

## Orchestrating a Pan-African University Alliance with the help of e-learning

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### Abstract

Taking the salient case of an Italian Foundation that started to create a Pan-African university alliance for entrepreneurship education, we conducted a field study based on interviews and observation for a period of seven years. The aim was to understand how to overcome challenges that arise when fostering entrepreneurship education programs (EEP) by orchestrating an inter-organizational network in Africa. Our study revealed that proximity and contextualization play a strategic and crucial role in orchestrating an entrepreneurial eco-system in a context shaped by resource scarcity and solid societal as well as economic problems. We contribute to scholarly and practitioner understandings of how to establish effectively EEPs together with the orchestration of an entrepreneurial eco-system in Africa.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship Education, Network Orchestration, Africa.

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### 1. Introduction

Over the last decades, entrepreneurship has become an important economic and social topic as well as an often-researched subject (Fayolle and Gailly, 2008) and simultaneously, entrepreneurship education has gained more attention from entrepreneurship scholars (Harris & Gibson, 2008; Matlay, 2006; Mitra & Matlay, 2004). Recently, scholars have started to focus on how to design an effective entrepreneurship education programs (EEP), which primarily embrace studies with respect to competence models in order to understand which skills and actions are required in order to teach entrepreneurship (Gielnik *et al.*, 2015, Nabi *et al.*, 2015). In this scenario, EEPs has been recognized as one of the instruments for fostering entrepreneurial attitudes, intentions, and competences and this view has led to a dramatic rise in the number and status of EPPs in colleges and universities worldwide (Finkle and Deeds

2001; Katz 2003; Kuratko 2005; Matlay 2005). Although, education is widely accepted as a leading instrument for promoting economic growth, it might get stunted and challenged in environments in which the foundational infrastructure for the conduct of business is not sufficient to stimulate business formation and growth (Arrow, 1969; Khanna & Palepu, 1997). Hence, emerging markets – such as Africa as an entire continent – present rich settings for studying both voids in commercial institutions (Hoskisson *et al.*, 2000) and their resulting challenges for entrepreneurship education. By the absence of basic resources and cohesive industrial structure or market infrastructure for new venture creations, entrepreneurs need more support than training and education in theoretical content (George & Prabhu, 2000).

To illuminate those issues and to foster entrepreneurship education, we need to focus on orchestrating entrepreneurial eco-systems. However, recent studies have been limited towards studying single units of













