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Influence of University Experience on the Entrepreneurial Quality among Graduate Students in Malaysian Public Universities

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to examine the influence of university experience on the development of entrepreneurial quality among graduate students in Malaysian Public Universities. A conceptual model is proposed and empirically tested where entrepreneurial quality is influenced by university experience.

Design/Methodology: A questionnaire survey was administered to 400 students in several Public Universities. Regression analysis as statistical tools was used to analyze the data and test the hypotheses that entrepreneurial quality is impacted by the university experience.

Findings: The postulated relationships were found supported by the data. The research found that university experience has significant and positive impact on entrepreneurial quality among graduate students in Malaysian Public Universities.

Implications/originality: The study is particularly useful for Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education as well as the Malaysian Public Universities by identifying advantages university experience among students in Malaysian Public Universities. This paper is hoped to give valuable reference to the parties to consider the university in order to prepare for the young generation in the future.

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1. Introduction

There is a growing recognition that graduates in particular and related supportive environments are of critical importance for economic growth and development (Nabi 2000). Furthermore, graduates represent the ultimate outputs or products of Higher Education (HE). However, Teichler (2003) and Elias and Purcell (2004) noted that, even though there is rapid expansion of higher education, the qualities possessed by graduates to be applied to their career are still questionable. This is because the factors that determine the qualities of graduates are largely unexplained and hence, those characteristics of entrepreneurial quality should be emphasized in higher education training (Hegarty and Jones 2008; Henderson and Robertson 2000; McLarty 2005). Previous studies discovered that most of failures related to individual career were due to the lack of entrepreneurial quality (Raduan, Kumar and Yen 2006). That is the reason why entrepreneurial quality has become the central investigation in studies conducted,

particularly in entrepreneurship. The quality of human capital development has become the critical element and the basis for the nation development (Norashidah 2008). Malaysia Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Najib Tun Razak believes the graduates must be at the forefront of the Economic New Model (MEB) in order for Malaysia to become a developed nation in 2020. Under that proposition, Ministry of Higher Education is geared towards producing quality graduates through various programs and activities.

2. Literature Review

There are a number of studies conducted on entrepreneurial quality (Cumplido and Alcalde 2002; Cumplido and Linan 2007; Darroch and Clover 2005; Gurol and Atsan 2006; Koh 1996; Kuip and Verheul 2003; Litunen 2000; Sambasivan, Yusop and Mohani 2009; Shuhairimi, Azizi, Ku Halim and Saadiah 2009; Valtonen 2007). Most of these studies on entrepreneurial quality are in general and usually conducted within the contexts of Small Medium Enterprise (SME) and Small Medium and Micro Enterprise (SMME) (Anderson, Jack and Dodd 2005; Cumplido and Alcalde 2002; Darroch and Clover 2005; Sambasivan et. al 2009). According to Kuip and Verheul (2003) and Pickernell, Pacham, Jones, Miller and Thomas (2011), limited focus has been given to understanding the entrepreneurial quality in the graduate students context regardless its importance and potential.

Entrepreneurial quality has been looked as an important factor which affects the business potential such as in overcoming barriers as well as increasing the business survival (Darroch and Clover 2005). Entrepreneurial quality is essential in increasing the competitiveness of regional economy, not only the competitiveness of the entrepreneurs themselves (Cumplido and Alcalde 2002). University experience plays an important role in developing entrepreneurial potentials, focusing on equipping their graduates with knowledge and skills needed in business creation and innovation within corporations they work with, through the accumulation of transferable skills in the campus (Poon et. al 2009).

Universities as higher education institutions have been looked to develop more conducive and supportive environments of entrepreneurship in campus (Pickernell et.al 2013). This is due to the importance of university experience in developing graduate's quality as graduates spend at least three to five years of campus life (Bath et. al 2004). During campus life, the students have developed some skills as well as qualities to be brought into their career in the future. During campus life also, graduates learn and gain benefits through the activities held in the universities and the changes of the graduates are considered as a reflection of the university experience (Narvaez and Rest 1990). Other than that, Barefoot, Jewler and Gardner (2009) stated that in university, graduates learn to manage their own life such as managing their time and finance. In addition, Narvaez and Rest (1990) concluded that university experience affects the stimulation of the intellectual which in turn will have impacts on how the graduates decide and overhaul morally. In this study, university experience consists of an examination of graduates' perceptions of the elements of the university environment that are related to graduates' quality and development.

Greene and Saridakis (2007) in National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship Report suggested that higher education institutions should consider the way which they prepare individuals for entrepreneurship. University experience plays an important role in developing entrepreneurial potentials, focusing on equipping their graduates with knowledge and skills needed in business creation and innovation within corporations they work with, through the provision of transferable skills in the campus (Poon et. al 2009). Universities as higher education institutions are hoped to develop more supportive environments of entrepreneurship in campus (Pickernell et.al 2011). This is due to the importance of university experience in developing graduate's quality as graduates spend at least three to five years of campus life (Bath et. al 2004). During that period, the students have developed some qualities to be brought into their career in the future.

All graduates have gone through the university experience. Chickering, Arthur, McCormick and John (1970) who are the researchers in the human development field, pointed that individual quality develops along which change that occurs during university or university years. Furthermore, Pascarella (1987) claimed that, the extent and quality of graduate's involvement in university are the principal determinants

of university impact on graduate's development. Thus it shows that university experience has a positive influence with the graduate's quality.

3. Methodology

Quantitative method was used in this study. The respondents for this research are graduates students in public universities in Malaysia. Probability sampling is a sampling technique in which every member of the population has a known and nonzero probability of selection (Zikmund et. al 2010). Probability sampling was chosen for this study as the sampling frame was available. The aim of this type of sampling is to reduce the sampling error to a minimum level (Cooper and Schindler 2011).

3.1 Population and Sample

In this study, the total population of graduate students in Malaysian Public Universities was obtained from Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia. The latest statistics is up till October 2016. From the total population, the sample size was identified used Krejcie and Morgan (1970). A cluster sampling technique was used to determine the sample of the study. The major reason for cluster sampling to generate appropriate sample size economically, while maintaining the features of a probability sampling (Zikmund, et. Al 2010). In this case, clusters consist of types of the universities namely research universities, focused universities and comprehensive universities. The universities were selected at random and also proportionate numbers of students were selected using simple random method from each university to form the sample of the study.

3.2 Measurement of the items

Entrepreneurial quality in this study was defined as essential characteristics possessed by the graduate students. The instrument used for the measurement of need for achievement was adapted from Steers and Brauntein (1976). Furthermore, this instrument was also used by Lee (1997). The need for achievement consists of five items. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale is 0.925. The instrument used for locus of control was adapted from Levenson (1974). The items for locus of control consist of three items. This instrument was also used by Lee and Tsang (2001). The Cronbach's alpha is 0.85. The instrument used for the measurement of risk taking propensity was adapted from Jackson (1976). Furthermore, this instrument was used by Hyrsky and Tuunanen (1999). The items for risk taking propensity consist of three items. The scale has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.789. The instrument used for the measurement of perseverance was adapted from Duckworth et. al (2007). The items for perseverance consist of three items. The Cronbach's alpha for perseverance is 0.78. The instrument used for the measurement of independent was adapted from Steers and Brauntein (1976). Furthermore, this instrument was used by Lee (1997). The items for independent consist of four items. The Cronbach's alpha is 0.89.

The instrument used for the measurement of creative and innovative was adapted from Zhou and George (2001). Furthermore, this instrument was also used by Kim, Hon and Lee (2010). The measurement for creativity consists of six items. The Cronbach's efficient alpha for creativity is 0.96. For the measurement of knowledgeable, the items were adapted from Shane (2000). These items were used by Tang and Murphy (2012). University experience is defined as the psychological, social, learning and living aspects of the campus environment undergone by graduates. In terms of university experience, the measurement of constructs was adapted from Pace (1979) as these are established items that have a high reliability score. Items for university experience consist of seven items in a seven-point likert scale. The cronbach's coefficient alpha is 0.80. This measurement of construct has been chosen as it was used previously by Meld and Hunter (1998).

3.3 Data Collection and Data Analysis

A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to the graduate students in Malaysian Public Universities. Out of 400 questionnaires distributed, only 360 were collected for data analysis. Two universities from Research University category were selected, one university from comprehensive university and three

universities from Focused University were selected in this study. A descriptive analysis and linear regression analysis through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 was used to examine the influence of university experience on entrepreneurial quality among graduate students in Malaysian Public Universities.

4. Findings and Discussion

University experiences influences the entrepreneurial quality among graduate students in Malaysian Public Universities

Table 1 shows the result of liner regression analysis for the university experience as an influence factor on entrepreneurial quality. The results shows that the university experience was significantly contribute to the entrepreneurial quality where the $p = .000$ is less than the value of alpha ($.00 < .05$). Regression test showed a significant relationship where university experience significantly affects entrepreneurial quality. The value of R^2 ($R^2 = 0.285$) contributes 28.5% towards entrepreneurial quality among graduate students in Malaysian Public Universities. Meanwhile, the value of coefficient (unstandardized Coefficients) or $\beta = 0.619$ is show the influence of university experience on entrepreneurial quality. When the score for university experience goes up a unit, the score for entrepreneurial quality will also increase up to 0.619 units.

Table 1

Regression analysis of the university experience and entrepreneurial quality

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1						
	(Constant)	1.450	.186		7.779	.000
	University Experience	.619	.051	.536	12.155	.000

^a Dependent variable: entrepreneurial quality

Adj. R Square: 0.285

ANOVA: $F = 147.75$ ($p < 0.05$)

The influence of university experience on entrepreneurial quality among Malaysian Public Universities.

This study found that the university experience was significantly influence the entrepreneurial quality among graduate students in Malaysian Public Universities. This findings was supported by Peace (1984), he found that university is responsible for many things in stimulating the student development and learning. This finding also in line with Shiri et al., (2012), where the university environment conditions become one of important factor that can affect the experience either strengthen or weaken student to become an entrepreneur. This findings also supported by Anderson (2011), in her studies claimed that university environment may influences the student`s life and development in future.

5. Conclusion and Implication

This research is hoped to provide several implications for theory. First, the entrepreneurial quality literature is expanded through this research, such as the examination of entrepreneurial quality in graduate students context. In addition, little is known about the antecedents of entrepreneurial quality. Guzman and Santos (1995) have come out with the Model of Entrepreneurial Quality. Inspired by the work, the researcher tested the concept of entrepreneurial quality in graduate students context in public universities in Malaysia. The findings of this study is hoped will serve as reference for higher education institutions which focus on tertiary education thus can potentially train the graduates in terms of entrepreneurial quality that will eventually lead them to be successful people in the future. Nevertheless entrepreneurial quality among graduate entrepreneurs lacks empirical examinations (Pickernell et. al. 2011).

This study is hoped can be useful for Ministry of Higher Education, Higher Education Institutions as well as entrepreneurial associations in generating ideas and programs in order to develop entrepreneurial

quality among graduate students in Malaysia. Ministry of Higher Education Institutions, entrepreneurial associations, graduates and societies themselves might use the information from this to collaborate with each other in programs to improve the existing educational systems and eventually produce better graduates in the future. The information from this research is hoped can assist Malaysia Government in order to realize the Economic New Model (MEB) that aim the graduates to be at the forefront of the in order for Malaysia to become a developed nation in 2020.

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