



ENTREPRENEURIAL BEHAVIOR AMONGST STUDENTS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

The government has strategised initiatives to organize an education system that improve the training and skills quality wise, as well as enhancing the lifelong learning programs. In the field of education and training, interests and apprehensions on the entrepreneurship subject is the highlight of today's higher learning institutions. This study aims to measure the implementation of Basic Entrepreneurship Module (BEM), by using the Stufflebeam's CIPP Evaluation Model. The achievement level of entrepreneurial behaviors in terms of cognitive, non-cognitive, commercial skills and the early initiative is assessed as product evaluation. The strated sampling is used for a large scattered population in Malaysia. Data obtained from 105 students in the Business Accounting Certificate program from six community colleges. This study used questionnaires as research instrument. The questionnaires were then analyzed by using descriptive statistics method. Overall, the findings indicated that respondents agreed that the implementation of BEM has given impact to the product evaluation that consists the aspects of cognitive, non-cognitive, commercial skills and early initiative at the high levels.

Keywords: Perspectives, Entrepreneurial behavior, Assessment, Community colleges, Entrepreneurship module, Product evaluation.

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Contribution/ Originality

This study shows the existing entrepreneurship education especially in the higher education institutions. It is one of very few studies which have evaluated on the entrepreneurial skills amongst students of community colleges in Malaysia. This paper's primary contribution is the finding that the entrepreneurial behaviors are vital in cultivating the young entrepreneurs in the community colleges.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades, Malaysia has made significant investments in post-secondary and tertiary education. To date, Malaysia has established 405 public training institutions and 584 private skills training institutes (Malaysia, 2010). In 2011, higher education institutions have brought forth more than 147,642 graduates from the institutions (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2011). The government is committed to improving the quality of graduates' skills, thus higher education institutions have to broaden the employability of their graduates. In order to enhance the skills and capabilities of the workforce, the government is targeting 33% of the workforce in higher skilled jobs by 2015, and 50% by 2020. At present, only 28% of the total workforce in Malaysia to work in high-skilled jobs where only 23.4% of the labor force with tertiary education in Malaysia. The percentage of labor force with tertiary education is expected to increase to 26.7% in 2010 (Malaysia, 2010). The demand for knowledgeable and skilled workers have certainly evolved with the existence of many new jobs in the economic growth corridors

and regions. The increasing demand for knowledgeable and skilled human capital will be met through higher education and training institutions at all levels.

The National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHESP) for the period from 2008 to 2010 is implemented by Ministry of Education (MoE) is formulated to enhance human capital development by empowering the higher education (MHEM, 2008). The implementation of NHESP has outlined seven strategic cores. The Second Core of the plan is focused towards the improvement in the quality of teaching and learning, whereby has put universities on a great challenge to improve the quality of human capital those are knowledgeable, competent and able to meet the industry demands. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is mainstreamed and enhanced the quality of the graduates. It provides an alternative to enable individuals to realize their potential based on preferences and talents has been entrusted to the educational and training institutions.

The impactful opportunities and skills training programs will be able to meet the supply of highly skilled human capital. In addition, enhancement capacity of higher education institutions by reforming programs that have an element of education and entrepreneurial skills is vital. Intensifying the entrepreneurship education and training programs should be taken seriously with emphasis on knowledge-based training and instilled positive values and attitudes towards careers in entrepreneurship amongst the students. Thus, the challenge should begin with the development of the curriculum according to market needs and changes in the dynamics of teaching and learning methods. The culture of teaching and learning need to be changed and transformed in producing quality human capital whom have excellence in knowledge, skills, creativity and innovation. MoE also put a few key performance indicators (KPI), and one of them is intensifying education programs and entrepreneurship training in universities, polytechnics and community colleges.

Bridges (2008) also stressed that to meet the economic needs of the 21st century, a change in the education system towards the entrepreneurship or '*entrepreneurially-driven*' is really important. Hence, entrepreneurship is a major economic driver in the world that leads to create job as well as wealth (Zoheir *et al.*, 2013). Entrepreneurship education and training is increasingly featured as the important agenda in today's education, and has gained the priority place in higher education institutions and schools. Nevertheless, many researchers in the country think that education and entrepreneurship is still less favorable than in western countries (Nor and Hafinaz, 2005; Mohd *et al.*, 2007). Thus, Kourilsky and Walstad (1998) stated that entrepreneurship education and training programs will remain effectively and significant, the needs in teaching and learning approaches and understanding of the real world of work in entrepreneurship.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Norfadhilah and Norasmah (2012) agreed that if entrepreneurship education aims to create more entrepreneurs, the teaching and learning approaches should lead students to the experiential learning in a controlled environment. It is important to educate the students that entrepreneurs could come from various backgrounds and instill students with a rightful view of the tremendous opportunities available in entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial skills acquired by the students could be applied in all forms of employment or career. In fact, a person employed by a business entity can apply entrepreneurial thinking in the internal management of the business (Kourilsky and Walstad, 1998).

The Second Core of National Mission (2006-2020) is strategised to increase capacity and innovation and nurture first class mentality by encouraging technology entrepreneurs. In consistent with that, some universities have increase the efforts in producing knowledgeable and skilled people in entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship education curriculum was introduced to instill an element of innovation to stimulate entrepreneurship education and training programs at higher learning institutions either as a compulsory or an elective subject. (Armanurah *et al.*, 2006) stated that studies have been conducted to see the acceptance of students from various fields of

engineering and technology and found that they agreed to accept the subject of entrepreneurship as an elective subject or intergration to the programs.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Exposure to entrepreneurship education and training effective is evident from the participation of students in entrepreneurial programs they attend. For community college students in addition to education and skills training followed by specialized modules are compulsory for all students at the college, they are also given exposure to other courses run certain parties inside and outside the college. Unfortunately, the number of those who have never attended the course/program of study in entrepreneurship through community colleges is 66.3 % and only 33.7% had attended courses/programs in entrepreneurship at community colleges (MHEM, 2010).

This is a phenomenon that is quite surprising and should be taken seriously. Improvement actions to address this situation to create many more generations of young entrepreneurs who are knowledgeable and should be taken immediately. There is an issue that need to be discussed is the entrepreneurial aspirations of the graduates in this program may not nurtured with the received training at the community colleges. Community college is successful in sowing these characteristics of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial aspirations among graduates but less prominent in efforts to build confidence and provide knowledge of entrepreneurship among graduates. A Graduate Tracer Studies (GTS) have been conducted since 2003 for obtaining feedback on the education and assess the employability of community college graduates by the Department of Polytechnic and Community College Education (DPCCE), MHEM. In year 2010 showed 7,672 graduates have been successful in pursuing their careers in respective fields.

Community colleges students graduate in various fields of engineering and technical whom were self-employed in entrepreneurship is still less favorable. The tracer study in 2008 has shown that the graduates obtained employment was 1,797 (48.6%) while the number of those who do not work or unemployed was 1,432 (38.7%). However, 56.7% of those who do not work stated that they are still looking for a job during this tracer study. The 2010 Tracer Study also shown that the number of graduates who get involved in entrepreneurship by operating their own companies is the second highest number of 15.7% compare to those who working in the local private sector by 64.7%. Surprisingly, community colleges graduates whom engaged in entrepreneurship is still low, they stated a higher aspiration to become entrepreneurs which is 75.8% (MHEM, 2007). This indicates that community college students are the target groups that should be given emphasis on enhancing entrepreneurial skills training implemented in the higher institutions. Community college graduates indeed are the future entrepreneurs whom generate economic development of the nation.

4. METHODOLOGY

The population of this study is students from 10 community colleges in Malaysia. The number of population identified are 144 students who are pursuing Business Accounting Certificate program and undertaking BEM in their the final semester. A total of 105 samples were collected for this study. Survey method was used to conduct this evaluation study.

Questionnaires were distributed as the research instrument to get feedbacks in terms of perception of students in product evaluation. Data obtained were analysed using descriptive statistics method based on frequencies and percentages to describe the background of the respondents, whereas the size of central tendency (mean) and measure of variability (standard deviation) are used to measure the students' perceptions towards entrepreneurial behaviors.

5. RESULT

Data obtained shown that 60.9%(n=64) of respondents were female and 39.1%(n=41) of respondents were male. This study also shown that majority of 70.5%(n=74) has not been pursuing any training in entrepreneurship, whereas a total of 29.5%(n=31) respondents who has attended any training in related to entrepreneurship. The result covers the perceptions towards the evaluation of BEM in terms of product evaluation which is the cognitive, non-cognitive, commercial skills and early initiatives. The level of perceptions can be referred to the mean score interpretation adapted from [Norasmah et al. \(2006\)](#) as follows:

- i. Mean score of 1:00 to 2:00 is low;
- ii. Mean score of 2:01 to 3:00 is moderately low;
- iii. Mean score of 3:01 to 4:01 is moderately high; and
- iv. Mean score of 4:01 to 5:00 is high.

5.1. Product Evaluation

5.1.1. Students' Perspectives in Cognitive Entrepreneurial Behavior

In this study, the level of cognitive entrepreneurial behaviors is measured by 20 questions as a whole. Table I shows that the respondents agreed that the item "*I think that entrepreneurs should be capable of preparing a business plan*" at the highest mean score of 4.41 and standard deviation of 0.549. Whereby, item "*I can be a model to others*" has a lower mean score of 4.12 and standard deviation of 0.60.

Overall, findings show that the achievement of the students is at the high level with mean score of 4.29 and 0.58 of standard deviation on product evaluation in terms of the cognitive entrepreneurial behaviors. This indicates that students have the excellent cognitive entrepreneurial behaviors.

Table-1. Level of Cognitive Entrepreneurial Behavior

	Item	Mean	SD	Intp.
H2	I think that entrepreneurs should be capable of preparing a business plan.	4.41	0.55	H
H7	I can be a model to others.	4.12	0.60	H
	Overall Mean (20 items)	4.29	0.58	H

Source: [Rasmuna \(2014\)](#)

5.1.2. Students' Perspectives in Non-Cognitive Entrepreneurial Behavior

The non-cognitive behavioral elements were measured by 25 questions. Table II shows that item "*I think that to become a successful entrepreneur I have to use my weakness and strength*" is the highest mean score of 4.34 and standard deviation of 0.586. Whereas, respondents agreed that the item "*I only venture into a successful business in the future*" has a lower mean score than the former item at 4.00 of mean score and 0.75 of standard deviation.

The overall findings show that the students' achievement in the cognitive entrepreneurial behaviors is at the high level 4.16 of mean score and 0.67 of standard deviation. This study also indicates that students have an excellent non-cognitive entrepreneurial behaviors.

Table-2. Level of Non-Cognitive Entrepreneurial Behavior

	Item	Mean	SD	Intp.
I8	I always defend my opinion if someone else does not agree.	4.00	0.753	H
I25	I think that to become a successful entrepreneur I have to use my strengths and weaknesses.	4.34	0.586	H
	Overall Mean (25 items)	4.16	0.668	H

Source: [Rasmuna \(2014\)](#)

5.1.3. Students' Perspectives in Commercial Skills of Entrepreneurial Behavior

Based on the data analysed in Table III shows the mean score for all items entrepreneurial behavior in terms of commercial skills of students is between 4.05 to 4.35 of mean score. Respondents indicate the highest level of agreement with mean score of 4.35 and standard deviation of 0.55 for item, "*supervising staff under his/her supervision*". Meanwhile, the students agree at lower mean scores level than other items with mean score of 4.05 and standard deviation of 0.56 on the item, "*operate office equipment on its own (independent)*". This indicates that they strongly agree that to be an entrepreneur they must have excellent commercial skills especially in supervising staff under his supervision.

Students also agree to have confidence and skills in handling office equipment independently as the preparation of commercial skills amongst them. Overall, the results show that the items on the achievement of product evaluation in terms of commercial entrepreneurial skills shows the mean score at a high level with a mean score of 4.23 and standard deviation of 0.58. This shows that students have the excellent entrepreneurial behaviors in the aspect of commercial skills in which lead themselves to be successful in entrepreneurship.

Table-3. Level of Commercial Skills Entrepreneurial Behavior

	Item	Mean	SD	Intp.
J14	Supervise staff under his/her supervision.	4.35	0.554	H
J13	Handling office equipment with its own (independent).	4.05	0.562	H
	Overall Mean (14 items)	4.23	0.581	H

Source: Rasmuna (2014)

5.1.4. Students' Perspectives in Early Initiative Entrepreneurial Behavior

Table II shows the mean score for each item of the entrepreneurial behaviors in terms of the earlier initiative is between 3.79 to 4.34. Students states the highest mean score of 4.34 and standard deviation of 0.52 for item, "*I'm going to open a business of my interest.*" Whereas, students express moderately high of 3.79 mean score and standard deviation of 1.11 on the item, "*I open a business when I have my own financial resources*". This means that they have the initiative to set up a business based on their own interests in the future. However, the students confidence to start a business simply when they own a good financial resources.

Overall, the results show that the achievement of product evaluation in terms of the early entrepreneurial initiatives shows the mean scores on the high level of 4.14 and a standard deviation of 0.69. This concludes that students have the excellent entrepreneurial behaviors entrepreneurship in terms of early initiative.

Table-4. Level of Early Initiative Entrepreneurial Behavior

	Item	Mean	SD	Intp.
K11	I'm going to open a business of my interest.	4.34	0.516	H
K8	I would open a business when I have my own financial resources.	3.79	1.107	MH
	Overall Mean (12 items)	4.14	0.693	H

Source: Rasmuna (2014)

6. DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that the product evaluation of the entrepreneurial behaviors among community college students is high in terms of cognitive, non-cognitive, commercial skills and the early initiatives behavioral. Overall achievement of the entrepreneurial behaviors in the aspects of cognitive, non-cognitive, commercial skills and early initiatives is at the high level of mean scores between 4.14 and 4.29. In this study, the cognitive behavioral possessed by the students are related to the knowledge of the function of careers, goals formulation, planning and problems solving.

The findings of this study is in line with [Norasmah et al. \(2006\)](#) that also shows the level of the entrepreneurial behavior among students is high, especially in the aspect that related to the knowledge of the function of careers and planning, but moderately high level in the formulation of goals and problems solving. As [Norasmah \(2002\)](#) says that a person will have a deep knowledge about entrepreneurship if they get more exposure through education or training in these areas. Thus, students of community college have the high level of knowledge towards entrepreneurship after getting the exposure through the entrepreneurship module that is BEM.

This study are also consistent with [Norasmah et al. \(2011\)](#) which shows that cognitive entrepreneurship behavioral among the youth of Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia is also high. This study shows that students' agreement is high on starting a business so that their knowledges in business could give them capabilities in providing a business plan. All in all, before starting a business it is important to have the ability to prepare a good and an effective business plan.

If this study is also to look on the percentage of entrepreneurial behaviors' index, this findings will show that the students of community college do have a high percentage of the entrepreneurial behaviors'index. This study is in line with a study by [Norasmah et al. \(2006\)](#) which shows that students from the higher learning institutions (HLIs) also have a high level in the element related to the knowledge of the functions of careers. In addition, students from the training centre have a high index in the entrepreneurial behaviors than the HLIs'students. Therefore, students of higher education and training institutions such as community ollege also have a high percentage of the entrepreneurial behaviors'index in terms of cognitive entrepreneurial behaviors.

This study finds that non-cognitive entrepreneurship behavioral outcomes for students. The overall achievement in the entrepreneurship behaviors in terms of non-cognitive indicates a high level of the mean scores between 4.01 and 5.00 Non-cognitive behavioral aspects are consisted the control of external factors, internal control. self-tolerance of ambiguity, can be controlled by others and self-assessment.

Attitudes and characteristics include all the features necessary for entrepreneurship are such as far-sighted entrepreneurs, optimism, a desire to succeed, not satisfied with what is seen by others and did not hesitate for a point to be involved in, confident, freedom, self-reliant, creative and innovative. Non-cognitive behaviors are the characteristic of a special entrepreneurship which cannot be taught by others ([Norasmah and Halimah, 2007](#)).

The study shows that students believe that to become a successful entrepreneurs they need to use their weaknesses and strengths is at the highest mean score of 4.34 and 0.59 of standard deviation. [Mohd and Norasmah \(2010\)](#) also believe that those who knows the strengths and weaknesses before engaging in business could be the potential individual to succeed. This study is parallel to [Norasmah et al. \(2011\)](#) that also find that the non-cognitive entrepreneurial behavior among youth of Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia is high in the control of external factors, internal control, self-tolerance of ambiguity, can be controlled by others and self-assessment.

This study also find that the respondents highly agree that they believe in venturing into a successful business in the future with a men score of 4.01 and standard deviation of 0.753. This indicates that the student agree that to become entrepreneurs but not to become a successful entrepreneur, even though it is possible to achieve. Students felt that an entrepreneur should be adventurous and take risks to become a successful entrepreneur. According to [Carolyn \(2008\)](#) entrepreneurs who have a high level in internal locus of control will take action to change themselves and the environment around them to achieve a successful business venture through taking action on the opportunities that exist. Therefore, it is very important for the students to prepare and strengthen themselves with the knowledge and the necessary entrepreneurial skills.

All in all, the results show that each item on the achievement of product evaluation in terms of commercial entrepreneurial skills is at a high level. Students strongly agree that their commercial skills in supervising staff under their supervision after having the exposure towards BEM. This means that students have excellent commercial skills likewise in supervising their staff. The high level of commercial skills of the students proves that the implemented objectives of BEM are achieved whenever the students have the knowledge in administration,

financial management and marketing in order to be entrepreneurs. The importance of knowledge of the entrepreneurial skills in such as commercial skills would propel entrepreneurs taking action and facing change to be successful in business.

The results shows that the respondents agree that the elements of earlier initiative, "*I'm going to open a business of my interest*" is at the highest level. However, item "*I am going to open a business when I have the financial resources*" shows a lower level than the overall level. The results show that all items on the achievement of product evaluation in terms of early initiatives of entrepreneurial behaviors shows a high level of agreement. This shows that the students have the early initiatives of entrepreneurial behaviors through the BEM modules. Based on the theory Theory of Reasoned Action which is related to attitude and behavior, an entrepreneur will or will not act from intention to implementation. They will also have an in-house source of self-control and initiative, aims, business skills, beliefs, thoughts and practices (Scholl, 2002). These attributes regards as essential to high achievement in motivation. Thus, students who have demonstrated high achievement of entrepreneurial behaviors related to early initiatives will take actions with the right intentions, objectives, initiatives and skills will show a better performance in business.

From these findings it is proposed that exposure to entrepreneurship education and skills training should be given to all community college students based on the needs of today's economy. As Nor (2002) says that an entrepreneurship education is able to influence students to choose entrepreneurship as future careers. All these efforts will allow the existence of more young entrepreneurs (MHEM, 2009). In the end, it will contributes to nation of young entrepreneurs with strong entrepreneurial attitudes those would be more successful in business (Tamizharasi and Panchanatham, 2010).

7. CONCLUSION

The culture of teaching and learning in community colleges need to be changed and transform in the quality of human capital, excellent knowledge and skills that can generate socioeconomic improvement and community with a high income. The students of community colleges have to increase their confident so that they can become a successful entrepreneurs.

This study is also expected to be leveraged by the students at other institutions in enhancing entrepreneurial skills and knowledge acquired during the exposure through learning. Next, it will provide guidance to educators, particularly at community colleges in developing entrepreneurial behavior and thus can be applied to students during the teaching and learning process.

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