

**STRATEGIC ANALYSIS OF THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING APPROACH IN
DEVELOPING YOUTH ENTREPRENEURIAL CAPABILITIES: A PERSPECTIVE ON
PEDAGOGICAL INNOVATION AND CHARACTER TRANSFORMATION**

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the experiential learning approach as an innovative pedagogical strategy in developing youth entrepreneurial capabilities, with an emphasis on character transformation and learning innovation. Employing a literature review method with a qualitative approach and descriptive analysis, data were gathered from 30 scholarly articles and reputable sources published between 1980 and 2025, which were then rigorously filtered to 17 most relevant articles. The analysis reveals that experiential learning enhances entrepreneurial technical skills and cultivates core character values such as independence, responsibility, creativity, and resilience. This approach aligns with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory and constructivist pedagogy, and is supported by various case studies, such as project-based entrepreneurship programs in educational institutions. Furthermore, this study reveals that systemic integration of experiential learning into curricula can serve as a strategic solution for preparing youth to be adaptive to the challenges of the digital economy and social transformation.

Keywords: Experiential Learning, Entrepreneurial Capabilities, Youth, Pedagogical Innovation, Character Transformation

**ANALISIS STRATEGIS PENDEKATAN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING DALAM
PENGEMBANGAN KAPABILITAS KEWIRUSAHAAN GENERASI MUDA:
PERSPEKTIF INOVASI PEDAGOGIS DAN TRANSFORMASI KARAKTER**

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pendekatan experiential learning sebagai strategi pedagogis inovatif dalam pengembangan kapabilitas kewirausahaan generasi muda, dengan menekankan pada dimensi transformasi karakter dan inovasi pembelajaran. Menggunakan metode tinjauan pustaka dengan pendekatan kualitatif dan analisis deskriptif, data dikumpulkan dari 30 artikel ilmiah dan sumber terpercaya yang terbit antara tahun 1980 hingga 2025, yang kemudian diseleksi secara ketat menjadi 17 artikel yang paling relevan. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa experiential learning dapat meningkatkan keterampilan teknis kewirausahaan, membentuk nilai-nilai karakter seperti kemandirian, tanggung jawab, kreativitas, dan daya juang. Pendekatan ini sejalan dengan teori Experiential Learning dari Kolb dan pedagogi konstruktivistik, serta diperkuat oleh berbagai studi kasus, seperti program kewirausahaan berbasis proyek di institusi pendidikan. Selain itu, penelitian ini mengungkap bahwa integrasi experiential learning secara sistemik dalam kurikulum dapat menjadi solusi strategis untuk membangun generasi muda yang adaptif terhadap tantangan ekonomi digital dan perubahan sosial.

Kata kunci: Experiential Learning, Kapabilitas Kewirausahaan, Generasi Muda, Inovasi Pedagogis, Transformasi Karakter

INTRODUCTION

In the face of globalization, technological disruption, and shifting social values, developing entrepreneurial character among youth has become a strategic necessity for strengthening national competitiveness. Entrepreneurship is increasingly regarded not only as an economic activity but also as a catalyst for social change, requiring innovative thinking, mental resilience, and character maturity (Sieg et al., 2023). Unfortunately, many formal education systems in Indonesia still rely heavily on conventional cognitive approaches and have not yet systematically integrated the affective and psychomotor dimensions essential to shaping an entrepreneurial spirit. This underscores the urgency of adopting experiential learning—a hands-on, experience-based learning approach (learning by doing)—that can bridge the gap between entrepreneurial theory and practice in the context of youth education.

The Experiential Learning Theory developed by (Kolb, 1984) provides a solid theoretical foundation for integrating concrete experience with reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation in the learning process. Through this approach, students do not merely acquire knowledge but also directly experience, feel, and reflect on entrepreneurial values. This is highly relevant to the characteristics of today's youth, who are more responsive to contextual, participatory, and interactive learning methods. In practice, experiential learning can take the form of business simulations, social projects, entrepreneurship internships, and business incubations, all of which enhance competency while reinforcing character traits such as responsibility, leadership, and risk-taking.

Furthermore, the experiential learning approach serves as a driver of pedagogical innovation within the entrepreneurship education ecosystem. Pedagogical innovation requires a paradigm shift from traditional instructional methods toward learner-centered, project-based, and collaborative learning facilitation. This innovation also includes the use of digital technology, interdisciplinary integration, and a commitment to transformative learning. In this context, experiential learning is not just a teaching

technique but an educational strategy that touches on student identity and values. Thus, pedagogical innovation through experiential learning can enhance knowledge while transforming the way students think, feel, and act—an essential aspect of entrepreneurial character transformation (Politis et al., 2025).

Character transformation is a crucial component in developing youth entrepreneurship, as entrepreneurial success is determined not only by knowledge and skills but also by character strengths such as integrity, perseverance, social empathy, and self-confidence. Character education in entrepreneurship cannot be achieved through one-way lectures but must be grounded in real experiences that test values and principles in actual situations (Politis, 2005). In this regard, experiential learning provides a platform for students to internalize values through direct action and critical reflection. This process aligns with constructivist approaches, which emphasize that meaning is built through active interaction with one's environment.

However, the reality on the ground indicates that the implementation of experiential learning in educational institutions across Indonesia remains limited and tends to be sporadic. Many institutions still lack a structured entrepreneurship curriculum that systematically integrates experiential learning. The absence of adequate training for educators, limited resources, and minimal institutional policy support are among the key barriers. This is unfortunate, as strengthening the entrepreneurial capabilities of the younger generation heavily depends on the quality of educational interventions that holistically combine theory, practice, and character formation (Hözlner & Halberstadt, 2023). Therefore, a comprehensive strategic analysis of the experiential learning approach in entrepreneurship education is essential—one that examines both the supporting and inhibiting factors—to ensure that the intended transformation can be realized in a sustainable manner.

Conceptually, entrepreneurial capability encompasses the ability to identify opportunities, develop ideas, design business models, make decisions under uncertainty, and build networks and collaboration. These

capabilities are not developed instantaneously but rather through a reflective, active, and gradual learning process. From the perspective of experiential learning, each business or project experience serves as a medium to strengthen these capabilities through cycles of reflection and action (Moore et al., 2010). Thus, this approach holds strong potential for accelerating the development of entrepreneurial capabilities among youth in a more authentic and contextualized manner, compared to purely theoretical approaches that are disconnected from real market and social dynamics.

Amid the accelerating pace of digital transformation and the evolving post-pandemic economic landscape, today's youth are increasingly required to possess adaptive and value-based entrepreneurial capabilities. It is no longer sufficient for them to be mere job seekers—they must be encouraged to become job creators with a problem-solving mindset. Hence, the integration of experiential learning as a strategic educational approach is not only relevant but also urgent. This study is significant in examining how experiential learning can be effectively implemented in the context of entrepreneurial and character development for youth, and how this approach can serve as a form of pedagogical innovation that responds to the demands of the times.

Based on the above rationale, this study aims to strategically analyze the experiential learning approach in developing youth entrepreneurial capabilities from the perspective of pedagogical innovation and character transformation, in order to contribute meaningfully to the renewal of a more contextual, transformative, and impactful entrepreneurship education system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Experiential Learning

Experiential Learning is a learning approach that emphasizes acquiring knowledge through direct experience, reflection, and real-world application within the context of life or work. Introduced by David A. Kolb in 1984, this theory outlines that effective learning occurs through a four-stage cycle: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract

conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). In the context of entrepreneurship education, experiential learning enables learners to engage in business simulations, case studies, field practice, and real projects, all of which foster applied understanding and the ability to solve problems creatively and adaptively.

Entrepreneurial Capabilities

Entrepreneurial Capabilities refer to a set of competencies, skills, and attitudes that enable individuals to create, manage, and grow ventures in innovative and sustainable ways (Motta & Galina, 2023). These capabilities include critical thinking, creativity, calculated risk-taking, the ability to innovate, and leadership in navigating market uncertainties. The development of entrepreneurial capabilities is essential for nurturing entrepreneurs who can adapt to social and technological changes while creating solutions that generate both economic and social value—especially amid today's digital transformation era.

Youth Generation

The Youth Generation represents a demographic group in transition from adolescence to adulthood, generally encompassing individuals aged 15 to 30. This generation is characterized by its openness to technology, strong desire for independence, and a set of values that differ from previous generations. In the context of entrepreneurship development, youth are seen as potential agents of change due to their cognitive flexibility, innovative spirit, and readiness to face future challenges (Mahmudin, 2023). Therefore, it is crucial for educational systems to equip them with relevant skills through transformative and contextual learning approaches.

Pedagogical Innovation

Pedagogical Innovation refers to the renewal or enhancement of learning methods, strategies, or instructional designs aimed at improving the effectiveness and relevance of education to meet contemporary needs (Asmayawati et al., 2024). This innovation may involve the use of technology, collaborative learning models, project-based approaches, and

the integration of real-world contexts into the curriculum. In entrepreneurship education, pedagogical innovation is necessary to cultivate learning experiences that are interactive, practical, and capable of shaping creative and solution-oriented mindsets. Experiential learning is one form of pedagogical innovation that emphasizes active learner engagement in the educational process.

Character Transformation

Character Transformation is the profound change in individual values, attitudes, and behaviors that supports the development of a responsible, honest, resilient, and socially aware personality (Imawan & Ismail, 2023). This transformation is essential in entrepreneurship education, as business success is determined not only by technical skills but also by integrity, perseverance, and ethical conduct. Through experiential learning, students are not only trained to think and act entrepreneurially but are also guided to develop strong, resilient character through real-life experiences, direct challenges, and deep reflection on their actions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach using a literature review method aimed at analyzing the experiential learning approach in the development of youth entrepreneurial capabilities from the perspective of pedagogical innovation and character transformation. It adopts a descriptive-analytical orientation, meaning that it focuses on presenting findings systematically, in depth, and with argumentative clarity, by synthesizing various theoretical and conceptual insights from relevant scholarly sources published between 1980 and 2025. This approach was chosen for its ability to explore the meanings, trends, and complex conceptual relationships among experiential learning, pedagogical innovation, character transformation, and entrepreneurial capability without involving the collection of primary data.

The data sources in this study were obtained through a systematic search of scholarly articles published on platforms such as Google Scholar and various academic and

reputable institutional databases, including ScienceDirect, Springer, Taylor & Francis, SAGE, and research portals of higher education institutions and relevant international organizations. The search process was conducted using keywords such as “experiential learning in entrepreneurship education,” “innovation in pedagogy,” “youth character transformation,” and “entrepreneurial capability development,” with publication years filtered between 1980 and 2025 to ensure data relevance and currency.

In the initial phase, 30 articles were found to be aligned with the research topic. However, after a rigorous selection process based on inclusion criteria—such as topic relevance, originality of ideas, methodological validity, citation frequency, and the academic standing of the publishing journals—17 articles were deemed the most representative and relevant for further analysis. Exclusion criteria were applied to articles considered redundant, overly general, not focused on youth, or those that did not explicitly address pedagogical and character dimensions.

The data were analyzed using descriptive-analytical techniques, involving the identification of key themes, comparison of arguments, and drawing of conceptual conclusions from each selected article. The analysis was conducted in stages, starting from comprehensive reading, categorization of findings, examination of conceptual interrelations, to the construction of a detailed and argumentative scientific narrative. The goal was to formulate a comprehensive understanding of how experiential learning can serve as an innovative pedagogical strategy in shaping entrepreneurial capabilities and character among youth in the era of educational transformation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The experiential learning approach in entrepreneurship education draws strong legitimacy from Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), developed by David A. Kolb in 1984. This theory posits that effective learning occurs through a continuous four-stage cycle: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). In the context of entrepreneurship

education, this cycle encourages students to internalize knowledge through direct engagement, critical reflection, conceptual meaning-making, and real-world application—fostering an integrated development of knowledge, skills, and values. This approach is highly suitable for youth, as it stimulates active participation and learning achievement through real-life experiences such as business simulations, independent ventures, industrial field studies, and structured internships. These activities create authentic learning environments that allow students to face entrepreneurial challenges in a contextual and purposeful way. Consequently, experiential learning naturally strengthens entrepreneurial capacities such as creativity, decision-making, risk management, and mental resilience through involvement in experience-based learning processes. It also contributes to shaping an entrepreneurial mindset by allowing students to construct personal meaning from each experience. Active engagement in entrepreneurial activities reinforces conceptual understanding while building confidence in initiating sustainable ventures. Thus, this approach cultivates reflective, adaptive, and innovative individuals capable of responding to the complex dynamics of modern entrepreneurship.

Previous studies affirm that experiential learning plays a critical role in shaping entrepreneurial identity and competence among students, as experience-based learning bridges theory and practice in a directly relevant context (Pittaway & Cope, 2007). Through active participation in real business projects, students gain deep insights into market dynamics, consumer behavior patterns, and complex decision-making processes—all of which enhance their ability to identify opportunities, think critically, and build strategic social networks. (Rae, 2010) further supports this by demonstrating that direct entrepreneurial engagement helps students develop tolerance for ambiguity, understand risk concretely, and embrace failure as part of the growth process. Such learning fosters entrepreneurial character traits—courage, resilience, responsibility, and perseverance—

that are difficult to cultivate through traditional one-way instructional methods. The reflective process accompanying these experiences reinforces personal meaning-making of each challenge and decision faced, positioning experiential learning as a core mechanism for forming entrepreneurial values and attitudes. Moreover, direct involvement in business processes creates a dynamic, contextual learning condition where students adjust strategies in real-time, enhancing their cognitive agility and adaptability in business environments. Through this, experiential learning contributes to a proactive and solution-oriented entrepreneurial mindset, facilitating the emergence of technically competent individuals equipped to tackle complex, uncertain challenges.

The social constructivist theory introduced by (Vygotsky, 1980) emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through meaningful social interaction, and within the experiential learning context, this is reflected in the collaborative dynamics that unfold when students engage in joint entrepreneurial projects. Learning occurs through group discussions, role-sharing, idea negotiation, and conflict resolution, creating space for students to build deeper understanding of entrepreneurial realities in a contextual manner. Such learning environments promote the internalization of social values such as empathy toward peers, active listening, and collective responsibility—critical for developing leadership and social awareness. In entrepreneurship projects involving business simulations or community engagement, students directly experience the complexities of social relationships and market demands that require them to adapt, innovate, and make ethical decisions. This fosters the development of social entrepreneurial character, blending economic goals with contributions to community well-being. Amid the dominance of rote learning and information reproduction in Indonesia's educational system, experiential learning emerges as an approach that fosters more dialogic, participatory, and reflective learning. It positions students not as passive recipients but as active agents constructing meaning through shared experience, leading to

personal and social transformation aligned with the need for sustainable, value-based entrepreneurial character development.

The Student Company program initiated by Prestasi Junior Indonesia provides a concrete example of how experiential learning can be systematically implemented through real entrepreneurial activities at the secondary school level (Dinata, 2023). In this program, students are given full responsibility as business actors—from planning and production to marketing and company liquidation—immersing them in a miniature yet dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem. A case study at SMA Negeri 3 Semarang illustrates how comprehensive student involvement in business operations fosters significant cognitive and affective transformation, especially in decision-making, team collaboration, risk-taking, and creative problem-solving in real-life situations (Arifiyah & Widodo, 2017). This experience-based learning process trains students to directly integrate theory with practice, strengthens systemic and reflective thinking skills, and cultivates ownership of their work. Additionally, through interactions with consumers, mentors, and internal teams, students refine vital social competencies such as communication, negotiation, and empathy—essential traits in entrepreneurship. The program also introduces students to market dynamics and principles of resource accountability, building awareness of the impact business decisions have on the surrounding environment. By placing students in real-world scenarios, the program accelerates character learning through firsthand challenges and achievements, leading to deeper understanding of values like integrity, hard work, and self-confidence in their journey as young entrepreneurs.

In the context of pedagogical innovation, the experiential learning approach revolutionizes traditional teaching methods by shifting the emphasis from the lecturer as the central source of information to the student as an active agent who shapes their own learning experiences through direct engagement in real-world-like situations. This transition transforms the classroom into an interactive space that fosters exploration, collaboration, and critical reflection, thereby making the learning process

dialogical and constructive rather than one-way. Prior research indicates that this model significantly enhances students' emotional and cognitive engagement, as they perceive a personal relevance to the subject matter and can immediately observe the practical implications of each entrepreneurial concept they apply (Nabi et al., 2017). This change also stimulates stronger intrinsic motivation, as students are not merely driven by grades but are genuinely inspired by the challenges and dynamics they face throughout the learning process. Within such a learning environment, instructors evolve into facilitators who design experiential activities, guide reflection processes, and encourage students to construct their own understanding through practice and interaction. This approach fosters the development of 21st-century competencies such as critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and creativity—essential skills for producing graduates who can adapt to the rapid and complex changes in today's professional landscape. Within this framework, experiential learning enhances the effectiveness of entrepreneurship pedagogy and strengthens the role of educational institutions as transformative agents in preparing young people to become future innovators and leaders.

From the perspective of character formation, experiential learning provides concrete and contextual experiences that serve as a medium for internalizing moral and ethical values—fundamental pillars of entrepreneurship. Character education theory, as developed by (Lickona, 1992), emphasizes that character is developed through active engagement in real-life situations that demand personal responsibility, integrity in action, and the ability to reflect on the moral consequences of decisions. In entrepreneurship projects, students encounter real challenges such as production errors, team conflicts, pricing dilemmas requiring honesty toward customers, or deadline pressures that test perseverance and mental endurance. These situations cannot be addressed through theory alone but require intense emotional and social learning, where students are trained to act with honesty despite potential losses, take responsibility for team outcomes, and remain resilient in the face of failure. Reflection on such experiences

strengthens the affective and moral dimensions of learning, allowing students to acquire business knowledge while directly grappling with ethical dilemmas that will shape their future professional attitudes. In this process, traits such as empathy, courage, and principled consistency develop naturally, nurtured in authentic contexts laden with real pressure and consequences. Hence, experiential learning is relevant not only in the cognitive and psychomotor domains but also serves as a vital pillar in cultivating entrepreneurial individuals who are resilient, reflective, and deeply rooted in honesty and social responsibility.

The implementation of experiential learning in Indonesian educational institutions presents structural complexities rooted in both physical limitations and deeply ingrained pedagogical cultures, including teacher-centered instruction, memorization-based assessment, and hierarchical teacher-student relationships. These factors make the transition to experience-based learning a paradigm shift that requires systemic change. Despite normative support for entrepreneurship education, a study by the Ministry of Education and Culture (2022) reveals that experiential learning remains sporadic and poorly integrated within the curriculum, exposing a significant gap between policy documents and field-level execution. This gap is further widened by the lack of teacher training in facilitative pedagogy and the limited availability of resources such as business labs, incubation centers, or entrepreneurship simulation spaces needed to support experiential learning effectively. Teachers often lack understanding of their role as mentors who facilitate reflective and exploratory processes, having been accustomed to directive instructional models centered on content delivery. Therefore, strategic interventions are needed, including curriculum redesign to incorporate project-based learning across disciplines, intensive and ongoing teacher training, and the development of entrepreneurial ecosystems within schools and campuses that offer real opportunities for students to experiment, fail, and learn in environments that closely mimic business dynamics. In other words, the shift to

experiential learning requires systemic investment in learning culture, educator capacity, and infrastructure to support active, reflective, and transformative learning cycles.

Strategies to develop youth entrepreneurial capabilities through experiential learning demand a holistic approach that reconfigures the educational ecosystem as a whole. This includes curriculum renewal to embed exploratory and interdisciplinary spaces, intensive training to equip educators to become reflective and transformative facilitators, and the strengthening of partnerships with industry players, SMEs, and local communities to contextualize learning. In this context, experiential learning should not be viewed merely as a methodological innovation, but as a systemic strategy aligned with national entrepreneurship development policies—especially in addressing employment challenges and fostering the emergence of independent young entrepreneurs. Young people must be positioned as active subjects in the learning process, learning through direct experience in managing risk, developing products, engaging with consumers, and facing failure as part of building entrepreneurial mentality. Within this framework, experiential learning serves as a transformative educational tool that simultaneously engages cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains, producing individuals who not only understand entrepreneurial theory but can apply it in real contexts. With supportive policies, institutional incentives, and cross-sector collaboration, experiential learning can become a strategic foundation for cultivating a generation of youth who are resilient, innovative, and socially oriented in building the nation's economy.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the experiential learning approach is an effective and transformative pedagogical strategy for developing entrepreneurial capabilities among the younger generation. Grounded in Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory and supported by Vygotsky's social constructivism and Lickona's character education theory, experience-based learning fosters not only conceptual

understanding but also shapes attitudes, values, and practical skills relevant to the entrepreneurial world. Findings from previous studies and concrete case examples such as the Student Company program demonstrate that this method produces graduates who are more independent, adaptive, creative, and possess strong entrepreneurial integrity. Furthermore, this approach aligns with the demands of 21st-century education, which emphasizes active, collaborative, and contextual learning.

The implications of this study are highly significant for the educational sector, particularly in curriculum development for entrepreneurship education. First, educational institutions must redesign learning strategies that have traditionally been theory-oriented toward more experience-based models. Second, educators need to be trained to serve as facilitators who can encourage reflective, exploratory, and applicable learning processes. Third, educational policymakers should consider the systemic integration of experiential learning within the national entrepreneurship curriculum to shape technically competent, socially mature, and ethically grounded young entrepreneurs. Fourth, partnerships with industry and local communities must be strengthened to provide learning spaces that reflect real-world workplace conditions.

Based on the analysis, it is recommended that secondary and higher education institutions implement the experiential learning approach more broadly within entrepreneurship programs, moving beyond temporary extracurricular activities or pilot projects. Another key recommendation is the importance of collaboration among academics, business practitioners, and policymakers to establish a learning ecosystem that supports experiential learning. Additionally, further empirical research is needed across different regions of Indonesia to test the effectiveness of experiential learning within diverse cultural and social contexts and across various educational levels. Lastly, there is a need to develop an experiential-based evaluation model for entrepreneurial capabilities that integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions in a balanced manner.

This study has several limitations. First, as a literature review, the analysis relies entirely on the researcher's interpretation of existing sources, without direct empirical validation in the field. Second, the limitation in the publication timeframe (1980–2025) and the selection of only 17 articles from an initial pool of 30 may have excluded other relevant studies that could offer alternative perspectives. Third, because the study focuses broadly on youth, it does not explore in depth how experiential learning may have varying impacts on students from diverse social, economic, and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, the findings of this study should be complemented by future research based on field data and using quantitative or mixed-method approaches.

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