

DEVELOPING YOUTH HUMAN CAPITAL CAPABILITIES TO INCREASE THE NATIONAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP RATIO

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Abstract

The Youth Entrepreneurship Ratio in Indonesia's 2025-2029 National Medium-Term Development Plan remains unmet, with 2025 realization reaching only 1.17 percent against a 1.33 percent target. This study analyzes the problem from a public-sector human resource management perspective, treating the programs of the Ministry of Youth and Sports (Kemenpora) as human capital investments whose effectiveness is determined by capability conversion. The theoretical framework combines human capital theory and the capability approach. Using a qualitative case-study design with seventeen purposively selected key informants, complemented by documentation review and triangulation, the data were analyzed thematically according to capability dimensions and conversion factors. The findings show that Kemenpora's programs have formed an investment portfolio covering cognitive, psychological, social, and enabling capability dimensions, yet with uneven emphasis. The conversion effectiveness from program outputs to ratio outcomes is low, mainly due to weak post-training mentoring and limited access to capital and digital infrastructure, while regional disparities reflect differences in conversion factors. The study recommends shifting the orientation from outputs toward capabilities and outcomes, balancing the development of all four dimensions, strengthening region-differentiated enabling factors, and adopting evaluation based on surviving ventures.

Keywords: *Capability Conversion, Entrepreneurship Ratio, Public-Sector Human Resource Development, Youth Entrepreneurial Capability, Youth Human Capital.*

A. INTRODUCTION

The demographic dividend that Indonesia is currently enjoying is essentially an accumulated stock of productive-age human capital that has not yet been fully converted into economic capacity. Statistics Indonesia (2025) records a youth population of 66.8 million, or 23.8 percent of the total population. From the perspective of human capital theory, this large number becomes valuable only when accompanied by investment in education, training, and health that raises individual productivity (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1964). Without such investment, a demographic advantage may turn into a burden when young cohorts fail to enter productive economic activity. Comparative evidence further indicates that the quality of regional institutions and knowledge resources strongly conditions how such potential is translated into entrepreneurship (Audretsch et al., 2023; Belitski et al., 2022).

Entrepreneurship is one of the clearest manifestations of youth human capital being put to use, because it demands a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are not acquired automatically but are formed through learning and experience. Several meta-analytic studies confirm that human capital is positively associated with entrepreneurial success, although the magnitude of the effect depends on the type of human capital and its context (Unger, Rauch, Frese, & Rosenbusch, 2011; Marvel, Davis, & Sproul, 2016). Within this frame, the Youth Entrepreneurship Ratio can be read not merely as a labor statistic but as a proxy for the extent to which young people's entrepreneurial human capital has actually been formed and actualized. The realization of this potential is also shaped by the surrounding

entrepreneurial ecosystem and the digital economy, whose elements enable or constrain new-venture creation (Autio et al., 2021; Stam & Van de Ven, 2021; Nambisan et al., 2022).

Through the Ministry of Youth and Sports (Kemenpora), the government has designated the increase of the Youth Entrepreneurship Ratio as a priority indicator in the 2025-2029 National Medium-Term Development Plan and has translated it into a series of training, incubation, and capital-assistance programs. Conceptually, these programs constitute a form of public-sector human capital investment: the state allocates resources to build the entrepreneurial capabilities of its young citizens. The problem is that the 2025 realization of the Youth Entrepreneurship Ratio reached only 1.17 percent, below the 1.33 percent target, and moved only 0.01 points from the 2024 baseline of 1.16 percent. This gap raises a fundamental question from a public-sector human resource management standpoint: why has the investment in existing programs not been converted into a commensurate increase in capability and entrepreneurial achievement?

The question of conversion lies at the heart of debates over the effectiveness of human resource development. Baldwin and Ford (1988) cautioned early on that the success of training does not end with the acquisition of knowledge in the classroom, but rather with the transfer of that knowledge into actual behavior. Martin, McNally, and Kay (2013) empirically found that entrepreneurship education and training do increase human capital assets as well as entrepreneurial outcomes, but the effect is stronger for academically oriented interventions than for short training-focused ones. These findings imply that a large number of program participants does not guarantee the formation of capabilities that can be translated into a running business.

Prior studies on youth entrepreneurship have generally taken two paths. The first highlights individual-level determinants, such as entrepreneurship education, motivation, self-efficacy, and entrepreneurial intention (Bae, Qian, Miao, & Fiet, 2014; Kim, Kim, Lee, & Joung, 2020). The second examines policy and institutional dimensions, including national strategy and inter-agency coordination (Bappenas, 2022). Meanwhile, studies in the Indonesian context have largely discussed human capital within business organizations and micro, small, and medium enterprises (Jaelani, 2021; Damayanti, Efendi, & Rifa'i, 2020), yet few have specifically analyzed how government-run human resource development programs build youth entrepreneurial capability and why program outputs do not readily convert into ratio gains. This is the gap that the present study seeks to fill.

The novelty of this study lies in re-reading Kemenpora's programs as a practice of public-sector human resource development, analyzed through a combination of human capital theory (Schultz, 1961; Becker, 1964) and the capability approach (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 2011). Rather than assessing success by the number of programs or the availability of regulations, this study places the effectiveness of capability conversion at the center, that is, the process by which program investment is transformed into entrepreneurial capability and ultimately into entrepreneurial action reflected in the ratio. Against this backdrop, the study aims to analyze how Kemenpora's programs develop the entrepreneurial human capital capabilities of young people and to identify the factors that determine the effectiveness of their conversion, so that a capability-development model relevant to public-sector human resource management can be formulated.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Human Capital Theory and Investment in Human Capital

Human capital theory is rooted in the idea that human beings constitute a form of capital whose value can be enhanced through investment. Schultz (1961) argued that expenditure on education, training, and health is not mere consumption but an investment that increases a person's productive capacity. Becker (1964) sharpened this idea by distinguishing general

human capital, which is useful across many contexts, from specific human capital, which is relevant to a particular task or field. In the context of entrepreneurship, competencies such as the ability to recognize opportunities, manage business finances, and market products are specific human capital that must be deliberately formed through learning and experience.

This perspective provides a basis for understanding the government's role as an investor in human capital. Nafukho, Hairston & Brooks (2004) emphasize that human capital theory has direct implications for human resource development, as it positions training as a strategic instrument for building capacity. However, the theory also carries an important limitation: the possession of human capital does not automatically lead to economic outcomes, because conditions that enable the productive use of that capital are still required. It is this limitation that leads to the capability approach.

2. The Capability Approach: From Resources to Functionings

The capability approach developed by Sen (1999) distinguishes among the resources a person possesses, capability as the real freedom to achieve something, and functioning as the achievement that is actually realized. According to Sen, the possession of resources does not directly produce achievement, because conversion factors of a personal, social, and environmental nature determine whether resources can be turned into genuine capabilities. Nussbaum (2011) enriches this framework by emphasizing that development is essentially an effort to expand human capabilities to live the lives that people value. Recent applications of the capability approach extend it to labor-market participation and youth transitions, underscoring the role of real opportunities rather than the mere possession of resources (Bonvin et al., 2023).

Applied to youth entrepreneurship, this approach explains why the outputs of training programs are not identical to increases in the ratio. Training provides resources in the form of knowledge and skills, but the decision and the ability to actually start and sustain a business, namely the functioning of entrepreneurship, depend on conversion factors such as access to capital, social support, digital infrastructure, and regional conditions. The capability approach thus provides an appropriate lens for analyzing the gap between program investment and entrepreneurial achievement.

3. Entrepreneurial Human Capital and the Effectiveness of Its Development

The entrepreneurship literature treats entrepreneurial human capital as a combination of knowledge, skills, and experience relevant to business activity. The meta-analysis by Unger et al. (2011) of dozens of studies found that the relationship between human capital and entrepreneurial success is positive but small, and stronger when human capital is measured as the outcome of investment, such as actual skills and knowledge, rather than as the investment itself, such as years of schooling. This finding implies that what matters is not the number of training sessions attended, but the extent to which training produces competencies that are genuinely mastered and used.

Marvel et al. (2016) stress the need for a more specific and outcome-oriented conceptualization of entrepreneurial human capital, while Martin et al. (2013) show that the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education and training varies according to intervention design. Baldwin and Ford (1988) add the crucial dimension of training transfer, that is, participants' ability to apply what they have learned in practice, which is influenced by participant characteristics, training design, and the work environment. Taken together, these findings consistently direct attention to the quality and applicability of capability formation, rather than to the volume of activities alone. Beyond knowledge and skills, entrepreneurial cognition and psychological resources also shape whether individuals act on the opportunities they perceive (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2022; Obschonka et al., 2022; Newman et al., 2021).

4. Public-Sector Human Resource Development

In the public sector, human resource development is not limited to civil servants but also encompasses the government's efforts to build the capacity of citizens as part of its development function (Garavan et al., 2021; McLean & Jiantreerangkoo, 2022). This role positions the state as the organizer of large-scale human capital investment, whose effectiveness is measured by changes in the capability of the target group rather than by the mere completion of activities, mirroring broader debates on the distinctiveness and strategic value of human resource management in the public sector (Knies et al., 2022; Farndale et al., 2023; Clark et al., 2022). The psychological dimension is also relevant: psychological capital such as self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007) helps determine whether individuals dare to take the risk of entrepreneurship. Developing youth entrepreneurial capability therefore requires interventions that are not only cognitive but also psychological, social, and structural.

C. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case-study design focused on the youth entrepreneurship development programs run by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. A case-study design was chosen because the study seeks to understand in depth the process of capability formation and conversion within a real institutional context that cannot be separated from its setting. Data were collected over the 2025 to 2026 period, in line with program implementation during the current budget years.

The primary data source consisted of seventeen key informants selected purposively based on their involvement in and knowledge of the planning, implementation, and beneficiaries of the programs. The informants included policy-making and implementing officials at Kemenpora and related ministries and agencies, a regional government representative, strategic partners from young entrepreneurs' associations, and young business actors who were program beneficiaries. The interview guide was structured around the four capability dimensions of the conceptual framework, so that each question was directed at exploring how the programs formed participants' knowledge, psychological attitudes, networks, and access.

Secondary data were obtained through documentation review of strategic planning documents, Youth Development Index achievement data, program output reports, and regulations related to entrepreneurship development. To ensure validity, the study applied source triangulation and technique triangulation by comparing accounts across informants and cross-checking them against documentary evidence. The analysis was conducted thematically through the stages of organizing the data, coding based on capability dimensions and conversion factors, displaying the data in a matrix, and drawing conclusions. The thematic approach was chosen so that the analysis could move from a description of program outputs toward an explanation of the mechanism of capability conversion.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Kemenpora Programs as a Portfolio of Human Capital Investment

Analysis of documents and informant accounts shows that Kemenpora's programs can be understood as a portfolio of human capital investment with diverse targets and forms. The Entrepreneurship Lecture and the Fostering of Entrepreneurial Interest programs are directed at forming initial Knowledge and interest; the national entrepreneurship training and the training for young people with disabilities and youth in extreme poverty target the expansion of access and equity; while capital assistance for Youth Entrepreneurship Centers and Novice Young Entrepreneurs provides the resources to start a business. Achievement reporting is carried out quarterly through an internal performance system, indicating the presence of an

output-monitoring mechanism. Table 1 maps these programs onto the capability dimensions they build, together with their 2025 output achievements.

Table 1. Mapping of Kemenpora Programs onto Human Capital Capability Dimensions and 2025 Outputs

Program/Intervention	Main Capability Dimension	2025 Output
Entrepreneurship Lecture	Cognitive (knowledge & initial interest)	600 participants
National entrepreneurship training	Cognitive (business skills)	500 participants
Training for youth with disabilities	Cognitive & enabling (access equity)	500 participants
Training for youth in extreme poverty	Cognitive & enabling (access equity)	800 participants
Capital assistance for Youth Entrepreneurship Centers (SKP)	Enabling (capital access)	10 SKP
Capital assistance for Novice Young Entrepreneurs (WMP)	Enabling (capital access)	25 WMP
Partnership with HIPMI & Youth Entrepreneurship Forum	Social (networks) & psychological	Networks down to district level

Source: Compiled by the Authors (2026)

The mapping in Table 1 shows that the program portfolio already covers all four capability dimensions, albeit with uneven emphasis. The largest investment in terms of the number of beneficiaries lies in the cognitive dimension and access equity through training, whereas the enabling dimension in the form of capital assistance reaches a far smaller number of recipients. This imbalance provides an early indication that the conversion chain from knowledge to a running business may be broken at the stage of providing access.

2. The Capability Dimensions Being Developed

The cognitive dimension, which encompasses entrepreneurial knowledge and skills, is developed primarily through lectures and training. Accounts from implementing informants confirm that the material focuses on fostering interest and enhancing the capacity of novice entrepreneurs. However, consistent with the findings of Unger et al. (2011), the value of this dimension depends heavily on the extent to which knowledge is genuinely mastered rather than merely delivered, so that the duration and depth of training become important determinants that are not yet fully met in short-format activities.

The psychological dimension relates to the formation of motivation, self-confidence, and resilience in facing business risk. Although not always explicitly designed, this element appears in incubation and mentoring activities. Informants from among business partners emphasized the importance of continuous mentoring until business actors become independent, consistent with the notion of psychological capital as a support for entrepreneurial courage (Luthans et al., 2007). The absence of post-training mentoring risks leaving psychological capability inadequately formed.

The social dimension concerns the networks and relationships that expand business opportunities. Partnerships with young entrepreneurs' associations and entrepreneurship forums that maintain networks down to the regional level constitute a potential source of social capital. The enabling or access dimension covers capital and digital infrastructure, including the use of people's business credit schemes, the integration of business databases, and digital business-service channels, in line with work on digital entrepreneurship that highlights how digital platforms lower entry barriers and reshape venture creation (Troise et al., 2022; Nambisan et al., 2022). These last two dimensions are decisive, because without adequate access, cognitive and psychological capabilities cannot be turned into an operating business.

3. Conversion Analysis: From Program Outputs to Ratio Outcomes

The core of the problem lies in the low effectiveness of conversion from program outputs to ratio outcomes. As presented in Table 2, the 2025 realization of the Youth Entrepreneurship Ratio of 1.17 percent moved only 0.01 points from the previous year's baseline, whereas reaching the target of 1.61 percent by 2029 requires an average increase of about 0.11 points per year. In other words, the actual conversion rate is far below the rate required, even though various programs have reached thousands of participants.

Table 2. Target and Realization of the Youth Entrepreneurship Ratio and the 2029 Target

Indicator	Baseline 2024	Target 2025	Realization 2025	Gap 2025	2029 Target
Youth Entrepreneurship Ratio (%)	1.16	1.33	1.17	-0.16	1.61

Source: Kemenpora Strategic Plan and the Youth Development Index Prognosis (2025)

This gap affirms the capability approach's thesis that resources and outputs are not identical to functionings. The high number of training participants reflects the magnitude of investment and outputs, but the small movement in the ratio shows that the capabilities formed have not been widely converted into businesses that actually operate. This phenomenon is consistent with the training-transfer problem identified by Baldwin and Ford (1988), in which the acquisition of knowledge does not automatically continue into behavioral change without a supportive environment. The disparity in proportion between the number of training participants and the number of capital-assistance recipients in Table 1 reinforces the inference that the point at which conversion breaks down lies in weak enabling factors.

4. Regional Disparity as a Gap in Conversion Factors

Capability conversion also does not occur evenly across space. Provincial achievement data reveal a wide gulf between the western and eastern regions, as presented in Table 3. The provinces with the highest ratios are concentrated in western Indonesia, while those with the lowest ratios are dominated by the eastern region, with differences reaching dozens of times.

Table 3. Distribution of the Highest and Lowest Youth Entrepreneurship Ratios Across Provinces

Five Highest Provinces	Ratio (%)	Five Lowest Provinces	Ratio (%)
Bangka Belitung Islands	2.18	Highland Papua	0.06
Lampung	2.16	South Papua	0.25
Jambi	1.83	West Papua	0.40
Yogyakarta	1.78	Maluku	0.41
Bengkulu	1.72	Central Papua	0.48

Source: Youth Development Index Prognosis (2025)

Within the capability approach, this disparity is best explained as a difference in conversion factors rather than merely a difference in program coverage. Regions with more mature digital infrastructure, financing access, and business ecosystems have a greater ability to turn individual capabilities into operating businesses. Conversely, in regions with limited endowments, the same training yields lower conversion, consistent with entrepreneurial-ecosystem accounts that emphasize how regional conditions govern the productivity of entrepreneurial resources (Roundy et al., 2022; Autio et al., 2021). The implication is that uniform human resource development interventions risk widening the gap, so that adjustments in the intensity and form of support according to the characteristics of each region's conversion factors are needed.

5. Determinants of Conversion Effectiveness

A synthesis of the findings identifies four factors that determine the effectiveness of capability conversion. First, the depth of competency formation, namely the extent to which training produces genuine mastery rather than mere exposure to knowledge. Second, the continuity of mentoring, which bridges the transition from knowledge to practice and sustains the psychological capital of business actors. Third, the availability of capital access and digital infrastructure, which serves as the enabling factor decisive for the realization of a business. Fourth, the orientation of program evaluation, which to date has emphasized outputs in the form of participant numbers rather than outcomes in the form of surviving businesses. These four factors explain why large program investment has not been matched by ratio achievement.

6. A Model for Developing Youth Human Capital Capabilities

Drawing on the conversion analysis, this study formulates a model for developing youth human capital capabilities that places conversion effectiveness at its core. The model calls for a shift from an output orientation toward a capability and functioning orientation. On the input side, programs should begin with a careful competency needs analysis and a competency-based curriculum rather than ceremonial activities. On the capability-formation side, all four dimensions must be developed in a balanced way, with particular strengthening of the psychological dimension through mentoring and the enabling dimension through access. On the conversion-factor side, support must be differentiated according to regional characteristics. On the output side, evaluation must be oriented toward businesses that actually run and survive, so that feedback can improve the design of subsequent investment.

The findings of this study extend the understanding of the role of human capital in entrepreneurship by situating it within the context of public-sector human resource development. Consistent with Unger et al. (2011) and Marvel et al. (2016), the study affirms that what matters is not the volume of investment but the quality of the capabilities formed and their applicability. In line with Martin et al. (2013) and Baldwin and Ford (1988), the study shows that intervention design and post-training support determine whether knowledge is translated into practice. Through Sen's (1999) capability approach, the study explains the achievement gap as a problem of converting resources into functionings, which depends on personal, social, and regional factors.

The theoretical contribution of this study is to shift the unit of analysis of youth entrepreneurship effectiveness from program provision toward the effectiveness of capability conversion within a public-sector human resource management framework. Practically, the study suggests that the government treat entrepreneurship programs not as a series of stand-alone training activities but as a human capital investment managed along the entire conversion chain, from needs analysis, through the formation of multidimensional capabilities and the provision of enabling factors, to outcome-based evaluation. This reorientation is expected to narrow the gap between the magnitude of program investment and the ratio achievement that has thus far continued to widen.

Theoretically, this study enriches the study of public-sector human resource management by integrating human capital theory and the capability approach to explain the effectiveness of entrepreneurship programs. Practically, the findings provide a basis for improving program design so that it is more oriented toward the formation and conversion of capabilities. The study has limitations. The qualitative case-study approach is not intended for statistical generalization; the coverage of young business actors as informants is concentrated in a single area, and part of the analysis rests on available program-output data. Further research is encouraged to test the relationships among capability dimensions, conversion factors, and youth entrepreneurial success across a broader geographic scope.

E. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the low Youth Entrepreneurship Ratio is not caused merely by a lack of programs, but by the weak effectiveness of converting human capital investment into entrepreneurial capability and functioning. Kemenpora's programs have formed an investment portfolio covering the cognitive, psychological, social, and enabling dimensions, but with uneven emphasis and a conversion chain that breaks down mainly at the provision of access and post-training mentoring. Regional disparities in achievement are best understood as differences in conversion factors, so that uniform interventions risk widening the gap. Based on these findings, the development of youth human capital capabilities should be directed at four main points. First, a reorientation of programs from outputs toward capabilities and outcomes through needs analysis and a competency-based curriculum. Second, a balanced development of all four capability dimensions, with strengthened continuous mentoring and psychological support. Third, the strengthening of enabling factors in the form of capital access and digital infrastructure, differentiated according to regional characteristics. Fourth, a reform of program evaluation so that it is based on outcomes in the form of surviving businesses rather than participant numbers alone. With this orientation, public-sector human capital investment stands a greater chance of being effectively converted into an increase in the youth entrepreneurship ratio toward the 2029 development target.

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