The Practice of Entrepreneurship Education in a Malaysian Higher Education Institution: A Single Case Study

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Abstract--- This study assessed the practice of entrepreneurship education in a Malaysian higher education institution (HEI). The teaching methods adopted by lecturers are integral in enhancing the quality of entrepreneurship education in Malaysia. As such, a single case study design was employed, in which a lecturer served as the purposive sampling. A semi-structured interview was conducted to generate qualitative data. Drawing on Arasti's et al., [1] teaching methods in entrepreneurship education, concept-driven thematic analysis was performed. The study outcomes may serve as reference and guidance to other academicians and stakeholders. This study is an effort to intensify interest among students towards entrepreneurship and is an excellent platform to embrace the idea of self-employment as an entrepreneur upon graduation.

Keywords--- Entrepreneurship Education, Teaching Method, Higher Education Institution (HEI), Qualitative, Single Case Study.

I. INTRODUCTION

The issue of unemployed graduates is not one that is unfamiliar. The Department of Statistics reported that the significant increase of unemployment rate in Malaysia stems from the rising number of people in the labour market [2]. Former vice chancellor of Universiti Malaya, Professor Ghauth Jasmin, pointed out the soaring number of unemployed public university graduates. He claimed that the number may escalate to 600,000 jobless graduates if no measure is taken to improve the English proficiency level of the graduates and the university education [3]. Concurrently, Adenan Satem, the former Chief Minister of Sarawak, expressed that the graduates' failing to secure employment was due to their poor command of English [4]. In another recent report, Lim Guan Eng, the former Minister of Finance of Malaysia asserted that high unemployment rate among youth was due to lack of work experience and insufficient skills or education to compete in the labour market[5]. The annual report published by the Central Bank of Malaysia in March 2019 highlighted that despite 173,457 diploma and degree holders penetrating the job market, only 98,514 high-skilled jobs were available at that point of time[5].

Those being said, effective measures are sought to ensure that Malaysia produces advanced, versatile, and marketable graduates. In line with this, the Malaysian government, particularly its Ministry of Higher Education, has

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an integral role as reflected in the latest policy called Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015–2025 (Higher Education) or MEB (HE), which was launched in 2015 [6]. The policy outlines a comprehensive transformation program for the HE system to improve its system on the dimensions of access, quality, equity, unity, and efficiency. Based onShift 1 MEB (HE), the then Ministry of Higher Education had aimed to develop holistic, entrepreneurial, and balanced graduates in line with the National Education Philosophy. This shift emphasises the necessary curriculum and learning changes, which are required to equip graduates with ethical and spiritual values, leadership skills, national identity, language skills, thinking skills, and knowledge. This should enable Malaysian graduates to move to a high level of well-being and contribute to the harmony and betterment of family, community, nation, and global society. The HEIs across Malaysia have initiated a combination of learning experiences and entrepreneurial achievements into the curriculum, by enhancing the entrepreneurial course design and the practical components of basic entrepreneurship courses, apart from introducing an entrepreneurial field in the academic program.

In tandem with national progress, the Ministry of Higher Education has devised the Entrepreneurship Action Plan 2016–2020 to foster entrepreneurial mind-set via HE system with the aim of generating graduates who are holistic, entrepreneurial, and balanced. The Entrepreneurship Action Plan is composed of four key initiatives: (1) implementing high-impact educational practices by embedding elements of entrepreneurship across the curriculum and fields of study, (2) implementing the job creator framework, (3) improving the ecosystem that supports entrepreneurial activities of students, and (4) strengthening the competencies of entrepreneurship instructors and coaches. With the establishment of this plan, graduates are encouraged to become job creators in ensuring financial sustainability of the institution. They are also expected to be more entrepreneurial in securing funding sources in order to reduce dependence on government sources. Hence, the Malaysian education system requires revision and linkage with entrepreneurship element.

By placing entrepreneurial skills as the primary focus, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) has turned into an entrepreneurial research university that aims to generate significant changes in transforming a job seeker into a job creator by instilling entrepreneurial mind-set. The HEI is an excellent platform to transform a graduate's mind-set into becoming an entrepreneur. In order to achieve this, UTM has made an effort to foster entrepreneurial mind-set by creating an entrepreneurship ecosystem in its campus, such as the synergy created between the faculty and UTM Centre for Student Innovation and Technology Entrepreneurship (UTM XCITE). In addition, UTM has also integrated entrepreneurship courses in its undergraduate curriculum. Therefore, this study explored the practice of entrepreneurship education in UTM by focusing on the teaching methods during learning process.

1.1 Practice of Entrepreneurship Education in Higher Education Institutions

Entrepreneurship can be implemented through entrepreneurship education [7]. This notion is supported by Romero [8], who stated that entrepreneurship education exerts essential influence to develop entrepreneurship activities as participation of students in the activities makes entrepreneurial learning process more efficient [9]. The HEIs have a vital function in implementing programs and courses that can improve both education and training in entrepreneurship. Through its education system, the government can influence the rate of entrepreneurship because education can cultivate entrepreneurship in several ways. First, education can train one with a sense of autonomy

independence and self-confidence, while allowing one to make career choices. Second, education expands the horizons of individuals, thus making people more willing to look at opportunities. Lastly, education offers knowledge that equips one to develop new entrepreneurial opportunities [10]. Fleming et al., [11] suggested that entrepreneurship education can be implemented by encouraging entrepreneurship culture among students. According to Shepherd [12], the creation of entrepreneurial mind-set among students demands the use of innovative models and content in teaching that involve changes to the course content and the learning process itself. Indirectly, HEIs are the best platform for application of this concept, mainly because it involves a wider community and individuals at this stage are mature enough to train themselves with entrepreneurial mind-sets and skills.

Prior studies have highlighted the importance of entrepreneurship education and its effect on progression of countries. Despite the vast studies in the field of entrepreneurship education, only a handful has assessed the subfield of teaching methods. Wahid et al., [13] claimed that teaching methods have an important role in entrepreneurship education, while Arasti et al., [1] highlighted that the effectiveness of entrepreneurship education program depends mostly on the teacher's skill and knowledge of varying teaching methods, particularly entrepreneurship teaching methods. Lee and Wong [14] agreed that the key of successful entrepreneurship education is an effective teaching approach that satisfies the needs of students. A wide range of teaching methods can be applied during the learning process. The vast teaching methods may be classified into the following: case study, guest speaker, group discussion, formal lecture, role play, interview with entrepreneurs, individual project, group project, simulation, development of a new venture creation project, guidance through support mission, seminar, problem solving, training in an enterprise, and scientific visit [1].

II.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

One of the approaches to explore the practice of entrepreneurship education in a HEI is the qualitative approach. Creswell [15]claimed that some researchers adopted the qualitative method to explore a problem and develop detailed elaboration on a certain phenomenon. Chua [16] stated that many elements, such as emotions, motivation, and empathy, embedded in individuals or groups are more suitable to be investigated via qualitative means asthese elements cannot be described by the figures in quantitative data. As for this study, it looked into the practice of entrepreneurship education by focusing on the teaching methods applied during the learning process. Hence, a list of teaching methods was produced based on literature review in light of entrepreneurship education. Next, a lecturer was selected to retrieve opinions regarding the listed methods and the teaching methods employed by the participant in teaching the course or other appropriate suggestions.

A single case study design [17] was employed in this study to explore the practice of entrepreneurship education from the lens of a lecturer who is also a member of Azman Hashim International Business School, UTM. The single case study was selected as it enabled the researchers to capture and comprehend the teaching methods used by the participant in an in-depth manner with regard to entrepreneurship education in UTM. According to Yin [17], the case study design is used to answer 'how' and 'why' questions, where researchers have little or no control over the behaviour those involved in the study. Yin added that case study is relevant when the researchers seek extensive and in-depth description of a certain phenomenon. Case study analysis has the potential to address both simple and

intricate scenarios.

In this study, purposive sampling was employed to select a participant who met the inclusion criteria set in this study. According to Creswell [15], purposive sampling is a qualitative sampling procedure to intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the issue at hand. In this study, only one participant was selected based on the teaching and research experiences as academic staff. The participant should have more than 10 years of experience in teaching entrepreneurship education and other entrepreneurship subjects in two local universities. Additionally, a semi-structured interview was conducted and the interview session was recorded using a voice recorder. The interview data were then transcribed into transcripts. According to Jaffri et al., [18], transcribing is a process that transforms verbal expression of interview into written words. After the transcription, a copy of the transcript was sent to the participant for verification and validation purpose. Creswell [15]asserted that review of transcript by interview participant is a validation process that ascertains the consistency, the reliability, and the accuracy of the transcript.

III. DATA ANALYSIS

Concept-driven thematic analysis was selected as the analysis method in this study due to its suitability to analyse qualitative data retrieved from interview session. Braun and Clarke [19] stated that thematic analysis is a method that systematically identifies, analyses, and interprets the pattern of meanings or 'themes' in qualitative data. In this study, the six phases of Braun and Clarke's approach [20]was adopted in conducting the concept-driven thematic analysis. The phases included familiarising with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and preparing the write-up. The teaching methods in entrepreneurship education, which were outlined by Arasti et al.,[1], had been selected as the guideline during the coding process. Next, the codes were organised and classified into several common themes. Braun and Clarke [19]added that a good thematic analysis will have themes that ideally have a singular focus, related but do not overlap, not repetitive and directly address the research questions. The matic analysis can be usefully aided by the presence of thematic network [21]. A thematic network reflects a web-like illustration or a hierarchical-like presentation [18], in which the measure arranged into patterns. Apart from thematic network, the themes need to be elaborated by related literature.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The practice of entrepreneurship education in HEI has highlighted several teaching methods based on past research. Based on the excerpts presented in Table 1, the list of teaching methods used by the participant in this study have been classified into the following categories: formal lecturer, group project, problem solving, guest speaker, and web-based learning [1]. At the initial phase of the interview session, the participant was required to give her opinions regarding the importance of entrepreneurship education. The participant said:

> "*Entrepreneurship is important because it is related with whatever we do in our lives. Regardless of whatever you want to take, whatever you want to be, entrepreneurship is inseparable*".

The next question directly addressed the teaching methods used by the participant during learning process. Initially, the participant used formal lecturer methods to introduce herself and get to know her course students.

During the first meeting with her students, she would brief about the course outline and relate it with the present situation. The participant mentioned:

"As education level or education institution, we try to equip the students with skills demanded by the industry. So, when the industry says that they want people with this type of characteristic. Then, we will adjust our education system and pedagogy to meet the industry needs".

Table 1: Description of Teaching Methods Theme

Main Theme	*Sub-themes*	*Excerpts From Interview*
Teaching Method	Formal lecturer	*"We try to equip our students with skills demanded by the industry. We adjust our education system and pedagogy to meet the industry needs"*
	Group project	*"In business, we must have pre- and post-plan. The students need to do some written work, and later, hands-on activity. They must carry out an entrepreneurship activity, where we will observe their rubric, and how far they are able to conduct the activity. It has to be an activity that they manage from the beginning by planning".*
	Problem solving	*"The best subject for long-term impact is entrepreneurship subject. Why? Because in entrepreneurship subject, students can identify opportunities; gather, assemble, and integrate resources; decide how they are going to plan and play around with figure and finances; and how they are going market it"*
	Guest speaker	*"I always invite representatives from the industry to give talks and to share their experiences. It is good to work closely with university because they can see more opportunities"*
	Web based learning	*"So now everything is online and in terms of education settings, we have e-learning and mock teaching. These are available online, as books and the library system are also online"*

Concurrently, the participant was given a set of questionnaire to identify their entrepreneur mapping. It was aimed to determine the students' tendency towards entrepreneurship skills and interests. This survey identified three categories of students. The first category refers to students who obtain low scores in both skills of and interest towards entrepreneurship. Upon facing this type of students, the participant would play her role to instil entrepreneurship elements in them. Next, the second category is composed of students who are low in skills but high in entrepreneurship interest. Here, the participant would motivate the students and let them realise that they have extra skills, in comparison to the others. Lastly, the third category of students gains high scores in both entrepreneurship interests and skills. Based on experience, this type of students would already have established their own business. Entrepreneurship education is viewed as opportunity recognition, organising resources with the presence of risk, and building of business venture [22]. Hence, students with high scores would not encounter problems and can pass the course with flying colours.

Group project is one of the participant's favourite teaching methods. The participant said:

"In business, we must have pre-plan and post-plan. For pre-plan and post-plan, students need to do written work, and then hands-on activity. They must carry out entrepreneurship activity, in which we will observe their rubric, and how far they are able to conduct that activity. It has to be one activity that they manage from the beginning by planning".

The above statement is in agreement with that highlighted by Kuttim et al.,[22], whereby entrepreneurship education is a collection of formalised teaching that trains and educates anyone with business creation or small

business development. In applying this, the participant explained that the assessment of entrepreneurship subject is not merely based on examination. A lecturer may evaluate the students indirectly, such as through quiz, simple and short question, activity, and so on. This course has been approved by the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) to be conducted without final exam, but 100% coursework, mainly because the main objective of this entrepreneurship course is to assess how students master the theoretical foundation. Therefore, the assessments are more likely to in corporateoral presentations and report writings.

The tasks or assignments given adopt the approach of problem solving. The participant mentioned that entrepreneurship is the best long-term course that can help students develop several entrepreneurial skills, such as identifying opportunities, gathering resources, planning systematically, rectifying problems, and planning for marketing. These are indeed the multi-purpose skills required by the industry. Similarly, Raposo and Do Paco [23]claimed that entrepreneurship can enhance people to become more responsible, apart from promoting them to become entrepreneurs or entrepreneurial thinkers who can contribute to economic development and sustainable communities. The participant added that this is one of the reasons for the Ministry of Education to embed the entrepreneurship course into the university curriculum, as well as the inclusion of at least one entrepreneurship course across all academic programs. This requirement is mandatory and every student has to complete this particular course in order for them to graduate. At the university level, the students are equipped with relevant skills demanded by the industry.

The participant revealed that the differences in her students can be divided into two categories: business and non-business students. She stated the following:

"UTM has two curricula. Non-business students commonly take a subject, which is entrepreneurship and enterprise development. Actually they have already learnt these subjects because they are related, but combined into one service, one product. We just embed the elements of management, marketing, and financial assessment because they already have the idea. As for business students, they have the core entrepreneurship subjects that are more detailed. For example, marketing students would have already learnt about marketing and management. So, in terms of managerial aspect, we can see their credibility because their planning, documentation, and flow of project appear clearer than those of non-business students."

The participant invited guest speaker as one of her teaching methods. She would make the extra effort to establish university and industry linkages. She elaborated:

"I always invite representatives from the industry to give talks and to share their experiences. They also said that it's good to work closely with university because they can see more opportunities. They can get ideas from university and then apply them to the industry, which are unavailable to their competitor. We cannot deny that in the theory aspect, university is better but in technical aspect, university still needs the industry. The collaboration has to be there…"

Similarly, Hazelkorn[24]noted that industry complements the healthy environment of a university. He added that a solid relationship between universities and industry assures the sustainability and competitiveness of a university at the international level.

The last teaching method used by the participant refers to web-based learning. This learning is based on online or better known as 'blended learning'. Staker and Horn [25] defined blended learning as any time a student learns at least in part through online delivery with some elements of student's control over time, place, path or pace. Meanwhile, Means et al., [26] viewed blended learning as the approach that does not eliminate the need for face-to-face instructor and usually does not yield cost savings as purely online offerings do. The participant reckoned that education to date more likely leans on online dimension with the emergence of e-learning and mock teaching. The library also uses online system to search books, journals, and other academic resources, besides offering online materials such as e-books. The participant claimed that she preferred blended learning as it promotes long-life learning incorporated with cutting-edge technology.

V. CONCLUSION

The main objective of introducing entrepreneurial course is for the graduates to experience different exposure and expertise, and not merely to obtain a degree. The initiative taken by the Ministry of Education in embedding entrepreneurship course into the university curriculum and making it a requirement to earn a bachelor degree is indeed an excellent measure. Ujang et al., [27] asserted that students have to master entrepreneurial knowledge and skills, such as business models, capital accumulation, networking, work culture, establishment companies, copyrights, and professional membership. Such knowledge and skills can be implemented by learning entrepreneurship. Apart from that, the idea of employability amongst graduates needs to be transformed, whereby being an entrepreneur who can create jobs should be the target, instead of being a job hunter. This calls for improvement in the entrepreneurship syllabus so as to generate more entrepreneurs, and simultaneously mini misereliance on government sources.

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