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Practice-Based Entrepreneurship Training Through Market Validation and Mentoring: A Community Engagement Program at Universitas Sugeng Hartono

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Abstract. Entrepreneurship courses can become overly centered on concepts and business plans when students have limited contact with customers and market uncertainty. This article describes the implementation of a practice-based entrepreneurship training program for 24 students at Universitas Sugeng Hartono from May 14 to June 25, 2026. The program combined entrepreneurial-mindset orientation, business proposal development, preparation of marketing materials, direct market practice, weekly progress reporting, mentoring, and final reflection. A descriptive qualitative approach was used to organize evidence from proposals, progress reports, classroom observations, supporting documentation, and student reflections. The implementation produced a structured learning sequence that moved from opportunity identification to customer contact, feedback, and strategy revision. Market validation and minimum viable product concepts gave students a practical basis for testing assumptions before expanding a business idea. Weekly reports made activity, obstacles, and follow-up decisions visible, while mentoring sessions converted individual difficulties into shared problem-solving material. Because participant records were heterogeneous and did not provide a complete standardized outcome dataset, the program cannot support claims about causal effects, average revenue gains, or changes in entrepreneurial intention. Its contribution is an implementable model for connecting entrepreneurship concepts with customer-facing action and reflective mentoring. Future delivery should retain the practice cycle while adding common indicators, baseline and endline measures, and systematic reflection records.

Keywords: entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial mindset, market validation, mentoring, minimum viable product, practice-based learning
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INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship education is expected to help students recognize opportunities, mobilize resources, and act under uncertainty. Evidence from systematic reviews and meta-analyses suggests that entrepreneurship education can contribute to knowledge, skills, attitudes, and intentions, but the strength of those outcomes varies with program design and evaluation quality [1], [5]-[7]. This variation matters because a course may successfully transmit terminology while providing little experience of customer discovery, negotiation, rejection, or revision. Neck and Greene argue that entrepreneurship is better taught as a method that students practice rather than as a fixed body of predictive knowledge [2]. Action-based and experiential approaches similarly place students in situations where decisions produce consequences that can be examined and discussed [3], [4].

Direct action does not remove the need for structure. Students who enter a market too early may confuse activity with learning, while students who remain in planning mode may protect an untested idea from useful feedback. Lean-startup research addresses this tension through hypothesis-based probing, customer discovery, minimum viable products, and iterative learning [8]-[10]. These approaches treat an early business model as a set of assumptions to be tested. They also require disciplined interpretation: experiments do not speak for themselves, and feedback can be misleading when the customer segment,

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test, or success criterion is poorly specified [9]. For education, the practical challenge is therefore to combine market action with reporting, mentoring, and reflection.

Entrepreneurial learning also has an emotional and social dimension. Experience becomes educational when learners transform events into revised understanding and future action [11]. Critical experiences, including rejection and failed attempts, can prompt deeper learning when students are supported in examining what occurred rather than simply labeling the outcome as failure [12]. Studies of challenge-based and action-oriented entrepreneurship education show the value of authentic tasks, collaboration, and educator scaffolding [14], [15]. These elements are especially relevant for novice student entrepreneurs, who may encounter cognitive conflict when classroom logic differs from ambiguous customer behavior.

In Indonesia, entrepreneurship education is widely recognized as part of higher-education preparation, yet provision and teaching practices remain uneven. Research with Indonesian students links entrepreneurship education with entrepreneurial preparation, mindset, self-efficacy, and intention [13], [17]. A mapping of Indonesian higher-education literature also identifies the need for more contemporary and practice-oriented learning designs [14]. These findings support programs that move beyond business-plan completion, while also showing why local implementation evidence is needed.

This community engagement article describes a practice-based entrepreneurship program implemented at Universitas Sugeng Hartono. The objective was to document how market validation, direct business practice, weekly reporting, and mentoring were organized into a coherent learning cycle, and to identify implementation lessons for future entrepreneurship programs. The article does not estimate program impact; it reports what the available program evidence can support.

METHODS

Program design and setting

The program used a descriptive qualitative community-engagement design. It was conducted at Universitas Sugeng Hartono from May 14 to June 25, 2026, and involved 24 students. Learning took place through classroom or synchronous meetings and independent business practice. The design emphasized direct experience: students were expected to develop a business idea, identify prospective customers, communicate a value proposition, collect feedback, and revise their approach.

The program combined instruction and action because neither component was considered sufficient on its own. Classroom sessions introduced entrepreneurial concepts, reviewed proposals, and supported problem solving. Outside scheduled sessions, students prepared products or services, created marketing materials, contacted potential customers, conducted demonstrations or negotiations, and documented their activity. Students could work individually or in groups, but each participant was expected to explain their contribution.

Implementation stages

The program was delivered in six connected stages, as shown in Figure 1. First, the entrepreneurial-mindset orientation addressed initiative, creativity, opportunity recognition, customer orientation, persistence, responsibility, and learning from rejection. Training materials positioned entrepreneurship as a sequence of small, testable steps rather than an attempt to build a complete business in one move.

Second, students identified a business idea and prepared a proposal describing the product or service, target customers, customer needs, value proposition, marketing strategy, pricing, operations, and implementation plan. Proposals were presented for feedback on feasibility and clarity.

Third, students prepared business and marketing resources. Depending on the project, these included promotional content, brochures, price lists, cooperation proposals, social-media materials, product descriptions, system demonstrations, user manuals, and other supporting documents. Students also identified potential customers and selected appropriate channels.

Fourth, students conducted direct business practice. They introduced products or services, explained benefits, discussed customer needs, negotiated prices, requested feedback, and attempted transactions. Customer interest, hesitation, rejection, delay, and requests for adjustment were treated as information for the next decision. Actual transactions were relevant evidence of acceptance, but unsuccessful attempts were also retained as learning records.

Fifth, students submitted weekly progress reports and discussed them in mentoring sessions. Reports covered prospective customers contacted, customers obtained, transactions, revenue where recorded, marketing channels, individual contributions, supporting evidence, obstacles, and follow-up plans. The records varied in completeness and were therefore not treated as a standardized quantitative dataset.

Sixth, the program ended with reflection and evaluation. Students considered the greatest obstacle to obtaining transactions and the most important lesson from the project. Evaluation focused on participation in business activities, customer interaction, response to feedback, problem solving, strategy revision, and persistence.

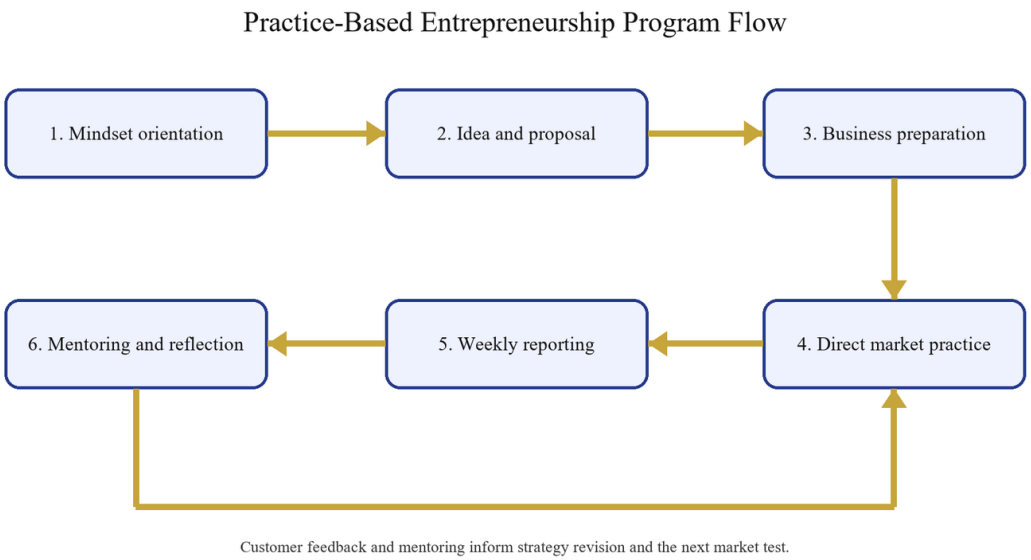


Figure 1. Flow of the practice-based entrepreneurship training program.

Data sources

Five sources informed the implementation report. Business proposals documented the initial business logic. Weekly progress reports recorded activities, customer contact, obstacles, and planned revisions. Supporting documentation included promotional materials, transaction evidence where available, customer communication, cooperation proposals, demonstrations, and user guides. Classroom or synchronous-session observation documented participation and problem-solving discussions, as shown in Figure 2. Final reflections provided the planned basis for identifying obstacles and learning experiences.

Figure 2. Documentation of a synchronous mentoring session

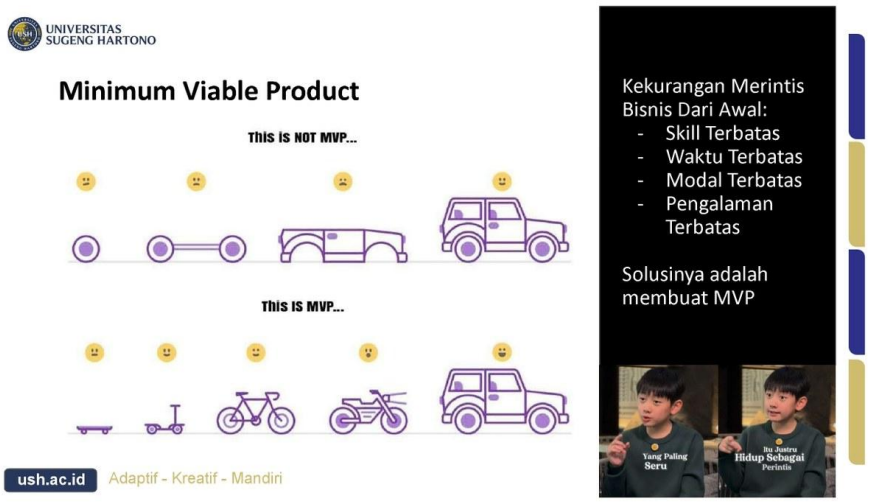
Training slides were also examined as implementation artifacts, as shown in Figure 3 and Figure 4. The material covered entrepreneurial mindset, market validation, minimum viable products, lean-startup cycles, and the progression from idea validation toward development and growth.

A. Entrepreneurial mindset and market validation

B. Start small and test the market

Figure 3. Supplied training materials on entrepreneurial mindset and business orientation.

A. Minimum viable product



B. Lean-startup cycle and implementation flow

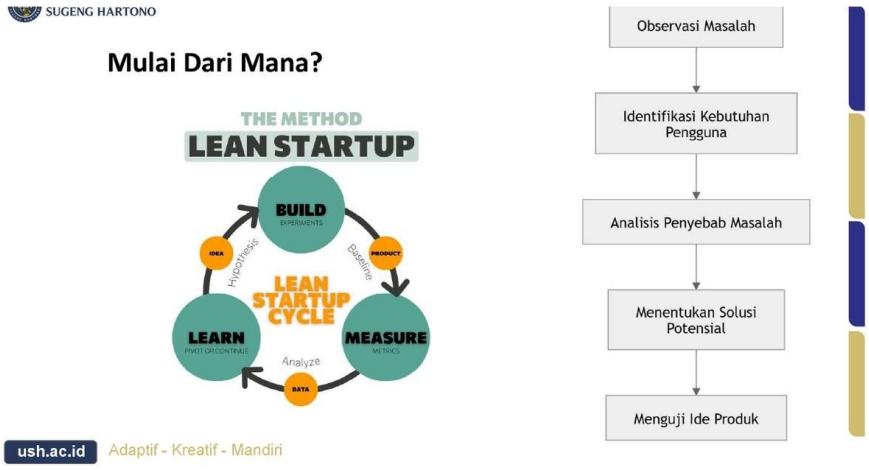


Figure 4. Supplied training materials on minimum viable products, lean-startup cycles, and implementation stages.

Focus of evaluation

The evaluation framework linked each dimension to observable evidence rather than relying on a single outcome measure, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The evaluation framework

Evaluation dimension	Focus	Main evidence
Business planning	Structure and development of the business idea	Proposal
Market engagement	Contact and communication with prospective customers	Progress report and documentation

Evaluation dimension	Focus	Main evidence
Marketing practice	Selection and use of promotional channels	Progress report and artifacts
Customer response	Interest, rejection, delay, and requests for adjustment	Progress report and reflection
Problem solving	Strategies used to address practical obstacles	Mentoring notes and observation
Student contribution	Individual roles in individual or group projects	Contribution report
Strategy improvement	Changes made after feedback	Progress report and observation
Persistence	Continuation after unsuccessful approaches	Observation and reflection
Entrepreneurial learning	Lessons attributed to direct market experience	Final reflection

Data analysis and credibility

The materials were organized by source and implementation stage. The analytic procedure followed a descriptive thematic logic: repeated reading, identification of relevant statements or documented actions, initial coding, grouping of related codes, and interpretation of themes [16]. Attention was directed to planning, customer interaction, marketing communication, obstacles, negotiation, strategy adjustment, rejection, persistence, and decision making.

Source triangulation was used to improve credibility. Progress-report statements were compared with proposals, supporting documentation, observations, and reflections where those sources were available. Mentoring discussions were used to clarify incomplete records. Numerical entries were treated as contextual information only because reporting formats and completeness varied among participants.

Ethical and privacy considerations

The program materials were produced through routine educational activities. This article presents aggregate implementation information and anonymized documentation. Student and customer identities, contact details, private conversations, transaction credentials, and access links were excluded. No facial or name-based analysis was performed.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Program delivery created a staged action cycle

The available documentation showed that the program was implemented as a progression rather than as a single seminar. Students first encountered concepts of entrepreneurial mindset and opportunity recognition, then translated ideas into proposals and market-facing materials. Direct business practice was followed by reporting, discussion, and revision. Table 2 summarizes the correspondence between stages, student tasks, and documentary evidence.

Table 2. Program implementation stages and observable outputs

Stage	Main student activity	Observable output
Mindset orientation	Examine initiative, customer orientation, persistence, and rejection	Participation and training documentation
Idea and proposal development	Define customers, needs, value proposition, price, and implementation	Business proposal
Business preparation	Prepare product/service and marketing resources	Promotional and operational artifacts
Direct market practice	Contact customers, explain value, negotiate, and request feedback	Communication and activity documentation
Weekly reporting and mentoring	Record progress, obstacles, evidence, and next action	Weekly report and discussion record
Reflection and evaluation	Identify major obstacles and lessons	Reflection record

This sequence is consistent with action-based entrepreneurship education, which connects conceptual learning with tasks that require students to make decisions and interact with external actors [3], [4]. The key design feature was not simply that students were told to "start a business." The program decomposed that broad instruction into increasingly concrete tasks. Such scaffolding is important because entrepreneurial assignments can become difficult when students face unfamiliar market behavior without a shared method for interpreting it [15].

Market validation shifted attention from ideas to evidence

The training materials repeatedly framed large business ambitions as a series of smaller tests. The minimum viable product and lean-startup content directed attention toward understanding a market, reaching prospective users, and learning before scaling. In the implementation flow, proposal development did not end the project. Proposals became starting assumptions that had to encounter customer response.

This approach corresponds with hypothesis-based probing in lean-startup research [8], [10]. For student projects, its educational value lies in making assumptions visible. A target-customer description can be compared with the people who actually respond. A proposed benefit can be examined against customer questions. A planned price can be tested in negotiation. These comparisons create material for learning that a classroom-only exercise cannot provide.

The program also treated unsuccessful transactions cautiously. Rejection was not counted as evidence of business success, but neither was it discarded. It was recorded as a possible signal about customer selection, communication, pricing, timing, trust, or product fit. This distinction is important. Entrepreneurial learning literature describes critical experiences as potential triggers for revised understanding, but learning depends on how the experience is processed [11], [12]. A rejection becomes educational when the student can identify what was tested, what response occurred, and what should change.

At the same time, lean experimentation should not be romanticized. A small test can produce ambiguous evidence, and students may revise a sound idea after contacting the wrong segment or may preserve a weak idea by interpreting politeness as demand [9]. The mentoring component was therefore necessary to examine the quality of each inference, not merely the number of activities completed.

Weekly reporting functioned as reflective accountability

The weekly report connected action with reflection. Students were asked to document prospective customers, completed activities, marketing channels, contributions, supporting evidence, obstacles, and follow-up plans. This structure made progress discussable. It also reduced the risk that a business project would be evaluated only by a final presentation assembled after the activity.

The reporting process had two functions. First, it created accountability for concrete action. Students had to show what they had attempted rather than describe only what they intended to do. Second, it created a recurring decision point. Obstacles recorded in one week could be discussed and converted into a next step for the following week. In this sense, the report supported the transformation of experience into revised action described in entrepreneurial-learning frameworks [11].

The records also revealed an evaluation limitation. Numerical fields such as transactions and revenue were not complete or standardized across participants. The program appropriately used them as context, but the available data cannot be aggregated into a defensible estimate of average business performance. Rideout and Gray warn that entrepreneurship-education evaluations can overstate effects when outcome measures and counterfactuals are weak [7]. The present article therefore reports the reporting mechanism as an implementation finding, not the values contained in incomplete reports.

Mentoring converted individual obstacles into shared problems

The synchronous-session documentation confirms that mentoring was part of the delivery process. During progress discussions, students could present difficulties such as finding customers, explaining the offer, responding to different needs, setting prices, overcoming hesitation, and accessing appropriate markets. The lecturer provided guidance, while peers could contribute suggestions from their own attempts.

This collective discussion matters because novice entrepreneurs often experience market problems as personal failure. A mentoring setting can reframe the event as a problem with variables that can be examined: segment, message, channel, timing, price, evidence, or product configuration. Experiential entrepreneurship research emphasizes that collaboration and structured reflection help learners interpret uncertain events [4]. Challenge-based learning likewise benefits from facilitation that connects an authentic task with a deliberate learning process [14].

The mentoring model used here was practical rather than therapeutic or motivational. Its purpose was to help students specify what happened and choose a plausible next action. This orientation also prevented persistence from being defined as repeating the same approach. Persistence was linked to adaptation.

The program offers an implementation model, not an impact estimate

The principal result is a replicable program architecture: orientation, proposal, preparation, market contact, weekly evidence, mentoring, revision, and reflection. It integrates the practice emphasis recommended in entrepreneurship-education literature [2]-[4] with market-testing logic [8]-[10] and reflective learning [11], [12]. In the Indonesian context, this model responds to calls for entrepreneurship education that develops mindset and preparation through more than theoretical exposure [13], [14], [17].

The evidence does not establish that the program increased entrepreneurial intention, self-efficacy, revenue, or long-term business continuation. There was no standardized baseline and endline instrument, no comparison group, and no complete common dataset across the 24 students. The documentation also did not provide a verified set of verbatim reflections suitable for quotation. These limitations restrict the conclusions but clarify the next evaluation design.

Future delivery should retain the weekly action cycle while introducing a common data form. At minimum, the form should distinguish customer contacts, substantive conversations, offers made, transactions, revenue, reasons for rejection, changes implemented, and evidence attached. A brief baseline and endline measure could assess entrepreneurial self-efficacy, mindset, or perceived competence. Final reflections should be collected in a consistent format and analyzed with an audit trail. Follow-up after the course would show whether students continue, modify, or discontinue their ventures and why.

CONCLUSION

The program connected entrepreneurship concepts with customer-facing tasks through a staged cycle of proposal development, market validation, weekly reporting, mentoring, and strategy revision. Its defensible contribution is a practical implementation model that makes entrepreneurial action and reflection visible. Claims about learning gains or business performance require standardized baseline, outcome, and follow-up data in future delivery.

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