incubators, and policymakers, contributing to a more resilient and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem in Brazil.