

Architects of Environment: A New Faculty Identity at the Intersection of Entrepreneurship
Education and AI in Russian Universities¹

Research Overview

Faculty teaching entrepreneurship move beyond traditional roles. A survey of 300+ Russian teaching staff and 10 interviews reveal an emerging identity — architect of the entrepreneurial environment — combining online and offline practice, mentoring, ecosystem brokerage, AI integration, and federal-policy navigation rather than expert or facilitator work.

(47 words)

Purpose of Study

University entrepreneurship education has expanded rapidly in Russia under federal initiatives such as the Platform for University Technological Entrepreneurship (PUTP). Yet the professional identity and best practices of faculty leading these programmes remain under-studied. Existing typologies of teacher roles — expert, facilitator, instructor — do not capture practitioners who simultaneously mentor, broker external partners, integrate AI tools, run accelerators, and navigate federal policy. This study maps an emerging faculty role of the architect of the entrepreneurial environment, and asks what its emergence implies for educational administration and the design of professional development pathways.

Research Methods

A mixed-methods design was used, with the qualitative material collected to validate, deepen, and explain the patterns first observed in the quantitative data. The quantitative strand a survey of 300+ teaching staff engaged in entrepreneurship education in Russia (designed across 62 thematic dimensions covering project experience, business background, work with students, specialized in different subject fields, AI use, pedagogical practices, balance between freedom and direction, the role of institutional infrastructure including start-up studios, accelerators, etc., as well as

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motivation, and community belonging). The qualitative strand was 10 interviews with leading experts in the field from top-tier Russian universities (including HSE, MIPT, ITMO and others connected to the PUTP federal platform).-Quantitative analysis used regression, cluster, and factor analysis; interview analysis followed an inductive coding approach with cross-case comparison; findings were triangulated across the two strands.

Results and Discussion

Four findings stand out across the survey and the interview data. First, the most experienced respondents operate as architects of the environment and have a distinct self-identity, emphasising the design of conditions rather than transmission of content. Second, AI is integrated intensively yet pragmatically: most successful respondents use generative AI personally (Perplexity, DeepSeek, ChatGPT, Gemini) and demonstrate it to students, while remaining wary of cognitive substitution; one interview respondent explicitly framed the teacher's role as teaching students not to dull their thinking. Third, optimal group size for these formats clusters around very small teams (4–10 students) for transformative work, with 60 named as the upper limit for tool-based training while traditional individual mentoring in a “one-on-one” format is becoming more and more difficult to implement due to massification of entrepreneurship education. Fourth, federal infrastructure (PUTP, accelerators) is judged unevenly: some elements operate as substantive ecosystems, others as bureaucratic check-boxes. Paradoxically, formal infrastructural elements might hinder the potential of the new architect-of-environment role of a teacher implying ecosystem brokerage and AI-integration.

Keywords

teacher role; entrepreneurship education; teacher professional development; AI in entrepreneurship education;