

ENTREPRENEURIAL ASPIRATIONS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS ENROLLED IN VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

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Introduction

The goal of entrepreneurship education is to develop students as potential job generators rather than just job takers. It has been reported that the decision whether or not to create is central a venture to the understanding of entrepreneurial activity. Self-employment and business ownership are realistic options for students with vocational and technical skills (Kent, 1990). Unfortunately, most individuals do not perceive entrepreneurship as possible career alternative. Thus, it is important to develop positive attitude towards entrepreneurship (Zaidatol et al. 1998). Studies conducted in the Western States had indicated that entrepreneurship education was related to the decision whether or not one wants to start own business. Research also indicated that work experience, hobbies, entrepreneurial self-perception and a business idea are perhaps the strongest influence on career aspiration. Thus this study attempted: (1) to determine the entrepreneurial aspirations of secondary school students enrolled in vocational and technical subjects, (2) to investigate the implementation of vocational and technical subjects towards the development of entrepreneurship, and (3) to develop a training programme that promotes entrepreneurial aspirations.

Materials and Methods

Subjects of the study comprised of 1336 secondary school students enrolled in elective courses in the area of vocational and technology and 153 Kemahiran Hidup Bersepadu 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, and two school districts were randomly selected from each state. Respondents were randomly selected from these schools. The study employed a descriptive correlational research design. The researchers developed two research instruments, one for the teachers and the other for the students. Data were analysed by using SPSSPC+.

Results and Discussion

Findings of the study indicate that secondary school students' aspirations are still low. Those who attained a good level of academic achievement showed lower entrepreneurial potential than students who had lower academic abilities.

There was a significant difference in characteristics between the students who wanted to be self-employed and those who wanted to be employed. More Malay students and more arts students than science showed interest in entrepreneurship. In general, the students entrepreneurial characteristics are moderate with the highest mean score is to understand self-value. The lowest mean score is for the characteristics related to 'locus of control' and 'risk taking'. Regarding the implementation of entrepreneurship education this research found that about 40% of the teachers said they felt they did not have adequate exposure and were ill-equipped to teach book keeping, an important topic in entrepreneurial syllabus at Malaysian secondary schools. About 35% thought the content of entrepreneurial component was too heavy and that there was insufficient time to teach, making the subject boring to students. Lack of teaching aids was also one of the reasons why this subject was not properly delivered to students. Some of the teachers had difficulty in understanding the theory and practice of entrepreneurship. This study also found that teachers and students were equally 'knowledgable'. Because of that teachers showed positive indications in wanting to improve their skills in teaching entrepreneurship. This study recommended that entrepreneurial skills as suggested by Hisrich and Peters (1995) should be considered.

Conclusions

Secondary school students still have low entrepreneurial aspirations. Entrepreneurial characteristics of students who wanted to be self-employed are more positive than those who wanted to be employed. As a whole the students entrepreneurial potential are positive, but still low for high academic achievement students. Teachers need more entrepreneurial education and training so that they can improve their teaching, Robinson and Sexton (1995) said that a formal education has a strong positive influence on entrepreneurship especially for those who chose to be self employed.

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