

## The Perceived Entrepreneurial Characteristics of Malaysian Living Skill Teachers: Implication for Teacher Preparation Programme

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### ABSTRAK

Usaha keusahawanan dalam bentuk perniagaan kecil dan baru menjadi satu aspek penting dalam pertumbuhan ekonomi sesebuah negara. Mata pelajaran Kemahiran Hidup Bersepadu (KHB) yang mengandungi komponen keusahawanan telah diperkenalkan dalam kurikulum sekolah di Malaysia semenjak tahun 1988, tetapi persoalan timbul sama ada guru yang mengajar komponen tersebut mempunyai ciri-ciri keusahawanan yang diperlukan. Satu tinjauan telah dijalankan untuk mengkaji ciri keusahawanan guru Kemahiran Hidup Bersepadu (KHB) di sekolah menengah di Malaysia. Dapatan menunjukkan kebanyakan guru yang terlibat dalam kajian ini mempunyai tahap ciri keusahawanan yang sederhana. Guru lelaki mempunyai ciri keusahawanan yang lebih tinggi berbanding guru perempuan. Tidak ada perbezaan ciri keusahawanan antara guru yang mempunyai tanggungjawab pengajaran yang berbeza. Guru yang mempunyai aspirasi untuk menjadi usahawan mempunyai ciri keusahawanan yang lebih tinggi berbanding guru yang tidak mempunyai aspirasi sedemikian. Adalah dipercayai bahawa semua guru KHB mesti mempunyai ciri-ciri keusahawanan dan ianya boleh dibentuk melalui latihan dalam perkhidmatan. Disyorkan supaya semua program latihan perguruan mempunyai satu kursus 3 kredit dalam bidang pendidikan keusahawanan.

### ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurial efforts in the form of small, new businesses have become an important force in the economic growth of a nation. Living Skills subject (KHB) with an entrepreneurship component was introduced in the Malaysian school curriculum since 1988, but a question arise whether the teachers themselves possess the entrepreneurial characteristics needed. A survey was conducted to investigate the levels of the perceived entrepreneurial characteristics of the Integrated Living Skills teachers (KHB) in Malaysian secondary schools. Findings indicated that a majority of the teachers participated in the study had a moderate level of perceived entrepreneurial characteristics. Male teachers were more entrepreneurial compared to female teachers. The entrepreneurial characteristics of teachers with different teaching responsibility did not differ. Teachers who aspired for entrepreneurship were more entrepreneurial than the teachers who did not have such an aspiration. It is believed that all KHB teachers should possess the entrepreneurship characteristics and it can be developed through in-service training. It is suggested that all teacher education programme should have a 3 credit course in entrepreneurship education.

### INTRODUCTION

The growing interest of entrepreneurship, especially on the part of the government, is prompted in part by the assumptions that much of the economy's ability to innovate, diversify, and create new jobs comes from the small

business sectors (Shapiro 1985). Small businesses are presumed to be a major driving force behind the job creation as well as sustaining the economic development of a country. In fact, entrepreneurial efforts in the form of small, new businesses have become an important force

in the economic growth of a nation (Oslo 1985). Birch (1990) stated that during the 1980s the Fortune 500 firms in the US eliminated 4 million workers, but during the same period the total U.S. employment expanded by more than 20 million. Majority of them were employed by small business companies. The entrepreneurial sector as posited by Birley (1989) is viewed as a significant factor in designing the strategies for the recovery and economic growth of many nations.

Entrepreneurship itself has been diversely defined by many people. Entrepreneurship as defined by Gunderson (1990) is the enhancement of skills to serve the consumers. It has been defined by Kuratko and Hodgetts (1992) as a process of innovation and venture creation. Entrepreneurship is also defined as a process of creating something different with value (Hisrich and Peter 1995).

Who are the entrepreneurs? According to Burch (1986), typically an entrepreneur is seen as someone who owns and operates small businesses. However, he argued that simply to own or operate a small business does not make someone an entrepreneur. It is more than owning and operating a small business. Entrepreneurs are the initiators of economic growth. They are the self-starters and doers. Kuehl and Lambing (1990) regarded the entrepreneur as a person who takes initiative for a business project, organizes the resources it requires, and assumes the risks it entails. An entrepreneur is someone with a unique idea beyond the imagination of others. He or she is someone who always goes against the odds because he or she can see the future of his or her venture. As such, Oslo (1985) defined the entrepreneur as a future-oriented, risk-taking person who engages in the identification and development of new ideas. In the field of education, we may define a teacher who is entrepreneurial as a teacher who is innovative, creative, and futuristic. Those teachers have ideas on how to make teaching and learning appealing to students.

Studies have unearthed different characteristics of successful entrepreneurs. For example, Moorman and Haloran (1996) postulated that in order to be successful, an entrepreneur should have the confidence, determination, perseverance, creativity, and need for achievement. Hisrich and Peters (1995), on

the other hand perceived that an entrepreneur should have three basic skills which include technical skills, business management skills, and personal entrepreneurial skills.

### STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Studies on the entrepreneurial characteristics of students are numerous (eg. Kourilsky 1990; Solomon and Fernald 1990; and Hatten and Ruthland 1995). Their findings showed that entrepreneurial characteristics are inherent among students. However, the writers are not able to find a research investigating the entrepreneurial characteristics of vocational and technical teachers. Lachman (1980) believed that if a person has the same characteristics as entrepreneurs he or she will have a higher tendency to perform entrepreneurial acts than people who do not possess such characteristics.

Entrepreneurs can be developed if given proper training and exposure. Meyers (1992) suggested that if students are to be prepared to be entrepreneurs, they should be provided with experiences to assist them in the development of entrepreneurial skills. In Malaysia, various government agencies, such as the Ministry of Entrepreneurs Development, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Youth and Sports have undertaken steps to create entrepreneurs. However, in order to provide a good entrepreneurial training, it is very proper for the trainer in this case, the school teachers to be entrepreneurial. But, a question arises as to whether or not the school teachers, especially the integrated living skill (KHB) teachers possess the entrepreneurial characteristics. Thus, a study was conducted to ascertain the entrepreneurial characteristics of the KHB teachers.

### OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of the study was to assess the perceived entrepreneurial characteristics of the KHB teachers. More specifically, the study attempted to answer the following research questions:

- What are the levels of perceived entrepreneurial characteristics of the KHB teachers?
- Do the perceived entrepreneurial characteristics of teachers who primarily teach KHB subject differ than teachers who did not primarily teach KHB subject?

- Do the perceived entrepreneurial characteristics of male and female teachers differ significantly?
- Do the perceived entrepreneurial characteristics of teachers with different specialization during teacher training differ significantly?
- Do the perceived entrepreneurial characteristics of teachers who aspire to be entrepreneurs differ significantly from those who do not aspire to be entrepreneurs?
- Do the perceived entrepreneurial characteristics differ significantly among teachers of different races?

**METHODOLOGY**

The study employed a descriptive correlational research method. The independent variables were selected demographic variables which include gender, training specialization, race and aspiration. The dependent variable was the perceived entrepreneurial characteristics.

*Population and Sample*

The target population was all integrated living skill teachers in Malaysia. The sample consisted of 153 KHB teachers from the selected academic schools in Malaysia. A multi-stage random sampling procedure was employed to obtain the sample. Four states were randomly selected. From each of the four selected states, two school districts were randomly selected. From the selected school district, a random selection of secondary schools was done. All KHB teachers from the selected schools formed the sample of the study.

*Instrumentation*

The research instrument was developed by the researchers. It consists of the section about demographic variables and the section containing statements describing the entrepreneurial characteristics. The section on the entrepreneurial characteristics was developed based on the literature about entrepreneurship. Originally, the research instrument contained 84 statements/ items that describe the entrepreneurial characteristics. The perceived entrepreneurial characteristics were measured using 5 point Likert scale (5= strongly agree, 4=agree, 3= moderately agree, 2=disagree, and 1=strongly disagree). However, based on the pilot-test results, the statement/items in the research

instrument were reduced to 42 statements on entrepreneurial characteristics (Table 5). The elimination of the statements was done based on the reliability test results. The statements were removed from the questionnaire on two basis: (1) negative total item correlation and (2) close to zero correlation. The estimated reliability coefficient of the final research instrument containing 42 items was 0.93.

**RESULTS**

One hundred and fifty-three Integrated Living Skills (KHB) teachers were involved in the study. About 61% of them were female teachers and 39% were male teachers. A majority of them were Malay teachers (Table 1). Their ages were between 21 and 54 years old with a mean of 34.6 years old. On the average the KHB teachers have been in the teaching profession for almost 12 years. They have taught the KHB subjects for about 6.5 years. Most of them (81%) were educated at the Teacher Training Colleges. They were trained in home science, agricultural science, industrial arts, integrated living skills, and commerce (Table 2). Even though their training specializations differed, most of them taught the KHB subject in school (Table 3).

The first research question was designed to ascertain the perceived entrepreneurial

TABLE 1  
Ethnic background of the respondents (n = 153)

Ethnic background	f	%
Bumiputra	120	78.4
Chinese	20	13.1
Indians	2	1.3
Others	11	7.2
Total	153	100.00

TABLE 2  
Areas of specialization at the certificate level (n=124)

Areas of specialization	f	%
Home Science	37	29.8
Agriculture Science	30	24.2
Industrial Arts	11	8.9
Living Skills	28	22.6
Commerce	11	8.9
Others	7	5.6
Total	124	100.00

TABLE 3  
Types of academic subjects (primarily) taught by the respondents (n=131)

Subjects	f	%
Home Science	5	3.8
Agriculture Science	4	3.0
Living Skills	118	90.0
English	1	.8
Bahasa Melayu	2	1.6
Commerce	1	.8
Total	131	100.00

characteristics of the KHB teachers. As shown in Table 5, the respondents reacted favorably to the statements describing their entrepreneurial characteristics (M=3.98, SD. =.31). The respondents' perceptions of their entrepreneurial characteristics were divided into three categories (Table 4). The total score of the perceived entrepreneurial characteristics which was the accumulated scores of all 42 items was used as the basis to classify the levels of perceived entrepreneurial characteristics of the KHB teachers. The total scores of the perceived entrepreneurial characteristics of the KHB teachers were between 106 and 203 with a mean of 164.14 and a standard deviation of 13.99. Although the KHB teachers reacted favorably to the statements of their entrepreneurial

characteristics, a majority of the them posses a medium level of entrepreneurial characteristics

Another objective of the study was to ascertain if the perceived entrepreneurial characteristics differ among the male and female KHB teachers. The study showed that the perceived entrepreneurial characteristics were more prominent among male teachers than female teachers (M= 168.33 and M=161.23 respectively,  $t = 3.01, p = .003$ ). The entrepreneurial characteristics were also more prominent among teachers who aspired to be entrepreneurs than teachers who did not aspire to be entrepreneurs (M = 165.05 and M = 156.78 respectively;  $t = 2.09, p = .019$ ). On the other hand, the study showed that the perceived entrepreneurial characteristics did not differ among teachers of different ethnic groups [ $t = .72, p = .48$ ], among teachers with different specializations [ $F_{(5,118)} = 1.06, p = .38$ ], and among teachers with different teaching emphasis in schools ( $t = .33, p > .05$ ), as illustrated in Table 6.

TABLE 4  
Levels of the perceived entrepreneurial characteristics of the KHB teachers (n=137)

Scores	Level	%
<150.14	Low	13.1
150.14 - 178.13	Medium	76.7
>178.13	High	10.2

TABLE 5  
Means and standard deviations of the perceived entrepreneurial characteristics of KHB teachers

If nobody will go somewhere with me, I'll go by myself [DEPENDABLE]	4.11	.56
When I am given the job, I'll do it until it is finished [DEPENDABLE]	4.44	.65
I'll voice my opinion even if other people dislike it [DEPENDABLE]	3.83	.65
I can see many business opportunities in the community [INNOVATIVE]	4.13	.66
A problem is an opportunity for me to develop new product [INNOVATIVE]	3.94	.67
If I am an entrepreneur, I will find ways to introduce new product in the market [INNOVATIVE]	4.28	.54
Even if the risk of any investment is very high, as an entrepreneur I will invest because the return is also high [RISK-TAKER]	3.68	.74
I will never be frustrated if any of the projects I am working on fails [RISK-TAKER]	3.62	.83
I am an honest person [SELF-VALUE]	4.19	.66
I am trustworthy [SELF-VALUE]	4.32	.58
I am a responsible person [SELF-VALUE]	4.38	.55
I like to finish the job that I have started [SELF-VALUE]	4.36	.56
Favorable economic condition is important for me [SELF-VALUE]	4.35	.65
I am very firm [SELF-VALUE]	3.80	.66
I have the potential to lead [WORK VALUE]	3.82	.66
I want to lead others [WORK VALUE]	3.70	.78

I can make decisions [WORK VALUE]	3.91	.68
I can follow other directions [WORK VALUE]	4.09	.56
I like to help people [WORK VAUE]	4.24	.62
When I work, I am always on time [WORK VALUE]	4.09	.61
I can work under pressure [WORK VALUE]	3.24	1.0
I start work before being asked by someone [INITIATIVE]	3.82	.74
I will do the job before I knew that I have to do it [INITIATIVE]	3.23	.91
I will find information needed to complete the task [INITIATIVE]	4.20	.66
My health does not hinder me to teach [ENERGETIC]	3.95	.88
I like active teaching [ENERGETIC]	4.34	.53
I am always in good health and fresh even I am in stress [ENERGETIC]	3.69	.78
I can do the job better without supervision [SELF-CONFIDENCE]	3.75	.71
I always overestimate my ability to succeed in any project [SELF-CONFIDENCE]	3.97	.69
I am always worried [SELF-CONFIDENCE]	3.2	1.74
In business, I like to see the development rather than making profit [ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATION]	4.21	.64
The salary is the main factor in choosing a job [ACHIEVEMENT ORIENTATION]	4.05	.61
I like to work with well-known people [ACHEIEVEMENT ORIENTATION]	4.38	.59
When I have a difficult problem, I will spend time trying to solve it [PERSEVERANCE]	4.13	.66
I like the activities which I have the knowledge about it and am comfortable with it (OPPORTUNITY)	4.03	.61
I will try to obtain new job opportunities [OPPORTUNITY]	4.21	.49
I like to try new things that are different from what I have done [OPPORTUNITY]	4.00	.51
I like to mingle with successful people [OPPORTUNITY]	3.49	.77
I need special attention when dealing with others [OPPORTUNITY]	3.94	.61
I will look for anything to do the job quickly [EFFICIENCY ORIENTATION]	4.07	.57
I do not know how to use time wisely [EFFICIENCY ORIENTATION]	3.89	.76
I feel uneasy when time is wasted [EFFICIENCY OREINTATION]	4.18	.54

Item mean = 3.98; SD. = .31

Scale mean = 164.14; SD. = 13.99

Note on scale = 5 = Strongly agree; 4 = Agree; 3 = Moderately agree;

4 = Disagree; 1 = Strongly disagree

TABLE 6  
Means and standard deviations of the perceived entrepreneurial characteristics by selected demographic variables

Demographic	Mean	SD	t-Test	.p
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	168.33	12.7	3.01*	.003
Female	161.23	14.2		
<b>Entrepreneurial aspiration</b>				
Entrepreneurial	165.05	14.3	2.09*	.019
Non-entrepreneurial	156.78	11.1		
<b>Ethnic</b>				
Bumiputra	168.57	14.62	.72*	.475
Non-bumiputra	166.09	15.56		
<b>Teaching emphasis</b>				
167.83	14.41	.33*	.74	KHB
169.00	12.7			Non KHB

## DISCUSSION

Possessing the entrepreneurial characteristics will benefit teachers even if they themselves are not entrepreneurs. Teaching is a very complex process requiring a teacher to possess all the necessary qualities of an effective teacher. Miller (1983) contended that teachers are the most important element in vocational education. The values, skills, professional knowledge, experience, and human relation skills that a teacher possesses will determine the quality of the entrepreneurial learning opportunities available to students.

Teachers have to be entrepreneurial because they will determine the success of education. Their innovativeness and creativity in their teaching approaches will enhance not only the teaching process, but the learning process as well. They have to make the correct decisions with regard to the teaching strategies to be used with which different of students. They have to constantly look for opportunities to improve and update their knowledge and skills to be able to provide a good entrepreneurship education to students. Enterprise development and enterprise education is not so much on the development of individual businesses, but the process of developing the entrepreneur and people who may work in the businesses (Rosa 1992).

Regardless of the differences in demographic characteristics, teachers should be entrepreneurial in order to be successful in their profession. However, the present study shows the entrepreneurial characteristics differ among teachers of different gender and entrepreneurial aspirations. The study showed that the entrepreneurial characteristics did not differ among teachers with different training specializations and the subject primarily taught by the KHB teachers. The study also shows that majority of the teachers possess a medium level of the perceived entrepreneurial characteristics. We believe that every teacher who teaches the integrated living skills subject should have a high level of entrepreneurial characteristics in order to train students to be educated entrepreneurs. Scott (1988) believed that long term supply of well educated and well qualified entrepreneurs is essential to the strong modern economy. Hynes (1996) believed that it is necessary to encourage and foster enterprise at an earlier age and this can be effectively actioned through the promotion of enterprise through

education. The KHB teachers should possess all the characteristics associated with the successful entrepreneurs. Based on the findings of the study, the training programs should emphasize on developing teachers to be innovative, be able to take risk, be self-confident, be able to look for opportunities, and efficiency. However, other characteristics should be developed as well if we are to have teachers who are entrepreneurial.

## CONCLUSION

The following conclusions based on the findings of the study were:

- Majority of the teachers participated in the study had a medium level of perceived entrepreneurial characteristics.
- Male KHB teachers were more entrepreneurial compared to female KHB teachers.
- KHB teachers who aspired to be entrepreneurs perceived themselves to be more entrepreneurial than the KHB teachers who did not aspire to be entrepreneurs.
- There was no significant difference of perceived entrepreneurial characteristics among teachers who had different training specializations.
- There was no significant difference of perceived entrepreneurial characteristics among teachers who had different teaching responsibilities.

## RECOMMENDATION

The entrepreneurship education will result in the birth of new generation of entrepreneurs who will spur the economic growth of a nation. As noted by Singh (1990) entrepreneurship education can be used as a means of safeguarding the economic sovereignty of the Third World countries. Therefore, students should be trained to gradually adopt the spirit of being entrepreneurs. They should be provided the experiences through various activities in order for them to develop the entrepreneurial spirit and characteristics needed for the success in their chosen profession. The educators of the future workforce (entrepreneurs or non-entrepreneurs) must be entrepreneurial.

The educational system is one of the several environmental influences which may help form entrepreneurs who will make such contribution. Hence, schools should serve as a training ground for entrepreneurial skills development where

future entrepreneurs could adopt a positive attitude while anticipating changing needs and prepare them optimally by coupling themselves and their skills to the needs of the ever-changing environment (Leo-Paul Dana 1993). Leo suggested that entrepreneurship education should have a greater emphasis on practical experience. More activities (eg. selling of souvenirs, hari raya cards) should be planned and implemented through clubs and societies in schools. The entrepreneurial activities conducted through societies and clubs will encourage students to be entrepreneurial regardless of the type of professions they will enter. The country needs a pool of entrepreneurial workforce in order to be competitive.

With regard to teacher preparation, we would like to suggest that a general 3 credit hour course on entrepreneurship education to be included in the curriculum of teacher education. Each prospective teacher needs to be exposed to entrepreneurship regardless of their teaching specializations. Prospective teachers have to acquire the knowledge about and skill of entrepreneurship simply because by being entrepreneurial the teachers can make teaching and learning more effective. As for prospective technical and vocational education students who do not major or minor in entrepreneurship or business education, a different structure of an entrepreneurship education must be made compulsory to them. The course should have both theoretical as well as practical components. In other words, prospective teachers of technical and vocational education will have to undergo a laboratory training in entrepreneurship. Hatten and Ruthand (1995) believed that nurturing potential entrepreneur through the educational process could produce more entrepreneurs. In the case of teacher preparation, it implies that prospective teachers will be able to acquire the entrepreneurship skills that may make their teaching more successful. Some of the entrepreneurial skills that may relate well with the teaching professions are initiative, creative thinking, organizing, innovativeness and many more. It is believed (Lachman 1980) that a person who has the same characteristics as entrepreneurs will have a higher tendency to perform entrepreneurial acts than people who do not possess such characteristics.

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