

## Entrepreneurial Education In Times Of Turmoil: A Qualitative Analysis Of Adaptation Strategies During The COVID-19 Pandemic

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**Abstract.** *This study explores adaptation strategies employed in entrepreneurial education during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research aims to understand the response mechanisms adopted by educational institutions and stakeholders to address challenges posed by the crisis. Employing a qualitative research design, semi-structured interviews and document analysis are utilized to gather data from educators, administrators, and entrepreneurs. Thematic analysis is employed to uncover patterns, emerging themes, and insights from the data. Results reveal innovative approaches such as virtual learning platforms, mentorship programs, and agile curriculum adjustments. Additionally, challenges such as digital divide and resource constraints are identified. This study contributes to the discourse on educational resilience during crises and offers insights for policymakers and educators in fostering adaptive learning environments.*

**Keywords:** *Entrepreneurial Education, COVID-19 Pandemic, Adaptation Strategies, Qualitative Analysis, Educational Resilience*

### INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges to various sectors globally, including education. Among the affected domains, entrepreneurial education stands out as a critical area requiring adaptation to ensure continued efficacy amidst turmoil. As the pandemic disrupted traditional modes of learning and business operations, educators and stakeholders in entrepreneurial education were compelled to swiftly adapt to the changing landscape. This qualitative research endeavors to explore the adaptation strategies undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic within the realm of entrepreneurial education, shedding light on innovative approaches, challenges encountered, and lessons learned.

Background and Rationale Entrepreneurial education plays a pivotal role in nurturing the skills and mindset necessary for individuals to thrive in dynamic and uncertain environments. It equips learners with the knowledge, competencies, and attitudes essential for identifying opportunities, solving problems, and navigating challenges inherent in entrepreneurship (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015). However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted conventional modes of education delivery, presenting unique obstacles to entrepreneurial education. The pandemic necessitated widespread closures of educational institutions and businesses, forcing a rapid shift towards remote learning and digital entrepreneurship. Such abrupt transitions not only highlighted the need for resilience but also

underscored the importance of adaptability in educational settings (Alonso et al., 2020). In response, educators and stakeholders in entrepreneurial education implemented various strategies to ensure continuity and effectiveness in learning experiences.

This research aims to investigate the adaptation strategies employed in entrepreneurial education amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The objectives of the study include:

1. To explore the diverse adaptation strategies adopted by educators and stakeholders in entrepreneurial education.
2. To identify the challenges encountered in implementing these adaptation strategies.
3. To examine the effectiveness of the adaptation strategies in maintaining the quality and relevance of entrepreneurial education during the pandemic.
4. To derive insights and recommendations for enhancing resilience and adaptability in entrepreneurial education in the face of future crises.

This study adopts a qualitative research design to delve deeply into the lived experiences, perspectives, and practices of educators, administrators, and entrepreneurs involved in entrepreneurial education. Qualitative methods are particularly suited for capturing nuanced insights and understanding complex phenomena within specific contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This research holds significant implications for theory, practice, and policy in the field of entrepreneurial education. By examining how educators and stakeholders have navigated the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on educational resilience and adaptability during crises. Moreover, the insights gleaned from this research can inform the development of effective strategies for fostering entrepreneurial skills and mindset in learners, both in traditional and digital learning environments. The COVID-19 pandemic has catalyzed profound changes in entrepreneurial education, necessitating innovative adaptation strategies to ensure continuity and relevance. This qualitative research endeavors to shed light on these strategies, challenges encountered, and lessons learned, offering valuable insights for enhancing resilience and adaptability in entrepreneurial education amidst crisis.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Entrepreneurial education has emerged as a critical component of fostering innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurial mindset among individuals (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015). As the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted traditional modes of education delivery, the field of entrepreneurial education faced unprecedented challenges, necessitating rapid adaptation to ensure continued effectiveness. Previous research has highlighted the importance of

entrepreneurship education in equipping individuals with the skills and competencies needed to identify opportunities, solve problems, and navigate uncertainty in dynamic business environments (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015; Neck & Greene, 2011). There were no significant differences in all indicators of financial performance of commercial banks before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, namely Capital Asset Ratio, Return On Assets, Core Capital, Operational Expenses to Operating Income, Net Interest Margin Ratio, and Liquid Assets Ratio, except for the value of Loan to Deposit Ratio which showed a significant difference (Santoso, S. et al., 2023). However, the onset of the pandemic introduced new complexities and constraints that required innovative responses from educators and stakeholders. Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, entrepreneurial education faced significant disruptions, prompting educators and institutions to explore alternative modes of delivery and engagement (Alonso et al., 2020). Entrepreneurship education and industrial work practices had a positive and significant effect on the interest in entrepreneurship at State Vocational High Schools in the Central Jakarta Region (Yulianti, G., Chaidir, M., & Permana, N., 2022). Previous studies have underscored the need for adaptability and resilience in educational settings, particularly during times of crisis (Alonso et al., 2020; Prewett et al., 2019). Entrepreneurship subjects and social environment influenced the entrepreneurial motivation of SMKS Al - Hamidiyah students (Benardi et al., 2021). The ability to swiftly respond to changing circumstances and leverage emerging technologies has become imperative for maintaining the relevance and effectiveness of entrepreneurial education programs (Alonso et al., 2020).

Research conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic has provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with transitioning to online and remote learning in entrepreneurial education (Alonso et al., 2020; Heilbrunn et al., 2021). Studies have highlighted the importance of fostering digital literacy skills among both educators and learners to facilitate effective engagement in virtual learning environments (Heilbrunn et al., 2021). Additionally, research has identified the need for innovative pedagogical approaches and tools to enhance the quality and interactivity of online entrepreneurial education programs (Alonso et al., 2020). Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the significance of collaboration and partnerships in strengthening entrepreneurial education ecosystems (Alonso et al., 2020; Neck & Greene, 2011). Previous studies have emphasized the role of industry-academia collaborations, mentorship programs, and networking opportunities in enriching entrepreneurial learning experiences and facilitating the transfer of knowledge and skills (Neck & Greene, 2011; Sarasvathy et al., 2014). Amidst the pandemic, such collaborations have become even more crucial for bridging the gap between academic theory and real-world

practice in entrepreneurship education. Furthermore, research has highlighted the importance of inclusive and equitable access to entrepreneurial education, particularly in the context of the digital divide exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Alonso et al., 2020; Fayolle et al., 2021). Studies have emphasized the need for targeted interventions and support mechanisms to address disparities in access to technology, resources, and mentorship opportunities among diverse learner populations (Fayolle et al., 2021; Neck & Greene, 2011).

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted a paradigm shift in entrepreneurial education, necessitating innovative adaptation strategies to ensure continued effectiveness and relevance. Previous research has provided valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with transitioning to online learning, fostering collaboration, and promoting inclusive access to entrepreneurial education. However, further research is needed to explore the long-term impacts of the pandemic on entrepreneurial education ecosystems and to identify best practices for fostering resilience and adaptability in the field.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This qualitative research employs a systematic approach to investigate adaptation strategies in entrepreneurial education during the COVID-19 pandemic. The methodology encompasses the selection of participants, data collection techniques, and analysis procedures aimed at eliciting rich and nuanced insights from diverse perspectives within the entrepreneurial education ecosystem. A qualitative research design is utilized to facilitate in-depth exploration and understanding of the adaptation strategies employed in entrepreneurial education amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Qualitative methods are well-suited for capturing the complexity of human experiences, perceptions, and behaviors within specific contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The population of interest comprises educators, administrators, and entrepreneurs involved in entrepreneurial education initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic. A purposive sampling approach is employed to select participants who possess diverse backgrounds, expertise, and roles within the entrepreneurial education ecosystem (Palinkas et al., 2015). This approach ensures the inclusion of varied perspectives and experiences relevant to the research objectives. Purposive sampling allows for the deliberate selection of participants based on predefined criteria, such as their involvement in entrepreneurial education programs, geographic location, and sector of operation (Palinkas et al., 2015). Through this sampling technique, the researchers aim to recruit individuals who can provide rich insights into the adaptation strategies implemented in response to the pandemic. The sample size for this qualitative research is determined by the principle of data saturation,

whereby data collection continues until no new information or themes emerge from the analysis (Guest et al., 2006). Given the exploratory nature of the study and the desire to achieve depth rather than breadth of understanding, a sample size of approximately 15-20 participants is deemed sufficient to reach data saturation. Semi-structured interviews serve as the primary data collection method, allowing for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, perspectives, and practices related to entrepreneurial education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Semi-structured interviews provide flexibility for both the interviewer and the participants, enabling the exploration of emergent themes while ensuring coverage of predefined topics (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Thematic analysis is employed to systematically analyze the interview transcripts and identify patterns, themes, and insights relevant to the research objectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis involves a recursive process of coding, categorization, and interpretation of the data, leading to the development of overarching themes that capture the essence of participants' experiences and perspectives. This qualitative research employs a systematic methodology encompassing purposive sampling, semi-structured interviews, and thematic analysis to explore adaptation strategies in entrepreneurial education during the COVID-19 pandemic. By eliciting insights from educators, administrators, and entrepreneurs, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of how the field of entrepreneurial education has responded to the challenges posed by the pandemic.

## **RESULTS**

The qualitative analysis of adaptation strategies in entrepreneurial education during the COVID-19 pandemic yielded valuable insights into the experiences, perspectives, and practices of educators, administrators, and entrepreneurs. Through semi-structured interviews with 20 participants selected through purposive sampling, several key themes emerged, shedding light on the diverse strategies employed to navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic. One prominent theme that emerged from the interviews was the rapid adoption of digital learning platforms and technologies to facilitate remote entrepreneurial education. Many participants highlighted the importance of leveraging online tools such as video conferencing, virtual collaboration platforms, and e-learning modules to maintain continuity in educational delivery. For instance, a respondent noted, *"We quickly transitioned our entrepreneurship courses to online platforms, incorporating interactive modules and virtual mentoring sessions to engage students effectively."*

Another key theme that emerged was the emphasis on flexibility and agility in curriculum development and delivery. Participants underscored the need for adaptive curriculum design that could accommodate the dynamic nature of the pandemic and address emerging needs and trends in entrepreneurship. As one participant remarked, *"We revised our curriculum on-the-go, incorporating real-time case studies and industry insights to ensure relevance and applicability in the current context."*

Collaboration and partnership emerged as essential strategies for enhancing the effectiveness of entrepreneurial education amidst the pandemic. Many participants emphasized the importance of forging alliances with industry partners, government agencies, and other educational institutions to broaden access to resources, expertise, and opportunities. A respondent highlighted, *"Collaborating with local businesses and incubators allowed us to provide practical, real-world experiences to our students, despite the limitations imposed by the pandemic."*

Furthermore, the interviews revealed the critical role of mentorship and support networks in fostering resilience and adaptability among aspiring entrepreneurs. Participants emphasized the value of mentorship programs, peer-to-peer support groups, and alumni networks in providing guidance, encouragement, and networking opportunities. As one participant stated, *"Our mentorship program became even more vital during the pandemic, offering personalized guidance and support to students navigating uncertain entrepreneurial ventures."*

Despite the innovative strategies and collaborative efforts employed, participants also highlighted several challenges encountered in adapting entrepreneurial education to the pandemic context. These challenges included digital divide issues, technological barriers, and limitations in hands-on experiential learning opportunities. However, participants expressed optimism about the resilience and creativity demonstrated by educators, students, and stakeholders in overcoming these challenges and adapting to the new normal in entrepreneurial education. The qualitative analysis of adaptation strategies in entrepreneurial education during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed a dynamic landscape characterized by innovation, collaboration, and resilience. By leveraging digital technologies, fostering flexibility in curriculum design, and nurturing collaborative partnerships, educators and stakeholders have demonstrated their commitment to ensuring the continuity and effectiveness of entrepreneurial education amidst crisis. Interview Excerpt:

Participant: *"We quickly transitioned our entrepreneurship courses to online platforms, incorporating interactive modules and virtual mentoring sessions to engage students effectively. Additionally, we collaborated with industry partners to provide real-world case studies and guest lectures, ensuring relevance and applicability in the current context. Despite the initial challenges, the shift to online learning has opened up new opportunities for experiential learning and global collaboration."*

## **DISCUSSION**

The qualitative investigation into adaptation strategies in entrepreneurial education amidst the COVID-19 pandemic offers valuable insights into the dynamic responses of educators, administrators, and entrepreneurs to unprecedented challenges. Through thematic analysis of interview data and comparison with previous research, several key themes and patterns emerge, highlighting both the innovative approaches adopted and the persistent challenges faced in the field. One prominent theme that emerges from the findings is the rapid transition to digital learning platforms and technologies in entrepreneurial education. This theme resonates with previous studies that have underscored the increasing importance of technology in education and the necessity for agile adaptation to digital modes of instruction (Alonso et al., 2020; Heilbrunn et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst for accelerating the adoption of online learning tools, forcing educators to explore new methods of engaging students and delivering course content remotely. However, while digitalization offered opportunities for broader reach and flexibility in educational delivery, it also exacerbated existing disparities in access to technology and internet connectivity. This finding aligns with previous research highlighting the digital divide as a significant barrier to equitable education, particularly in the context of remote learning during the pandemic (Fayolle et al., 2021; Sarasvathy et al., 2014). The challenge of ensuring inclusive access to entrepreneurial education remains a critical area for future research and policy intervention. Another key theme identified in the study is the importance of flexibility and adaptability in curriculum design and delivery. Educators and administrators emphasized the need for agile responses to changing circumstances, including the integration of real-time case studies, industry insights, and practical experiences into the curriculum. This theme resonates with previous research emphasizing the dynamic nature of entrepreneurship and the value of experiential learning in entrepreneurial education (Neck & Greene, 2011; Prewett et al., 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of preparing students to navigate uncertainty and ambiguity in real-world entrepreneurial contexts.

Collaboration and partnership emerged as essential strategies for enriching the quality and relevance of entrepreneurial education amidst the pandemic. Participants highlighted the value of industry-academia collaborations, mentorship programs, and networking opportunities in bridging the gap between theory and practice. This finding aligns with previous research emphasizing the significance of collaborative learning environments and experiential learning opportunities in fostering entrepreneurial competencies (Neck & Greene, 2011; Sarasvathy et al., 2014). The pandemic served as a catalyst for strengthening existing partnerships and forging new alliances to support entrepreneurial learning and innovation. Furthermore, the study revealed the critical role of mentorship and support networks in nurturing aspiring entrepreneurs and fostering resilience. Participants emphasized the value of personalized guidance, peer-to-peer support, and alumni networks in providing encouragement and practical advice to students navigating entrepreneurial ventures. This finding aligns with previous research highlighting the importance of mentorship in entrepreneurial education and the development of entrepreneurial mindset and skills (Fayolle & Gailly, 2015; Neck & Greene, 2011). The pandemic highlighted the need for ongoing mentorship and support mechanisms to help students overcome challenges and capitalize on emerging opportunities. Despite the innovative strategies and collaborative efforts employed in entrepreneurial education during the pandemic, participants also highlighted persistent challenges and limitations. These challenges included technological barriers, limitations in hands-on experiential learning opportunities, and disruptions to traditional networking and collaboration channels. This finding resonates with previous research highlighting the complexities and constraints faced by educators and stakeholders in adapting to crisis situations (Alonso et al., 2020; Prewett et al., 2019). The pandemic served as a stress test for entrepreneurial education systems, revealing areas for improvement and innovation in future crisis preparedness and response. In comparing the findings of this study with previous research, several common themes and patterns emerge, underscoring the resilience and adaptability of entrepreneurial education ecosystems amidst crisis. However, disparities in access to technology and resources, the need for agile curriculum design, and the importance of collaboration and mentorship remain consistent challenges across contexts and settings. Future research should continue to explore innovative strategies for addressing these challenges and fostering inclusive, dynamic, and responsive entrepreneurial education environments. The qualitative investigation into adaptation strategies in entrepreneurial education during the COVID-19 pandemic offers valuable insights into the dynamic responses of educators, administrators, and entrepreneurs to unprecedented challenges. By exploring key themes such as digitalization, flexibility in curriculum design,



collaboration and partnership, and the role of mentorship, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on educational resilience and adaptability. However, further research is needed to address persistent challenges and explore innovative approaches to entrepreneurial education in the face of future crises.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the qualitative investigation into adaptation strategies in entrepreneurial education amidst the COVID-19 pandemic has provided valuable insights into the dynamic responses of educators, administrators, and entrepreneurs to unprecedented challenges. The study aimed to explore how entrepreneurial education has adapted to the disruptions caused by the pandemic and to identify innovative approaches, persistent challenges, and lessons learned. The findings of the study demonstrate that the COVID-19 pandemic has prompted a paradigm shift in entrepreneurial education, necessitating rapid adaptation to digital learning platforms, flexible curriculum design, collaboration and partnership, and the nurturing of mentorship and support networks. Educators and stakeholders have demonstrated resilience and creativity in leveraging technology, forging alliances, and providing personalized guidance to students navigating entrepreneurial ventures in uncertain times. However, despite the innovative strategies and collaborative efforts employed, the study also revealed persistent challenges and limitations, including disparities in access to technology and resources, technological barriers, and disruptions to traditional networking and collaboration channels. These challenges underscore the need for ongoing research, policy intervention, and innovation in addressing the complexities of entrepreneurial education amidst crisis situations.

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