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## The Effectiveness of the Entrepreneurship Education Program in Upgrading Entrepreneurial Skills among Public University Students

Badariah Hj Din<sup>a,\*</sup>, Abdul Rahim Anuar<sup>b</sup>, Mariana Usman<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a, b, c</sup> College of Law, Government and International Studies, Universiti Utara Malaysia, 06010, Kedah

### Abstract

Entrepreneurship education programmes create high job satisfaction and enhance life status. Higher levels of entrepreneurship education achievement lead to higher earnings and reduce the level of unemployment. Of late, many universities around the world are in the process of strengthening their entrepreneurship education programmes in order to create more young entrepreneurs in the future. This kind of education programme is always being reviewed to ensure the structure of the programme will fit in with the challenges of the world outside. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education programmes on Malaysian university students. This study used the survey technique to evaluate the effectiveness of the entrepreneurship education programme in a Malaysian public university, specifically at Universiti Utara Malaysia. The result shows that the entrepreneurship programme which is offered by Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) is very effective in enhancing the entrepreneurial skills of the students. The findings suggest a strong relationship between the business plan, risk thinking and also self-efficacy and effectiveness of the programme, while a moderate relationship is observed in need for achievement and locus control. Thus, this study has suggested that the entrepreneurial skills and activities can be spurred through entrepreneurship education and training in a public university. The research findings will be highly significant to the Ministry of Education in terms of strengthening the entrepreneurship culture among the youth. Building the interest of our young generation is a challenge the government will face. Finally, the findings of this study will guide policy makers on how to take appropriate measures regarding current trends of entrepreneurship education programmes in public universities in Malaysia.

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\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +6-012-551-3451.  
E-mail address: [badariahdin@uum.edu.my](mailto:badariahdin@uum.edu.my)

## 1. Introduction

Youth is a valuable asset that can contribute to the economic development of Malaysia. At this period of time, most of the youth are currently in the process of completing their studies and preparing themselves for the job sector. As we understand, most of the vacancies in the public and private sectors require the candidates to have an appropriate level of education as one of the criteria to be fulfilled. Indeed, the level of education of this generation will determine the type of job that they are qualified to apply. According to Chen, Chang & Mahmood (2009), many universities and higher education institutions in Malaysia have started to introduce courses related to entrepreneurship or major in entrepreneurship, for instance, Multimedia University (MMU) has launched a program known as Bachelor of Multimedia (Media Innovation and Entrepreneurship) with Entrepreneurship as a core course. On the other hand, the Malaysian government through the Ministry of Higher Education implemented a policy to enhance the entrepreneurship education programs in higher learning institutions. The Entrepreneurship Development Policy was introduced in 2010 with several strategies. Nordin (2010) believes that the introduction of Entrepreneurship Development initiative for Malaysian higher learning institutions in 2010 will produce graduates with entrepreneurial mindset and increase the number of graduate entrepreneurs besides nurturing entrepreneurial academics and researchers. This policy is necessary due to the increasing interest of many countries to foster entrepreneurship culture through university education and trainings as it has been proven that entrepreneurial activities can be spurred through entrepreneurship education and trainings.

Hence, the Entrepreneurship Development Policy consists of six strategic levels which are first of all, to set up an entrepreneurship centre in every higher learning institution. This is for implementing, monitoring as well as evaluating the program and also activities that are related to entrepreneurship. The second level is to develop and formulate a new notion for knowledge and entrepreneurship programs in all the higher learning institutions. Third, to deeply entrench the development programs which are parallel to strengthening entrepreneurship for the purpose of producing more young entrepreneurs; the fourth level is the role of the institutions in formulating a new mechanism to evaluate the success of projects. The fifth level is to create a more conducive environment to encourage the development of entrepreneurship students.

According to the statistical data from the Ministry of Higher Education (2014), the total number of graduates who were still unable to secure an appropriate job in 2013 was 53,282. This is the most acute problem faced by our present graduates. Consequently, every university around the world is now strengthening their education programs in order to produce more young entrepreneurs who can create their own jobs. These programs have always been amended to make sure that the structure of the programs fits the challenging and demanding world outside.

Most graduates are aiming to get high salaries in the public or private sector after graduation. They never realize that there is a sector that would offer them higher income than working in private as well in public sectors. Most of the graduates assumed that entrepreneurship is not suitable for them due to their lack of knowledge on this field. As a result, our youths are focusing on hunting for the best positions in the public and private sectors that are very competitive rather than choosing to become entrepreneurs as a solution in generating income. Besides, there is a situation where these youth have to work hard for their fixed wages even though their salaries do not commensurate with the amount of work that they do. Indeed, becoming an entrepreneur is much better than becoming an employee. To produce successful entrepreneurs is not easy. It needs a lot of effort, determination and commitment to pick up the qualities of entrepreneurs. In fact, a lot of scholars believe that becoming an entrepreneur is a process and youth can be shaped to be one in this industry. The government also realized that entrepreneurship is a profiting skill that can help our youth generate not only their own personal income, but also the economic development of the nation. This study is only a guide and a contribution to entrepreneurship knowledge with the hope of strengthening entrepreneurship among the youth. To build the interest of our young generation is a challenge to the government.

The lack of knowledge and awareness on entrepreneurship among our youth is a big challenge nowadays. With the rate of unemployment in our country which is around 3.0% (430,000 unemployed) by the Malaysian Statistical Department as of March 2015, our youth seem to be in a dilemma and stuck in their own dimension whereby they will slowly be lost in this era. Have we ever imagined and thought of the long term effects on our youth? At least 1.5 million of our youth are at a high risk of getting involved in unemployment problem, social crimes, juvenile and a lot of unethical problems. To overcome these problems, our government through the Ministry of Higher Education has started to come up with a lot of activities for the students in higher learning institutions who have high potential to be entrepreneurs.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of Universiti Utara Malaysia's Entrepreneurship

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