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Educators Insights on Entrepreneurship Education Among Students

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ABSTRACT

In many educational institutions nowadays, entrepreneurship has emerged as a crucial subject and learning component. In order to cultivate and enhance potential entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship education is being introduced to university students as part of a larger university plan. To create effective entrepreneurship courses, a thorough grasp of knowledge acquired by students to become entrepreneurs is essential. Limited research on the viewpoints of educators regarding their perceptions of student entrepreneurship education has been conducted especially in Malaysia. Hence, this paper explored the perception of educators, focusing on fifteen (15) educators at the Faculty of Hotel & Tourism Management, UiTM Terengganu campus. This study is an exploratory study. Findings derived were indicating knowledge acquired by students, focusing on three (3) themes, including entrepreneurship mindset, market sensitivity, and skills. Students could grow and refine their entrepreneurial skills using the findings as a base. Furthermore, it also contributes to the significance value of strategies that universities can implement for a successful Entrepreneurship Management among students, integrating best practices embedding entrepreneurship skills, market sensitivity and entrepreneurship thinking in enhancing their intention. Recommendations and future research are made based on the findings of the study.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship education, intention, market sensitivity, students, skills.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The advancement of Entrepreneurship Education (EE) over the past decades has been refined in several levels of education institutions be it university, secondary or primary school (Adnan et al., 2018; Fayolle, 2018; Neck & Greene, 2011). Entrepreneurship education served as a crucial element in education covering undergraduate and postgraduate training programs (Hattab, 2014). By learning the principles of entrepreneurship, students can be equipped with appropriate knowledge that leads to job creation as well as creative research-derived solutions that meet the needs of public and private organizations. This is in line with the initiatives of the government to introduce entrepreneurship education that has huge potential to create job employment for future graduates as well as contribute to the country's economy. As interesting as it portrays, this entrepreneurship education has invited many academicians and researchers to explore the topic further and has gained popularity among educators, instructors and all the people engaged in entrepreneurship education (Adnan et al, 2018; Neck et al, 2011; Shamsudin et al., 2019).

Among the popular work are by Shamsuddin et al (2019) that highlighted students with entrepreneur education are more willing to venture into business than those who have not been exposed to any proper entrepreneurship education. It is generally believed that entrepreneurial skills can be cultivated by teaching students' appropriate entrepreneurial education. Hence, Ministry of Education has focused on entrepreneurship education to promote entrepreneur learning that combines theoretical lectures with hands-on learning for good impact and an enriching learning experience. Looking at a bigger perspective, the continuous efforts taken by government on introducing entrepreneurship education would probably reduce the amount of unemployment in the country in the long run. All these efforts should be commendable, nevertheless Adnan et al (2018) reported that entrepreneurs faced several problems including difficulties to access quality human capital, lack of access to sizeable financial capital and lack of support to grow and become sustainable. This has consequently led them to lose many opportunities and lack of sustainability as highlighted in the Social and Blueprint 2015-2018 as reported by Rahman, Ismail and Sahid (2019). Moreover, what influences students to join self-employment are still vague between entrepreneurial education and entrepreneurs' knowledge (Ghazali et al., 2012). Thus, policymakers (government and universities) need to design an effective program for their entrepreneurial education. Added to limited research on the viewpoints of educators regarding their perceptions of student entrepreneurship education especially in Malaysia (Ghazali et al, 2012; Rahim et al, 2015), thus this study warrants an empirical investigation. Therefore, it is hoped that the findings of this study would serve as a platform for students to build and polish their entrepreneurship skills. Furthermore, the findings can also contribute to the significance value of strategies that universities can implement for a successful Entrepreneurship Management among students, integrating best practices and developing to a new framework for entrepreneurship education that would in return benefit social and economic development of future generation. Thus, this paper investigates educator's perspectives on entrepreneurship education among students.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Entrepreneurship Education Programs

In line with the above notion, every university has set up an entrepreneurship centre governed by the Entrepreneurship Development Policy that consists of several strategic levels. Specifically, in UiTM, Malaysian Academy of SME & Entrepreneurship Development (MASMED) is the responsible department for entrepreneur education collaborating with several faculties and campuses. The main focus would be for students to possess skills and engage in entrepreneurship, technology and innovation. The next level would be to formulate a new notion for knowledge and entrepreneurship programs in all universities. In conjunction, entrepreneurship education in universities is to enhance the development programs to be in line with strengthening entrepreneurship and young entrepreneurs. Moreover, is to formulate mechanism for evaluating the success of projects as well as to create a more conducive environment to encourage the development of entrepreneurship students.

Back then in year 2010, the government has undertaken a program jointly organized by the National Entrepreneurship Institute (INSKEN), with a total of 61,000 participants benefiting from the program. Few

entrepreneurial programs and mechanisms that cater to the advancement of entrepreneurship activity had been introduced since then to promote more people, in particular students at universities, to become entrepreneurs. Currently in year 2022, government establish several entrepreneurship programs to foster this entrepreneurship culture among Malaysians. Examples are *Program Realisasi Impian Ekonomi Digital (PRIME)* - Digital Branding through BIZ.MY (free registration) and GO2 Brand Standard and other domain categories by Ministry of Communications and Multimedia, *Bantuan Bimbingan Usahawan dan Kursus & Latihan Keusahawanan* by Ministry of Rural Development, Social Entrepreneurship for Rural Youth (SERY) by Ministry of Youth & Sports, to name a few (SME info, 2022). Moreover, policies to enhance the entrepreneurship education programs in universities had been implemented with the focus to produce graduates equipped with entrepreneurial mindsets besides nurturing entrepreneurial academics and researchers. This policy is important following the current trend for many countries to foster entrepreneurship culture through university education and training.

The entrepreneurship education process can begin as early as primary school. Universities and educational institutions are vital platforms to educate youngsters as universities can provide manpower resources for many sectors and they are the future leaders of Malaysians. This is supported by Adnan et al (2018) that highlighted it has been proven where entrepreneurial activities can be disseminated through entrepreneurship education. Malaysian universities produce more than 250,000 graduates annually in a country of about 30 million people. With the effect of endemic that hit worldwide, the number of unemployed graduates is forecasted to rise with this uncertain economy. The disease has been spreading globally to 210 countries and territories around the world with a total of 2,013,918 confirmed cases of the COVID-19 that originated from Wuhan, China, and a death toll of 127,587 deaths (Worldometer, 2020). Competition would be very tense in the job market especially for fresh graduates without any work experience. Hence, entrepreneurship is a practical way to integrate and empower young people especially students in the labour market (Shamsudin et al, 2019). Additionally, the field is also considered desirable to increase innovation, competition and respond to the rapidly changing economic trends.

2.2 Entrepreneurship Education Terminologies

The term “Entrepreneurship education” has been used interchangeably according to organizations and countries. Basically, it is characterised as training that provides the necessary abilities for individuals to create a new company. The best delivery method however, has been hotly contested. Hytti and O’Gorman (2004) postulated that there are numerous approaches to approach entrepreneurship education based on the goals provided. If improving understanding of entrepreneurship is the goal of the education entrepreneurship, a wise decision is to disseminate the knowledge via public platforms such as media, seminars or lectures. These techniques are renowned for their potency in spreading information to a lot of target audiences in a short amount of time. Otherwise, if supplying people when developing entrepreneurial abilities is the goal, then it is advisable to adopt an approach such as industrial training. Additionally, education in entrepreneurship is a formalised programme to give students the entrepreneurship knowledge and abilities to comprehend consumer and market insights recognising commercial potential and needs. It includes networking abilities, idea generation and creating and executing a business plan, managing a company and assessing the internal and external environment for business (Rahim et al, 2015).

Entrepreneurship education is also known as “Enterprise education”, term used in developed countries such as Britain and Ireland. The substance of the programme is more heavily weighted toward fostering individual ability or entrepreneurial qualities. Consequently, the ultimate goal of the programme is not the creation of the corporate entity (Nurmi & Paasio, 2007). In Malaysia, entrepreneurship education and training have merged as the ministry’s main area of concentration and educators are urged to promote a methodology for entrepreneurial learning that integrates in-class theoretical educators with outside-of-class practise a positive impact and a richer educational experience in the classroom. Additionally, students encounter the self-directed learning and problem-based learning have been shown to significantly improve the entrepreneurial goals of students (Rahim et al, 2015).

2.3 Challenges in Entrepreneurship

All these efforts should be commendable, nevertheless Adnan et al (2018) reported that entrepreneurs faced several problems including difficulties to access quality human capital, lack of access to sizeable financial capital and lack of support to grow and become sustainable. This has consequently led them to lose many opportunities and lack sustainability as highlighted in the Social and Blueprint 2015-2018 as reported by Rahman et al (2019). On the other hand, the formation of the entrepreneurial intention is improved by theoretical knowledge advancement and empirical training, which is a key aspect (Sharma, Ram & Srivastava, 2020). If students are interested in launching a new business, it is advantageous to introduce them to the skills and resources needed to be an entrepreneur early in their careers. Students need to be capable of handling unexpected events and dealing with complexity in their upcoming work. Thus, training is very crucial to boost the students' motivation to venture into entrepreneurship. However, it acts as part of the challenges as it requires huge funds to conduct the entrepreneurship training.

2.4 Students' Intention on Entrepreneurship

The ability and inclination to act, as well as the environment in which a person has been trained for future activity, are both referred to as readiness (Othman & Othman, 2019). The two types of readiness are cognitive and non-cognitive. "Cognitive domain" refers to the information and abilities that a person needs, whereas "non-cognitive domain" denotes, for instance, an individual's entrepreneurial traits or attitudes (Othman et al, 2019). It is directly connected to intention. Based on this, effective entrepreneurship depends on a combination of willingness, intention, and entrepreneurial skills that are supported by the environment. Although it emerged from 2008 to 2017, the issue of entrepreneurial ambition was not sufficiently developed to be regarded as a driving theme in the industry (Aparicio, Iturralde & Maseda, 2019). In other words, looking at it bibliometrically, although it seems to be connected to other topics like management, tourism, and entrepreneurship, it is not complex enough to be regarded as a driving theme. In their literature review, Nabi et al. (2017) drew attention to the fact that research on Entrepreneurship Education has primarily concentrated on short-term, subjective impact measures like entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions rather than longer-term ones like venture creation behaviour and business performance, and they urged future research to fill this gap. However, these authors highlighted the necessity to look at other topics, such national culture and gender, that may have a moderating effect on the relationship between entrepreneurial spirit and its results. The results of the bibliometric study conducted by Aparicio et al. in 2019 revealed a number of topics pertaining to entrepreneurial ambitions, country culture, entrepreneurial abilities, and personal attributes, with Theory of Planned Behaviour as the predominant theory used to justify many of these studies.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study is an exploratory study in order to better comprehend the nature of the issue since limited studies have been conducted (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019) with regard to Entrepreneurship Education from educators' perspectives. These qualitative studies where data are collected through interviews, are exploratory in nature (Bougie et al, 2019). Fifteen (15) educators at the Faculty of Hotel & Tourism Management, UiTM Terengganu campus Dungun had been selected for the in-depth interviews. Investigating educators' viewpoints on entrepreneurship education for students is the interview's main goal. All of the educators who agreed to take part in the study were contacted and their approval was obtained before any interviews could begin. The inclusion of the respondents was justified by their appointment as Entrepreneurial Educator Experts (EEE) under MASMED and their participation in student entrepreneurship activities. All the respondents are very knowledgeable on the topic of entrepreneurship education within the organization. The researchers chose subjects via purposeful sampling. According to Hagaman and Wutich (2017), most themes were identified with 10 in depth interviews and no new themes identified after about 20 interviews. Thus, 15 respondents in this study are enough to identify new themes and saturate categories based on the interview session. Table 1 below lists the characteristics of the interviewees, identified as Informants 1 to 15. Each interview session lasted between 45 to 60 minutes on average. For these semi-structured interviews, sets of questions were provided.

Items of questions asked were adopted from Blenker, Korsgaard, Neergaard & Thrane (2011) study. The interview sessions that were recorded using audio-visual tapes were then transcribed verbatim, reviewed comprehensively and summarized into themes, categories and concepts. It was then analysed using Atlas.ti software. The truth of responses is a key concern when data are obtained through interviews. Bias may be emphasized due to particular responses or characteristics of the informants (Brink, 1993). Thus to ensure validity of the study, listed below are researchers' attempts to increase the validity of responses in such a setting as suggested by Brink (1993):

- (1) By making sure that informants are well aware of the study's purpose. The goal of the study, the objectives of the investigation, the methodology used to collect the data, and the intended use of the study's findings were all discussed by the researchers.
- (2) by first establishing a rapport of trust with the subjects and remaining in that situation for a predetermined amount of time. The typical interview lasted 45 to 60 minutes, with preparation time for setting up the interview location. It is regarded as lengthy and satisfies the minimal standards for response validity.
- (3) by conducting many interviews with the same informant. Regarding several entrepreneurship viewpoints and areas, the same informant has been interviewed.
- (4) By contrasting the outcomes with additional evidence. The study's findings have been compared to relevant literature and earlier research in the subject of entrepreneurship education.
- (5) by having the informant corroborate the analysis and findings. The downside of this strategy, according to Brink (1993), is that respondents may give answers that corroborate the researcher's arguments and become more aware of the researcher's inferences.
- (6) By taking precise and thorough field notes to record the changes in responses over time.
- (7) by showing a second outside researcher the field notes. According to Brink (1993), an outside researcher who isn't part of the team will typically be able to tell far more quickly if a fieldworker is being deceived or coerced.

Table 1: Respondents Characteristics

Respondents	Position	Gender	Age
15	Managerial positions (Informant 1)	Male	40-45
	Managerial positions (Informant 2)	Female	40-45
	Managerial positions (Informant 3,4)	Female	35-39
	Senior Lecturer (Informant 5,6)	Male	40-45
	Senior Lecturer (Informant 7,8,9)	Female	40-45
	Senior Lecturer (Informant 10,11,12,13)	Female	35-39
	Lecturer (Informant 14)	Female	35-39
	Lecturer (Informant 15)	Male	35-39

4.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings from the analysis discovered that three (3) themes were derived consisting of entrepreneurship skills, market sensitivity and entrepreneurship thinking. Findings were indicating knowledge acquired by students as part of grooming them to be industry-ready and competitive entrepreneurs.

4.1 Entrepreneurship Skills

Majority of the informants postulated that entrepreneurship skills appeared crucial in entrepreneurship education among students. Informant one (1) highlighted; *“Skill is something that we can develop. So having the right skills as entrepreneur would be very beneficial for students once they graduated”*. Moreover, informant two (2) stated, *“To be honest, it’s going to be a tough time for graduates nowadays to find the best job suitable with their qualification. So what we are doing right now is to equip them with all the knowledge and skills as entrepreneurs so that they are ready to face the intense market of job hunting later on”*. Furthermore, informant five (5) highlighted, *“Everyone have their passion and interest but I believed entrepreneurship skills is something that can be nurtured. I remembered there’s one time in one of the entrepreneurship programs, there’s one student show no interest at all in entrepreneurship and have zero knowledge with regards to any entrepreneurship programmes under government. They join the activity because they have to, it’s part of their college or club requirement. By after that the student became interested once know and have the right skills”*.

This is consistent with a study by Liñán (2004) that showed that entrepreneur knowledge and skills disclosure will directly lead to a high awareness of the existence of the profession, and the next option will give the best assessment of the capabilities and form students' self-determination to pursue entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs' expertise was obvious and important for advancing the economy (Liñán, 2015). According to Wang and Verzet (2011), entrepreneurship can be promoted through education so that young people can develop good entrepreneurship abilities. Overall, entrepreneurship education adds value to the level of entrepreneurship commitment. Nowadays, many education institutions and universities offer complete entrepreneurship education as required by SMEs and part of the curriculum as well as extracurricular instruction. Club activities for students are connected to entrepreneurship programmes, so learning about entrepreneurship is not just confined to the material covered in lectures. Additionally, both academics and businesspeople usually concur that it takes expertise to locate and cultivate entrepreneurial opportunities. The ability of entrepreneurs to recognise possibilities is influenced by and contributed to by entrepreneurship education, according to Mohd Khata et al. (2012). Due to this, students' awareness of entrepreneurship can be improved and developed with well-planned entrepreneurship education and training. Regardless of the employment path they choose, students need to have entrepreneurship abilities. This entrepreneurial approach can help students become more driven by their accomplishments than by their academic performance. Students gain the ability to adopt and use innovative problem-solving strategies based on recent facts, and they can evaluate their capacity to deal with difficulties and failures in an iterative, group problem-solving process.

4.2 Entrepreneurship Thinking

Findings also indicated that the majority of the informants highlighted entrepreneurship thinking as evidently important in entrepreneurship education among students. Informant seven (7) highlighted; *“Having the right entrepreneur mindset and thinking out of the box would be very beneficial for students in the future. Mindset and thinking are the key to successful entrepreneurs”*. Moreover, informant ten (10) stated, *“Students need to be creative and innovative when it comes to being an entrepreneur. For example, in one of our selling activities for fundraising, I was amazed with how creative they are in using socmed as part of their marketing strategy. They completed selling 200 doughnuts in just three hours”*. Furthermore, informant fifteen (15) highlighted, *“Students need to be industry ready and change their style of thinking. They need to be an opportunist in every situation. They cannot rely for managers at any companies to hire them. They can create their own job opportunity and be the manager of their own company”*. These findings describe well the trend in entrepreneurship education where Malaysia and other countries

are not only focusing on acquiring knowledge and skills in science and technology per se. Romero (2013) further emphasised that student involvement in entrepreneurial activities and education has a significant impact on the development of entrepreneurship education and activities. Through entrepreneurship, people are given the freedom and chances to work and think in accordance with what a researcher wants them to study and to generate opportunities that allow for a respectable return. Thus, having an entrepreneurial mindset is crucial for students who want to start a significant business after graduation. Universities can incorporate entrepreneurial education within their existing curricula. Focus can be placed on planning how to thoroughly prepare students for entrepreneurship education by involving them in as many entrepreneurial activities as possible to gain more exposure and expertise in this field. Further, there should be more emphasis on entrepreneurial activities.

Generally, by including activities focusing on attitude, skills, and adventure traits in the curriculum, institutions and government organisations can build entrepreneurship education. Due to the increased involvement of undergraduates in entrepreneurial activities, it is advantageous particularly for individuals who help entrepreneurs and small business owners. Education received via the study of entrepreneurship may have sparked interest, mind, and ambition to become an entrepreneur. In order for entrepreneurial educators and curriculum designers to conclude from prior experiences, curricular content needs to be described in greater detail (Sirelkhatim et al, 2015). Entrepreneurship programmes in universities are anticipated to contribute to the growth and development of entrepreneurship students that were specifically studied entrepreneurship or other courses that offered minor entrepreneurship. It is clear that entrepreneurship education gives students a perspective on the entrepreneurial world that they can use regardless of the immediate job path they choose.

4.3 Market Sensitivity

Majority of the informants agreed that market sensitivity is vital in entrepreneurship education among students. Informant three (3) highlighted; *“In order for customer to buy your product, you must study your market first and conduct a market survey. You need to be sensitive on who are your target audiences. Some students that involved in selling buying activities, yeah it’s good that they have the passion and mindset but they forgot their customer. It should be their priority”*. Moreover, informant eight (8) stated, *“The tip is always know your market well and take it seriously. You can’t expect to have a customer if you ignore the market trend”*. Furthermore, informant eleven (11) highlighted, *“Reaching out to our market as conveniently as possible would be the answer if you are selling any products. It is more so that now we are currently evolve with technology”*. Generally, when entrepreneurs recognized market sensitivity, it would precede their direct attention toward producing a quality and favourable product that meet the market demand. Having in-depth knowledge about the target market would probably boost students’ confidence as entrepreneurs.

In line with the findings above, MASMED in UiTM has introduced Postgrad Training in Innovation and Entrepreneurship Exploration (TIE) to commercialize postgrad students’ research work and encourage them to involve in entrepreneurship. This is unique and enhances the work of doctoral students while benefiting society. The commercialization process takes place to suit the market, building a collaborator and networking as well as funding. All of these steps are supported by MASMED and it provides business experience for students. It can be seen as a continuous process to embrace the entrepreneurship culture among students since undergraduate students are being exposed to entrepreneurship education, while the postgraduate students have advanced entrepreneurship programs. Moreover, this study postulates that market sensitivity is an important element in entrepreneurship education. This is supported by the results from informant four (4), *“Provided the market opportunity and resources, I personally think that it will boost*

students confident and interest in venturing into business”. Additionally, active entrepreneurship promotion efforts should be made in order to boost university students' involvement in the process of finishing their studies at the institution (Mahmood, Kaestner & Yeboah, 2010). According to Abdul Halim, Yahya, Mohd Foad, Mohd Shuker, and Yakob (2010), the different characteristics that impact students in entrepreneurship education include attitude, inventiveness, teamwork, risk-taking, and decision-making. These findings provide scholars with a venue for discussion about entrepreneurship education especially on strategies that would attract students to involve in this entrepreneurship education. It is hoped that students will gain self-confidence as a result and go on to start their own businesses or find employment.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Students need entrepreneurship education to develop the attitudes and self-efficacy necessary for a successful business. This study added to the body of knowledge about Eastern entrepreneurship, particularly among students pursuing entrepreneurship courses, with regard to knowledge acquired for students to be competitive and industry-ready entrepreneurs. However, because it does not reflect the entire population, the study's conclusions should be interpreted with caution. This study focuses on the opinions of educators, particularly at one public institution in the nation. Before generalisations about entrepreneurial education around the world can be made, additional research in various fields and public and private colleges at the national and international levels may be required. The future longitudinal study is also advised, taking the advancement of entrepreneurial education into account. Detailed analysis of existing entrepreneurial education methods of Entrepreneurship Education is highly needed especially from the university side. It can focus on the curriculum design contents and materials covering several aspects such as appropriateness, relevance, coherence, and social usefulness with regard to entrepreneurship education nature and impact (Fayolle, 2018). Moreover, findings from Aparicio et al (2019) reveal little Entrepreneurship Education research in the context of Higher Education indicating there's a need for a current review that focuses on Entrepreneurship Education outcomes in higher education.

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