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ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM ASSESSMENT BY STUDENTS OUTCOME ON THEIR PERCEIVED ENTREPRENEURIAL CHARACTERISTICS

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Abstract
The aim of this study was to determine if the participation in the Entrepreneurship program which focused on Entrepreneurial Personal Branding and Selling affected students' perceived entrepreneurial characteristics. The study focused on seven entrepreneurial characteristics which was emphasized in entrepreneurship education in the university. Subject of this study involved 88 students who participated in the course of entrepreneurship. A reflection worksheet on entrepreneurial characteristics was used as data collection tool. A pre-test was administered in the third week of the course. The post-test was conducted in the fourteenth week of the course. Results showed that overall the completion of Entrepreneurship course had a positive impact on the strengthened of perceived entrepreneurial characteristics. Detailed findings related to each entrepreneurial characteristics and discussion of findings will be explored further in the paper.

Key words: Entrepreneurship education, entrepreneurial characteristics, students

Introduction
The importance of entrepreneurship has been acknowledged more and more in recent years, including in Indonesia. Entrepreneurship education has also been encouraged to be implemented in education system in Indonesia. Therefore, some schools in Indonesia have already included entrepreneurship education in their curriculum.

It can be argued that university has a responsibility to equip students to face their life after completing the study in the university. If the graduates are only ready to seek jobs and not create jobs, unemployment are unavoidable, because the job opportunities are limited and many people fight over the jobs. Therefore, entrepreneurship education has also been adopted in universities in Indonesia. Some universities devote certain academic credits for entrepreneurship course, whereas other universities attempt to integrate entrepreneurship education with the subject course.

Needless to say, the focus of entrepreneurship education is to create more entrepreneurs. Many studies have showed that personal characteristics have a contribution to the success of business. Certain characteristics or psychological features would equip individuals to cope with the stress and rigors of entrepreneurship (Garcia, 2011). Entrepreneurs might not have a unique personality. Entrepreneurs might not be very different from others in the kind of personality. However they have different degree of psychological feature (Shaver cited in Garcia, 2011).

Rauch and Frese (2007) argue that there are small to moderate relationships between personality traits and business creation and business success. They assert that general/broad personality traits influence business creation and success by affecting the personality dynamics of goal setting and strategy development. The general/broad personality traits (e.g. extraversion, emotional...
stability, openness to experience, agreeableness, conscientiousness) influence the specific personality traits (e.g. need for achievement, risk-taking, innovative, autonomy, locus of control, self-efficacy), and the specific traits affect goals and action strategies which are important to business success.

Considering that specific personality characteristics are related to business success, entrepreneurship education should not only deal with the knowledge of entrepreneurship, but also personal characteristics development. I would argue that entrepreneurship education at the university should also develop relevant characteristics in order to equip students to face the challenge and stress in entrepreneurship or business.

The aim of this study is to determine if the participation in the Entrepreneurship program which focused on Entrepreneurial Personal Branding and Selling affected students’ perceived entrepreneurial characteristics. Specifically, the study was addressed to answer the following research question: Do students’ perceived entrepreneurial characteristics pre-test scores different from perceived entrepreneurial characteristics post-test scores after participation in the entrepreneurship course which focused on Entrepreneurial Personal Branding and Selling?

**Entrepreneurial Characteristics**

Various studies have been conducted to examine entrepreneurial characteristics with different focus of characteristics. For example, Koh (1996) in his study on Hong Kong MBA students attempted to compare the entrepreneurial characteristics between students who are entrepreneurially inclined and who are not. He looked at six characteristics, namely need of achievement, locus of control, propensity to take risk, tolerance of ambiguity, self-confidence, and innovativeness. While Aghazamani and Roozikhah (2010) in their study among Iranian and Swedish university students focused on five personal characteristics, including the need for achievement, self-confidence, risk-taking aptitude, knowledge of the market, and creativity.

Uru, Caliskan, Atam, and Aksu (2011) in their study, focused on 6 entrepreneurial characteristics, including risk propensity, need for achievement, locus of control, optimism, competitiveness, and innovativeness. These six characteristics were selected because they were highly cited in many studies.

Unlike Uru et al. (2011), Jha’s study of entrepreneurial characteristics among pineapple growers in India (2008) focused on knowledge level, risk orientation, self-confidence, management orientation, farm decision making ability, and leadership ability.

Looking through previous studies, there are many different characteristics which are regarded as the characteristics of entrepreneurs. Uru et al. (2011) also evaluate that there is still debate about this.

Although previous studies showed various entrepreneurial characteristics in the literature, the current study looked at 7 entrepreneurial characteristics including passion, independent, market sensitivity, creative and innovative, calculated risk taker, persistent, and high ethical standard. These characteristics were selected in this study because they were the focus of entrepreneurship education in the university where this study was conducted.

The definitions of entrepreneurial characteristics used in this study referred to the indicators in the previous study by Wonoahadidojo& Melinda (2008). Individuals with passion are shown by the enthusiasm and affection on what they do. Independent refers to the ability to perform action without depending on others in determining choice and making decision. Market Sensitivity is indicated by the sensitivity to the situation and market condition so that individual is able to take advantage from every opportunity and even create opportunities. Creative and innovative is shown by strong
curiosity and imagination, and ability to create original idea and realize it. A calculated risk taker always calculates the possible success and failure in his/her actions to achieve goals, and has the courage to keep going when the risk of failure is not so big. Persistent is defined as perseverance, diligence, and not easy to give up in the effort to reach the goal. Person with high ethical standard always refers and considers ethics in making decision and in his/her effort to achieve goals.

Entrepreneurship personal branding and selling course as a part of entrepreneurship education

Entrepreneurial Personal Branding and Selling was one of the series of entrepreneurship course delivered in the university where this study was conducted. This course was the first entrepreneurship course for students and addressed to students in the first semester. In this course, students were facilitated to develop their self-knowledge, build their passion and vision, and also to build their personal selling skills.

The course was delivered in various methods, including seminar, reflection by using worksheets, sharing, presentation, discussion, and mentoring. The course was project-based in which students should practise personal selling. Students were involved in personal selling project for 7 weeks. Related to the seven entrepreneurial characteristics, the personal selling project was specifically aimed to develop and hone students’ passion, to develop market sensitivity and persistence, and relating and persuasion skills.

In this course, students were facilitated to think and know about themselves. Self-knowledge worksheet was used to stimulate and facilitate the students. This self-knowledge exploration was continued with the exploration of personal passion and vision in the following week. The process of exploration was also facilitated by a worksheet.

Having explored their personal passion and vision, students were then introduced the essence of entrepreneurship, which included the value creation. Using a case study of a famous entrepreneur, students learn about entrepreneurial characteristics. Various approaches in ethical principles were then introduced to students. Students discussed on some ethical cases in order to build their understanding of ethical principles.

In this course, students were facilitated to focus on personal selling project. They were helped to understand the importance of this project in developing their entrepreneurial characteristics and skills. They were also equipped with strategies in personal selling and basic finance and operation.

The personal selling project was conducted for 7 weeks. Students' progress was monitored and facilitated every week. The selling process was also evaluated every week. In addition to mentoring with the mentors each week, students were also asked to fill in reflection sheets based on their selling process experience. At the end of the weekly reflection, students were always reminded to create values in their personal selling project.

While students were involved in this project for 7 weeks, topics on business model canvas, communication skills, and building entrepreneurial mindset were delivered to students. Sessions on sharing success and failure stories were also held to build the entrepreneurial learning atmosphere.

In helping students’ learning process, university provided facilitators which consisted of academics and practitioners. As argued by Greene and Rice (2007), the combination of academics and practitioners in the university learning system are important. The academics will be able to help with learning tools, whereas practitioners has the ability to share their experience and help students to learn deeper. Katz (1995, in 2007) also has a similar argument. He mentions that the inclusion of practicing entrepreneurs
in all phases of education process can improve the entrepreneurship education.

Research method

Instrument

Data used in this study was taken from one of the worksheets used in the Entrepreneurship course. The worksheet was distributed two times in the course program, which was in the third week and the fourteenth week of the program as a student’s self-reflection. Students were asked to reflect on their life and think about their entrepreneurial characteristics. They were asked to write down their personal experience which was related to a specific entrepreneurial characteristic, then they were asked to rate their entrepreneurial characteristics using 10-point Likert-type scale in terms of how much they thought they have the stated entrepreneurial characteristics. The higher the score they rated, the stronger they perceived they have the entrepreneurial characteristic (1 = did not show the stated characteristic at all; 10 = highly showed the stated characteristic). Before filling the worksheet, students were explained the meaning of each entrepreneurial characteristics stated.

Study sites and respondents

This study was conducted in a university in an urban area in Indonesia which emphasizes entrepreneurship education in their curriculum. A total of 709 students enrolled Entrepreneurial Personal Branding and Selling course. The sample size of this study was 88 students.

Among 88 students, 97.8% students were on the first year of their undergraduate study. The student sample consisted of 52.27% males (n=46) and 47.73% females (n=42). They were from 9 study programs in the university, including International Business Management, (regular class and international class), Visual Communication Design, International Multimedia Technology, Business Information System, Interior Architecture, Psychology, International Hotel and Tourism Business, and Culinary Business. The sample was dominated by International Business Management students which also became the majority of the students in the population of the university.

Results

General results

Statistical testing using the paired samples t-test showed that there was a significant overall difference between pre-test and post-test scores (t = -3.242; df=81 ; p = 0.000). The data of mean and SD score for each group of test is shown in the following table.

| Table 1. Descriptive data on overall entrepreneurial characteristics |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------
| Entrepreneurial characteristics | Mean | N | Std. Deviation |
| Pre-test mean | 44.500 | 82 | 8.783 |
| Post-test mean | 47.488 | 82 | 7.838 |

The result showed that the overall perceived entrepreneurial characteristics of students increased following the Entrepreneurship Personal Branding and Selling course.

Specific entrepreneurial characteristics

The data analyses found that the distribution of each entrepreneurial characteristic data did not meet the normal distribution. Therefore, the comparison between pre-test and post-test scores was conducted by employing Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test. The results of comparison between pre and post-test scores are shown in the following table.

| Table 2. Entrepreneurial characteristic comparisons between pre-test and post-test |
The above table shows that there were significant differences between pre-test and post-test scores of market sensitivity, innovative creative, persistent, and high ethical standard. Thus, among seven entrepreneurial characteristics, the characteristics of market sensitivity, innovative creative, persistent, high ethical standard increased following the Entrepreneurship Personal Branding and Selling course.

**Discussion and recommendations**

In the past, some researchers believed that personality traits will not change in adulthood. However research after 1994 showed that the assumption that personality traits do not change in adulthood should be re-evaluated (Roberts & Mroczek, 2008). Roberts & Mroczek (2008) mentions that personality traits are developmental constructs. Personality traits continue to change in adulthood and life experiences may be involved in the causal mechanisms.

The results of the current study showed that participation in the entrepreneurship course, in this case is Entrepreneurial personal selling and branding course, strengthened entrepreneurial characteristics, especially market sensitivity, innovative, persistent and high ethical standard. This shows that personality characteristics can still change in university-student age.

I would argue that the personal selling project had an important contribution to the growth of the characteristics of market sensitivity, innovative creative, persistent and high ethical standard.

Looking at the personal selling project that students were involved, students actually practise to understand the features of their products to make a link to the advantages of having products, and also to identify the benefits of the customer to buy the products. Students learnt to identify which customers had the needs that would be met by the products. Students also learnt to formulate the benefits to meet the need of the customers. Furthermore, the failure that they faced in selling has helped them to identify the wrong way to approach customer and better way to approach. This kind of practise has helped students to improve their market sensitivity.

In addition, in the personal selling project, students should look for innovative ways to sell. They can bundle products to attract the customers and improve selling transactions. This experience actually stimulated their creativity. Many students testified that the personal selling project had stimulated them to find alternative ways of getting customers and alternative ways of selling.

In the personal selling project, students often faced the situations that the potential customers objected to buy their products. One of the students also mentioned in his testimony of selling insurance products, that he faced many rejections before having a transaction. This kind of exercise has helped students to develop persistence.

The development of persistence, market sensitivity, innovative creative can also stimulated by peers. In the learning process during the Entrepreneurship course in that semester, there were also sessions of sharing success stories and failure stories. In this sharing time, students who showed selling achievement, were asked to share their
process of selling, including their difficulties and their ways in coping with the difficulties. The students were also asked to encourage other students based on their experience. In the end of the sharing session, the facilitators highlighted the learning points so that other students can benefit and learn from their peers. Similarly in the session of sharing failure stories, students who faced difficulties also shared their difficulties and failures, so that their peers could learn from the sharing.

According to Social Learning Theory, individuals can learn from observing valued model and the reinforcement following the behavior (Scheiner, 2009). Individuals will imitate the behaviors of model in order to receive the similar reinforcement (Bandura, in Scheiner, 2009). Therefore, it can be argued that the session of sharing time is also helpful to enhance the learning process and in this case it will help students not only to adopt a positive attitude but also specific ways of behaving. Therefore, sharing by peers who have similar challenge are considered useful strategies in entrepreneurship education and recommended.

References


