

Level of Entrepreneurial Competency Among Lecturers at Politeknik Melaka

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Abstract

Politeknik Melaka, an institution under the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, is committed to enhancing the effectiveness of its educators in delivering quality education. This study investigates the levels of entrepreneurial competence among lecturers and their ability to integrate entrepreneurial elements into their teaching practices, specifically examining how internal entrepreneurial attitudes relate to the willingness to apply these elements. Focusing on three key competencies—optimum opportunity, problem-solving skills, and self-confidence—this research highlights their importance in fostering an entrepreneurial mindset among lecturers, which can enrich student learning experiences. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analysed using SPSS version 23, with a random sample of 30 lecturers participating. Findings reveal that lecturers' entrepreneurial competencies significantly influence their readiness to implement these elements in their teaching methodologies. Those exhibiting higher levels of opportunity recognition and problem-solving skills demonstrated a greater willingness to incorporate entrepreneurial practices into their curricula. This study underscores the necessity of developing entrepreneurial competencies among educators and offers valuable insights for enhancing educational practices at Politeknik Melaka. Ultimately, equipping lecturers with these skills may lead to a more dynamic and innovative learning environment, better preparing students for the challenges of the contemporary workforce.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Competence, Polytechnic Education, Teaching Practices, Internal Entrepreneurial Attitudes, Educator Development

1.0 Introduction

In Malaysia, the term "entrepreneur" gained prominence in the 1970s with the implementation of key policies, including the New Economic Policy (1971-1990), the National Development Policy (1990-2000), and Vision 2020, which collectively aimed to foster the development of entrepreneurship. According to Sarimah (2008), an entrepreneur is defined as an individual who establishes a new entity to offer innovative products or services to the market, irrespective of profitability. In alignment with the IPT Entrepreneurship Development Policy,

the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) actively promotes the integration of entrepreneurship into the curricula of higher education institutions (Ismail et al., 2009). This initiative seeks to enhance students' exposure, awareness, and skills related to entrepreneurship, ultimately cultivating a mindset that prepares them for entrepreneurial careers (Nor Aishah, 2002). Entrepreneurial competence refers to an individual's ability to perform entrepreneurial functions effectively, which is developed through behavioural practices influenced by one's values, attitudes, and internal motivations.

The significance of entrepreneurial competence is underscored by its role in fostering a proactive attitude among individuals, enabling them to pursue tasks independently and strive for success in their ventures. This competence is particularly vital during the pre-start-up phase, as it allows entrepreneurs to prepare adequately and explore untapped opportunities. The ability to identify and seize existing business opportunities is crucial for success and resilience in a competitive landscape. Recent initiatives at Politeknik Melaka, including Entrepreneurship Carnivals and Product Pitching Competitions, have highlighted the need for lecturers with strong entrepreneurial backgrounds. However, some lecturers involved in these programmes lack such experience, which may hinder their ability to effectively foster entrepreneurship among students. The main goal of the study is to assess the level of entrepreneurial competence among Polytechnic lecturers.

This research offers a unique focus on the entrepreneurial competencies of lecturers at Politeknik Melaka, an area that has been relatively underexplored in the literature. By investigating the relationship between lecturers' internal attitudes and their willingness to integrate entrepreneurial elements into their teaching, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how these competencies can influence educational practices. The findings will provide valuable insights for policymakers and educational leaders seeking to enhance the pedagogical approaches of lecturers in Malaysian polytechnics. By identifying key competencies and their relationship with teaching practices, this research will inform strategies for developing entrepreneurial education, ultimately cultivating a more entrepreneurial mindset among students and strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Malaysia.

2.0 Literature Review

Entrepreneurial competence encompasses a set of fundamental characteristics, including general knowledge, motivation, talent, self-image, and skills, which can be applied to new business ventures, sustainability efforts, and organisational growth (Bird, 1995). This competence integrates high-level traits that combine personality characteristics, skills, and knowledge, playing a crucial role in determining organisational performance (Man et al., 2002). Mitchelmore and Rowley (2013) assert that "there is widespread recognition that success, performance, and SME growth are highly dependent on entrepreneurial competence."

In addition to these characteristics, author also provided that entrepreneurial competence refers to an individual's ability to effectively carry out entrepreneurial functions. It is shaped by life values, attitudes, and intrinsic motivation, which drive individuals to excel in their tasks. According to Yufiza, Azizah & Siti Saleha (2018), those with strong entrepreneurial competence can perform more efficiently and effectively compared to their peers with similar knowledge and qualifications. Numerous studies have examined the various characteristics of entrepreneurial competencies, indicating that these traits serve as vital drivers of entrepreneurial performance and organisational success, as well as benchmarks for assessing an individual's interest in entrepreneurship (Haziah Sa'ari et al., 2013). For instance, Wedathanthrige (2014) identified key entrepreneurial competencies among small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Sri Lanka, including the ability to see and seize opportunities, perseverance, business networking, self-confidence, goal setting, commitment, risk-taking, decision-making freedom, systematic planning, and persuasive communication.

In the Malaysian context, the government has implemented entrepreneurship education at various levels as part of the Third Outline Perspective Plan (3rd OPP), which aims to encourage community involvement in business. This initiative is essential for achieving the goal of creating a Bumiputera Commercial and Industrial Community by 2020 (Economic Planning Unit, 2001). To this end, various entrepreneurship co-curricular programs have been introduced across educational institutions, such as the Entrepreneur Pioneer Program in primary schools, the Young Entrepreneur Program in secondary schools, and the Student Entrepreneurship Program in higher education. These initiatives seek to cultivate entrepreneurial awareness among youth, potentially reducing reliance on salaried employment and increasing job opportunities within society (Halimah, 2001).

However, interestingly, it is important to note that the readiness of students to engage in entrepreneurship varies significantly. Individuals are more likely to succeed in entrepreneurship and exhibit a high level of competence when they have been exposed to foundational concepts in the field. Therefore, it is essential to assist students in identifying relevant self-competencies in entrepreneurship. This support enables them to develop long-term plans and strategies for future success, ensuring they are well-equipped to navigate the challenges of the entrepreneurial landscape.

3.0 Methodology

The methodology for this study is designed to provide a clear and systematic understanding of the research design and implementation. This investigation employs a survey-based methodology, emphasising a quantitative approach, in accordance with the recommendations of Hair et al. (2003, 2006) and Glasow (2005), who advocate for surveys as effective instruments for gathering primary data concerning beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and lifestyles. The study population consists of 30 lecturers randomly selected from Politeknik Melaka, with a specific

focus on examining their levels of competence in areas such as optimal opportunity identification, problem-solving skills, and self-confidence.

To facilitate data collection, a structured questionnaire was utilised as the primary research instrument. This questionnaire addressed various dimensions, including demographic information, opportunities for optimisation, problem-solving abilities, and levels of confidence. The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 23. Descriptive data analysis generated frequency distributions and percentages for the respondents' backgrounds, as well as mean scores and standard deviations to evaluate the identified competencies.

Research Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey-based methodology; emphasis on quantitative approach
Literature Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations from Hair et al. (2003, 2006) and Glasow (2005).
Study Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 lecturers from Politeknik Melaka; focus on competence in: Optimal opportunity, identification Problem-solving skills and Self-confidence
Data Collection Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structured questionnaire covering: Demographic information, Opportunities for optimization, Problem-solving abilities, Levels of confidence
Data Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using SPSS software (version 23); descriptive analysis includes: Frequency distributions, Percentages for respondent backgrounds, Mean scores and standard deviations for competencies
Intrepretation of Result	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on predefined scale (see Table 1).

Figure 1: Methodology

The interpretation of mean scores adhered to a predefined scale, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Interpretation Scale for Mean Scores

scale	level
1.00 – 2.00	low
2.01 – 3.00	Moderate low
3.01 – 4.00	Moderate high
4.01 – 5.00	high

Source: Nunnally dan Bernstein (1994)

Furthermore, it may be advantageous to elaborate on the random selection process, provide details regarding the types of questions included in the questionnaire, acknowledge any potential limitations, and note the ethical considerations addressed in the study. This comprehensive approach will enhance the robustness and transparency of the research methodology.

4.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Respondent Demographics

The findings of this study provide a comprehensive overview of the demographics of the respondents (N=30), who represent five departments at Politeknik Melaka: Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Commerce, and General Studies, as well as Mathematics, Science, and Computer Studies. Among the 30 respondents, the majority were female, comprising 25 individuals (83.3%), while male respondents accounted for 5 individuals (16.7%).

In terms of racial composition, the study reveals a predominant representation of Malays, with 29 respondents (96.7%) identifying as such, while the remaining respondent (3.3%) belonged to a different racial group. The academic qualifications of the respondents varied considerably: 2 respondents (6.7%) held diplomas, 14 respondents (46.7%) possessed bachelor's degrees, 12 respondents (40%) had master's degrees, and 2 respondents (6.7%) held doctoral degrees.

Experience levels among the respondents also varied significantly. Most lecturers had extensive teaching experience, with only 1 respondent having served for fewer than 9 years. Specifically, 12 respondents (40%) had between 10 and 14 years of service, while 11 respondents (36.7%) had served for 15 to 19 years, and 6 respondents (20%) had more than 20 years of service.

A summary of the respondent demographics is provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Respondents Demographics

NO	CATEGORY	(N) 30	PERCENTAGE
1	Gender		
	Male	5	16.7%
	female	25	83.3%
2	Race		
	Malay	29	96.7%
	Others	1	3.3%
3	Academic Background		
	Diploma	2	6.7%
	Degree	14	46.7%
	Master	12	40.0%
	Phd	2	6.7%
4	Years of service		
	5-9	1	3.3%
	10-14	12	40%
	15-19	11	36.7%
	20 and above	6	20%
5	Department		
	JP	6	20%
	JKA	7	23.3%
	JKE	2	6.7%
	JPA	8	26.7%
	JMSK	1	3.3%
	Others	6	20%
	Total	30	

This demographic profile indicates a strong female representation and a predominance of Malay lecturers, alongside a diverse range of academic backgrounds and significant teaching experience. These factors highlight the varied perspectives and expertise present within the faculty at Politeknik Melaka.

4.2 Discussion

i. Optimal Opportunities – table 3 shows the item discussed.

Table 3: Optimal Opportunities

No	Item	Mean score	Standard Deviation	Mean interpretation
1	I enjoy challenges and opportunities	4.20	0.887	high
2	I prefer to engage in activities that I know and am comfortable with	4.74	0.681	high
3	I always identify opportunities to take on new tasks	4.17	0.834	high
4	I always try to do something very new and different from what I have done before	4.03	0.718	high
5	I always take advantage of the opportunities that arise	4.17	0.791	high
	Overall average value	4.262	0.7822	high

The overall average value of 4.262 indicates a high level of entrepreneurial competence among the lecturers, suggesting that they generally possess a positive attitude towards challenges and opportunities. Individual items reflect a consistent trend, with mean scores above 4.00, indicating that lecturers feel confident in their ability to identify and act upon new opportunities. The standard deviations are relatively low, suggesting that there is a strong consensus among lecturers regarding their entrepreneurial competence.

ii. Problem Solving – table 4 shows the item discussed.

Table 4: Problem solving skills

No	Item	Mean score	Standard Deviation	Mean interpretation
1	I always think of unique solutions for every problem I encounter	4.13	0.681	high
2	I always think of new ideas	4.13	0.730	high
3	If I have chosen a method to solve a problem, I will not switch to a new method	3.33	0.922	Moderate high

4	I often think of various ways to solve a problem	4.20	0.664	high
5	If a certain approach to solving a problem does not work, I will look for another approach	4.30	0.596	high
	Overall average value	4.018	0.7186	

The overall average value of 4.018 indicates a high level of problem-solving competence among the lecturers, suggesting they are generally adept at thinking creatively and seeking out solutions to challenges. Most items reflect a positive attitude towards innovative problem-solving, with mean scores above 4.00, except for item 3, which received a mean score of 3.33, indicating a moderate high level of flexibility in problem-solving methods. The relatively low standard deviations imply a strong consensus among lecturers regarding their problem-solving abilities, with a clear inclination towards exploring various solutions and adapting their approaches when necessary.

iii. Self Confidence – table 5 shows the item discussed.

Table 5: Self Confidence

No	Item	Mean score	Standard Deviation	Mean interpretation
1	I feel confident that I will succeed in everything I try to do	4.23	0.504	High
2	I will change my mind if many people disagree with me	3.67	0.802	Moderate high
3	When trying something complex or challenging, I feel confident that I will succeed in doing it	4.00	0.743	High
4	I often take on tasks that involve risks	3.57	0.774	Moderate high
5	I firmly stand by my decisions even if others completely disagree with me	3.67	0.922	Moderate high
	Overall Average Value	3.828	0.749	

The overall average value of 3.828 suggests a moderate high level of self-confidence among the lecturers, indicating that they generally feel confident in their abilities but may exhibit some reservations in certain areas. The highest

mean score is 4.23 for the item stating confidence in success, reflecting a strong belief in their capabilities. Items 2, 4, and 5 show moderate high levels of confidence, with mean scores between 3.57 and 3.67, indicating that while lecturers are generally self-assured, they may be more flexible in their decision-making when faced with disagreement. The standard deviations indicate a moderate consensus among lecturers regarding their self-confidence levels, with some variation in responses particularly related to risk-taking and decision-making in the face of opposition.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The findings reveal that while Melaka Polytechnic lecturers demonstrate a high level of entrepreneurial and problem-solving competence, their self-confidence requires enhancement. High mean scores indicate confidence in identifying opportunities and generating solutions; however, moderate high scores in risk-taking and decision-making suggest underlying insecurities that may inhibit their entrepreneurial potential. To address this gap, targeted training programmes should focus on both theoretical knowledge and practical experiences, such as workshops and mentorship, to empower lecturers and foster a stronger sense of self-efficacy. Additionally, creating a culture of continuous learning and collaboration among lecturers will reinforce positive attitudes towards innovation and risk-taking. In line with Rabbior's (1990) assertion that true entrepreneurial spirit must be embodied by individuals, Melaka Polytechnic should invest in skills training and cultivate an environment conducive to entrepreneurial behaviours. This comprehensive approach can enhance the quality of education delivered and better prepare students for future entrepreneurial challenges.

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7.0 AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Fariza Haidayu M.H.: Abstract, Introduction, Methodology; **Suraya Hani K.:** Discussion, Data Collection; **Munirah A.R.:** Result, writing-Reviewing.

8.0 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

This manuscript has not been published elsewhere and is not under consideration by other journals. All authors have approved the reviews, agree with its submission and declare no conflict of interest in the manuscript.

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