

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**DEVELOPING AN
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
EDUCATION MODEL FOR
APPLICATION-ORIENTED
UNIVERSITIES IN HEBEI, CHINA:
A MIXED-METHOD APPROACH**

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
**Doctor of Philosophy
(Education)**

Faculty of Education

September 2025

ABSTRACT

The escalating global unemployment crisis has underscored entrepreneurship as a key driver of economic recovery and highlighted the pivotal role of Entrepreneurship Education (EE) in Higher Education Institutions. In China, Application-Oriented Universities (AOUs) face unique challenges in implementing EE, necessitating a tailored benchmarking model that aligns with their specific educational goals and institutional contexts. This study adopts a convergent-embedded mixed-methods design to develop an EE model specifically for Chinese AOUs. Quantitative strand: A survey involving 1,747 students and 38 faculty members across AOUs in Hebei Province provided broad insights into students' entrepreneurial awareness, curriculum satisfaction, and gaps in institutional support systems. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Qualitative strand: A comprehensive policy analysis of Malaysia's National Entrepreneurship Policy 2030, the Entrepreneurship Action Plan for HEIs (2021–2025), and the MOHE Guide to Entrepreneur-Integrated Education identified the key structural elements of national and institutional EE frameworks. This was complemented by a case study of Universiti Teknologi MARA, highlighting exemplary internal practices that could inform implementation in the Chinese AOU context. The two data sets were integrated through joint displays, aligning quantitative findings (e.g., limited use of incubation centers, inadequate funding access) with qualitative themes (e.g., multi-stakeholder governance, performance incentives) to guide model development. Findings reveal that AOUs require enhanced practical support, stronger industry collaboration, and better integration of EE into disciplinary curricula. In contrast, Malaysia's coordinated, incentive-driven EE ecosystem provides transferable strategies that offer actionable value for Chinese institutions. Based on these integrated insights, the study proposes a comprehensive EE implementation model for AOUs, comprising a vision, mission, two strategic goals, three strategic thrusts, eight pillars, and 27 actionable initiatives across areas of leadership, internal capacity-building, and external engagement. The mixed-methods approach strengthens the model's validity and provides a robust, context-sensitive roadmap for policymakers, institutional leaders, and educators seeking to implement and evaluate sustainable EE programs in China's evolving higher education landscape.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I extend my deepest appreciation to my esteemed mentors, Dr. Norazah Binti Abdul Aziz and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mohammed Hardy Loh Bin Rahim, for their patient guidance and instrumental support throughout my research journey. Their expertise and insights were pivotal to the successful completion of my thesis, and I am profoundly grateful for their mentorship.

I also wish to express my gratitude to the Malaysian Academy of SME & Entrepreneurship Development for their invaluable information and assistance. The resources and support provided by MASMED significantly contributed to the accomplishment of my research.

Special thanks are due to my colleagues and friends, whose encouragement and support were constant sources of strength throughout this project. Your belief in my work and your willingness to lend a helping hand have been truly appreciated.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to my family, whose unwavering support has been my foundation. My wife's wholehearted dedication and assumption of the majority of household responsibilities were instrumental to my success. Furthermore, I am profoundly thankful to my parents for their caring support of my son during my doctoral studies. To everyone mentioned and those unmentioned, this piece of victory is dedicated to you.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

The persistent issue of unemployment has been exacerbated globally by the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to a significant economic recession in 2020. High unemployment rates threaten a country's growth and social cohesion, making unemployment a critical area of concern for governments worldwide. In the United States the pandemic caused the loss of 20.5 million non-farm jobs (May 2020), and the unemployment rate had already soared to 14.7 percent the previous month (April 2020) (*Unemployment in the United States - Wikipedia*, n.d.). The World Economic Forum has predicted that the unemployment rate could potentially escalate to 20%, comparable to levels last seen during the Great Depression (≈ 25 percent in 1933). In the United Kingdom, the situation also reflected the pandemic's toll. The *Labour Market Overview, UK - Office for National Statistics* reported an estimated unemployment rate for all people at 4.9%, marking an increase of 1.2 percentage points from the previous year and 0.7 percentage points from the preceding quarter. Malaysia experienced a similar trend, with its unemployment rate rising to 4.8% in Nov 2020 from 3.2% a year earlier. (*Malaysia Unemployment Rate | 1998-2020 Data | 2021-2023 Forecast | Calendar*, n.d.). This increase was attributed to the severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the nation's economy. Even China, which had managed to avoid a large-scale epidemic outbreak since the second quarter of 2020, saw an increase in its unemployment rate. The unemployment rate rose to 5.6%, which was 1.7% higher than the previous year (Registered Unemployed Persons in Urban Area, National Bureau of Statistics of China, n.d.).

In the context of a challenging economic environment and the imminent fourth industrial revolution, entrepreneurship is increasingly recognized as a key driver for economic revitalization (Maritz et al., 2020). Karlsson et al. (2015) highlight the growing interest in entrepreneurship as a means to stimulate economic growth. Acknowledging the importance of entrepreneurship during uncertain times, countries like China have incorporated entrepreneurship education (abbreviated as EE afterwards)