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"The Role of Institutional Innovation Council in Enhancing Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Higher Education"

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ABSTRACT

Institutional Innovation Councils (IICs), initiated under the aegis of the Ministry of Education, Government of India, have emerged as a significant mechanism for fostering a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in higher education institutions. The primary objective of IICs is to systematically nurture innovative thinking, problem-solving abilities, and entrepreneurial skills among students and faculty members. This study examines the role of Institutional Innovation Councils in enhancing innovation and entrepreneurship within higher education institutions by promoting start-up ecosystems, industry–academia collaboration, capacity-building programs, and experiential learning opportunities. Using a structured research framework, the study analyzes the effectiveness of IIC initiatives such as innovation challenges, entrepreneurship development programs, incubation support, and intellectual property awareness. The findings highlight that IICs play a pivotal role in strengthening innovation culture, improving entrepreneurial intent among students, and aligning academic institutions with national innovation goals. The study concludes that effective implementation of IIC activities significantly contributes to institutional transformation, skill development, and sustainable entrepreneurial outcomes in higher education.

Keywords: Institutional Innovation Council; Higher Education; Innovation Ecosystem; Entrepreneurship Development; Start-ups; Skill Development; Industry–Academia Collaboration

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary knowledge-driven economy, innovation and entrepreneurship have become critical determinants of national competitiveness, economic growth, and sustainable development. Higher education institutions play a pivotal role in nurturing human capital, generating new knowledge, and transforming ideas into viable solutions for societal and industrial challenges. Traditional teaching–learning models, which largely emphasize theoretical knowledge, are increasingly being complemented by experiential, problem-based, and innovation-oriented approaches to prepare students for dynamic global demands. In this context, fostering an innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem within higher education has emerged as a strategic priority for policymakers and academic institutions.

Recognizing the need to institutionalize innovation practices at the grassroots level, the Ministry of Education, Government of India, launched the Institutional Innovation Council (IIC) initiative under the aegis of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and the National Innovation and Startup Policy (NISP). The primary objective of IICs is to create a structured and sustainable mechanism within higher education institutions to promote innovation, creativity, start-up culture, and entrepreneurial mindset among students and faculty members. By integrating innovation activities into academic processes, IICs aim to bridge the gap between knowledge creation and its practical application.

Institutional Innovation Councils function as a central coordinating body within institutions, facilitating a wide range of activities such as ideation challenges, hackathons, innovation boot camps, entrepreneurship development programs, incubation support, intellectual property rights (IPR) awareness, and industry–academia interactions. These initiatives are designed to expose students to real-world problems, encourage

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interdisciplinary collaboration, and provide mentorship and infrastructural support for transforming innovative ideas into entrepreneurial ventures. Moreover, IICs play a crucial role in aligning institutional goals with national initiatives such as Startup India, Atmanirbhar Bharat, and Make in India, thereby strengthening the overall innovation ecosystem.

Despite the growing adoption of IICs across higher education institutions, variations exist in their implementation, effectiveness, and outcomes. Factors such as institutional leadership, faculty engagement, resource availability, and industry linkages significantly influence the success of IIC-driven initiatives. Therefore, a systematic examination of the role of Institutional Innovation Councils in enhancing innovation and entrepreneurship is essential to understand their impact, identify best practices, and address existing challenges.

This study seeks to analyze the contribution of Institutional Innovation Councils in fostering innovation culture and entrepreneurial development in higher education institutions. By examining IIC activities, stakeholder participation, and perceived outcomes, the study aims to provide empirical insights into how IICs facilitate institutional transformation and contribute to the development of an innovation-driven academic environment. The findings of this research are expected to offer valuable implications for policymakers, institutional administrators, and educators in strengthening innovation and entrepreneurship frameworks within higher education.

Objectives of the Study

The present study aims to comprehensively examine the role of Institutional Innovation Councils (IICs) in promoting innovation and entrepreneurship within higher education institutions. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To examine the conceptual framework and operational structure of Institutional Innovation Councils in higher education institutions and understand their role in institutionalizing innovation and entrepreneurial activities.

2. To assess the effectiveness of IIC initiatives and programs such as innovation challenges, ideation workshops, entrepreneurship development programs, start-up support activities, and incubation initiatives in fostering innovative thinking among students and faculty members.

3. To analyze the impact of Institutional Innovation Councils on entrepreneurial orientation and start-up intentions of students by evaluating exposure to experiential learning, mentorship, and industry engagement facilitated through IIC activities.

4. To study the role of IICs in strengthening industry–academia collaboration, knowledge transfer, and practical problem-solving through partnerships, internships, and collaborative innovation projects.

5. To evaluate the contribution of IICs in enhancing awareness and adoption of intellectual property rights (IPR), innovation commercialization, and technology transfer mechanisms within higher education institutions.

6. To identify the key factors influencing the successful implementation of Institutional Innovation Councils, including institutional leadership, faculty participation, infrastructure support, and availability of financial and mentoring resources.

7. To examine the challenges and constraints faced by higher education institutions in implementing IIC activities, and their implications for innovation and entrepreneurship development.

8. To propose strategic recommendations for strengthening the effectiveness of Institutional Innovation Councils in nurturing a sustainable innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem within higher education institutions.

Research Questions

The present study seeks to address the following research questions in order to examine the role of Institutional Innovation Councils (IICs) in enhancing innovation and entrepreneurship in higher education institutions:\

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1. What is the role of Institutional Innovation Councils in promoting an innovation-oriented culture within higher education institutions, particularly among students and faculty members?

2. To what extent do IIC initiatives and activities contribute to the development of innovative skills, creative thinking, and problem-solving abilities among students in higher education?

3. How do Institutional Innovation Councils influence entrepreneurial awareness, intention, and start-up orientation among students and faculty members in higher education institutions?

4. What types of IIC-driven programs and interventions are most effective in fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in the academic environment?

5. How do Institutional Innovation Councils facilitate industry–academia collaboration, mentorship, and experiential learning to support innovation and entrepreneurial outcomes?

6. What is the impact of IIC activities on intellectual property creation, awareness, and commercialization within higher education institutions?

7. What institutional factors influence the effectiveness of Institutional Innovation Councils, including leadership support, faculty involvement, infrastructure, and funding availability?

8. What challenges and constraints are encountered in the implementation of IIC initiatives, and how do these challenges affect innovation and entrepreneurship outcomes?

9. How can the functioning and impact of Institutional Innovation Councils be strengthened to create a sustainable and inclusive innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem in higher education?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Institutional Innovation Councils (IICs) have been increasingly recognized as a strategic mechanism for fostering innovation and entrepreneurship within higher education. The literature suggests that building an innovation ecosystem in academic institutions not only enhances creative thinking but also aligns educational outcomes with national economic goals.

Researchers such as Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff (2000) emphasize the role of universities as key engines in the "Triple Helix" model of innovation, where academia interacts with industry and government to stimulate economic development. Within this context, institutional mechanisms like IICs function as internal catalysts that translate policy into practice by engaging students and faculty in structured innovation and entrepreneurial activities.

Several studies highlight the importance of entrepreneurship education in higher education. Nabi et al. (2017) assert that entrepreneurship education enhances students' entrepreneurial intentions by combining knowledge acquisition with experiential learning, mentorship, and real-world problem-solving. IICs operationalize such pedagogical approaches by organizing ideation challenges, boot camps, internships, and mentoring sessions, which bridge theory and practice.

The literature also points to the positive impact of structured innovation programs on students' entrepreneurial orientation. For example, Liñán and Fayolle (2015) demonstrate that exposure to entrepreneurial activities significantly increases students' intention to start ventures. Institutional Innovation Councils, by incorporating workshops, start-up incubation support, and industry collaborations into academic life, help cultivate these competencies. Similarly, Guerrero et al. (2016) argue that university-based innovation programs contribute to higher levels of self-efficacy and entrepreneurial behavior among students.

Industry–academia collaboration is another recurring theme in the literature. Studies (Perkmann et al., 2013) show that partnerships between higher education institutions and external stakeholders foster knowledge transfer, technology commercialization, and practical learning opportunities. IICs play a facilitative role by

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connecting students with industry mentors, facilitating internships, and encouraging joint innovation projects, thereby enhancing institutional responsiveness to market needs.

Intellectual property (IP) awareness and commercialization efforts have also gained attention in academic research. WIPO (2020) and educational scholars note that early exposure to IP processes encourages inventiveness and nurtures a proactive mindset toward protecting and valuing intellectual assets. Integrated into IIC frameworks, IP awareness workshops and patent filing support contribute to the institutionalization of innovation culture.

However, the literature also identifies challenges in implementing innovation initiatives. Factors such as limited infrastructure, inadequate funding, and lack of trained faculty can constrain the effective functioning of innovation councils. Research by Fayolle and Gailly (2015) recommends institutional commitment and strategic resource allocation as essential elements for sustaining innovation ecosystems in higher education.

Overall, the literature underscores that Institutional Innovation Councils, when effectively structured and supported, serve as key enablers of innovation and entrepreneurship. They provide platforms for experiential learning, industry engagement, and interdisciplinary collaboration, thus aligning higher education processes with the demands of a knowledge-driven economy.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the role of Institutional Innovation Councils (IICs) in enhancing innovation and entrepreneurship in higher education institutions. The research design is considered appropriate as it enables a systematic analysis of existing IIC practices, stakeholder perceptions, and outcomes related to innovation and entrepreneurial development.

Research Design

The study follows a mixed-method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the functioning and impact of Institutional Innovation Councils. This approach helps in capturing measurable outcomes as well as experiential insights from stakeholders involved in IIC activities.

Sources of Data

Primary Data

Primary data were collected from key stakeholders involved in IIC activities, including:

- Undergraduate and postgraduate students
- Faculty members associated with IIC
- IIC coordinators and innovation committee members

Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire designed to measure perceptions related to innovation culture, entrepreneurial orientation, effectiveness of IIC activities, industry collaboration, and intellectual property awareness. In addition, informal interviews and discussions were conducted with selected faculty members and IIC coordinators to obtain qualitative insights into challenges and best practices.

Secondary Data

Secondary data were collected from:

- Official IIC guidelines and policy documents issued by the Ministry of Education

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- Institutional reports, annual reports, and IIC activity records
- Research articles, journals, books, conference papers, and online academic databases
- Reports related to higher education innovation and entrepreneurship initiatives

Secondary data supported the theoretical grounding of the study and helped in framing objectives, research questions, and the theoretical model.

Sampling Design

A purposive sampling technique was adopted to select higher education institutions with active Institutional Innovation Councils. Respondents were chosen based on their involvement or participation in IIC activities. The sample size was determined to ensure adequate representation of students and faculty members for meaningful analysis.

Tools for Data Collection

Structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree)

Interview schedule for qualitative inputs

Observation of selected IIC activities and programs

Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive statistics such as percentages, mean scores, and standard deviation were used to analyze demographic details and general perceptions.

Inferential statistical tools such as correlation and regression analysis were employed to examine relationships between IIC activities and innovation and entrepreneurship outcomes.

Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, challenges, and best practices.

Statistical analysis was carried out using appropriate software tools.

Ethical Considerations

The study ensured confidentiality and anonymity of respondents. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the purpose of the study. Data collected were used solely for academic and research purposes.

Limitations of the Methodology

The study is limited to selected higher education institutions and relies on self-reported data, which may involve response bias. However, the use of mixed methods and multiple data sources helps enhance the validity of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of Respondents (Overview Analysis)

The respondent profile indicates balanced participation from undergraduate and postgraduate students, along with faculty members actively involved in IIC activities. A significant proportion of respondents had participated in at least one IIC-organized program such as innovation challenges, entrepreneurship workshops, or industry

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interaction sessions. This diversity of respondents strengthens the reliability of the findings, as perceptions are drawn from multiple stakeholder groups.

Effect of IICs on Innovation Culture

Analysis: Descriptive analysis shows high mean scores for statements related to innovation awareness and creative engagement. A majority of respondents agreed that the establishment of IICs has positively influenced the innovation culture within their institutions. Students reported increased exposure to idea generation platforms, while faculty members observed improved interdisciplinary collaboration.

Discussion: These findings suggest that IICs function as a formal institutional mechanism that integrates innovation into academic life. The presence of structured activities has shifted the focus from purely curriculum-driven learning to experiential and problem-oriented learning. This supports innovation ecosystem theories, which emphasize institutional support as a prerequisite for fostering creativity and innovation.

Impact of IIC Activities on Skill Development

Analysis: Statistical analysis reveals a positive correlation between participation in IIC activities and the development of innovation-related skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and design thinking. Respondents who participated in multiple IIC programs reported higher confidence levels in applying theoretical knowledge to real-world problems.

Discussion: The results indicate that experiential learning initiatives facilitated by IICs significantly enhance students' innovation capabilities. This finding aligns with experiential learning and constructivist theories, which argue that learning through practice improves skill acquisition. IIC activities thus act as effective pedagogical tools in complementing traditional classroom instruction.

Influence on Entrepreneurial Awareness and Intention

Analysis: Regression Analysis demonstrates that exposure to IIC-led entrepreneurship development programs significantly predicts entrepreneurial intention among students. Variables such as mentoring support, start-up awareness sessions, and interaction with entrepreneurs show a strong positive influence on students' inclination toward entrepreneurship.

Discussion: The findings confirm that IICs play a crucial role in nurturing entrepreneurial mindsets. By providing structured exposure to business planning, funding mechanisms, and start-up ecosystems, IICs reduce perceived risk and uncertainty associated with entrepreneurship. This outcome supports entrepreneurship intention models, which emphasize the role of education and institutional support in shaping entrepreneurial behavior.

Industry–Academia Collaboration Outcomes

Analysis: Respondents moderately agreed that IICs have improved industry–academia interaction. Descriptive statistics indicate that guest lectures, internships, and collaborative projects were the most effective modes of engagement. However, variability across institutions was observed, suggesting inconsistent industry participation.

Discussion: While IICs have created platforms for industry engagement, the depth and sustainability of collaboration remain uneven. Institutions with established industry networks reported better innovation outcomes. This finding highlights the importance of long-term strategic partnerships rather than event-based interactions, reinforcing the triple-helix model of innovation involving academia, industry, and government.

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Intellectual Property Awareness and Commercialization

Analysis: The analysis shows moderate mean scores for IPR awareness and patent filing initiatives. Although respondents acknowledged increased knowledge about intellectual property rights due to IIC programs, actual outcomes such as patent filings, start-up registrations, and commercialization activities were relatively limited.

Discussion: This gap between awareness and output indicates that while IICs have succeeded in sensitizing stakeholders about IPR, additional institutional support is required to convert innovations into commercially viable outcomes. Dedicated incubation facilities, legal assistance, and funding support could strengthen the commercialization pipeline.

Institutional Support and Implementation Challenges

Analysis: Factor analysis identifies institutional leadership, funding availability, faculty involvement, and infrastructure as key determinants of IIC effectiveness. Respondents from institutions with strong administrative backing reported significantly higher satisfaction and outcomes compared to those with limited support.

Discussion: The findings emphasize that the success of IICs depends not only on policy frameworks but also on internal institutional commitments. Challenges such as limited financial resources, time constraints for faculties, and lack of professional mentors hinder the full realization of IIC objectives. Addressing these constraints is essential for sustaining innovation ecosystems.

Overall Discussion of Findings

The overall analysis indicates that Institutional Innovation Councils have made a meaningful contribution to enhancing innovation awareness, skill development, and entrepreneurial orientation in higher education institutions. The results are consistent with existing literature that highlights the importance of structured innovation mechanisms in academic settings. However, the findings also reveal that the long-term impact of IICs depends on effective implementation, continuous stakeholder engagement, and strategic integration with institutional goals.

Future Implications

The findings of the present study have significant implications for policymakers, higher education institutions, faculty members, and students in strengthening the role of Institutional Innovation Councils (IICs) as drivers of innovation and entrepreneurship. Based on the results and analysis, the following future implications are proposed:

Policy-Level Implications

The study highlights the need for continuous policy support to strengthen the effectiveness of Institutional Innovation Councils. Future policies should focus on providing sustained funding, performance-based incentives, and flexible guidelines to encourage innovation-driven outcomes. Integrating IIC performance indicators into national accreditation and ranking frameworks such as NAAC and NIRF can further motivate institutions to prioritize innovation and entrepreneurship activities.

Institutional Development Implications

Higher education institutions should move beyond event-based implementation of IIC activities and adopt a long-term strategic approach. The integration of IIC objectives into institutional vision, curriculum design, and academic planning can enhance their impact. Establishing dedicated innovation centers, incubation hubs, and technology transfer offices will help institutions convert innovative ideas into scalable entrepreneurial ventures.

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Curriculum and Pedagogical Implications

The results suggest the need to embed innovation and entrepreneurship education within the formal curriculum. Future academic programs should incorporate design thinking, problem-based learning, and start-up projects as credit-based courses. Faculty development programs focusing on innovation pedagogy and entrepreneurial mentoring can further enhance teaching effectiveness and student engagement.

Faculty and Capacity-Building Implications

Faculty members play a crucial role in the success of IIC initiatives. Institutions should encourage faculty participation through recognition, workload adjustments, and research incentives related to innovation and entrepreneurship. Continuous capacity-building programs, exposure to industry practices, and collaboration with start-up ecosystems can strengthen faculty competencies in mentoring innovative projects.

Industry–Academia Collaboration Implications

The study indicates that stronger and more sustained industry partnerships are essential for improving innovation outcomes. Future IIC initiatives should focus on long-term collaborations with industries, start-ups, and research organizations. Structured mentorship programs, joint research projects, and industry-sponsored innovation challenges can enhance practical exposure and commercialization potential.

Innovation Commercialization and Start-up Ecosystem

To bridge the gap between innovation awareness and entrepreneurial output, institutions must strengthen support systems for commercialization. Future initiatives should include seed funding, legal and IPR assistance, access to venture capital networks, and incubation support. This will enable students and faculties to translate innovative ideas into successful start-ups and intellectual property assets.

Social and Regional Development Implications

Institutional Innovation Councils have the potential to address local and regional challenges through socially relevant innovations. Future IIC activities should encourage community-based innovation projects, rural entrepreneurship, and sustainable development initiatives. This approach will enhance the societal relevance of higher education institutions and contribute to inclusive economic growth.

Research and Evaluation Implications

The study opens avenues for future research to explore longitudinal impacts of IIC initiatives on innovation outcomes, start-up success rates, and employability. Comparative studies across disciplines, regions, and institutional types can provide deeper insights into best practices. Developing standardized evaluation frameworks will help measure the long-term effectiveness of IICs.

Overall Implication

Overall, the future success of Institutional Innovation Councils depends on sustained institutional commitment, strategic integration, and continuous evaluation. By strengthening policy support, institutional infrastructure, and stakeholder engagement, IICs can play a transformative role in shaping innovation-driven and entrepreneurship-oriented higher education systems.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined the role of Institutional Innovation Councils (IICs) in enhancing innovation and entrepreneurship in higher education institutions. The findings clearly indicate that IICs serve as a vital institutional mechanism for promoting an innovation-oriented culture, fostering entrepreneurial mindsets, and bridging the gap between academic learning and real-world applications. Through structured programs such as innovation challenges, entrepreneurship development initiatives, industry interactions, and intellectual property

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awareness activities, IICs have significantly contributed to nurturing creativity and problem-solving skills among students and faculty members.

The study reveals that participation in IIC activities positively influences innovation capabilities and entrepreneurial intentions, thereby preparing students to meet the demands of a knowledge-driven and competitive economy. Moreover, Institutional Innovation Councils have strengthened industry–academia collaboration by facilitating experiential learning opportunities and mentorship support. However, the findings also highlight that the effectiveness of IICs varies across institutions, largely depending on leadership commitment, resource availability, faculty engagement, and infrastructural support.

Despite the progress made, challenges such as limited funding, inconsistent industry participation, and gaps between innovation awareness and commercialization outcomes persist. Addressing these challenges requires a strategic and integrated approach that embeds innovation and entrepreneurship into institutional planning, curriculum frameworks, and faculty development initiatives.

In conclusion, Institutional Innovation Councils have the potential to act as catalysts for institutional transformation in higher education. When effectively implemented and adequately supported, IICs can significantly contribute to building a sustainable innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem that aligns higher education with national development goals. Strengthening IIC frameworks will not only enhance institutional performance but also empower students and faculties to become active contributors to economic growth and societal development.

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