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## The Impact of University Experience on The Development of Entrepreneurial Quality among University Students in Focused Universities

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**Abstract:** This paper explains on the impact of university experience in developing entrepreneurial quality among university students in Focused University in Malaysia. The elements of university experience plays important role in developing entrepreneurial quality among students in Higher Learning Education Institutions. The impact of university experience in developing entrepreneurial quality is supported by Psychosocial Development Theory by Erikson (1950). Respondents for this study are students in Focused University in Malaysia. Data was analyzed using Statistical Package For Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0. The result showed that university experience influence the development of entrepreneurial quality among university students in Focused University. Therefore it is hoped that Ministry of Higher Education, Higher Education Institutions and other relevant stakeholders should cooperate and coordinate to come up with more entrepreneurial programs, mentoring activities and events for university students to continuously develop their entrepreneurial quality as well as to help the university students to become more successful in the future.

**Keywords:** entrepreneurial quality, university students, focused university, university experience.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurial quality as part of the quality of human capital development has become the critical element and the basis for the nation development (Hannon, 2010). The Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato' Seri Najib Tun Razak believes the students must be at the forefront of the Economic New Model (ENM) in order for Malaysia to become a developed nation in 2020. Under that proposition, Ministry of Higher Education is geared towards producing quality graduate entrepreneurs through various programs and activities (Mohamed Khalid, 2011).

There is a growing recognition that students entrepreneurs in particular and related supportive environments are of critical importance for economic growth and development (Nabi, 2000). Furthermore, graduate entrepreneurs represent the ultimate outputs or products of Higher Education (HE). However, Teichler (2003) and Elias & Purcell (2004) noted that, even though there is rapid expansion of higher education, the qualities possessed by students to be applied to their career are still questionable. This is because the factors that determine the qualities of graduate entrepreneurs are largely unexplained and hence, those characteristics of entrepreneurial quality should be emphasized in higher education training (Hegarty & Jones 2008; Henderson & Robertson ,2000; McLarty, 2005).

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **(A) Entrepreneurial Quality**

Entrepreneurial Quality has been defined in several ways in previous research from various perspectives (Cumplido & Alcalde, 2002; Cumplido & Linan, 2007; Guzman and Santos, 2001; Hvide, 2009; Shuhairimi *et. al.* 2009; Yusuf, 1995). However, those definitions of entrepreneurial quality has brought the same meaning as most of the researchers defined entrepreneurial quality as good and essential characteristics. Entrepreneurial quality in this study is defined as a collection of essential characteristics. The roles of entrepreneur involve creating and beginning a new firm, which is viewed as individual's decision and depends on the driving force behind the entrepreneur (Trevelyan 2008). It is believed that certain quality is needed to take up the role as entrepreneur; therefore attention is given to research on entrepreneurial quality (Littunen, 2000).

The process of entrepreneurship will not be materialized if the entrepreneurial quality, both personality and behavioral attributes, are not present (Hill, Gowan & Drummond, 1999). In order to gain sustainable growth, entrepreneurial quality is viewed as a crucial factor which affects the business potential such as in overcoming barriers as well as increasing the business survival (Darroch & Clover, 2005). Entrepreneurial quality is essential in increasing the competitiveness of regional economy, not only the competitiveness of the entrepreneurs themselves (Cumplido & Alcalde, 2002).

### **(B) University Experience**

National Council for University Studentship Report suggested that higher education institutions should consider the way which they prepare individuals for entrepreneurship (Greene and Saridakis, 2007). University experience plays an important role in developing entrepreneurial potentials, Focuseding on equipping their university students 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, 2013). Universities as higher education institutions are hoped to develop more supportive environments of entrepreneurship in campus (Pickernell, Packham, Jones, Miller & Thomas 2011). This is due to the importance of university experience in developing graduate's quality as university students spend at least three to five years of campus life (Bath, Smith, Stein & Swann, 2004). During that period, the students have developed some qualities to be brought into their career in the future.

University experience may influence student's life and development in future (Lin, 2011). The major benefit of a university experience is that it can deepen the human capital of individuals (Becker 1985). A

research conducted by Lin (2011) revealed that the more students accept and interact with the university experience, the more satisfaction they have with their life at the university and the better they grow throughout their university career. Furthermore, Gibson, Gibson and Zhou (2011) claimed that there is a need to identify factors which influence the development of entrepreneurial quality related to entrepreneurship education. Individuals have the opportunity to develop range of generic skills and also abilities for better impact in the future from their university experience (Greene & Saridakis 2007).

In addition, university students who employ positive coping skill will build interpersonal and social networks that in turn will enhance their abilities and inspire the sense of belonging as well as the development of identity in them (Lin 2011). Previously, several researches were done on university experience. Saenz, Marcoulides, Junn and Young (1999) looked on the association between university experience and academic performance among minority students. Furthermore, Douglas, McClelland & Davies (2008) developed a conceptual model of student satisfaction resulted from the student's experience in university. Greene and Saridakis (2007) reported that universities play a crucial role to influence university students to involve in entrepreneurship in the future. Beside that, Nair and Mertova (2009) who conducted university students employer survey based on graduate experiences in Monash University and found that university experience benefits the student after graduation specifically in their career life.

### **(C) Focused University**

There is a growing recognition that university students in particular and related supportive environments are of critical importance for economic growth and development (Nabi 2000). Furthermore, university students 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 university students to be applied to their career are still questionable. This is because the factors that determine the qualities of university students are largely unexplained and hence, those characteristics of entrepreneurial quality should be emphasized in higher education training (Hegarty & Jones 2008; Henderson & Robertson 2000; McLarty 2005).

Malaysia Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Najib Tun Razak believes the university students 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 university students through various programs and activities. Malaysia Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) plays an important role in creating the best ecosystem of higher education in public universities (UA), private higher learning institutions (IPTs), polytechnics as well as community colleges. All these institutions are a major component of the country's education and training ecosystem that will generate thinkers, scientists, scholars, skilled and semi-skilled workers in line with their respective roles. MOHE consists of three main departments namely Jabatan Pendidikan Tinggi (JPT), Jabatan Pendidikan Politeknik (JPP) and Jabatan Pendidikan Kolej Komuniti (JPKK) in managing Higher Learning Institutions in Malaysia. JPT is responsible to manage Public Universities as well as Private Universities in Malaysia. The mission of JPT is to ensure high quality education to achieve global excellence.

Focused University in Malaysia specialize in technical, education, management and defence area which consists of eleven universities in Malaysia included Universiti Utara Malaysia, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka, Universiti Malaysia Perlis,

Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, Universiti Malaysia Pahang, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan dan Universiti Pertahanan Malaysia.

#### **(D) University experience and entrepreneurial quality among university students**

University experience plays an important role in developing entrepreneurial potentials, equip their university students 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.* 2013). Universities as Higher Education Institutions develop more 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 university students spend at least three to five years of campus life (Bath *et al.* 2004). Sarri, Bakouros and Petridou (2009) in National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship Report suggested that higher education institutions should consider the way which they prepare individuals for entrepreneurship.

During campus life, university students learn and gain benefits through the activities held in the universities and the changes of the university students are considered as a reflection of the university experience (Narvaez & Rest 1990). In addition, Barefoot, Jewler & Gardner (2009) stated that in university, university students learn to manage their own life such as managing their time and finance. Furthermore, Narvaez and Rest (1990) concluded that university experience affects the stimulation of the intellectual which in turn will have impacts on how the university students decide and overhaul morally.

University experience consists of an examination of university students' perceptions of the elements of the university environment that are related to university students' quality and development. All university students 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 college or university years. Moreover, Pascarella and Smart (1987) pointed that, the extent and quality of graduate's involvement in college are the principal determinants of university impact on graduate's development. Based on the above discussion, this hypothesis is posited:

H1: *University experience influences the development of entrepreneurial quality among university students in Focused University.*

#### **(E) Psychosocial Development Theory**

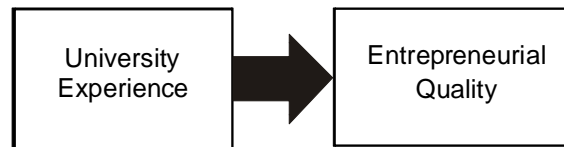
Psychosocial development theory explains that individual quality is formed by the interaction between the person and the surroundings (Littunen 2000). Thus, it is assumed that the entrepreneurial quality of an individual is formed by his or her social interaction which is the function of the psychosocial factors. Psychosocial factors such as a person's life situation, past experiences and changes in life play an important role in a person. Psychosocial development by Erikson (1950) deals with the development of an individual's identity through the involvement of social environment (Whitbourne, Sneed & Sayer 2009). This theory states that individual qualities are not solely determined by biological influences (personal factors) but also can be influenced by psychological as well as environmental experiences.

The effects of personal environment factors on entrepreneurial quality have been well examined and usually refer to trait theory (Baum *et al.* 2001; Shane, Nicolaou, Cherkas & Spector 2010). However, the effects of psychosocial factors on entrepreneurial quality are lacking of examination, especially in relation

to graduate entrepreneurial quality (Pickernell *et al.* 2011). Applying psychosocial development theory that human development is influenced by the interaction of psychological and social factors (psychosocial), it is proposed that psychosocial factors should have some effects on the development of entrepreneurial quality at an individual level. McKeown, Nixon, Martin and Ranson (1996) claimed that human quality can be developed from the participation in life. Whitbourne *et al.* (2009) adopted this theory by investigating the relationship between life history variables namely education, work and long term relationships with changes in psychosocial development. Mroczek & Spiro (2005) added that these life history variables are important predictors in individual quality development. Moreover, Eggebeen and Sturgeon (2006) stated that exposure to the differing value systems prevalent during colleges and early adult years played a role in affecting ones values, attitudes and relationship qualities and dynamics differently.

### III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework proposed to investigate the desirable chain of university experience and entrepreneurial quality among university students in Focused University.



### IV. MEASUREMENT OF THE ITEMS

Entrepreneurial quality consists of the element of need for achievement, locus of control, risk taking propensity, perseverance, independent, creativity and innovative and knowledgeable. 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). The Cronbach's efficient alpha for creativity is 0.96. 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.

## V. DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS

The population for this study is university students from Focused University in Malaysia. A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed to the graduate students in Malaysian Focused Universities. Out of 250 questionnaires distributed, only 173 were collected for data analysis. Three Focused University in Malaysia were selected in this study. A linear regression analysis through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 was used to examine the influence of university experience on entrepreneurial quality among graduate students in Focused University in Malaysia.

This study used probability sampling design. A cluster sampling technique as one of the probability sampling design 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). Three focused 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.

## VI. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

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  $R^2$  ( $R^2 = 0.230$ ) contributes 23.0% towards entrepreneurial quality among graduate students in Malaysian Public Universities. Meanwhile, the value of coefficient (unstandardized Coefficients) or  $\beta = 0.473$  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 0.473 units. Therefore, based on the findings, H1 is supported.

**Table I**  
**Regression analysis of the university experience and entrepreneurial quality**  
 Coefficients<sup>a</sup>

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	2.619	.131		20.045	.000
University Experience	.283	.031	.473	9.132	.000

<sup>a</sup> Dependent variable: entrepreneurial quality

The influence of university experience on entrepreneurial quality among university students in Focused University.

This study found that the university experience was significantly influence the entrepreneurial quality among university students in Focused 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.

## VII. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

It is recommended that future researcher to conduct a longitudinal study on the development of entrepreneurial quality since entrepreneurship is a process which takes certain period of time; that is there might be other factors at the early stage of the development of entrepreneurial quality in university students. A wider and more detailed approach on entrepreneurial quality among university students should be done. This paper focus only on the university experience among university students. Other than this factor, future studies might also look at the other factors that can influence the development of entrepreneurial quality among university students in other category of higher learning institutions.

## VIII. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

University experience plays an important role in developing entrepreneurial quality among university students in focused university. Therefore from the findings, it is hoped that the entrepreneurial quality literature is expanded, such as the examination of entrepreneurial quality in university student context. Moreover, this study can also be served 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). It is also 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.

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