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STATE OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA: A COMPARISON OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN MALAYSIA TO INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

This study provides a comprehensive exploration of entrepreneurship education in Malaysia, focusing on institutional and government initiatives to stimulate innovation, economic growth, and job creation. Despite compulsory entrepreneurship subjects in public universities, a significant rise in graduate entrepreneurs remains elusive. The study assesses the state of entrepreneurship programs in Malaysian institutions and benchmarks them against Babson College in the United States. Content analysis and interviews with 12 successful entrepreneurs scrutinize program outcomes and course offerings at Universiti Utara Malaysia and Universiti Malaysia Kelantan, comparing them with Babson College. Secondary data, obtained through desktop reviews, illuminate Malaysia's entrepreneurship education courses, assessed through university websites. Literature searches across databases and primary qualitative data offer in-depth insights, employing a mixed-methods approach to comprehensively address the research problem. Triangulation enhances data credibility, while qualitative and quantitative data from experienced entrepreneurs provide practical implications. Findings underscore the need for foundational entrepreneurship education, practical skills, and diverse courses. They emphasize a shift from a grade-centered to an experiential learning-focused approach, echoing calls for educational reform.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship education, career choice, public university, comparative study, mixed-methods research.

INTRODUCTION

An agenda to empower entrepreneurship among students and a paradigm shift towards making entrepreneurship a career of choice needs to be established (Masri et al., 2022). Entrepreneurship, as a career alternative, holds immense potential for driving economic growth and addressing society's most pressing challenges (Looi & Maritz, 2021). Its significance in fueling innovation and job creation is widely acknowledged (Kowang et al., 2021). Traditionally, entrepreneurship education has been described as providing skills for starting new businesses, but its scope has expanded to encompass the preparation of graduates to tackle complex societal issues (Rani et al., 2019; Ratten & Usmanij, 2021).

Despite its growing importance, several challenges hinder the realization of entrepreneurship's full potential. This study seeks to explore the various challenges and opportunities in fostering a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem through education. A significant challenge lies in cultivating the entrepreneurial mindset among individuals, as many lack the ability to identify opportunities, take risks, and innovate. Conventional education systems often prioritize conformity over independent thinking and risk-taking, hindering the development of entrepreneurial spirits (Jena, 2020; Rahim et al., 2015). Furthermore, the inadequate development of entrepreneurial skills is another obstacle, as aspiring entrepreneurs may lack practical knowledge in areas such as business planning, financial management, marketing, and leadership.

With an estimated failure rate surpassing 70%, Malaysian entrepreneurs face a higher likelihood of failure compared to their counterparts in other countries (Roslan et al., 2020). Emphasizing the significance of failure in the entrepreneurial journey becomes crucial, considering that numerous successful businesses encountered multiple failures before achieving success. Encouraging individuals to pursue entrepreneurial ventures despite alternative employment options requires a coordinated and collaborative approach. Governments committed to a free market economy recognize the importance of nurturing entrepreneurship and frequently turn to entrepreneurship education as a strategy (Jena, 2020; Rahim et al., 2015). However, the effectiveness of these efforts depends on the harmonious collaboration of educational institutions, government entities, industry stakeholders, and the entrepreneurial community, which is sometimes lacking and hinders the creation of a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem.

This paper also explores the role of university education in entrepreneurial success, drawing from survey results indicating that 70 percent of company founders in the United States attribute their achievements to their university education (Wadhwa et al., 2009). Numerous studies emphasize the significance of entrepreneurship education in nurturing successful entrepreneurs (Gelard & Salleh, 2011; Ooi & Ahmad, 2013; Mazdan Ali & Muhammad Jazlan, 2014; Wongnaa & Seyram, 2014). However, researchers like Ertuna and Gurel (2011) challenge the traditional perception of university education as a guaranteed pathway to employment, highlighting the growing demand-supply mismatch and the need for enhanced job preparedness.

The Malaysian government's efforts to promote entrepreneurship among university graduates are examined, shedding light on its commitment to investing in entrepreneurship through training programs and initiatives (Roslan et al., 2020). Graduates who have received entrepreneurial education (both official and informal) have a high potential of becoming entrepreneurs (Mohamad et al., 2015).

Nonetheless, despite increased emphasis on entrepreneurial development, the number of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial intentions in Malaysia remains insufficient, raising questions about the effectiveness of current strategies.

By critically reviewing the existing literature, this paper aims to provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities surrounding entrepreneurship education and the role of university education in fostering successful entrepreneurs. Emphasizing the need for a collaborative and well-coordinated ecosystem, this study advocates for evidence-based strategies that maximize the potential of entrepreneurship as a catalyst for economic growth and societal transformation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurship Education in Malaysia

Entrepreneurship education has conventionally been described as education that requires the necessary skills and talents to set up new businesses, with a focus on unveiling these skills and discussing the optimal modes of delivery (Rani et al., 2019; Jena, 2020). Nowadays, entrepreneurship is not just about setting up new businesses and acquiring skills; it is also essential preparation for graduates to tackle society's most pressing problems. While not every graduate has the desire to solve global crises, some see it as an inseparable aspect of their personality, and others might develop this passion if provided with the necessary resources through university education. According to Lv et al. (2021), the education system often prioritizes standardized curriculum and rote learning, leaving little room for fostering creativity and innovation. This limits the ability of aspiring entrepreneurs to develop disruptive ideas and bring about significant changes in their industries. Examining the present setup of entrepreneurship programs in Malaysian universities and comparing it with top entrepreneurship universities in the United States will shed light on how graduates view entrepreneurship education, opportunities, and the role of universities as perceived by successful local entrepreneurs compared to their international counterparts.

The key problem is to examine entrepreneurship education and the country's capacity to foster the growth of entrepreneurs and the choice of entrepreneurship as a career among graduates. Entrepreneurship programs or education have been introduced to help students develop an entrepreneurial mindset, self-efficacy, and skills and to combat joblessness among graduates (Barnes & Scheepers, 2018; Kim-Soon et al., 2018; Beyhan & Bindik, 2017; Othman & Othman, 2017; Din et al., 2016; Guerrero et al., 2016). To achieve this, close collaboration between universities, industry, entrepreneurs, and graduates is needed, but in Malaysia, this collaboration is at a low level. The lack of learning resources can lead to ineffective entrepreneurship programs when led by traditional educational institutions. This includes ineffective curriculum, inappropriate lesson strategies and contents, and limited reference materials (Abbas, 2013). Additionally, while entrepreneurship is taught in the classroom, students often fail to run business practices within the university (Idris, 2017; Othman & Othman, 2017). What happens to student and curriculum development? Are they pro-entrepreneurship? Therefore, the present setup of entrepreneurship programs needs to be examined to identify gaps that contribute to the state of the nation's entrepreneurship program and whether it needs refinement for future improvement.

Simultaneously, engaging in activities to keep abreast of new skills and social networking is fundamental for young graduates (Guerrero, 2018; Hunter & Lean, 2018; Beyhan & Bindik, 2017;

Guerrero et al., 2016; Matlay, 2005) as they are among the most adept collectives in entrepreneurship. However, the readiness and quality of graduates produced in Malaysia do not gear them up to be entrepreneurs at the international level. There is a substantial disparity between the number of graduates aspiring to establish their own businesses and the actual number of those who eventually embark on entrepreneurial ventures (Al-Shammari, 2018; Othman & Othman, 2017). There is a great deal of interest in business start-ups, but this needs to be cultivated and assisted to reach fruition. One way to address this problem is to support and encourage more graduates to become entrepreneurs by ensuring they develop transferable skills and gain practical experience in entrepreneurial activities for global competition. How can we cultivate a greater number of graduates who will prioritize entrepreneurship as their preferred or first career choice in the future?

Entrepreneurship Education

The world is changing, and teaching, learning, and training in universities on entrepreneurship are commonly seen as drivers of growth in the knowledge-driven economy (Mei et al., 2020). Universities are evolving beyond their traditional roles of research and teaching to become essential institutions in increasingly knowledge-based societies, fulfilling the mission of preparing generations for better economic futures and fostering entrepreneurial mindsets (Al-Shammari, 2018; Barnes & Scheepers, 2018; Hunter & Lean, 2018; Beyhan & Bindik, 2018; Othman & Othman, 2017; Reyad et al., 2019; Din et al., 2016; Mahmood et al., 2020; Kowang et al., 2021). Given the current context, possessing fundamental entrepreneurial skills has become increasingly vital for job creation and wealth generation. The correlation between entrepreneurship and economic growth underscores the substantial role it plays in driving overall economic development. At this stage, the importance of entrepreneurship has grown, making it a priority for developing nations like Malaysia (Song et al., 2021).

The Malaysian government has made tremendous efforts to prepare all the necessary requirements for fostering the growth of entrepreneurship (Mahmood et al., 2020; Song et al., 2021). Entrepreneurship Education (EE) has grown in Malaysia over the last decade, empowering the country to aim for a high-income developed status (Din et al., 2020). Education in Malaysia plays a pivotal role in driving economic growth and facilitating job creation within the nation (Soon et al., 2018; Othman & Othman, 2017; Din et al., 2016; Kowang et al., 2021; Song et al., 2021). Karimi et al. (2015) stressed that entrepreneurship education influences students' thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors, motivating them to excel as entrepreneurs and consider entrepreneurship as their profession.

A study conducted by Nagarathanam and Buang (2016) found that education contributes to the development of entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions among students. Another study by Mahmood et al. (2020) discovered that the university's entrepreneurship curriculum has helped students run their businesses more efficiently because of the information and skills they have gained. Based on the results of this study, it can be inferred that a significant portion of Universiti Kuala Lumpur TEKNOPUTRA Alumni agree that the university's entrepreneurship education has contributed to their desire to foster entrepreneurship and simultaneously aided them in achieving sales, effectively managing employees, and enhancing business performance (Rani et al., 2019). The study conducted by Mei et al. (2020) revealed a positive correlation between the extent of entrepreneurship education received by students and the strength of their entrepreneurial intentions.

Prior research consistently shows a substantial link between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intentions. Research undertaken in various regions, including Spain (Barba-Sánchez & Atienza-Sahuquillo, 2018), Italy (Israr & Saleem, 2018), the United States, Turkey (Ozaralli & Rivenburgh, 2016), and Malaysia (Wahid et al., 2017; Jalil et al., 2021), has consistently indicated a strong association between entrepreneurship education and entrepreneurial intentions.

Entrepreneurship Career Choice

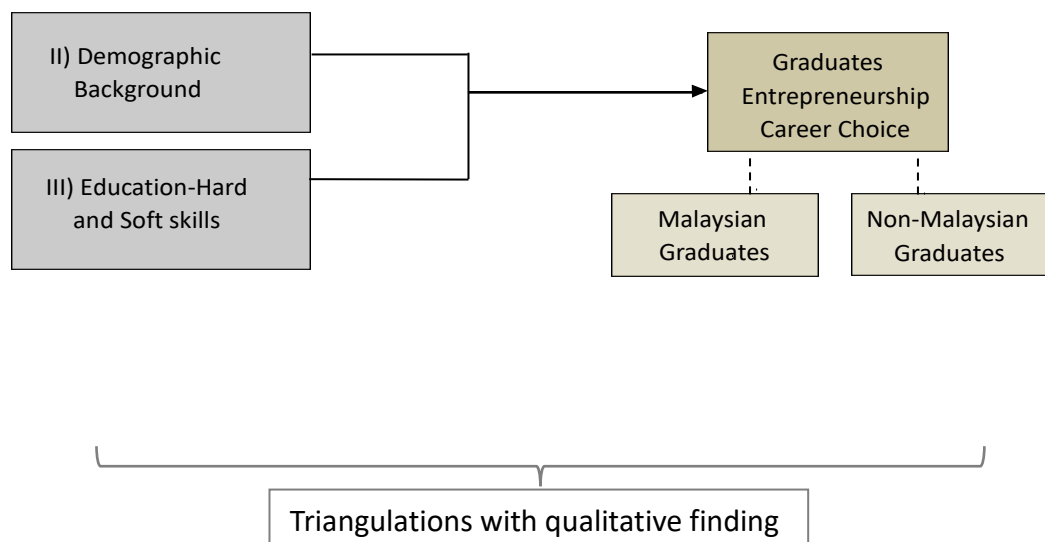
The study addresses research gaps through a comprehensive literature review by investigating two constructs related to graduates' career choices in Malaysia. The framework for understanding entrepreneurial behavior developed for this study draws inspiration from several previous works (Pfeifer et al., 2016; Mazdan, 2015; Mazdan & Muhammad Jazlan, 2014; Noorkartina et al., 2014; Marques et al., 2012). The study utilizes the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) framework to examine the factors influencing the choice of entrepreneurship as a career. This framework facilitates an understanding of how attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control converge to shape both intention and behavior in entrepreneurship.

In the current study, the TPB serves as a guiding structure, providing a comprehensive lens through which the interplay of these key elements—attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control—can be analyzed. This theoretical foundation enhances the study's capacity to delve into the intricacies of individuals' intentions and behaviors regarding entrepreneurship as a career choice.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the TPB, developed by Ajzen in 1991, has proven instrumental in various fields by offering a robust framework for understanding and predicting human behavior. Its applicability to the entrepreneurship context underscores its versatility as a theoretical foundation for exploring complex decision-making processes.

Figure 1.1

Proposed Theoretical Framework



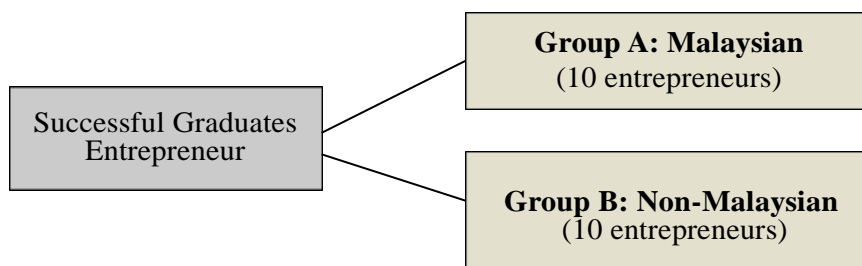
DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The selection of UUM alongside UMK was intentional, aiming to capture a holistic view of entrepreneurship education in diverse university settings. UUM, being a conventional university, and UMK, which has been endorsed as an entrepreneurship university, offer distinct perspectives on the incorporation of entrepreneurship into higher education. This deliberate choice allows for a comprehensive exploration of entrepreneurship education, considering the contrasting approaches of a traditional academic institution like UUM and an institution explicitly emphasizing entrepreneurship like UMK. By including both types of universities, the study seeks to uncover potential variations in curriculum content, teaching methodologies, and the overall emphasis on entrepreneurship. Additionally, this selection provides insights into how universities with different orientations approach the integration of entrepreneurship into their academic frameworks. It acknowledges UMK's endorsement as an entrepreneurship-focused institution and juxtaposes it with the conventional model represented by UUM, contributing depth and nuance to the analysis of entrepreneurship education in Malaysia.

This stocktaking process was conducted by examining the respective universities' websites, and the curriculum content was analyzed for meaningful comparisons. To ensure thoroughness, an extensive literature survey encompassed electronic databases, including Scopus, JSTOR, Science Direct, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, and Google Scholar, targeting relevant articles from economics, management, and entrepreneurship journals. This qualitative data was further complemented by primary data collected through in-depth interviews, allowing for a deeper exploration of individuals' real-life experiences. Creswell (2014) underscores the value of mixed methods for comprehensively understanding research problems, providing a rich and powerful explanation of the data. This approach allowed for triangulation, enhancing the depth and clarity of the findings. Significantly, the inclusion of qualitative data not only complemented the primary data collection process but also enriched the quantitative data gathered both prior to and after the research intervention. The selection of suitable respondents was carried out purposively, focusing on successful entrepreneurs with over five years of experience in entrepreneurship, thereby ensuring a focused and relevant participant group for this study.

Figure 1.2

Qualitative Respondent



ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Using content analysis, this investigation delves into the current state of entrepreneurship programs within selected Malaysian public universities, drawing comparisons with a world-renowned entrepreneurship institution. The latter's selection is guided by its ranking in The Princeton Review's Top Schools for Entrepreneurship Studies for 2019, facilitating a comprehensive evaluation of program outcomes, curriculum structures, and university course ecosystems. The aim is to discern the efficacy of these programs in empowering students for future entrepreneurial endeavors while also identifying avenues for potential enhancement within our own institution. Supported by diverse entrepreneurship education stages, these findings bolster quantitative survey results and converge with qualitative analytical outcomes to ensure triangulation.

Key aspects explored encompass perspectives on entrepreneurship education, the role of universities, and the university ecosystem, with interview-derived content enriching the insights. Based on The Princeton Review's ranking, the university chosen for comparison is juxtaposed against two local counterparts: Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), functioning as a conventional university, and Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK), operating as a recognized entrepreneurship-focused institution. This comparative analysis seeks to elucidate disparities in program outcomes, curriculum designs, and university course offerings while considering ways in which our own university can enhance its contributions to nurturing future entrepreneurs.

Table 1.1

Programme Learning Outcome of UUM, UMK and Babson College

UUM	UMK	Babson College
Bachelor in Entrepreneurship	Bachelor in Entrepreneurship	Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Minor
1. To acquire knowledge of the principles, concepts, theories and practices in entrepreneurship.	1. Knowledge and Comprehension	1. Developing Insight – Gaining proficiency in observing and performing field research (which can encompass quantitative or qualitative methods) about specific issues or challenges. This process involves cultivating fresh perspectives, generating unique insight and restructuring problems to facilitate innovative solutions.
2. To apply knowledge of entrepreneurship in business to demonstrate basic practical skills in business planning, development and management.	2. Cognitive Skills	2. Creativity & Innovation – Comprehending essential factors and circumstances that can enhance or impede both individual or group creative processes that boost or hinder creativity, learning framework for ideation, experimentation

		and involving others in the process.
3. To demonstrate networking and responsibility with stakeholders.	3.	3. Understanding Social Challenges – Understanding the systematic aspect of social and global issues, cultivating a comprehensive stakeholder perspective on how various entities contribute to and mitigate business or social challenges, pinpointing underlying causes rather than surface level solutions to systematic problems.
4. To demonstrate a good attitude, values, ethical awareness, social responsibility and professionalism in dealing with stakeholders.	4.	4. Leadership & Risk Taking - Acquire skills in taking creative risks and leading collaborative ideation, mastering the art of inspiring action in others, developing proficiency in managing the risks linked to introducing innovative concepts.
5. To demonstrate teamwork, leadership and communication skills within the business environment.	5. Communication Skills	5. Creating Impact – Acquiring the tools to transform an idea into a viable and communicable concept that garners support (financial and otherwise) from stakeholders like investors, suppliers, customers, regulators donors and advocates.
6. 6. To apply creative, scientific, strategic and critical thinking skills in solving problems.	6. Critical Thinking	
7. To engage in lifelong learning and information management skills as efforts to increase knowledge and professionalism in business management.	7. Management Skills	
8. To demonstrate managerial and entrepreneurial skills in dealing with stakeholders.	8. Entrepreneurial skills	

Table 1.1 above illustrates the program learning outcomes of UUM, UMK, and Babson College. UUM and UMK exhibit similarities, with their outcomes generally focusing on describing graduate attributes, in contrast to the more specific and targeted approach of Babson College. The primary aim of UUM and UMK is to cultivate graduates with entrepreneurial qualities, encompassing creativity, abilities, knowledge, skills, initiatives, and personal attributes, enabling them to seize job market opportunities, enhance career mobility, and embark on entrepreneurial ventures. However, Babson College's distinguished reputation in entrepreneurship stems from its founding principles. This emphasis on practical application is embedded in their entrepreneurship curriculum and programs, prioritizing experiential learning. While entrepreneurship education at UUM and UMK is making strides, persistent challenges remain. The essence of entrepreneurial skills is best imbibed through experiential learning, fostering entrepreneurial ecosystems, and nurturing cultures of innovation. In contrast, Babson College has integrated entrepreneurship as a distinct academic discipline for nearly five decades, reflecting its core ethos.

Their foundational experiences stimulate innovative thinking, prompting participants to devise practical solutions and gain hands-on experience, building an actual business in the inaugural year. This immersive approach cultivates not only start-up experience but also effective communication, leadership, teamwork, obstacle management, and project completion skills. It cultivates communication and leadership through personalized coaching sessions, a hallmark of their precise learning outcomes. Additionally, the inclusion of arts, humanities, and history in exploring themes like justice and inequality from diverse perspectives underscores how interpretations can be influenced by context, values, and attitudes. The depth, content, experience, and value of this foundation significantly contribute to producing the caliber of graduates the program seeks to create.

The study delves into the perspectives of successful local and international entrepreneurs on the role of universities in entrepreneurship education and ecosystems. Nas emphasizes that universities should go beyond theoretical education, advocating for experiential and boundary-pushing learning. In contrast, Mike and Rani see universities as incubators for entrepreneurial talent, providing a secure platform for budding entrepreneurs. Alex questions the necessity of university for entrepreneurship, emphasizing skill development and networking opportunities. The international entrepreneur, Dissa, shares a unique perspective, highlighting the culturally diverse university experience that hones people management and international collaboration skills.

The discourse also explores the balance between practical and theoretical approaches, echoing the tension between Babson College's hands-on ethos and Malaysia's theoretical paradigm. Alex and Dissa concur, viewing the university as a platform to equip students with transformative skills, even if entrepreneurship education does not necessitate university attendance. The viewpoints converge on the need for universities to reassess their role in nurturing entrepreneurship, bridging the gap between theory and practice. The complex and iterative nature of entrepreneurship education necessitates a flexible and evolving roadmap tailored to individual journeys within a supportive university ecosystem.

Pat, a successful entrepreneur from the Philippines, emphasizes the role of the university in fostering a start-up culture but underscores that it may not teach the specifics of building a business. He highlights the transformative impact of a program that sent students to Silicon Valley for their start-up, indicating the potential for real-world exposure to complement university education. The

perspectives of international informants (Dissa, Pat) and local informants (Nas, Rani) offer insights into cultural differences and their impact on entrepreneurship education. International experiences seem to have influenced more positive views on the responsibility of universities in nurturing entrepreneurship. Cultural contexts and exposure to diverse experiences may shape how individuals perceive the university's role in entrepreneurship education. A more global perspective can offer valuable insights into effective approaches.

Some informants, like Dissa, Alex, and Pat, share positive experiences where universities played a significant role in shaping their entrepreneurial mindset and skills. They value the opportunity for skill development, networking, and exposure to different cultures. The data implies that individual experiences and attitudes can greatly influence the perception of a university's role in entrepreneurship education. Positive experiences can lead to a more favorable view of the university's contribution. The data recognizes the nonlinear and iterative nature of entrepreneurship education, acknowledging that there isn't a one-size-fits-all approach and that entrepreneurial journeys can vary. The data suggests that flexibility in curriculum and recognizing the diverse paths to entrepreneurship is important. Universities should adapt to the evolving needs of students and the entrepreneurial landscape.

Several informants express concerns about the current state of entrepreneurship education in Malaysia. They point out the need for more practical experiences, relevant skills development, and a shift away from a strictly theoretical approach. There is a clear call for improvement in entrepreneurship education, with a focus on practical skills and real-world experiences. Adapting curricula to better align with entrepreneurial demands could enhance graduates' readiness for business ventures. In conclusion, the data presents a range of perspectives on entrepreneurship education and the university's role in fostering entrepreneurial skills and mindsets. It emphasizes the significance of hands-on learning, the establishment of a nurturing ecosystem, and the need for universities to adapt their approaches to better prepare students for the challenges of entrepreneurship. The findings suggest that a well-balanced and adaptable curriculum, coupled with a supportive ecosystem, can contribute significantly to producing successful entrepreneurs.

Both UUM and UMK provide business plan courses to instill foundational business knowledge, with UMK going a step further by integrating the Entrepreneur Apprentice course, focusing on communication and business skills. However, the adequacy of these courses in cultivating entrepreneurial thinking and action in academic and real-world contexts is questioned. Nas, a local entrepreneur, stresses the need for universities to collaborate with industry leaders, fostering a more practical and experiential approach to entrepreneurship education. This sentiment is echoed by Bai, who emphasizes the importance of cultivating both skills and resilience to navigate failure and success.

Muslim, another local entrepreneur, highlights a gap between academia and real-world entrepreneurship, emphasizing the value of personal entrepreneurial experience for effective guidance. Mani, aligning with this perspective, suggests that the courses entrepreneurs undertake should specifically prepare them for the challenges they will face in the field. This sentiment resonates with Pat, an international entrepreneur, who emphasizes the need for guidance, practical work, and insights from those who have navigated the entrepreneurial process for a faster cultural assimilation of the start-up ecosystem. These viewpoints collectively underscore the importance of a comprehensive and

practical approach in entrepreneurship education, intertwining academic knowledge with real-world experiences and industry collaboration.

In contrast, Babson College's entrepreneurship education is comprehensive and dynamic. It tailors pathways for various specializations, integrating business fundamentals with arts and sciences. Their curriculum enhances cultural awareness, critical thinking, and communication skills, essential for navigating the complex global economy. With senior professors leading interactive classes, Babson offers a stimulating learning environment. Their flexible approach, offering over 80 entrepreneurship courses, empowers students to choose a diverse range of subjects.

This comparison underscores the richness of Babson College's entrepreneurship education, where a holistic curriculum fosters not only business acumen but also a well-rounded, culturally aware mindset. In contrast, Malaysian universities lack the breadth of elective subjects required to expose students to diverse entrepreneurship domains. The call for a more practical, experiential, and interdisciplinary approach in entrepreneurship education resonates, as it prepares students to thrive in the dynamic and multifaceted world of entrepreneurship.

The provided data presents a comprehensive overview of entrepreneurship education programs offered by UUM, UMK, and Babson College, shedding light on the structure, content, and effectiveness of these programs. Here are key findings distilled from the data:

a) Program Structure and Content Comparison: The data underscores the differences in program structure among UUM, UMK, and Babson College. While UUM and UMK offer core courses covering a spectrum of business fundamentals, Babson College stands out for its integration of arts, sciences, and business skills. This multidisciplinary approach not only enriches students' perspectives but also equips them with the critical thinking and communication skills essential for today's global economy.

b) Entrepreneurship Education Effectiveness: The effectiveness of entrepreneurship education remains a central point of discussion. The data suggests that despite efforts by local universities to integrate entrepreneurship into their programs, there are concerns about the practical applicability and impact of the courses offered. This raises questions about the alignment of curricula with real-world entrepreneurial challenges and the development of hands-on skills.

c) Practical Learning and Experiential Education: Babson College's approach to integrating theory with practice stands out as a model for effective entrepreneurship education. By focusing on experiential learning and the application of skills in real-world scenarios, Babson's curriculum appears to be better suited to preparing students for entrepreneurial endeavors. UUM and UMK, on the other hand, seem to offer a more theoretical foundation, potentially warranting a greater emphasis on practical experiences.

d) Diverse Pathways and Customization: Babson College's emphasis on customizable paths and concentration areas aligns with the diverse nature of entrepreneurship. This approach acknowledges that entrepreneurship spans various industries and contexts, offering students the opportunity to specialize and develop skills relevant to their chosen entrepreneurial paths. This adaptability contrasts with the relatively limited elective choices in Malaysian universities.

e) **Cultural Awareness and Effective Communication:** The data highlights the importance of cultural awareness and effective communication in entrepreneurship education. Babson's incorporation of liberal arts courses and interactive, conversation-driven classes aims to foster critical thinking, communication skills, and a nuanced understanding of the global business landscape. This underscores the significance of a holistic education for aspiring entrepreneurs.

f) **Innovation and Impact:** Babson College's minor in Innovation and Entrepreneurship emerges as a promising avenue for cultivating students' ideas across various disciplines. By encouraging students to assess risk, potential, and societal impact, this minor program exemplifies a comprehensive approach to nurturing innovative thinking and entrepreneurial spirit.

g) **Role of Practical Experience:** Several local entrepreneurs emphasize the crucial role of practical experience in entrepreneurship education. They highlight the importance of bridging academia and industry to impart firsthand knowledge and insights. The consensus is that hands-on engagement, mentorship, and exposure to real-world challenges are pivotal in shaping effective entrepreneurs.

h) **Flexibility and Adaptation:** The data underscores the need for flexibility and adaptation in entrepreneurship education. The ever-evolving landscape of entrepreneurship demands curricula that can adjust to new trends, challenges, and opportunities. Babson's curriculum, characterized by its interactive nature and diverse course offerings, exemplifies a responsive approach to this need.

The data showcases the varying approaches to entrepreneurship education in UUM, UMK, and Babson University. While the Malaysian universities exhibit strengths in foundational business knowledge, they face challenges in effectively integrating practical experiences. Babson University's curriculum, on the other hand, excels in linking theory with real-world practice, fostering a dynamic learning environment conducive to creating well-rounded, culturally aware, and adaptable entrepreneurs. The data underscores the importance of experiential learning, customization, innovation, and effective communication in entrepreneurship education. It encourages local institutions to consider these aspects to enhance the impact of their entrepreneurship programs and better equip future entrepreneurs for success.

International graduate entrepreneur Alex underscores the limitations of traditional university education in keeping pace with the dynamic landscape of entrepreneurship and innovation. He reflects on his focus on grades rather than the learning process, acknowledging the difficulty for university curricula to match the rapid evolution of entrepreneurship. Alex suggests that students aspiring to be entrepreneurs should prioritize subjects that align with their goals.

Dissa, another international graduate entrepreneur, contrasts her experience studying abroad with the entrepreneurial ecosystem on her campus, highlighting the emphasis on people management, conflict resolution, and the encouragement to change the world. She contrasts this with her perception that most universities in her home country, Indonesia, mold students to be employees rather than entrepreneurs.

Tyson, an international graduate entrepreneur in Seattle, acknowledges the evolving role of universities, noting the emergence of social entrepreneurship programs. He emphasizes that universities are adapting to become more entrepreneurial over time.

In contrast, Fiona, another international graduate entrepreneur, did not take business or entrepreneurship courses at university. However, she emphasizes that her university experience, particularly being part of the student government running businesses on campus, played a crucial role in molding her into an entrepreneur.

These diverse perspectives from international graduate entrepreneurs collectively emphasize the need for universities to adapt and better align with the dynamic nature of entrepreneurship. The experiences shared highlight the importance of practical skills, alignment with personal goals, and an entrepreneurial mindset fostered by the university environment.

The dataset delves into an array of viewpoints concerning entrepreneurship education and the pivotal role universities play in cultivating entrepreneurial acumen. It navigates through contrasting stances on the extent of universities' impact on entrepreneurship education. While Nas and Mani critique the prevailing education system for sidelining entrepreneurship in favor of producing employees, Mike and Rani extol universities as nurturing environments that grant access to information and avenues for start-ups. This divergence underscores a critical juncture: whether universities robustly endorse entrepreneurship education or fall short. The data reflects an array of perspectives—some deeming universities deficient, others deeming them invaluable conduits for networking and skill honing.

Moreover, an illuminating facet emerges regarding the entrepreneurial ecosystem. As voiced by Mike and Rani, universities are underscored as pivotal incubators for nascent start-ups. The notion that universities provide a secure haven for young entrepreneurs to ideate and incubate ventures surfaces strongly. This dynamic paints universities as catalysts in shaping a thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem—one that furnishes resources and a cooperative milieu for fledgling visionaries. In the realm of pedagogical methods, the data spotlights the tension between hands-on learning and theoretical approaches within entrepreneurship education. While exemplifying institutions like Babson College emphasize experiential learning and practical applications, others like Nas and Mani lament the prevalence of abstract theorizing in Malaysian academia. This dialectic underscores the essence of balance—a fusion of theoretical underpinnings with practical engagement, poised to foster comprehensive entrepreneurial readiness.

The vantage of global versus local perspectives illuminates cultural influences on entrepreneurship education. International informants such as Dissa and Pat convey a sunnier disposition toward universities' role in nurturing entrepreneurship, possibly due to broader international exposure. Such diverse cultural contexts shape perceptions of universities as epicenters for entrepreneurial growth, echoing the significance of a global outlook in refining pedagogical approaches.

Personal experiences carve a distinct niche in the discourse. Dissa, Alex, and Pat tout universities as pivotal in shaping their entrepreneurial mettle, underscoring the contribution of higher education in refining skills, fostering networks, and expanding perspectives. This introspective angle illustrates that individuals' experiences and dispositions significantly color their perception of a university's imprint on entrepreneurship education. Furthermore, the dataset acknowledges the nonlinear, iterative nature of entrepreneurship education. It dispels the notion of a uniform path to entrepreneurial prowess, reinforcing the demand for adaptable curricula that mirror the multifaceted entrepreneurial journey. Flexibility emerges as a watchword for universities keen on nurturing diverse entrepreneurial trajectories.

Challenges and prospective enhancements emerge as a critical discourse. Various informants articulate concerns over the existing status of entrepreneurship education in Malaysia, with a focus on greater practical exposure, skill alignment, and a pivot away from excessive theoretical rigor. This clarion call signals an imperative for educational reform, prompting universities to recalibrate their approaches to cater to the emergent demands of real-world entrepreneurship.

In summary, the dataset encapsulates a tapestry of perspectives on entrepreneurship education and universities' roles in molding entrepreneurial attitudes and proficiencies. It underscores the pivotal role of practical learning, the orchestration of a supportive ecosystem, and the adaptive evolution of pedagogical methods to prime students for the intricate realm of entrepreneurship. The data underscores that a finely calibrated curriculum, synergistically intertwined with an enabling ecosystem, can significantly propel the next generation of successful entrepreneurs.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Our exploration delves into the complex connection between entrepreneurship education and the development of graduates' entrepreneurial ambitions, with insights drawn from the context of UMK, UUM, and Babson College. Our compass seeks to untangle the threads guiding graduates onto the path of entrepreneurship while illuminating universities' roles as nurturers of this dynamic mindset. The study weaves together interviews and meticulous analysis of Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and course offerings at these institutions, revealing two pivotal insights.

First, a notable divide emerges between universities' intended PLOs and the courses offered, underscoring the vital need for experiential learning to forge a potent arsenal of skills, competencies, and knowledge for the entrepreneurial future. Second, reflections from triumphant graduate entrepreneurs provide an intimate mirror, offering insights into the potency of entrepreneurship education and the nurturing environment fostered by universities.

The entrepreneurship programs offered by universities must undergo a metamorphic shift to fully prepare graduates for the intricate challenges and ambiguities strewn across the complex start-up terrain. These findings resonate harmoniously with prior research conducted by Birch, Lichy, Mulholland, and Kachour (2017), Din et al. (2015), Ahmed et al. (2017), and Rasli and Khan (2013), all of whom affirm the direct interplay between entrepreneurship education and graduates' career trajectories. However, a perplexing gap emerges within public universities (UUM and UMK) – a discordant note in their understanding of the purpose and outcomes of entrepreneurship education. PLOs often lean toward entrepreneurial principles but sometimes veer towards enhancing employment prospects rather than holistically nurturing graduates into seasoned entrepreneurs. This incongruity with the overarching intent of entrepreneurship education beckons for careful introspection and recalibration.

Babson College's dynamic entrepreneurship education stands in stark contrast. With customized pathways, integrating business fundamentals with arts and sciences, and a robust repertoire of over 80 entrepreneurship courses, Babson epitomizes a comprehensive approach fostering a culturally attuned mindset alongside business acumen. In Malaysia, a disconnection emerges within public universities (UUM and UMK); an incongruity between entrepreneurship education's intent and outcomes beckons for introspection. The exploration underscores the need for universities to recalibrate their

pedagogical methods, expand course offerings, and foster an ecosystem propelling graduates towards embracing entrepreneurship.

As the voyage unfolds, universities stand as pioneers, charting a course to sculpt entrepreneurs par excellence, where the seeds of entrepreneurship can sprout, flourish, and shape the destinies of graduates. Echoes of this sentiment resonate with earlier studies by Rahim et al. (2015) and Hamidon (2015), underlining the prevalence of a grade-centric mindset. Beyond the customary bounds of traditional education lies a realm that ignites intrinsic passion and fervor for entrepreneurship. To spark this transformation, collaborative efforts between universities and industry titans must converge, crafting curricula that mirror the demands of the ever-evolving real world.

In summary, the clarion call resounds – the quality of education emerges as the pivotal cornerstone of graduates' career choices. Aspirations to cultivate a legion of entrepreneurs must pivot towards an unwavering commitment to refining education and extending courses. This expedition beckons universities to fortify their curricula, recalibrate pedagogical methods, and foster an ecosystem primed to propel graduates toward embracing entrepreneurship with unyielding passion and unparalleled proficiency. The voyage towards crafting entrepreneurs par excellence beckons, demanding relentless efforts in cultivating an environment where the seeds of entrepreneurship can sprout, flourish, and ultimately sculpt the destinies of graduates.

RECOMMENDATIONS

By implementing the recommendations below, universities can transform their entrepreneurship education programs into dynamic, responsive, and impactful platforms that empower graduates to navigate the complexities of entrepreneurship with confidence and competence:

a) Alignment of Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and Courses:

Public universities (UUM and UMK) should conduct a comprehensive review of their entrepreneurship education programs to ensure alignment between intended PLOs and the courses offered. Emphasize experiential learning in course design to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application.

b) Curricular Recalibration:

Public universities (UUM and UMK) should recalibrate their entrepreneurship education curricula to prioritize holistic entrepreneurial development over merely enhancing employment prospects. Consider introducing courses that specifically focus on fostering an entrepreneurial mindset, creativity, and resilience.

c) Pedagogical Methods:

Universities, especially public institutions, should reconsider their pedagogical methods to promote an environment that sparks an intrinsic passion for entrepreneurship. Incorporate collaborative and interactive learning experiences that mirror real-world challenges, encouraging critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

d) Industry Collaboration:

Foster collaborative efforts between universities and industry leaders to create curricula that align with the dynamic demands of the real-world start-up ecosystem. Develop internship programs, industry partnerships, and mentorship initiatives to provide students with practical insights and exposure.

e) Diversification of Course Offerings:

Expand course offerings to include a diverse range of entrepreneurship-related subjects, ensuring that students can tailor their education to align with their specific entrepreneurial aspirations. Introduce courses that integrate business fundamentals with arts and sciences, providing a well-rounded entrepreneurial education.

f) Focus on Passion and Intrinsic Motivation:

Encourage a shift in mindset, moving away from a grade-centric focus to nurturing intrinsic passion and fervor for entrepreneurship. Design courses and programs that allow students to explore and pursue their entrepreneurial interests, fostering a genuine commitment to the field.

g) Experiential Learning and Ecosystem Building:

Prioritize experiential learning opportunities, such as business simulations, role-playing, and real-world projects, to enhance practical skills and competencies. Establish a supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem within universities, offering resources, mentorship, and networking opportunities to students.

h) Tailored Experiences and International Perspectives:

Recognize the diverse needs of students and provide tailored experiences that accommodate both local and international perspectives. Learn from international models, such as Babson College, to understand successful multidisciplinary approaches and integrate effective strategies into local contexts.

i) Continuous Improvement and Adaptation:

Implement mechanisms for continuous evaluation and improvement of entrepreneurship education programs, adapting to evolving industry trends and technological advancements. Stay abreast of global best practices in entrepreneurship education and be open to adopting innovative approaches.

j) Communication and Marketing:

Effectively communicate the changes and improvements made in entrepreneurship education programs to attract students who are passionate about entrepreneurship. Develop marketing strategies that highlight the unique aspects and success stories of the entrepreneurship education offered by the university.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this exploratory research has shed light on the intricate interplay between entrepreneurship education and graduates' career choices, with a specific focus on the roles played by UUM, UMK, and Babson College. The findings underscore the evolving nature of entrepreneurship education and its impact on aspiring entrepreneurs. While challenges persist, such as aligning curricula with practical demands and fostering an entrepreneurial mindset, the data reveals promising

strides in the right direction. Babson College's multidisciplinary approach and experiential learning stand as exemplars for effective education.

The contrast between local and international perspectives highlights the need for universities to adapt and provide tailored experiences. Collaboration with industries, experiential learning opportunities, and engagement of seasoned educators emerge as pivotal factors in cultivating successful entrepreneurship education. This study calls for a paradigm shift in educational approaches, urging universities to refocus on holistic development, industry integration, and real-world application.

By enhancing the quality and diversity of courses, fostering an entrepreneurial ecosystem, and nurturing a passion for entrepreneurship, institutions can empower graduates to embark on impactful entrepreneurial journeys, shaping a future where innovation and business acumen thrive.

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