

The Influence of Personality Traits and Demographic Factors on Agro-Entrepreneurship Education among Graduates

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Abstract. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Basic Student Entrepreneurial Program (BSEP) among the local university graduates who has undergone the training program in agro-entrepreneurship development. One thousand and five (1005) respondents who have participated in BSEP were interviewed with a structural questionnaire to gather information on their attitudes toward the effectiveness of BSEP and intention to become an agro-entrepreneur. The results show that participants agreed on the effectiveness of BSEP in developing graduates intention to becoming an agro-entrepreneur. The logit model was used to estimate and determine the relationship between certain variables namely; presence of entrepreneurs in the individual's family (an entrepreneurial role model), gender, area of origin, educational background and state of origin (East Coast and West Coast) and the perception on effectiveness of BSEP. The results of Logit test of independence shows that the four (4) tested variables are significant at 0.1 significant levels. These variables are; presence of entrepreneurs in the individual's family (an entrepreneurial role model), educational background, state of origin (East Coast and West Coast).

Key words: BSEP, entrepreneur, graduates, intention, Logit

1. Introduction

The entrepreneurial education in Malaysia has started as early as lower secondary level through the subject of Integrated Living Skills (ILS) which started in 1991. The effort to culture entrepreneurship is continued to the upper secondary level where students are given opportunity to take an elective subject which relates to entrepreneurship. The goal of entrepreneurship in school level is to inculcate the culture of students as a job creator and not as a job seeker (Kent, 1990). By the same token (or just put similarly) these types of programs also have been introduced to the local universities. According to Zaidatol (2002), students who achieve high academic results have low entrepreneurial potential and attitude compared to students who achieve lower academic results. Cheng (2009) also pointed that entrepreneurial education in Malaysia failed to influence students to take up entrepreneurial challenges (Cheng et al, 2009). However conclusions cannot be made based on just a few courses which have been tested. There are still many entrepreneurial courses which have not been evaluated as yet.

The BSEP (Basic Student Entrepreneurial Program) started in 2003 where 19 local higher education institutions and 1 private higher education institution were involved. Until now, BSEP has expanded to 27 Polytechnics in order to benefit the technical skills in entrepreneurship. It is expected that nearly 20,000 students have undergone this program nationwide (INSKEN, 2010). This program is targeted for final year students in higher education institutes who are interested in undertaking business opportunities in the future before they graduate. Through this program, participants will be exposed to several modules such as business opportunities, marketing, entrepreneurial simulations and characteristics of successful entrepreneurs and also

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be motivated to join the business field. At the end of the program, participants will be given a certificate that makes them eligible to apply for the Graduate Entrepreneur Fund (INSKEN, 2010)

2. Review of Literatures

In the psychological literature on entrepreneurship, as well as in some theories by economists, entrepreneurs are often described as individuals with certain kinds of stable and enduring characteristics or features (Covin and Slevin, 1991). While others emphasize on personality traits such as self-confidence, risk taking, always looking for opportunities, innovative, long-term thinkers realistic outlooks and attracted to challenges (Brockhaus and Horwitz, 1986; Cromie, 2000). Entrepreneurship can be characterized as a step-wise process which is influenced by both exogenous as well as endogenous factors, such as the existence of a business friendly environment, availability of the required factor endowments, ability to acquire desired resources, and ability to implement and manage the business concept Morris et al. (2001). To a large extent, Morris's conceptual framework assumes that entrepreneurial talent is given. On the other hand, some authors argue that entrepreneurship can be taught or encouraged through entrepreneurship education (Drucker, 1985, Gorman et al., 1997). Studies conducted by Abu Bakar (2003) shows that among success factors for Malaysian entrepreneurs in franchising dominant are related to full support and training from government, continuous communication and excellent franchise image (Abu Bakar et al., 2003). Cheng (2009) on the other hand take the view that the entrepreneurship education in Malaysia is not matching students' skill expectations with skill acquisition. Their findings also indicate that the level of understanding on "what is entrepreneurship" is still low among the trainers from entrepreneurship course (Cheng et al., 2009). Therefore this study attempts to investigate the influence level of BSEP towards socio-demographic factors and to evaluate the effectiveness of Basic Student Entrepreneurial Program (BSEP) among the local university graduates who has undergone the training program in entrepreneurship development.

3. Data and Empirical Method

Survey was conducted in order to gather information on the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education in BSEP among the participants of higher educational institutions in Peninsular Malaysia. Structured questionnaire was designed to capture participants' perception and opinion on BSEP in order to realize government aspiration to be competitive in the world market. A likert scale of 1 to 7 (1 representing strongly disagree and 7 strongly agree) was used to measure the participants' perception on 73 statements formulated in relation to entrepreneurship, agro-entrepreneurship and BSEP. The respondents were students who have attended BSEP modules or courses. These courses are offered by higher educational institutions from all over Peninsular Malaysia such as: University Putra Malaysia (UPM), Malayan University (UM) and University Technology Malaysia (UTM). The collected data was analyzed using descriptive analysis and Logit model. Descriptive analysis was applied to describe the respondents' profile and their perceptions towards entrepreneurship education. Subsequently, Logit analysis was employed to determine the extent of which respondents' socio-demographic and altitudinal characteristic on the BSEP predict the effectiveness of the course itself.

4. Empirical Findings and Conclusion

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

The percentage of respondents from the Northern region was 25.0% %, East coast, 34.2 %, Southern region, 22.1 % and Central region, 18.6%. In terms of age distribution, the majority of the respondents 66.80% were between 21 and 25 years old, 26.2 % of them were between 26 and 30 years old, 5.4% of the respondents were below 21 years old while another 1.5% was above than 30 years old. The age distribution indicated that majority of the respondents are in the range of graduation age which is 22 to 24 years old. Out of 1006 respondents, 38.6% of the respondents had family members who are involved in business while 61.4% of the respondents didn't have family members who are involved in business. In terms of education background, 62.1% of the respondents had technical education background while only 37.0% of the

respondents had social science background. Approximately fifty eight percent (58.4%) of the respondents are from the urban area whereas 41.6% respondents are from rural area.

4.2 The Perception of BSEP among Participants

With regard to the respondents perception towards entrepreneurship education namely BSEP, it is apparent that the effect of entrepreneurship education to be more closely aligned with an entrepreneurial characteristics. Table 1 shows the results of respondents' perception towards BSEP course. As can be seen from Table 1, the highest mean score is 6.07 and it shows that the participants are well-aware of the benefits of BSEP course in developing entrepreneurs' as well as agro-entrepreneurs.

Table 1: Perception of participants towards BSEP course

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly disagree	Mean
BSEP develops my interest towards agro-entrepreneurship	0.8		1.7	4.7	18.1	43.1	33.33	6.03
BSEP will provide me with the proper business practices needed		0.5	1.5	10.3	24.6	43.1	20.0	5.68
BSEP is important for the government in order to increase the number agro-entrepreneurs	0.1	0.5	0.9	10.7	16.0	38.3	33.4	5.98
BSEP has successfully changed my mindset of depending on jobs offered by government and private sectors towards being an agro-entrepreneur	0.1	0.6	2.0	14.0	24.7	37.9	20.7	5.59
BSEP has potential to reduce the unemployment rate among graduates		0.3	1.2	11.8	20.4	37.4	28.9	5.88
BSEP motivates me to become an agro-entrepreneur	0.1		1.1	9.4	20.8	40.7	28.0	5.85

The results presented in Table 2 shows that perception towards that BSEP will be able to develop interest in agro-entrepreneurship is high among the participants (mean=6.03). Overall more than 97% of the respondents have positive view on BSEP course indicating that BSEP is a successful program in enhancing interest among young graduates to become agro-entrepreneurs. A small number of respondents perceive that BSEP is unable to change their perception towards being an agro-entrepreneur after graduating and will depend on job offered by government and private sectors. Besides, 0.5% participants perceive that BSEP is unable to provide them with the proper business practices needed. This shows that not all participants have a positive perception towards BSEP.

4.3 Logit Test of Independence

The results of Logit test of independence show that among six independent variables tested, four variables are significant at 99.0% level. The dependent variable represents the influence level of BSEP course while the independent variables are; presence of entrepreneurs in the individual's family (an entrepreneurial role model), gender, area of origin, educational background and state of origin (East Coast and West Coast). The results as been seen in Table 2 indicate that those participants from North region are

1.725 times more likely to be influenced by the BSEP course compared to other participants. On the other hand, participants from the East Coast are 1.587 times more likely to be influenced by the BSEP course compared to other participants. It is postulate that people from the North Coast and East Coast are well known for their entrepreneurial characteristics among the Malaysian especially those from the state of Kelantan. According to Mohamed (2011), individuals from the East Coast and West Coast are more motivated or have more intention of becoming an agro-entrepreneur. Participants who have family members involved in business are 1.51 times more likely to be influenced by the BSEP course compared to other participants. Besides that, participants who come from technical background are 2.037 more likely to be influenced by BSEP compared to those from the social science background.

Table 2: Estimated Logit Regression Model of BSEP That Influences Motivation among Participants' to be Involved in Agro-entrepreneurship

Variable	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Gender [Female=0, Male=1]	-.295	.248	1.425	1	.233	.744
Area [Rural=0, Urban=1]	.201	.238	.711	1	.399	1.222
Availability of Family Members in Entrepreneurship [No=0, Yes=1]	.674	.233	8.334	1	.004*	1.510
Origin From North Coast [No=0, Yes=1]	.545	.313	3.037	1	.081*	1.725
Origin From East Coast [No=0, Yes=1]	.462	.270	2.918	1	.088*	1.587
Educational Background [Social Science=0, Technical=1]	.711	.246	8.339	1	.004*	2.037
Constant	-3.923	1.088	13.011	1	.000	.020

* significant at level 0.1

4.4 Conclusion

The study provides an important exploratory analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of BSEP course among the local university graduates who has undergone the training program in entrepreneurship development. The results show that there is positive perception on the BSEP in enhancing the entrepreneurial intention among young graduates. Besides, participants perceived that BSEP is able to; develop their interests in entrepreneurship, provide participants with proper business practices, help government to increase agro-entrepreneurs and reduce unemployment. Although a small number of participants disagreed with positive effect of the BSEP course, the careful consideration on curriculum in design involving with diversity, creativity, quality and equality will lead young graduates to develop their entrepreneurial skills and traits. More Innovative strategies need to be developed to encourage university students to attend the BSEP course in order to develop the interest to become entrepreneur.

5. Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE), Malaysia for granting Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) to undertake the study for the period of 2 years (November 2010 – present).

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