



Comparing Performance of Business and Non-business Students in Entrepreneurship Education

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship education has been discussed in numerous literature reviews as it plays integral roles for a country to move towards becoming a developed nation. Likewise, entrepreneurship education has been examined as one of the indicators in shaping entrepreneurial intention among university students and graduates. Given the significance of entrepreneurship education, recently, researchers have been discussing the right teaching method and devices in entrepreneurship education to educate non-business students. However, the distinction in performance in entrepreneurship education between business and non-business students are not completely investigated. Hence, this paper attempts to analyse and to compare performance between business students and non-business students in entrepreneurship education. ENT300 (Fundamental of Entrepreneurship) which is a compulsory course is used as a subject of this study. The results of students excel, pass and fail the course for seven sessions are recorded and analysed. The findings demonstrate that only one hypothesis was accepted and another two cannot be accepted. This paper adds to the entrepreneurship education literature and provides bits of knowledge to universities in better designing the curricular for entrepreneurship education.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, education, students, performance

1. INTRODUCTION

Intense global competition in today's world requires a nation to create competitive advantage by reengineering its industries to innovate and improve. Hence, Malaysia has put a concerted effort so as to support the transition from production-based economy to knowledge-based economy by creating an environment that generates prosperity and catalyses economic vibrancy. Entrepreneurship is claimed to be an important role in fostering economic growth and generate wealth and employment in developed as well as in third world countries. In Malaysia, initiatives have been devoted to develop entrepreneurship at all levels. Since the mid-1990s, universities and other higher education institutions introduced courses related to entrepreneurship or major in entrepreneurship.

Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) has embedded entrepreneurship in curricular and faculties by offering entrepreneurship programmes and courses at all levels of studies. Rahim et al. (2015) report some of the entrepreneurship programmes and courses in Universiti Teknologi MARA are 1) BBA (Hons) in Entrepreneurship (with 47 credit hours of entrepreneurship courses), 2) MBA with elective courses in Entrepreneurship (9 credit hours), 3) DBA with concentration in Entrepreneurship (12 credit hours) and 4) Master of Applied Entrepreneurship (with 48 credit hours of entrepreneurship courses). At undergraduate levels, pre-Diploma students in UiTM are compulsory to take Basic Entrepreneurship, followed by Diploma students with Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship during their final year, and at Bachelor Degree, science students are required to study Technopreneurship while Business and Management students need to study Principles of Entrepreneurship. Realizing the importance of entrepreneurship in establishing knowledge economy and efforts by local universities to uphold entrepreneurship education, the effectiveness of the entrepreneurship education in higher learning institutions however, remains vague.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Universiti Teknologi MARA has been known as among the first institution to introduce entrepreneurship courses and programmes to students and to promote entrepreneur as a career option among graduates. Universiti Teknologi MARA has recorded a history when the university managed to win as the Most Entrepreneurial University in Malaysia since the awards was introduced in 2012 for three consecutive years. Both formal and informal entrepreneurship education in Universiti Teknologi MARA is offered to provide opportunities for the students to learn and participate in entrepreneurial activities.

A review of the literature has shown that entrepreneurship education is crucial to spark the interests in entrepreneurship (Lee, Lim, Pathak, Chang, & Li, 2006). In addition, according to Lee, Chang, and Lim (2005), education is an important factor that distinguishes between entrepreneurs and non-entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, previous researchers have highlighted on the importance of entrepreneurship education in building job creation (McMullan, Long & Graham, 1987); equipping the students with entrepreneurial skills and competencies (Gorman, Hanlon, & King, 1997; Bechard & Toulouse, 1998) and forming entrepreneurship awareness in career options (Vesper, 1990; Bechard & Toulouse, 1998). Moreover, it has been reported that there is a positive effect of entrepreneurship education towards the intention to become an entrepreneur (Brand, Wakkee, & van der Veen, 2007; Karimi, Chizari, Biemans, & Mulder, 2010; Mazura & Norasmah, 2011). Nevertheless, scholars recommend different teaching methods should be employed in the entrepreneurship education, as there is no one-size-fits-all.

Given the importance of entrepreneurship education, there are also researches on how to embed entrepreneurship education in the curricular for non-business students. For example, Brand et al., (2007) pointed out the main components in teaching entrepreneurship to non-business students are awareness, attitudes, skills and knowledge. The authors anticipate the needs to develop business plans and to sit for written examination in a formal entrepreneurship education. However, the suggested pedagogy has no difference because the same technique has been used to teach business students (Roberts, Hoy, Katz, & Neck, 2014). To compare business and non-business students, there is not much knowledge that has been established on the likelihood to become entrepreneurs. Researchers worldwide highlighted the issues in teaching entrepreneurship to non-business students; however, the comparison of intention to become entrepreneur among the business and non-business students has not been identified.

In addition, given the same teaching methods used for business and non-business students, the performance among business and non-business students lacks of discussions. The business students are supposed to have more benefits in studying entrepreneurship as the components in the course comprise the core disciplines of marketing, accounting, operation management, management and to some extent business law. The above-mentioned disciplines have been taught to business students prior taking Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship, while the non-business students are expected to have difficulties in learning these new areas. Thus, the objective of this paper is to compare between the business students and non-business students in terms of their grade achievements. The hypotheses are, therefore, written as the followings:

H₁: Business students score excel in ENT300 is higher than the non-business students

H₂: The number of business students passes ENT300 is higher than the non-business students

H₃: The number of non-business students fail ENT300 is higher than the business students

3. METHODOLOGY

Universiti Teknologi MARA offers few subjects on Entrepreneurship; however, Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship (ENT300) is a mandatory course for students taking diploma in Universiti Teknologi MARA. Henceforth, the course is the most proper course to be utilized as a part of this study so as to meet the exploration goals. Also, the course gives an overview of the prerequisites to begin an entrepreneurial vocation by preparing the students with the Fundamentals of Entrepreneurships and the skills to business planning for the advantages of venturing into new business. Moreover, it permits educators to apply mixed instructing and learning as one of the educating techniques. There are nine Diploma programmes being offered in Universiti Teknologi MARA Sabah; Diploma in Business Studies, Diploma in Banking, Diploma in Hotel Management, Diploma in Business Studies (Transportation), Diploma in Science, Diploma in Plantation Management, Diploma in Accountancy and Diploma in Public Administration. These programmes are then grouped into business and non-business based on which cluster they belong to. Thus, consequently, business students comprised those taking Diploma in Business Studies, Diploma in Banking, Diploma in Hotel Management, Diploma in Business Studies (Transportation) and Diploma in Accountancy. Therefore, the rest are sorted as non-business students.

For the purpose of this study, the researchers also determine the characterization of excel, pass and fail. Excellent performance is indicated by students who acquired grades A-, A and A+. Meanwhile, for the grades C, C+, B-, B and B+ are treated as pass and grades F, E, D+, D and C- are regarded as fail. Descriptive analysis, such as frequency and mean is performed in order to compare the grades obtained among the business and non-business students

4. FINDINGS

Figure 1 demonstrates that business students did score excel compared to the non-business students who seated for the ENT300 examination for the past seven academic sessions. This group has scored excel starting from Session 2 2013/2014 and continuously maintained until Session 2 2015/2016. Therefore, H1 is accepted.

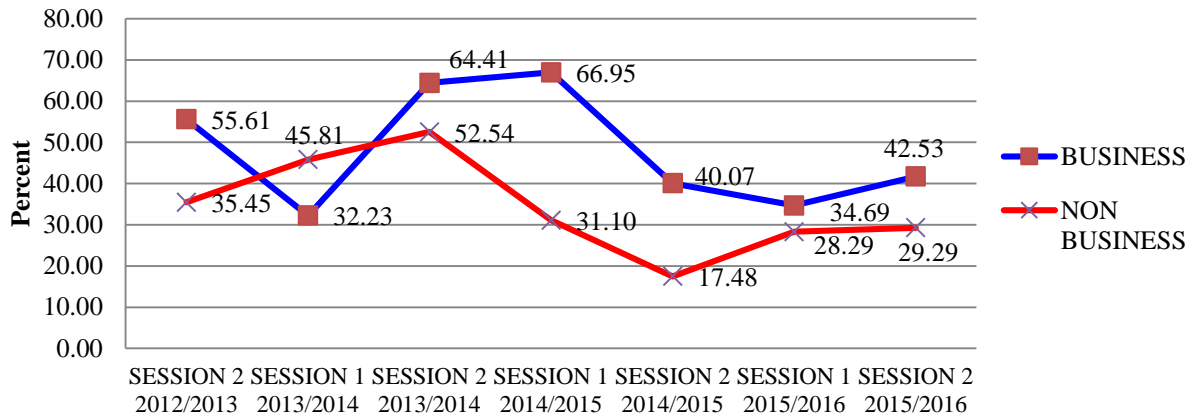


Figure 1: Excel score between business and non-business students for ENT300

Figure 2 presents the passing score for ENT300 between business and non-business students. The overall number of passing score for non-business students in ENT300 is higher than the business students, which they managed to score in Session 2 2012/2013, Session 2 2013/2014, Session 1 2014/2015 and Session 2 2015/2016. Thus, this resulted to H2 cannot be accepted.

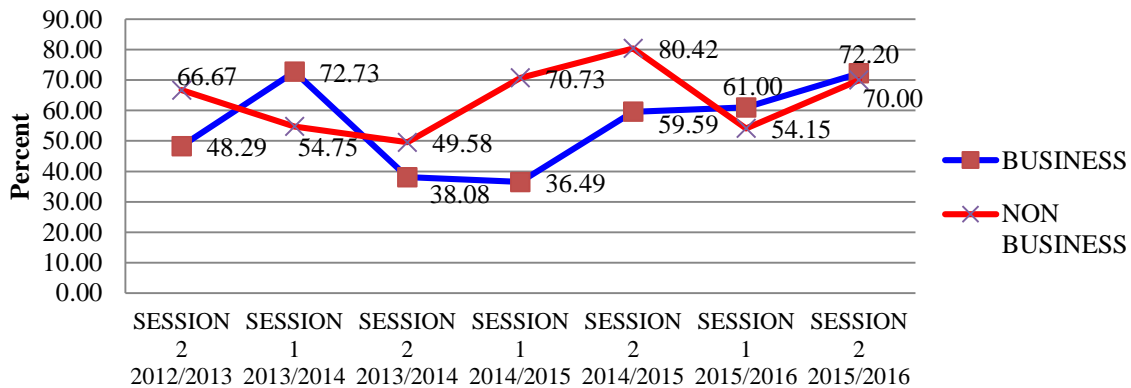


Figure 2: Passing score for ENT300 between business and non-business students

There was no failure rate in two sessions, which were in Session 1 2013/2014 and Session 2 2013/2014 for both business and non business students. However, business students show higher failure score starting from Session 1 2013/2015 to Session 2 2015/2016 as compared to the non-business students as shown in Figure 3. Thus, H3 is cannot be accepted.

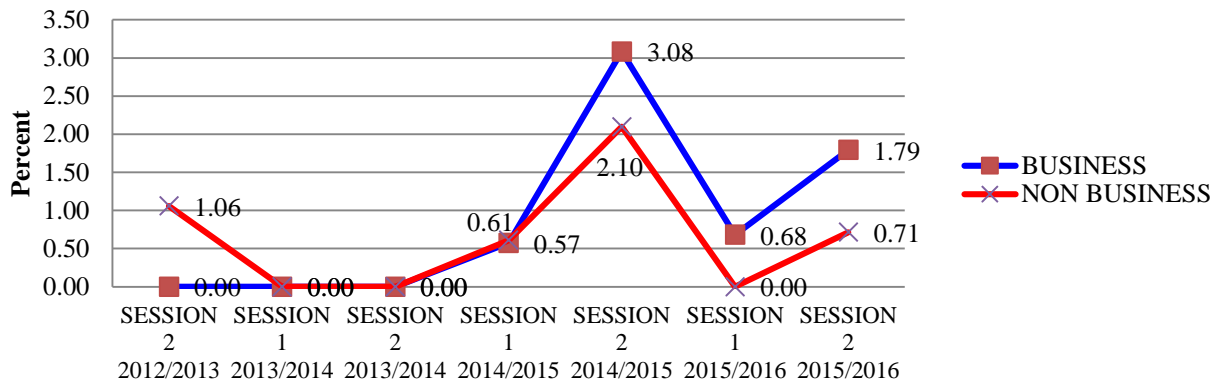


Figure 3: Failure score for ENT300 between business and non-business students

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Generally, excellent performance in the ENT300 is expected from the business students compared to the non-business students. The former have favorable positions as they have been exposed and taught with the primary modules in entrepreneurship education, particularly management, marketing, operations and finance at the beginning of their study plan. Accordingly, it facilitates better understanding and response in the teaching and learning process. Eventually, it leads to positive outcome towards the examination result of the subject. Figure 1 illustrates the excellence score of business students for five consecutive sessions starting from Session 2 2013/2014 until Session 2 2015/2016 compared to the non-business students. Hence, this resulted to lesser numbers of business students in the passing score range.

Alternatively, as the number of non-business students who excels in the ENT300 subject is low, most of them only managed to place in the passing score range as illustrated in Figure 2. Yet, the failure rate is still very low as presented in Figure 3. This outcome can be attributed to the plan of study for non-business students which did not include any core discipline of marketing, operations and finance. As a consequence, it requires the non-business students to put additional effort to comprehend business terms, theories and concepts within the same learning span of time with the business students before seated for the final examination.

At present, the teaching and learning methods used are lectures, tutorials, mid-term examinations and blended learning. These teaching pedagogies are applied to both groups. However, the experiential learning method is believed to have significant impact towards the attainment of positive result especially for the non-business group. In Universiti Teknologi MARA Sabah, the experiential learning activity includes the

Business Plan Competition (BPC). It was initiated in Session 1 2013/2014 and has still been carried out until the present time. This BPC is a platform that offers opportunities to all ENT 300 students to compete in presenting their business ideas. Students are required to prepare a business plan throughout the semester. Hence, it enables the students to engage terms, theories and concepts of business into the proposed business setup.

The outcome of this experiential learning had resulted in a more positive impact to both groups of students. There was no failure for two consecutive sessions after the BPC was introduced. In addition, there is an increasing trend for the passing score of non-business students starting from Session 2 2013/2014 to Session 2 2014/2015. Moreover, the failure rate for both groups is less than 4% indicating the fulfilment of the programme key performance indicator.

In conclusion, the performances of business students in entrepreneurship subject are more excel as compared to non- business students. Interestingly, the number of non-business students passing the subject is higher than business students. Experiential learning activities may contribute to the positive results. Non formal entrepreneurship exposure such as students' involvement in personal online business may be considered in future study, as it might facilitate understanding in entrepreneurship education.

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