

Factors Affecting the Tendency of TVET Students' Involvement in Entrepreneurship

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Abstract: Entrepreneurship is one of the fields that helps graduates to create their careers. Therefore, all Technical and Vocational (TVET) programs have been instilled with entrepreneurial elements to produce graduates who are entrepreneurial in nature. Similar efforts can also be seen through the improvement of the Entrepreneurship Action Plan of Higher Education Institutes and the Integrated Entrepreneurship Education Guide for HEIs. However, not all TVET graduates have the interests and skills to venture into entrepreneurship or make entrepreneurship as a career. This factor has contributed to the increase in the unemployment rate among graduates. Therefore, the present research was conducted to look at the tendency of TVET students' involvement in the field of entrepreneurship as their future career. It involved a descriptive quantitative approach via questionnaire and the data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. The respondents were selected among final year students from the Faculty of Technical and Vocational, UPSI. The results showed that the tendency of students' involvement in the field of entrepreneurship has recorded the highest mean value of $M = 4.60$, followed by job readiness skills (communication and efficiency) ($M = 4.37$) and metacognition ($M = 4.56$). Such findings suggest that the tendency of students' involvement in the field of entrepreneurship is mainly influenced by the metacognition factor, with minimal yet significant influence played by job readiness skills. Therefore, students' entrepreneurial skills need to be improved through trainings provided by HEIs to create awareness and good mastery in the field of entrepreneurship among students.

Key words: *Entrepreneurship Education, Entrepreneurial Skills, Job Readiness Skills, Metacognition, TVET*

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions (HEIs) play a vital role in the continuous development of individuals' talents as a whole in order to produce entrepreneurs, particularly among students. In line with the effort, the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) has developed the Entrepreneurship Action Plan of Higher Education Institutes and the Integrated Entrepreneurship Education Guide for HEIs with the aim to produce more entrepreneurs among HEIs students and graduates. For it to be realised, various strategies and initiatives have been formulated including the decision to offer Entrepreneurship as one of the compulsory subjects that must be taken by students across all higher education programs. The objective is to equip students with an entrepreneurial foundation that can motivate

them to apply the concept of entrepreneurship within their programs at the respective HEIs. Apart from that, the Technical Education and Vocational Training (TVET) has also been introduced with the aim of producing highly skilled human capital in line with the needs of the industry. According to Romy Abd Kadir and Azhar Hashim [1], TVET has the capability to produce excellent entrepreneurs due to its ideal integration with entrepreneurship. This is because TVET and Entrepreneurship Education are closely related where the knowledge and skills instilled can provide students with added values, training them as highly skilled human capitals, and subsequently assisting them to become entrepreneurs by creating their own careers.

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Applying the concept of entrepreneurship in higher education programs will provide students with an opportunity for the proliferation of ideas about the field of entrepreneurship that they can venture into. Such concept can be applied throughout the duration of their study via programs like *siswapreneur* or encouraging them to run their own businesses by becoming sales persons or dropship agents. The learning process and entrepreneurial values shall widen their space and minds to be creative, competitive, and innovative. Furthermore, the introduction of the Entrepreneurship subject in HEIs will indirectly produce more entrepreneurs among students whilst studying or after graduation, as well as helping graduates to become job creators. Therefore, HEIs play an important role to attract students' interests and produce as many entrepreneurs to meet the aspirations of the National Entrepreneurship Policy (DKN30), that will then contribute to the development and socio-economic sustainability of the country. According to Sarimah Che Hassan et al. [2], entrepreneurship is an important field for a country because it is a catalyst for economic growth while providing employment opportunities to the locals. However, not all students and graduates possess the entrepreneurship skills or are interested in becoming an entrepreneur. Such factor thus leads to the issue of unemployment especially amidst the current global pandemic of Covid-19. This is evident by the gradual increase in the unemployment rate of graduates in Malaysia every year, with a total of 170,300 unemployed graduates were recorded in 2020.

According to Farhana Mohd Rosli [3], the problem of unemployment today can be rectified by increasing the interests of both students and graduates to venture into entrepreneurship as their career. Barba-Sánchez and Atienza-Sahuquillo [4] believe that the entrepreneurship education offered in HEIs has the capability to increase students' motivation and influence their intentions of entering into the field of entrepreneurship. However, Schafer et al. [5] stated that the decision made by students and graduates to venture into entrepreneurship is often driven by several factors including exposure to the field of entrepreneurship itself. Such exposure is important for students to personally see and feel the experience of being an entrepreneur before choosing the field as their career. This experiential learning is also supported by Badri and Hachicha [6] who stated that among the

factors that motivate graduates to venture into entrepreneurship are socio-cultural background, demographic characteristics, and knowledge about the field. Therefore, it can be concluded that the effort of introducing the Entrepreneurship subject at the HEIs level is essential and in line with the objective to produce and increase the number of entrepreneurs in Malaysia. However, a common problem to such effort is that not all graduates have the interest and willingness to venture into entrepreneurship despite enrolling into business and entrepreneurship-related subjects in HEIs [7]. This indicates that the entrepreneurship education applied in HEIs fails to impose significant impact in motivating students and graduates to venture into the field of entrepreneurship. Therefore, this study aims to look at the factors that drive the tendency of TVET students' involvement in the field of entrepreneurship.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneur Education

Many believe that entrepreneurship education should be nurtured at an early stage to create entrepreneurs who can contribute towards the economic development of a country. According to Tingey et al. [8], entrepreneurship education serves as an intervention that encourages youngsters to grow, with the aims of developing life skills, cultivating positive relationship with the schools, and reducing high-risk behaviours within the society. Students' attitudes towards the field of entrepreneurship are often influenced by the significant impact of entrepreneurship education [9] where those who find entrepreneurship education as interesting are likely to have high interest, and vice versa. According to Johansen and Schanke [10], among the objectives of entrepreneurship education include the planning of creativity, reflective and analytical thinking, increasing competency for the establishment and efficiency of business management, and instilling the knowledge about entrepreneurship development and innovation processes.

The Malaysian government has been encouraging its citizens, particularly university graduates, to become entrepreneurs rather than mere dependency on salaried jobs. Since July 2007, the MoHE has made it compulsory for all students in public HEIs to take the entrepreneurship subject as part of their programs. Steps in cultivating entrepreneurship among Malaysians have also been done by the Ministry of Education (MoE) at the secondary school level in order to cultivate a positive attitude among students towards

entrepreneurship, subsequently driving their interests and inclination of venturing into the field. Such effort is done naturally through an ongoing dynamic process [11]. In addition, Pihie and Bagheri [12] stated that early exposure to entrepreneurship education can provide valuable knowledge and increase one's skills and experience, thus reducing the percentage of failures in the field of entrepreneurship.

The Tendency of TVET Students' Involvement in Entrepreneurship

Tendency refers to the procedure of exposure to apply the characteristics that exist within students as well as students' involvement in the field of entrepreneurship [13]. It serves as an important construct that prepares students in venturing into the field of entrepreneurship. Exposure and exploration in the field of entrepreneurship also increase one's self-mastery in a particular area and improve their knowledge and skills to compete with other industry players. According to Kamus Dewan [14], tendency is defined as having a high desire to do something that benefits a person and the surrounding environment. Wan Nawang and Mamat [15] posit that students' high level of tendency of venturing into entrepreneurship as a career often resulted from their involvement and exposure to entrepreneurial activities at schools. In addition, students' tendency and positive inclination towards the field of entrepreneurship is also influenced by demographic factors such as family background and environment. This is supported by Staniewski and Awruk [16] who stated that the success of an entrepreneur is driven by self-strength that is based on various demographic, external, and internal factors. Therefore, these factors need to be considered as part of the prominent influences to the tendency of both students and graduates to venture into the field of entrepreneurship.

Job Readiness Skills

The majority of employers generally prefer employees with good job readiness skills. Makki et al. [17] said that job readiness skills can be described as having the expertise, knowledge, attitude, and commercial understanding to achieve the objectives of an organisation. These readiness skills are believed to be highly demanded by employers because individuals with excellent job readiness skills often have the capability to help organisations in achieving its success as well as reducing the costs to provide trainings. Furthermore, Fatima Sulamen [18] stated that graduates with excellent job readiness and quality skills are deemed ready to meet the required labour standards in the job market.

Most employers have agreed on several characteristics of job preparation skills that are deemed important and beneficial particularly for graduates to enter and remain competitive in the job market. Primarily, graduates need to be good at adapting to new work cultures, highly knowledgeable in their respective field of work, able to work in a team, rapid learning of new skills, excellent professional ethics, good at taking care of themselves, and constantly strive to meet the workplace standards [19]. In this regard, graduates who fail to acquire basic job readiness skills prior to entering the job market are likely to have limited opportunity to increase their marketability value. This is because employers often want to reduce the cost of training new employees as it will increase the operating costs of the company [20]. Therefore, students and graduates must be prepared to increase their readiness skills and value before entering the employment field to overcome the issue of graduates who fail to meet employers' requirements.

Metacognition

Metacognition is defined as a cognitive knowledge, process, or point of view developed as part of a general understanding that plays a role in all cognitive activities [21]. In this context, metacognition refers to graduates' awareness of what is known and unknown as well as their sensitivity about the importance of improving competencies by consolidating relevant knowledge and skills [22]. According to Brewer et al. [23] there are five components mainly associated with metacognition, namely the ability and thinking to solve challenges, distinguishing between tasks, the right way to learn, recognising challenges and obstacles using different strategies and approaches, and realising how to deal with challenges and learning from problems at the workplace.

The application of metacognition in entrepreneurship education can help to produce entrepreneurs who can plan well, monitor the progress of self-learning, and evaluate what is learned [24]. Alkan and Erdem [25] further asserted that the concept of metacognition encompasses individuals who understand their own learning and learning processes and are able to provide feedback to themselves. Such ability is essential as metacognition often occurs between cognition and emotion. It also plays an important role in the self-regulation required for the learning process and influences many factors such as knowledge acquisition, understanding, memory, and application.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study involves a descriptive quantitative design to investigate students' inclination towards the field of entrepreneurship. Research design serves as an important guide to ensure that a study achieves its intended objectives and answers the research questions. The present study obtained the respondents' views and information pertaining to students' tendency of venturing into the field of entrepreneurship. The data were collected using a questionnaire where all items in the questionnaire were measured using a five-point Likert scale. This data collection method involves the collection of data from a population to understand a current situation in relation to the population and one or more variables. The population of this study comprised students from the Faculty of Technical and Vocational, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris. Such population was determined following several constraints encountered due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, the sample of this study comprised a total of 121 semester 7 students from the respective faculty. The selection of this sample was done following several limitations faced by the researchers, namely time constraints and difficulties in collecting semester data as all students were undergoing their teaching practical. Finally, all data were analysed using descriptive statistical analysis via the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 20 in order to obtain the answers to the research objectives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained were analysed to answer the objectives of the study related to the tendency of students' involvement in the field of entrepreneurship. All items in the questionnaire were divided into three parts, namely the tendency of students' involvement, level of job readiness skills, and metacognition. The findings showed that the average mean for the tendency of students' involvement in the field of entrepreneurship was at the highest value of $M = 4.60$, job readiness skills (communication and efficiency) recorded a value of $M = 4.37$, while metacognition obtained a mean value of $M = 4.56$. Overall, the findings of this study indicate that the tendency of students' involvement in the field of entrepreneurship is at a high level. However, their level of job readiness skills, particularly pertaining to communication and efficiency, needs to be further improved to enhance their readiness and mastery. This is because the field of entrepreneurship requires one to

be prepared, always be ahead, and think outside the box in order to remain competitive in the market. Table 1 shows the analysis results of the study.

Table 1

Research Analysis

No	Research Variables	Mean Value
1	Metacognition	4.56
2	Job Readiness Skills	4.37
3	Tendency of involvement in entrepreneurship	4.60

The analysis conducted in this study has identified metacognition as a prominent factor that influences the tendency of students' involvement in the field of entrepreneurship. Metacognition is an important construct to improve the entrepreneurial knowledge among students and graduates. The majority of respondents agreed that having basic entrepreneurial knowledge can help students to master the fundamentals of business planning, which in turn can be expanded to the management of their own businesses. This is evident where individuals with higher metacognitive awareness often possess higher hopes of achieving greater success [26]. In addition, the findings of this study also suggest that the application of students' metacognition level in entrepreneurship education encourages them to be more inclined towards venturing into the field of entrepreneurship. This is due to the aspect of self-efficacy, especially in terms of assessment skills where it positively encourages individuals to be ready to attempt challenging tasks and embrace any failures [27]. As such, metacognition is believed to help students develop proper planning, evaluate the pros and cons before starting a business, maintain long-term self-motivation until the completion of assignments, plan strategies, and identify intellectual strengths or weaknesses in the field of entrepreneurship that they venture into.

Apart from metacognition, job readiness skills (communication and competence) should also be considered in shaping an entrepreneur. Particular emphasis should be invested on job readiness skills as it can assist a business to last longer, especially in the current rapidly changing era of globalisation where entrepreneurs are directly responsible for the failures and success of the businesses they are involved in [28]. Although there is no denial that job readiness skills are deemed necessary to improve students' readiness, there are still students who do not perceive the importance of improving communication skills seriously. Therefore, in addition to metacognition, job readiness skills are

regarded as a highly prominent construct that helps prepare students as well as graduates to enter the field of entrepreneurship. This is because having excellent job readiness skills can help them to be better prepared and equipped with exceptional skills in order to face the challenges as entrepreneurs

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights to relevant stakeholders involved in the process of planning the development of entrepreneurship education HEIs. The development and changes in entrepreneurship education are not only important but also should be aligned with the current changes happening around the world. This is because the entrepreneurs developed through entrepreneurship education must be prepared to face the current and rapid changes happening in the business world as well as having a strong mental strength and preparation to face various challenges. In addition to metacognition and job readiness skills, the tendency of students' involvement in the field of entrepreneurship is also influenced by several other external factors, including the availability of continuous encouragement for students to conduct entrepreneurial activities at their respective HEIs. This, along with the facilities provided, will train them to become more skilled and able to apply the theories that they have learned during the lecture sessions. The importance of providing such encouragement and support can be seen where the field of entrepreneurship will provide students and graduates with numerous advantages such as job creation and the opening of more job opportunities for graduates. Therefore, all parties and stakeholders need to play their respective roles and take appropriate measures in helping students to enhance their potential to venture into the field of entrepreneurship and further ensure entrepreneurship as a career of choice after graduation.

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