

# Organizational Training in Startups: The Incubators Perspective in Turbulent Times

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## Abstract

The flourishing of younger and innovative organizations (start-ups) has never stopped. To grow, start-ups need capital and access to the market, and are often incubated by business incubators (hubs), which offer several services, both educational and practical, essential to enable the transformation of business ideas into concrete business projects. Disruptive times certainly affect the way start-ups are trained and empowered, mixing in-house and remote learning; nevertheless, incubators still deliver their valuable training to new organizations. This contribution intends to explore this change addressing the incubators (trainers) perspective, and to provide a practical contribution to the management literature on training process shifts across startup. A qualitative case study analysis was used in this research. It involves a combination of both secondary data and semi-structured interviews with the Incubatore SEI – a business hub based in the Campania Region – CEO and founder. This study focuses on distinct skill areas that influence startup empowerment processes: (1) individual knowledge, (2) organizational knowledge, (3) observable skills, (4) problem-solving skills, (5) attitudes and beliefs. This study emphasizes the need of change inventive training procedures amid crises, as well as the relevance of highly innovative hubs in delivering their training to startup. Furthermore, research reveals intriguing insights for the growth of incubators as well as intriguing perspectives for the future of the startup ecosystem through continuous empowerment.

**Keywords:** Organizational training, organizational skills, startup, incubators

## 1. Introduction

The Italian social fabric has seen a disruptive transformation in how organizations are motivated to operate, boosting technological innovation, and emphasizing the need to generate new competencies to address the job market's lack of high specialized staff (Gkeredakis et al., 2021). Consequently, for acquired digital skills to be effectively deployed in the workplace and cope with rapid obsolescence, certain requirements must be met (Maran et al., 2022). These include: a willingness to experiment with new ideas; the ability to identify and harness new talent; leveraging motivation as a core value; training that involves not just an individual worker, but the entire organization to adapt the culture and successfully support the transition to shared organizational change that is widely accepted as positive and non-threatening (Cayubitt, 2022); and training that emphasizes not only know-how but also new orientations toward new technologies

Organizational learning in creative and digital workplaces are typically incorporated into regular work practices, leading to training that readily achieves implementation. From the point of view of organizational learning, continuous improvement, is growing and adapting to society in the age of digital transition, embracing new methodological and technical techniques (Ivaldi et al., 2021). This is especially true in innovative start-ups, always on the lookout for hard and soft skills to increase both management and staff expertise (Nabi et al., 2006). As a result, incubators play an important role since they not only provide facilities for start-ups but also serve as venues for meetings, events, and organizational training. Business incubators are the pillars of new entrepreneurial initiatives, prompting the growth of human resources through the adoption of new organizational practices and innovative digital working tools (Pereira et al., 2022). The assistance offered by incubators goes beyond financial supply and helps to the growth of the startup's managerial know-how. Incubators have developed over time, changing, and upgrading their collection of services and resources to meet the requirements of the enterprises that have been incubated. In such an uncertain environment caused by the Covid-19 epidemic,

hubs provide vital contributions in terms of training by transferring specialized skills that foster the growth of the business and its employees (Dana et al., 2022). However, much remains to be done to contextualize successful training for start-up members in a crisis context. This paper sheds some light on how organizational training should be designed to enhance develop skills in startups after the Covid-19 era, and the role of business incubators in this respect (Capolupo, 2023a). Accordingly, the following Research Question informs this contribution:

*RQ: Which, from the incubators perspective, are the organizational skills should to be trained in startup in turbulent times?*

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the theoretical background that have inspired the research design, which has been presented in Section 3. Section 4 highlights the main results of this study, that are discussed in Section 5. Section 6 concludes the paper with limitations and the research agenda.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1 The Act of Training

Every training process is defined by several processes, which are conducted cyclically in the framework of lifelong learning (Bottallo & Maraschi, 2012): (1) The training needs assessment. The competences, skills, and traits possessed by the organization are evaluated through the analysis of training needs, considering not only existing but also rising demands. Surveys, interviews, and skill evaluations are examples of tools that may be used for this purpose. This is a difficult phase, but it is critical to obtaining effective training if done correctly. (2) Setting the goals, objectives, and methodology. planning and designing the activities to be implemented. The purpose of the training process was to generate changes in one or more characteristics of an individual, group, or organization; to achieve this, it is necessary to carefully plan and program the most appropriate methods, tools, and content. (3) Implementation stage. During the project implementation stage, depending on the methodology employed, the projected training intervention was carried out. (4) Evaluation. Finally, the results were evaluated. It was determined whether the expected and intended outcomes had been met by comparing them to the requirements identified and the objectives established during the initial phase. Thus, training is considered effective if it is successful in fostering organizational development; essentially, guaranteeing the skills learned are effectively transferred to the work context and produce benefits for the entire organization (Battisti et al., 2007). This design suggests that training is viewed as a process that has the purpose of responding to specific demands and requirements and must be planned to use well-defined methodologies and phases.

Since training requires mentoring and follow-up, each of the previous stage must be tightly integrated by several organizational factors that support the analysis of training needs. Otherwise, training could fail in reaching its goal. Table 1 summarizes the training needs analysis various steps (Goldstein and Ford, 2002):

Table 1. The process of training needs analysis: phases and objectives

| Stages                     | Aims                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Organizational Support  | Create a positive environment for analysis. Engage worker teams in the analysis. Define the analysis's aims, methodologies, and consequences.                                   |
| 2. Design                  | Explain the boundaries of the evaluation: organization, work, and individuals. Determine the primary sources of knowledge Create data collecting tools.                         |
| 3. Organizational Analysis | Determine the organizational limits and resources. Define strategy and goals. Examine the organizational climate in relation to training.                                       |
| 4. Job Analysis            | Explain the work task in detail. Determine the talents required to do the assignment. Assess the task's importance and complexity.                                              |
| 5. People Analysis         | Specify the level of expertise of the people engaged. Assess present performance and find any shortcomings. Evaluate individual traits that are essential for work performance. |

*Source.* Goldstein and Ford (2002).

As a result, this five-stages training needs analysis enables the organization to collect as much data as possible to determine whether or not to run the training course, and where to concentrate their efforts the most. Only when

the purpose of the job has been determined can the following process, which is the selection of the best training approach, begin. Thus, using the elements gathered during the organizational needs analysis phase, the planning of the training program takes place, i.e., creating a training process that is as advantageous to learning and knowledge transfer in the workplace as possible.

## 2.2 Organizational Training and Knowledge

The literature has long explored the link between organizational processes and training techniques. The problem sparked criticism and debate, which were conveyed through the contradiction between the concepts of learning and teaching. Van der Krogt (1998), for instance, suggested that organizational learning comprises of what educators do, establish, and design through courses, while also emphasizing that learning is a person's interaction with its environment. Learning organizations, according to Senge (1990), inspire lifelong education and learning generation across all levels and establish methods that easily disseminate knowledge within the organization where it is required. Furthermore, it quickly extends it into practical improvements (Hansen et al., 2020). Consequently, education is close to organizational learning, while also serving as an intangible asset and simplifying internal mobility

Training costs are elevated, nevertheless it's no longer considered as a managerial load, rather as a worthwhile investment in human capital. Training is recognized as a crucial instrument for competency growth at the individual, team, and organizational levels in organizations, particularly startups. It has an influence on people's knowledge, abilities, and attitudes, resulting in changes that should increase organizational efficiency (Fraccaroli, 2007). The concept of knowledge implies its acquisition and, whether effective, it results in competence.

The term competence has varied connotations depending on the definition. Skills are taught and represent the use of mental assets to solving problems or creating results, according to Campbell and Kuncel (2002). They also consider the strategies and processes employed to achieve effective solutions or outcomes. Attitudes define the subject's overall direction, value systems, and social and organizational setting. Campbell and Kuncel (2002) identify a particular set of variables that may be enabled by learning and training initiatives within firms, and these dimensions are consistent throughout startup research (Politis, 2008):

Table 2. Dimensions on which training impact in organizations

| Dimension              | Description                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Knowledge              | fundamental (tools, categories, events, and so forth). Operational knowledge, interdisciplinary and expert knowledge, and self-awareness.                                               |
| Organizational skills  | organizational policies, procedures, and norms aims and goals of the organization, procedures, events, and technology. Relationship and leadership system, duties, and responsibilities |
| Observable skills      | Self-regulation of mental, psychomotor, physical, social, emotional, and expressive abilities                                                                                           |
| Problem solving skills | means-end assessment, heuristic use, consciousness, and control over one's own processes of learning                                                                                    |
| Beliefs and attitudes  | organizational connection and sense of connection acceptance of organizational diversity, value-assets in organization                                                                  |

Source. Authors' readaptation of Campbell and Kuncel (2002).

While knowledge is often seen as theories' acquisition, rules, methods, and classifications, Organizational knowledge is widely seen as a mostly individual phenomenon (Patriotta, 2004). Organizations benefit from improved cognitive process quality and efficiency since the organization's knowledge exceeds that of its individuals. This happens for two reasons: first, companies learn from their members via normal training, and second, the organizational structure designs a knowledge-based architecture, a network of links among employees (and artifacts) that enables learning processes development. Spencer and Spencer (1993) framed competences as an iceberg, emphasizing the dual nature of the components: an explicit element, expressed through visible performances that basically refer to the person's tradition of knowledge and skills; and a hidden, implicit part, which requires a study of inner dimensions associated with inspiring, volitional, and socio-emotional procedures. Thus, observable abilities are skills and knowledge, which are traits that are visible

while they are relatively superficial, whereas self-image, traits, and motivations are hidden in the most intimate parts of personality. Problem solving skills fall under what are known as transversal competencies; more specifically, they represent an individual's ability to effectively engage in a process in which multiple people try to resolve a problem by reasoning and sharing information, solutions, and the tools required to put them into action. Finally, attitudes represent people's views on doing things, either explicit or implicit belief systems about themselves, and the social and organizational milieu. They are important, since they may directly impact employees' organizational behavior (Uhlmann et al., 2012).

### *2.3 Organizational Training in Startups: The Hubs Role*

Human capital is an important part of enterprises, and specifically of startups - since it recognizes the human attributes that differentiate individuals. Staff training helps to improve human resource quality by discovering both the strategic (Borgonovi et al., 2019) and behavioral components of management by fostering leadership abilities and creating a sense of identity among employees (Walton et al., 2017).

To generate this identity and flourish, an innovative start-up must not only seek the market for funding but also obtain talents to increase management expertise. In this sense, incubators play a critical role since they not only provide facilities and assistance to entrepreneurs, but also serve as venues for meetings and training courses. Business incubators, which provide backing frameworks for emerging entrepreneurial efforts throughout their start-up period (Carrera et al., 2008), are a tool for fostering human resource growth, among other things.

The support provided by incubators does not end with the mere provision of capital but also continues in the contribution of managerial know-how made available to the new start-up firm, thus becoming a structured and complex activity (Capolupo, 2023d). Incubators have evolved over time, adapting, and updating their set of services and resources to the needs of incubated firms (Bruneel et al., 2012). According to them Bruneel et al. (2012) there are three macro-phases of incubator growth. The early incubators, known as first-generation incubators, did not provide training or management advice but instead offered physical infrastructure such as offices, conference rooms, and so on. In the words of Bruneel (2012), the requirement for spending on technological advancement and innovation for economic development did not exist until the end of the 1980s. As a result, a second generation of hubs emerged, which included educational programs among its offerings, through which incubated organizations were guided by managers, and benefited from additional training; consequently, support, organizational, managerial, and market consulting were added to the current facilities and services that were previously present. In the second part of the 1990s, the need for establishing a network as a method of enhancing the odds of success of incubated organizations became evident. As a result, incubators nowadays have three key components: infrastructure provision, business assistance, and network connectivity. First, they provide physical space in government buildings, massive businesses, science parks, and universities. Science parks are places that physically gather and coordinate a network of high-tech enterprises, research institutes, and services to promote the propensity to create. Science parks allow a way of shifting knowledge from fundamental academic research to the actual market. They are made up of firms that primarily conduct research and development; hence, they do not engage in manufacturing activities that are only connected to research. The incubator can provide organizational training to the start-up through knowledge and skill transfer.

This may occur for different aims. First and foremost, to provide general fundamental skills. This relates to the supply of services required for the establishment of each new firm, with a focus on legal and fiscal concerns. The value generated through these actions is due to the opportunity cost of the efforts of those who founded the new company, and they can leverage the unique attributes of the business proposal lacking redirecting time from performing the necessary but quasi-business-peculiar operations for which the hub has already developed its own learning curve. Secondly, to transfer specific competencies to the business, which involves the transfer of specific know-how to the single business idea, contacts with activities that are complementary to it, and personnel skilled in start-up competencies (Nowak & Gantham, 2000).

Following that, the incubator provides an invaluable benefit to the development of start-ups by transferring universal and knowledge that allows the organization and its members to grow.

## **3. Methodology**

### *3.1 Rationale*

The case study used is that of SEI, a startup hub for entrepreneurship and inland development in Campania (Italy). The analysis had two purposes: exploratory and explanatory. Exploratory because, using an inductive logic approach, the causes underlying the evolution of a specific phenomena have been researched in order to get valuable hints in a previously uncharted domain (Ahrens & Dent, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). The

explanatory goal seeks cause-effect relationships between factual evidence that has evolved inductively. We were able to represent the hub characteristics, fostered enterprises, and the array of educational facilities supplied by analyzing primary sources, as suggested by Yin (1992). The research design involved two semi-structured interviews with the CEO of the SEI incubator: the first was geared toward describing the case-vignette, SEI, and the Demetra project, in order to delineate the boundary within which the investigation was carried out; the second, on the other hand, investigated, from the incubators' perspective, the perception of hub CEOs on which organizational skills should be most trained during the pandemic and, more generally, in disruptive events. Therefore, although the questions were direct and aimed at investigating the five dimensions of organizational training retrieved in literature, ample space was given to free discussion, leading to a broader conceptual exploration of these themes.

### 3.2 Case Study

SEI is an abbreviation for terms that define the activity's strength, that is sustainability, ethics, and innovation. These ideals define the hub's work as well as the future of entrepreneurship. The incubator acts as a catalyst for the formation of new businesses by providing training in all forms, providing comprehensive assistance to enterprises and start-ups, and attempting to meet any support needs either with its own team or through an external network. SEI has made innovation its mantra and, above all, has chosen to invest in the dreams of future generations. During the Covid-19, Demetra, was launched. The initiative aims to contribute to the development of a new and contemporary entrepreneurial fabric that SEI aspires to co-create among the country's interior territories, notably in southern Italy. The request for proposals is intended at people and previously established businesses that want to begin a training, incubation, and growth process to turn their company ideas into reality. The goal is to recognize 20 business idea that stand out for their long-term viability and efficacy. The selected firms will go through an 8-month incubation phase that will include specialized sessions with experts and professionals such as entrepreneurs, mentors, coaches, and C-level executives. Projects are picked based on the innovativeness of the company idea, the talents of the team members, and the ability to satisfy market demands. This project provides a comprehensive and free training program that includes lectures, meetings, a network of excellent experts, methods and assets for project development, and links between start-ups and large organizations.

Creating a profitable organization is a difficult path that requires several activities and decisions to be executed in the correct order. As a result, SEI has developed a five-step training program called Demetra to aid in the development of a successful business. It is based on the finest educational and training approaches, with the goal of reducing, or at least minimizing, the risk of failure and ensuring that the goals established by each company are realized. Five new businesses, at the end of the program, were fostered: Net4Science (agri-food); Charlotte Ski Couture (fashion and sport); Rilab (restoration); Harmonies (music); Jayananda Evolution (wellbeing).

This initial descriptive documentary analysis is followed by the interview.

(1) What is Demetra made of?

*“This call aims to create a new and contemporary entrepreneurial fabric that SEI seeks to support and assist in creating within the country's internal territories, particularly in southern Italy. The appeal is directed for established individuals and businesses that want to go on a road of training, incubation, and growth to realize their business ideas. This is a course that aims to reward the 20 business concepts that may stand out not only for their authenticity, but also for their durability and efficacy. The best ideas will go through an eight-month incubation phase, which will include specialized meetings with professionals such as entrepreneurs, mentors, and coaches. The projects are picked based on the innovativeness of the company idea, the quality of the team's work, and the capacity to meet market demand, and participation is entirely voluntary. The project will provide training programs, networking opportunities, and a network of exceptional individuals, techniques, and resources for developing projects and relationships between startups and major corporations”.*

(2) What are the goals of this call?

*“The competition seeks company concepts with extremely creative content. The selected students will participate in a training session designed to provide them with a set of skills that will allow them to make their company ideas more sustainable, inventive, and resilient. Inland areas account for around three-fifths of the total national territory, and despite their immense potential (particularly in terms of natural resources and huge treasures of cultural and productive history), they have been victims of depopulation and slow abandonment for many years. The National Strategy for Internal regions places a premium on interest in internal regions. As a result, the appeal intends to combine innovation with the untapped potential of these locations in order to produce new economic and industrial vitality”.*

### (3) What criteria are used to assess these proposals?

*For this purpose, the following actors examine the admission of the 20 business concepts to the call "Demetra":*

- *committee on Evaluation. A specifically formed commission examines and evaluates the applications that participate in the selection process;*
- *serve as a mentor to employees. Mentors and coaches followed the competitors through the contest as part of a specialized Startup Coaching plan, aiding and advise. The Mentor Staff, as part of the admission selection committee, also gathers data on ideas and proposed teams and provides feedback to the Commission for assessment purposes;*
- *an expert jury. The jury oversees selecting the finest business concepts. It will be made up of members of the Evaluation Committee and additional experts who will be appointed for free based on relevance and representativeness criteria (e.g., scholars, practitioners, entrepreneurs, experts of innovation);*

## 4. Results

According to Vincenzo Vitale, the organizational transformations spurred by the pandemic have a multiple nature: technological-instrumental, training-experiential, and process-structural-based.

Concerning technological issues, SEI, reacted to Covid-19 disruption looking for alternative solutions to deliver participants an effective training despite the threats of the moment. These tools allow for a sound solution which include a mix of quality (please specify "quality") training and long-distance training. This conclusion is consistent due to people's digital cultures and attitudes toward new working technologies:

*"People's digital cultures have spread. In terms of training, digitalization allows for participation in courses without the need for travel, encourages interactions with new stakeholders, and provides options for cooperation. In a nutshell, this has made training more accessible. It has resulted in significant benefits for organizations that have been in operation for many years and have a well-established consumer base. It was different for those startups that were born in the middle of Covid and had to forge their own relationships, possibly without ever meeting in person."*

This comment validates entrepreneurs' resilient attitudes throughout the initial months of the epidemic, providing promise for future growth of these realities.

Traditional teaching techniques are utilized the most, alternating with practical experience:

*"The platform used the most for video calls and webinars was Zoom." Following each seminar, startupper were always given training materials such as slides and documents via email. As a result, SEI did not halt its training activities, but instead attempted to develop a method to ensure excellent training through the Demetra call. Lastly, ideas that have completed the whole incubation process will be eligible for a first investment from SEI after an appropriate appraisal of the startup's worth."*

At this stage, it was asked whether SEI's attention is on the presented concept, and therefore on the project, on the individual-future entrepreneur, or on the start-up team. SEI's administrator explicitly replies to this topic, claiming that "both (are three not two) are important, and that in the selection phase, the team is evaluated first and whether they are able to endure the difficulty of realizing a business idea." Following that, it will be necessary to understand their motivations and what drives them to create a startup, after which the proposed idea will be evaluated; if it is found to be original and innovative, it will be accepted, and they will begin working with those who have applied for it.

The Covid-19 and its effects have undoubtedly had an impact on training and associated procedures, and hence on the SEI's operations.

*"Unfortunately, the pandemic has limited our training activities, which have not been halted. However, our team has done everything possible to ensure quality training for all young companies who have embarked on the incubation path through the Demetra, also call launched by us at the end of 2020, as well as for those who have decided to do the same independently. With the help of skilled mentors who have followed us on our journey, we have organized monthly webinars and online seminars."*

It is important noting that recent events have entailed an exponential usage of digital technology, perhaps quickening routes of digital transformation that were already in progress prior to the epidemic. The ideal training method appears to be the monthly webinar; it is a form of online module that lasts no more than an hour, is used in synchronous mode, and may be accessed at any time via a link. These alternate ideas, together with the correct features of the participants, contributed to the training program's success. According to the SEI CEO, in order for

training programs to be successful, *"a start-up ought to possess the following characteristics: the capacity to listen, enhance question oneself and, above all, question one's own idea, and accept the marketplace challenges, even when it tells us that we have to alter entirely or give up."* It is critical to incrementally develop the suggested concept, which SEI guides and monitors using the lean startup process.

SEI takes the Lean Startup method, which is a radical means of launching creative ideas and activities that helps establish a route towards a viable business while substantially lowering time and expenses, and hence the potential of failure.

Moreover, Knowledge, soft skills, and attitudes all have an impact on training, particularly during the learning process:

*"We also evaluate people's attitudes toward the training that we provide, the effort that each of them places into carrying out their idea, but also the commitment that they put into collaborating with one another and, most importantly, to accept the guidance that they are given from time to time in order to enhance or entirely modify the approach and way of handling certain aspects. This is a critical feature that is not as evident as it may appear."*

To SEI, there are several fundamental traits of individuals that, even with good training programs, cannot be taught: resolve, continuity, curiosity, emotional intelligence, collaboration, and the capacity to listen. All these qualities are required of organization leaders. Vincenzo Vitale's responses led to the emergence of several conceptual sub-categories of skills that may be associated to those drawn in the theoretical paragraph: Team-working; Problem solving; Managerial skills; Original ideas; Self-management; Technical-operational or job-specific skills; Other skills. This classification is shown in Table 3, along with the responses that were given and the conceptual category with which each is associated.

Table 3. Interview results

| Organizational competencies                  | Interviews response                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Dimension              |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Team-working                                 | <i>"More individuals working on the same concept and with the same aims is a must-have value for us. This asset is also an indicator of a strong relational skill, which is critical for a company to develop a network regardless of its own circuit of competence."</i> | Organizational skills  |
| Problem solving                              | <i>"Knowing how to deal with problems, particularly the unexpected, is critical. The power and resolve of a team or a legitimate person are simply in their capacity to overcome problems."</i>                                                                           | Problem solving skills |
| Managerial skills                            | <i>"Our education additionally focuses on assisting young entrepreneurs who come to us in improving these skills that require a solid foundation."</i>                                                                                                                    | Organizational skills  |
| Original ideas                               | <i>"This skill is crucial. Startups are evaluated based on their concepts, which must be novel, unique, and engaging. We require to see something different."</i>                                                                                                         | Beliefs and attitudes  |
| Self-management                              | <i>"This is another skill that we try to best define within the training that we provide. We work with young entrepreneurs to help them understand how to run their businesses on their own."</i>                                                                         | Observable skills      |
| Technical-operational or job-specific skills | <i>"Essential skill to successfully carry out a task that is as in line as possible with one's own abilities"</i>                                                                                                                                                         | Organizational skills  |
| Other skills                                 | <i>"The ability to involve partners and investors, as well as how to use the right</i>                                                                                                                                                                                    | Knowledge              |

The table shows the skills that, according to Incubators perspective, are considered important or desirable for entrepreneurs or startups. The first skill listed is team-working, which is seen as important for developing strong relationships and expanding a company's network. The ability to solve problems, particularly unexpected ones, is also highlighted as critical. Managerial skills are seen as important for entrepreneurs to have a solid foundation, and the ability to come up with original and engaging ideas is also considered crucial. Self-management is another important skill, and young entrepreneurs are trained to understand how to run their businesses independently. Additionally, technical-operational, or job-specific skills are seen as essential for successfully carrying out tasks, and there may be other skills that are important, such as the ability to involve partners and investors and to tell a compelling story.

## 5. Discussions

This study brought to light what startup incubators perceived were and could be the skills on which to focus new startup training programs. The five dimensions of skills to be trained were followed by seven specific factors explaining them, to enlarge the discussions horizon and offer insights that are not limited to organizational training factors. In fact, this research offers food for thought for further theoretical directions that can be related to the issues of Organizational Training in startups, especially in the post-pandemic scenario.

According to results, disruptive times such as the pandemic context have not slowed the development of start-ups; rather, while it has inevitably defined the lives of individuals while bringing about drastic shifts, it has inevitably spurred the development of these organizations because, on the one hand, entrepreneurial risk affected young entrepreneurs less when compared to precariousness. In general, the features of creative startups should make them more suited to deal with the COVID-19 dilemma than other types of firms.

To enhance resilience innovation is crucial, as innovative organizations continually predict and react to a wide range of problems (Linnenluecke, 2017). Nonetheless, organizations do not always recognize the true threat posed by a potential crisis (Munoz et al., 2019), and most startups will have been unprepared for the past events. Individuals' digital culture, on the other hand, has expanded, and many entrepreneurs now operate in this space (Scuotto et al., 2021). Start-ups have a better developed digital culture than established businesses (Faludi, 2023). Indeed, they demonstrate how, in disruptive times, open innovation, versatility, adaptation, and digitalisation are critical in developing new projects and meeting the new needs that arose because of the crisis, and how crises can frequently give rise to opportunities. This conclusion is consistent with startups' adaptability: Covid-19, in that case, failed to affect startups, since they demonstrated to be adaptive to changes, generating new methods to deal with the Covid-19 problem. Teamwork is vital to SEI; this competency is also a sign of a high relationship skill, which is essential for a start-up in creating a network even outside of one's own circle of competence. Furthermore, the literature verifies the transversal problem-solving abilities, which are highlighted as critical talents required not just to learn, but also, and most importantly, for personal growth. Individuals, according to the research, create their own competences (knowledge, skills, experience, etc.) beginning with wants and expectations and transforming them into supporting behaviors (Russo et al., 2018). In fact, the CEO argues that cooperation is one of the most important talents for a startup, citing it as a "symptom of an outstanding relational talent."

McClelland and Boyatzis (1982) defined managerial and management skills as traits of an individual who manages a corporation or a team of workers and contributes to the effective completion of a job; instead, to Galati et al (2016), managerial skills can be addressed as management overload, or the capability to deal with uncertainty. Individual competences and organizational values, according to Bradi et al. (2020), are vital for predicting objectively measurable career success and should be incorporated in theoretical models that explain career success. Similarly, SEI argues that its training focuses on assisting new entrepreneurs who apply to incubators to strengthen these abilities, which must have a solid foundation. Furthermore, SEI aims to develop self-management skills, the ability to involve partners and investors, and the ability to use the right levers to tell their stories. These are the qualities they strive to best describe through the training they provide.

Another feature required for effective training is attitude, which refers to how individuals approach the training they get, how committed each person is to be following his or her own concept, and the capacity to accept advice from time to time. The literature indicates that attitudes are key prerequisites because there will be no development unless instruction is supported with the appropriate approach. Other intrinsic characteristics of people, in addition to attitudes, are difficult to teach regardless of proper education programs. To Earl (2013), human beings would be intrinsically motivated to learning, whereas Pierce (2013) states that the drive would arise



primarily from the need to achieve one's goals and be reinforced by positive emotions, such as satisfaction and pride in learning, which would support the achievement of personal success.

The CEO stated that he continues to employ traditional teaching methods, alternating them with practical exercises. Consequently, regular frontal lectures, seminars, and conferences were offered, but workshops, practical activities, exercises, and outdoor training were only held on occasion. Concerning the incubation, Vincenzo Vitale was questioned about how he finds and selects businesses for incubation programs, and the answer was that it first assesses the team and if it can endure the task of creating an organization.

Significant success criteria for a startup may be found in both managerial decisions and the setting in which these businesses operate. The literature has found three macro-variables that explain the causes for a startup's success: entrepreneur traits, new business characteristics, and external factors connected to the geographical area or industry of reference (Schutjens & Wever, 2000). The number of start-ups in Italy has expanded significantly in recent years, yet the failure rate is over 80%. As a result, it is critical to explore the characteristics that might promote startup success (Molino et al., 2018). Indeed, the founders team of a startup has been shown to play an important role in ensuring its success; research has demonstrated that around 65 percent of high-potential start-ups fail due to challenges within the team (Wasserman, 2013), but those who attempt to carry out their ideas as a team are more likely to succeed and be financed (Klotz et al., 2014). Therefore, the analysis depicted the main dimensions analyzed proved to be consistent with the main positions retrieved in literature. When the findings of the interviews are combined with the literature on the efficiency of incubators, it is feasible to state that, during and post-Pandemic scenario, hubs are fundamental in startup training and the development of their organizational skills and human capital (Ssekiziyivu et al., 2023).

## 6. Conclusions

The interview findings revealed that a team or startup must have necessary competencies or be willing to acquire them via training. Moreover, in contrast to popular belief, not all skills can be taught since fundamental traits of humans such as desire, interest, emotional intelligence, and the ability to listen are impossible to transfer. In addition, being involved in incubation is limited to a few carefully selected organizations, making of the selection a complicated and crucial process. It has been noticed that to appropriately choose startups, suitable criteria must be defined in advance, and in this specific situation, it appears critical to assess both the idea given by the team and the organizational viability of the idea itself. Moreover, interesting concepts have come to light regarding the perspective that a startup or any young organization ought to take to cope with challenges of disruptive events. In fact, in crisis, adequate training, greater expertise, and the right resources make opportunity-oriented entrepreneurs more likely to manage and be more resilient than others. Evidence from the Italian innovation ecosystem have reinforced this result, which shows indicators of corporate resiliency and a rise in creative firms. These concerns have led to the identification of innovation as the primary issue that today's businesses must face, as well as the primary drivers of economic progress. Organizational resilience is a critical feature that guarantees the survival of startups.

Startups are distinguished by their capacity for invention; being imaginative is a necessity for resilience, since innovative firms constantly anticipate and respond to a wide range of difficulties. Resilience is critical in crisis, since it both outlines an organization's capability to keep fostering its activity during a period of disruption, but it also considers what resources were built up beforehand to a crisis and then used during and after it.

The literature has previously dealt with this evidence, which was mainly verified by the responses, and underlined the link between resilience and capacity for adaptation and digital change. SEI's ability to endure in the face of the pandemic and explore alternate solutions has allowed it to widen its digital culture and provide new entrepreneurs with the necessary skills. The training needs were met by technology, including a variety of e-learning platforms and different tools such as workshops and online seminars.

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