

Teaching Entrepreneurship at Universiti Kuala Lumpur-British Malaysian Institute: The Students' Perception and Mindset

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Abstract—This study was conducted with the aim to discover students' perception and mindset towards entrepreneurship field after taking entrepreneurship subject. Data were collected using both qualitative and quantitative research method. A set of questionnaire was distributed to 77 engineering students of UniKL British Malaysian Institute. Result shows that 60.5 percent students perceived entrepreneurship subject as important in providing them some skills needed for future. In term of image, 73.7 percent view entrepreneurs as a good profession. Even though most of the respondents express positive perception toward entrepreneurship, still they are not interested in the subject. Finding indicates that there should be changes in a teaching method; from traditional to a new effective and interesting approach as to enhance entrepreneurial spirit amongst students in the university.

Keywords—Entrepreneurial perception, entrepreneurial mindset, entrepreneurship subject

I. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is said as an agent for economy growth. There are several ways on how entrepreneurship helps to boost up an economy. With entrepreneurship, job can be created. Based on the study done by Ashvini (2011), hundreds of companies across the world are creating products that catch user fancy and are leading to increased demand which means businesses invest more in technology and thus look for people or train them for new skill sets. In the end it brings more jobs and more prosperity to the world. Another way how entrepreneurship helps the economy is by innovation and research and development. It was found that 2/3 of all inventions come from entrepreneurs (Fox, 2001). New inventions can improve the economy because they can provide better ways of doing tasks, and can also lead to new business that contributes to the economy. Entrepreneurship also helps the economy by creating wealth for many individuals seeking business opportunities. Both a new business and the wealth of the owner will help boost the economy by providing new products as well as the spending power created for the entrepreneur.

It is commonly accepted that educational system in universities is responsible to provide an academic environment as to produce more business founders. Thus, in today scenario, entrepreneurship and other business related subject such as Innovation Management and Technology Entrepreneurship is being thought to an engineering

students. There are more and more universities offering the said subject as to support the government effort to materialize its vision. However, the issue of the most effective approach in teaching entrepreneurship subject still being an endless discussion and debate particularly in the issue of how to encourage the development of qualities entrepreneurs (Collins and Robertson, 2003). A study done by Ming et al (2009) show that entrepreneurship education in Malaysia is not matching students' skill expectations with skill acquisition. The findings also indicate that the level of understanding on "what is entrepreneurship" is still low among the student. Another study done by Mohd Nizam et al. (2011) found that the awareness among students still need to be strengthen which the education and learning together with industrial support play an important role.

II. ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ENGINEERING

Entrepreneurship is commonly taught to business student in undergraduate level. However, in the recent years, most education institutes start offering this module to engineering student. Universiti Kuala Lumpur is no exception; with its vision "To be the premier entrepreneurial technical university"; it seem important to teach this module to their students. Therefore, entrepreneurship subject has been included in the program curricular and students are compulsory to take that subject. There are some reasons why engineering student should take entrepreneurship subject. One of the reasons is because real entrepreneur must have core competency in order to success. A core competency can be viewed as a complex harmonization of individual technologies and skills. Engineering student that take entrepreneurship subject will have the integration of strong technical capabilities (the engineering part, and not in itself necessarily core) with the ability to advance new business opportunities (the entrepreneurial part, and also not in itself necessarily core), and thereby displays the complex harmonization characteristic of a core competency (Polczynski and Jaskolski, 2005).

Another reason is because in Malaysia, there is a growing concern that technical students do not have sufficient entrepreneurial skills to venture in business particularly running small and medium enterprise (SME) set-ups. There are comments that these students have narrow business perspectives, less flexible to branch in other working areas and foresee themselves as only job seekers and not job creators. This spells the need for universities to introduce entrepreneurship subjects to non-business disciplines (Fauziah et. al, 2004). Goldberg (2006) as cited by Weaver and Rayess (2011) proposes that entrepreneurial should be

included in engineering programs. He said that strong technical skills are not enough and that engineers should have an ability to communicate effectively, sell ideas, manage time, and recognize and properly evaluate opportunities. In order to contribute and compete in today's entrepreneurial economy; an engineering graduate need not be an entrepreneur in the sense of starting one's own business. Possessing an entrepreneurial mindset is very beneficial whether one starts a business, excels in established corporations or joins a university or non-profit.

Moreover, rapid technological change and the emerging global marketplace provide challenges for both engineers and businessmen. Understanding how to recognize and evaluate market opportunities has become crucial in the new environment. A technological professional such as engineer; those with entrepreneurial skills has a better chance than a business administrator in moving innovations from research into manufacturing and the marketplace. That is the reason why engineering student should be equipped with entrepreneurial skills and knowledge, so that they have the ability to think entrepreneurially which later on they can play even more of a role in determining success.

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to investigate entrepreneurial perception and mindset of engineering students after taking entrepreneurial subject. Specifically, the objectives of the study were:

1. To identify students' perception on the importance of entrepreneurial subject in providing some of the skills needed as a preparation for the future.
2. To identify the most important teaching method that can improve students' entrepreneurial skills and knowledge.
3. To explore students perception on the image of entrepreneur in society

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Sample and Research Procedure

A total of 77 engineering student at diploma level who had taken an entrepreneurship subject were selected as the respondents for the study. The subject was compulsory for the student. The duration for learning this subject is 14 academic weeks. At the beginning of the semester students were given a syllabus and scheme of work of the subject in order to provide them preliminary understanding towards the subject. The syllabus provides information on the overall contents of the module while the scheme of work detailed out the learning plan, assessments and activities that will be undergone throughout the semester. The teaching approach and method implemented during the teaching-learning process were selected based on modification of traditional approach which views learning as a process of transferring knowledge from educator to learner with little participation from students.

B. Instrumentation

The questionnaire that was given to the samples consisted

of four parts. Part one is about identifying student perception toward entrepreneurship subject while part two is discovering student mindset on the importance of entrepreneurship subject. In part 3 students were asked about their judgment on entrepreneur image. Scales of 1 to 5 were used to measure their perception level where 1 indicates strongly disagree and 5 indicates strongly agree in part 1-3. In part 4, 1 indicates not important and 5 indicates highly important. An open ended question in part 4, gather students' opinion on the three most important methods that should be used in order to enhance students' entrepreneurial skills and knowledge in entrepreneurship subject. Students were also being asked on other methods that they felt important in teaching entrepreneurship subject. They were then requested to provide the importance of each method.

V. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Student perception on the entrepreneurship subject and its importance were measured. The findings show that 60.5% respondents perceived entrepreneurship as important subject and they agreed or strongly agreed that the subject could provide them certain skill. However, the analysis shows only 48.1% respondents intended to take the subject if it is not compulsory for them. It is probably due to teaching methods or the subject itself. The real reasons for this are not being identified. Perhaps it could be one of the areas for future research. In term of entrepreneur image, 73.7% students said that entrepreneurs are knowledgeable, skillful and passion because the profession is challenging by nature. Based on the research, students ranked entrepreneurial activity as the most important technique that can improve student entrepreneurial skills and knowledge; followed by lecture and tutorial. Therefore, 89.6% students suggested the university to revise the current teaching methods. The methods that should be practiced and the reasons of it are as follows:

A. Entrepreneurial activity

Student perceived an entrepreneurial activity as the best method to learn about entrepreneurship. They suggested the activity should be done in a longer time or more frequent instead of only one day activity as per current practice. They said entrepreneurial activity made student more understand about entrepreneurship, the risk and rewards of being an entrepreneur because the activity creates direct involvement of student in the entrepreneurial process, hence, gain a real experience and discover a taste of being an entrepreneur. Furthermore, by involving in this type of activity as stated by Miller (1987) cited by Mueller et al. (2006), students will gain many entrepreneurial characteristics, such as self-confidence, persistence and high energy levels, that are cannot easily be acquired in the classroom.

B. Lectures from expert

Lecture though it is labeled as "traditional method" or "passive method" as mentioned by Mwasalwiba (2010), in this university it is still considered important in providing students with basic entrepreneurship knowledge. However, students responded that the university should invites external experts such as business people and entrepreneurs

to take part in teaching as to provide them factual knowledge. In this sense, it will create students' interest on entrepreneurship because they will see that young entrepreneurs who come to give them a lecture are those who have in the past attended the same class. Students will think 'if he/she can do it, I can do it as well'

C. Visit SMEs

Learning process will be more effective by observing. Students, in their feedback said that visit to business location will enable them to have "live observation" on entrepreneurial activity. They will be exposed to the real business operation and get more business input through entrepreneur's experience. Students said this type of learning more interesting because student will gain knowledge about entrepreneurship direct from the entrepreneur. This approach will make them more understand on entrepreneurship field. Perhaps, the visit will build a connection and networking between business company/SMEs and university, whereby in future, those companies can provide business internship to the students.

VI. CONCLUSION

Students realize that entrepreneurship is one of the disciplines that is important to be learned. However, "conventional" or "traditional" method such as lectures, provision of selected readings, text books, tutorial and discussion in classroom are seem as no longer appropriate. Those methods might be able to enhance students' entrepreneurial skill and knowledge however it might not be able to attract students' interest in entrepreneurship which consequently the university fails to produce a real

entrepreneurs. Therefore, the university should consider teaching methods that are able to promote behaviors, develop competencies and value attributes of entrepreneurship. Student-centered learning should be practiced so that student entrepreneurial spirit can be improved, thus, many quality entrepreneurs can be produced by the university.

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