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The Relationship Between Educational Support And Entrepreneurial Intentions in Malaysian Higher Learning Institution

Mumtaz Begam Abdul Kadir* a, Munirah Salim b, Halimahton Kamarudin c

Mumtaz Begam Abdul Kadir, MARA Professional College, 75300 Melaka, Malaysia
Munirah Salim, MARA Professional College, 75300 Melaka, Malaysia
Halimahton Kamarudin, MARA Professional College, 75300 Melaka, Malaysia

Abstract

A study was conducted to determine the relationship between educational support and entrepreneurial intention of MARA Professional College students. The psychological model based on Ajzen’s theory of planned behaviour was used to identify the factors influencing the entrepreneurial intention of these students. The study analyzes the relationship between educational support towards entrepreneurial intention. Data were collected via questionnaire from 183 students of three different programmes offered in MARA Professional Colleges. The study utilized correlation and regression statistics to analyse the data. The finding of the survey shows that there is a significant relationship between attitudinal factor (r=0.5324), behavioural factor (r=0.5668) and educational support (r=0.6241) towards entrepreneurial intention. Educational support contributed 40.8% to attitudinal factor and 57.6% to behavioural factor. All three factors (attitudinal, behavioural and educational support) contribute 43.3% towards entrepreneurial intention among MARA Professional College. It is suggested educational support through professional education in these colleges is an efficient way of obtaining necessary knowledge about entrepreneurship. The result of the study has valuable implications for policy makers in Higher Education Division, college administrators and educators.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Intention; Entrepreneurship Education; Educational Support

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurial education has primarily occurred in Mara Professional College Malaysia. Students from various academic programmes are educated in the foundations of entrepreneurial knowledge, skills and attitudes (Autio et al. 1997; Gatewood et al., 2002; Hisrich, Langan-Fox & Grant, 2007; Mumtaz et al., 2010). Significant amount of money have been spent to design a viable entrepreneurship education for the students enrolling to these colleges. The current situation is that after 3 years of following business and entrepreneurship based programmes, the students’ interest in pursuing self-employment seemed to dissipate (Salmah et al. 2007; Zuraidah 2010 & Mumtaz et al. 2010). However, it is unknown whether contextual founding conditions or rather personality traits that drive students’ intention to self-employment. This factors mentioned above will be useful to policy makers to design effective programmes (Autio et al. 1997). Further; none of the studies in Malaysia have established the relationship between the variables (educational support , attitudinal factors, behavioural factors) demonstrating a significant gap in knowledge.

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Due to this current situation, there is a desire to address the following research questions:

i. Does educational support contribute towards attitudinal factors (personality traits, locus of control, curiosity) to be an entrepreneur.

ii. Does educational support contribute towards behavioural factors (risk taking and creativity) to be an entrepreneur.

iii. Does attitudinal, behavioural and educational support contribute towards intention to be an entrepreneur.

2. Literature Review

An intention is an anticipated outcome that guided by planned actions. The theory of planned behaviour is linked between attitudes and behaviours (Ajzen 1991). Intentions predict deliberate behaviours because behaviour can be planned. Intention is assumed to take hold of emotional factors that influence behaviour and indicate one’s effort to try to perform intentional behaviour. In the context of entrepreneurship, intention is identified as the important property for establishing an organisation (Kantz & Gartner 1988) and as a predictor of new reliable enterprise (Krueger 2000).

Many studies on college students’ intention to be entrepreneurs have been conducted. Christian (2000) studied on Bataknese students’ intention to be entrepreneurs and found that a number of 65% respondent had intention to be entrepreneurs. Another study on Balinese students’ intention found that out of 105 respondents, as much as 39.5% stated to intent to be an entrepreneur and as much as 35% stated to desire to be entrepreneurs (Lie 2004). Study by Christine (2004) on Chinese students’ intention to be entrepreneurs found that out of 105 respondents, 33.66% stated to intend to be entrepreneurs and 13.86% stated to desire to be entrepreneurs. Similar study done by Gerald (2006) on Javanese students’ intention to be entrepreneurs found that out of 194 respondents, as much as 30.4% stated to intent to be entrepreneurs and 22% stated to desire to be entrepreneurs.

The approaches of entrepreneurial intention studies focus on personal characteristics (risk-taking, propensity, tolerance for ambiguity, internal locus of control, innovativeness and independence) and motivational factors (love for money, desire for security and desire for status), rather than the differences in contextual factors (Ang and Hong 2000; Henderson and Robertson 2000; Wang and Wong 2004).

Enterprise education should develop entrepreneurial people and aspirations by equipping individuals with the appropriate knowledge and skills to initiate and sustain enterprises (Gatewood et al., 2002). There is a great variety in entrepreneurial education scope and structure among higher education in Malaysia. Entrepreneurship is likely to be useless unless the skill is developed through education and experience (KF, 2007; Hisrich, Langan-Fox & Grant, 2007).

Personality traits are becoming popular as an explanation of entrepreneurial behaviours and intentions. Personality traits describe as constructs to explain regularities in people behaviour. Contemporary theorist identifies five fundamental personality dimensions which are extroversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience. Individuals who have a strong need to achieve are among those who want to solve problems themselves, set targets and strive for these targets through their own efforts, demonstrate a higher performance in challenging tasks and are innovative in the sense of looking for new and better ways to improve their performance (Littunen, 2000; Utsch and Rauch, 2000).

The concept of locus of control refers to a generalized belief that a person can or cannot control his or her own destiny. In the study by Entrialgo et al. (2000) locus of control, need for achievement and tolerance for ambiguity are regarded as the determinants of the tendency for entrepreneurship. According to Rotter(1996) individuals vary in terms of how much personal responsibility they perceive and accept for their behavior and its consequences. Individuals with an external LoC believe circumstances beyond their immediate control such as luck, fate and other people affect their performance across a range of activities. Individuals with an internal LoC believe they personally control events and consequences in their lives (Koh, 1996; Riipinen, 1994; Hansemark, 1998). It is believed that entrepreneurs have an internal locus of control.

Risk taking propensity refers to the propensity of an individual to exhibit risk taking or risk avoidance when confronted with risky situations. Entrepreneurship is historically associated with risk taking. In the literature on entrepreneurship, thus, entrepreneurs are generally characterized as having a greater propensity to take risks than other groups (Cromie, 2000; and Thomas and Mueller, 2000; Teoh and Foo, 1997).

Curiosity is a motivational prerequisite for exploratory behaviour (Voss and Keller 1983). Curiosity has also been identified as a major motivator of behaviour in domains such as educational, occupational and recreational areas (Reio et al 2006). A study conducted by kashdan et al (2004) found that highly curious individual are more
motivated to explore new environments to obtain diverse cognitive, perceptual, or sensational information to satisfy their curiosity.

An entrepreneur is a person who creates new business by taking risks and uncertainties in order to gain some benefits and growth in business by identifying the opportunities and combining different resources required to establish the new business (Zimmerer & Scarborough 2004). Brockhaus (1980) identified that risk to tolerance or ambiguity tolerance does not affect entrepreneurs differently however, Ghosh and ray (1997) identified that risk and ambiguity have distinguished effects on entrepreneurial behaviour.

High creativity in running enterprise is a need for an entrepreneur. An entrepreneur should be ready to keep thinking and finding new opportunity in coping with problems and grow the enterprise. Scott (1999) conducted a study of 36 entrepreneurial start-ups addressing specifically the role of creativity in business start-ups. This study summarizes case findings of these thirty-six start-ups and determines that where the fits are strong novelty generating components of creativity. Study by Riyanti (2007) found that an entrepreneur’s creativity generally leads to innovative creativity.

Finding from a study conducted on MBA students’ entrepreneurial characteristics of need for achievement, locus of control, risk taking propensity, tolerance of ambiguity and innovativeness between those students who had entrepreneurial and also those found with non entrepreneurial intentions (Koh 1996).

Educational support through professional education in universities is an efficient way of obtaining necessary knowledge about entrepreneurship. This is supported by the result from a study done by Wang and Wong (2004) pointing out the fact that entrepreneurial dreams of many students are hindered by inadequate preparation of the academic institution. According to Ibrahim and Soufani (2002), the school and education system plays a critical role in identifying and shaping entrepreneurial traits. Other studies have pointed out that entrepreneurship education, especially education that provides technological training, is crucial to enhance entrepreneurs’ innovation skills in an increasingly challenging environment (Clarke 1990; Menzies and Paradi 2003).

Therefore, the literatures from previous studies show variables that might affect entrepreneurial intention. The area of this study covers behavioural, attitudinal and educational support factors and how these impact the intentions of students to become entrepreneurs.

3. Methodology

This study was carried out through a survey method, using questionnaires as the main instrument. This sample consists of 183 respondents among students from four programmes (Diploma in Entrepreneurship, Diploma in Business Studies, Diploma in Accountancy and Diploma in Islamic Banking and Finance) in MARA Professional Colleges. The conceptual framework for this study is built based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour by Ajzen (1991) and previously presented model on determinants of entrepreneurial intentions and behaviour by Bird (1988), Krueger and Carsrud (1993) and Shapero and Sokol (1982). This conceptual framework explains that entrepreneurial intention among students is influence by three main factor which are attitudinal factor, educational support and behavioural factors as shown in Figure 1. The dependent variable in this research is intention of entrepreneurship. Intentionality can be defined as a state of mind directing a person’s attention, experience and action towards a specific path to achieve something (Bird 1988). Therefore, intention is a predictor of planned entrepreneurial behaviour (Kruger 1993). The independent variables employed in this framework are attitudinal factor (personal traits, risk taking and locus of control); behavioural factors (creativity and curiosity) and educational support (syllabus, pedagogy and co-curriculum).

The questionnaire consists of 2 sections to measure the studied elements. Section A consists of 3 items on the demography information i.e. gender, programme and family background. Section B contains 70 items firstly, to measure attitudinal factor (personal traits, curiosity and locus of control), behavioural factors (creativity and risk taking) and educational support (syllabus, pedagogy and co-curriculum). In order to examine the personality traits, 9 items from five trait clusters which are extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness were used. The items have been adapted from The structure of phenotypic personality traits. (Goldberg 1993) and A very brief measure of the Big-five personality domains. (Gosling et al. 2003). 5 items were constructed to look into the internal locus of control and 10 items were to look into level of curiosity of an individual. These items were adapted from Traits and state curiosity in genesis of intimacy (Kashdan et al 2004). The 10 items on risk taking were adapted from A Domain-specific Risk-attitude scale. (Weber et al 2002). No modification was made to measure creativity and innovation which was taken from Entrepreneurial Leadership And New Ventures (Chen 2007). The items for educational support were constructed by researches taking into consideration of the present educational support given by MARA to these MARA Professional Colleges. To measure the entrepreneurial intention among students, 8 items were
taken from *The proactive personality scale as a predictor of entrepreneurial intention* (Crant 1996). Likert scale was used whereby scale ‘1’ is for Strongly Disagree and scale ‘7’ is for Strongly Agree.

![Research Conceptual Framework](image)

Fig 1: Research Conceptual Framework
(Adapted from Bird (1993), Krueger and Carusrud (1993) & Shapero and Sokol (1982))

A pilot study was carried out to revise the questionnaire and for item analysis. The validity and reliability of the questionnaire was measured. Factor analysis was performed to determine the underlying factorial structure of the scale. The result of the analysis revealed three factors (behavioural factor, educational support and attitudinal factor) with eigenvalues greater than 1.0. The internal consistencies of scale were assessed through computing Cronbach’s alpha. The components of factor affecting entrepreneurial intention show the reliability value between 0.813 to 0.930. Implication from these values indicates that all of the items used for each component in the questionnaire have a high and consistent reliability values.

### 4. Findings

The relationship between attitudinal factors, behavioural factor, educational support and entrepreneurial intention.

#### Table 2 Analysis of Pearson Correlation– Zero Order

| Attitudinal Factor | Educational Support | Behavioral Support |
|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Entrepreneurial Intention | 0.532 (181) \( p = 0.00 \) | 0.624 (181) \( p = 0.00 \) | 0.567 (181) \( p = 0.00 \) |
| Attitudinal Factor | 1.000 (0) \( p = 0.00 \) | 0.639 (181) \( p = 0.00 \) | 0.551 (181) \( p = 0.00 \) |
| Educational Support | 0.639 (181) \( p = 0.00 \) | 1.000 (0) \( p = 0.00 \) | 0.759 (181) \( p = 0.00 \) |
| Behavioral Factor | 0.551 (181) \( p = 0.00 \) | 0.759 (181) \( p = 0.00 \) | 1.000 (0) \( p = 0.00 \) |

\( p < 0.05 \)
Correlations were calculated to determine to what extent attitudinal factors, behavioural factors and educational factors correlated with entrepreneurial intention. As can be seen in Table 2, significant positive correlations \((p < 0.05)\) were formed for all three variables. Correlations ranged from 0.532 for attitudinal factor, 0.624 for educational support, to 0.567 for behavioural factor.

The correlation coefficient value gained from this analysis shows a solid relationship between the three elements (Davies in Baharom 2004). Whereby, this results show that there is a relationship between attitudinal factors, behavioural factors and educational support towards developing entrepreneurial intention among students.

Contribution of educational support towards attitudinal and behavioural to be an entrepreneur.

The result from the correlation as shown in Table 2 fulfils the required conditions for regression analysis. The correlation analysis shows that the studied dependent variable does not have a high correlation. Tabachnik and Fidell (1996) in Pallant (2001) stated that regression analysis can only be done if the correlation value between the studied enabler is < 0.7. Thus, the regression analysis can be carried out. Linear regression analysis was used to determine the contribution of the independent variable which is the attitudinal factor, behavioural factor and educational support towards intention to be an entrepreneur among students in MARA Professional College as stated in hypothesis \(H_1\) below.

\(H_1\): There is significant contribution from educational support towards attitudinal factor.

\(H_2\): There is significant contribution from educational support towards behavioural factor.

Table 3 and 4 show the results of linear regression analysis for the influence of educational support towards attitudinal factor that influence entrepreneurial intention. The linear regression analysis shows that educational support is the indicator with correlation \((\beta = 0.639, t = 11.168, p = 0.000)\) \((p < 0.05)\) and the value of \(R^2\) \((R^2 = 0.408)\) contributes 40.8% towards attitudinal factor influencing to be an entrepreneurship. Thus, \(H_1\) will be accepted When the score for educational support goes up a unit, the score for attitudinal factor will also increase up to 0.733 unit.

| Independent Variable | B     | Beta (β) | t     | Sig .t | \(R^2\) | Contribution (%) |
|----------------------|-------|----------|-------|--------|---------|-----------------|
| Educational Support  | 0.733 | 0.639    | 11.168| 0.000  | 0.408   | 40.8            |
| Constant             | 1.637 | .721     | 0.000 |        |         |                 |

\(R\) 0.639
\(R\) squared 0.408
Adjusted \(R\) squared 0.405
Standard Error 0.670

The contribution of educational support towards attitudinal factor forms the linear regression as below:

\[ Y = 1.637 + 0.639 \times X_1 + 0.670 \]

\(Y = \) Attitudinal Factor  
\(X_1 = \) Educational Support  
Constant 1.637  
Standard Error 0.347

Table 5 and 6 show the results of linear regression analysis for the contribution of educational support towards behavioural factor. The linear regression analysis shows that educational support is the indicator with correlation \((\beta = \)
0.567, t = 9.257 and p = 0.000) (p<0.05) and the value of $R^2$ ($R^2=0.321$) contributes 32.1% towards behavioural factor influencing entrepreneurial intention among Mara Professional College students. Thus, H2 will be accepted. When the score for attitudinal factor goes up a unit, the score for entrepreneurial intention will also increase up to 0.567 unit.

**Table 5 Analysis of Linear Regression Between Educational Support towards Behavioural Factors**

| Independent Variable | B    | Beta (β) | t      | Sig.-t | $R^2$ | Contribution (%) |
|----------------------|------|----------|--------|--------|-------|-----------------|
| Educational support  | 0.734| 0.759    | 15.666 | 0.000  | 0.576 | 57.6            |
| Constant             | 1.428| 5.776    | 0.000  |        |       |                 |

The contribution of educational support towards behavioural factors forms the linear regression as below:

$$Y = 1.428 + 0.734X_1 + 0.047$$

**Y** = Behavioural Factors  
**X₁** = Educational Support  
Constant = 1.428  
Standard Error = 0.047

Contribution of attitudinal, behavioural and educational support factor towards intention to be an entrepreneur.

H₃: There is no significant contribution from independent variable (attitudinal factor, behavioural factor and educational support) towards intention to be entrepreneur.

The linear regression analysis in Table 7 and 8 show that the independent enabler which are the attitudinal factor, behavioural factor and educational support are the indicators which has the correlation of ($β = 0.794$, $t=10.747$ and $p=0.000$) (p<0.05) and the value of $R^2$ ($R^2=0.390$) indicates the contribution of 39% towards the entrepreneurial intention among MARA Professional College students. When the score for educational support goes up a unit, the score for the construction of vision, mission and goal also will increase to 0.794 unit. Thus, H3 is accepted.

**Table 7 Analysis of Linear Regression Between attitudinal factors, behavioural factors and Educational Support towards Intention to be Entrepreneur**

| Independent Variable   | B    | Beta (β) | t      | Sig.-t | $R^2$ | Contribution (%) |
|------------------------|------|----------|--------|--------|-------|-----------------|
| Attitudinal Factors    | 0.227| 0.205    | 2.777  | 0.006  | 0.434 | 43.4            |
| Behavioural Factors    | 0.247| 0.115    | 2.156  | 0.032  |       |                 |
| Educational Support    | 0.447| 0.351    | 3.718  | 0.000  |       |                 |
| Constant               | 0.634| 1.489    | 0.001  |        |       |                 |

$R = 0.659^*$

$R$ squared = 0.434  
Adjusted $R$ squared = 0.425  
Standard Error = 0.762
Table 8  Analysis of Variance

| Sumber          | Sum of Squared | df | Mean Square | F     | Sig (p) |
|-----------------|----------------|----|-------------|-------|---------|
| Regression      | 79.920         | 3  | 26.640      | 45.832| 0.000a  |
| Residual        | 104.045        | 179| 0.581       |       |         |
| Total           | 183.966        | 182|             |       |         |

The contribution of independent enabler towards the entrepreneurial intention among MARA Professional College forms the linear regression as below

\[
Y = 0.634 + 0.227 X_1 + 0.247 X_2 + 0.447 X_3 + 0.426
\]

\[Y\] = Entrepreneurial Intention
\[X_1\] = Attitudinal Factors
\[X_2\] = Behavioural Factors
\[X_3\] = Educational Support
Constant 0.634
Standard Error 0.42

From the linear regression analysis can be concluded that attitudinal factors, behavioural factors and educational support contributed the 43.4 % towards entrepreneurial intention among MARA Professional College.

5. Discussion & Practical Implication

The traditional research stream on entrepreneurial behaviour has emphasized psychological and non-psychological factors to explain why someone start a new firm. The psychological factors, or traits perspective, addresses several human attributes, such as the need for achievement (McClelland, 1961) desire for independence (Cromie, 1987), internal locus of control (Cromie and Johns, 1983; Cromie, 1987), and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). The non-psychological factors are event based and determine the behaviour of the individual. Individuals act according the constraints and possibilities of the situation they found themselves in. The entrepreneurial event approach stresses that intentions are a robust predictor of individual behaviour such as starting a new firm (Ajzen, 1991; Krueger, 1993).

This study shows that purposeful education enhances students’ entrepreneurial intention by providing them with attitudes, knowledge and skills to cope with the complexities embedded in entrepreneurial tasks such as opportunity seeking, resource assembling and leading the business to success (Wilson, Kickul & Marlino, 2007). Formal entrepreneurial education provides students experience of mastery, role models, social persuasion and support by involving them in hands-on learning activities, business plan development and running simulated or real small business (Fiet, 2000; Segal, Borgia & Schoenfeld, 2005). This finding concurs with Lussiers and Pfeifer’s (2001) findings, where entrepreneur with higher education level, industrial and managerial experience, and business exposure have greater chance of succeeding in their business.

Students participation in entrepreneurial training programmes has been associated with changes in attitudes and intentions towards entrepreneurship and these trainings need proper teaching strategies compatible with the student-centred approach (Kuratko 2005). This is because the development of students’ entrepreneurial intention will be affected by the entrepreneurial instructions they received such as team oriented method and learning-by-doing hands-on activities (Rasmussen & Sorheim (2006) ; Frank et. al. (2005). Wood and Bandura (1991) suggested higher education teaching and learning should focus on providing mastery experience or repeated performance accomplishment.

The current study illustrated that proper entrepreneurship education exposure will enable students to have positive image in choosing entrepreneurship as a career. Entrepreneurship education, needs a different teaching pedagogy in which entrepreneurship education is linked to work-related learning (Dwerryhouse 2001), experiential learning (Kolb 1984), action-learning (Smith 2001) and entrepreneurial training (Gibb 1999). This is in line with the steps taken by Mara Higher Education Division in offering entrepreneurship courses to all students so as to improve their entrepreneurial intention as suggested by Peterman and Kennedy (2003) and Souitaris, Zerbinati, and Al-Laham (2007) who found that exposure to entrepreneurship education increases entrepreneurial intention. Emphasize is also given to teaching pedagogy and lecturers are send for training to equipment them with these pedagogical knowledge.
There are many ways to offer entrepreneurship education. If the objective is to provide understanding of what entrepreneurship is about, the most effective way to achieve this objective is to provide information through public channels such as media, seminars or lectures. These methods are effective in terms of sending the relevant information to a broader population in a relatively short time period. If the objective is to equip individuals with entrepreneurial skills which are applicable directly to work, the best way to deliver the education and training is via vehicles such as industrial training. However, if the objective of education is to prepare individuals to act as entrepreneurs, the most effective technique is to facilitate experiments by trying entrepreneurship out in a controlled environment, for instance through business simulation or role playing. (Hytti and O’Gorman 2004). This study also found that the industrial training programme made compulsory for all programme and the changes made in the programme by introducing students to business simulation by MARA policy makers concurs with Hytti and O’Gorman (2004).

Although there is no consensus on the content and structure of entrepreneurship education, the findings of current study showed that Higher Education Institution should, at least, “encourage the development of creative ideas for being an entrepreneur”, “provide the necessary knowledge about entrepreneurship”, and “develop the entrepreneurial skills” through educational support such as pedagogical, syllabus and co-curricular activities. It is clear that education and training are among the most important elements in the development of human resources. The previous studies in literature also indicate a link between education and entrepreneurship. It has been found that the probability of entrepreneurial intention is higher for students who have entrepreneurial skills, recognizes opportunities to start up, have received specific information, and considered that their education institutions are giving a positive support to entrepreneurship (Galloway and Brown 2002; Gorman and Hanlon 1997; Henderson and Robertson 2000).

It is suggested that the whole set of education and training activities within the educational system which provides adequate knowledge and inspiration for entrepreneurship develop in the students’ intention to perform entrepreneurial behaviours and possibility of choosing an entrepreneurial career might increase among young people. This had supported Shapero’s (1982) findings where it was argued that attitudes toward entrepreneurship should partly derive from prior exposure to entrepreneurial activity and affect intentions through changing attitudes. It is obvious that this result confirms the key role of educational support in the development of entrepreneurial intention. Therefore, in the light of the current study, it might be stated that entrepreneurship can be fostered as a result of a learning process.

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