

Relationship between PLKN programme and entrepreneurial personality among youths in Malaysia

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Abstract

The main objective of this study is to examine the influence of the National Service Training Programme modules of physical training, nation building, character building and community service on entrepreneurial personality of the trainees. The study was conducted on a sample size of 345 students of Universiti Utara Malaysia who had undergone these four important modules of the National Service Training Programme. The findings revealed that there is a positive relationship between modules of the National Service Training Program and entrepreneurial personality among youths. This relationship can be attributed to increasing demands from youths to seek for quality education from educational institutions that could equip them with the entrepreneurial competencies in preparing them for future careers. Moreover, the National Service Training Program is an ideal platform considered for introducing and inculcating the entrepreneurial culture among youths while they are undergoing national service. Hence, this paper posits that it is important for the government to provide entrepreneurial friendly environment in their bid to encourage and foster the entrepreneurial culture amongst the youths in Malaysia.

Keywords: national service, entrepreneurial personality, national service modules

INTRODUCTION

In the world of business driven by ideas and innovation, youth and entrepreneurship forms an inseparable mechanism for economy and social development. One of the notable and inevitable aspects of nation building is youth engagement and development in the entrepreneurial activity. In any country, the youth segment forms one of the most important components of the nation. Youths represent the hope and the future of nations in terms of continuing the upkeep and management of the country's political, economic and social systems. In response to this complex youth problem confronting the nation, variety programmes were introduced by government through several agencies. In specific, Malaysian government has taken the initiative to a higher level by introducing the National Service (Program Latihan Khidmat Negara – PLKN) which is targeted at the Form 5 school leavers.

The ultimate objectives of the PLKN are to develop a young generation who is patriotic with love and devotion for their country, enhance unity among the multi-racial communities in the country, instil a spirit of caring and volunteerism among society, produce an active, intelligent and confident generation. This in turn will instil and develop positive characteristics among the younger generation through good values and lastly, develop a generation that is obedient and loyal to the government. In a broader context, the youths' population represents an important segment of the nation who will play a major role in generating and sustaining the nation's economy, political and social development in the future. In line with this, many programmes which are focusing on entrepreneurship were carried out and extensively implemented to nurture entrepreneurial values. In particular, many platforms has been designed and executed by government and non-government organizations (NGOs) to inculcate the spirit and culture of entrepreneurship among youth in school and higher education institution. Issues of unemployment in the local economy amidst current uncertainties in global market demand and economic crisis situations have led to the need for any society or its communities at large to find opportunities in self-employment, including by the youths (Chigunta, 2001; Schoof, 2006a; Schoof, 2006b). The current limited career options and lack of independence in wage employment have prompted efforts to seek greener pastures in self-employment in the form of entrepreneurial ventures.

A review of the literature showed that youths' involvement in entrepreneurial activities have been studied by several authors such as Awogbenle and Iwuamadi (2010) who focused on entrepreneurship development programme as an intervention mechanism, Keat, Selvarajah and Meyer (2011) who concentrated on inclination towards entrepreneurship among university students and Zainol and Ayadurai (2011) who focused on personality traits on performance among Malay youths. Studies have showed that entrepreneurs possess particular personality traits, socioeconomic characteristics, and particular nature of business enterprise activities and enterprise development process (Bolton & Thompson, 2004; Bird, 1989; Shane, 2003; McClelland, 1961; Maimunah Ismail, 2001). Youths have also been found to possess some characteristics similar to the ones possessed by adults and matured entrepreneurs (see Chigunta, 2001:27-31; Schoof, 2006). The identified characteristics are said to distinguish the entrepreneurs from the non-entrepreneurs.

In relation to this, the Malaysian youth entrepreneurs had shown that they possessed particular personality traits and behavioural characteristics which fit McClelland's (1961) description of motivation and emotion as key psychological and social elements that drive people to venture into entrepreneurship. The youths' basis of motivation was human needs for achievement, power and affiliation. It was their spirit of competitiveness, personal

satisfaction, monetary benefits and independence that had motivated them to become entrepreneurs and sustain that entrepreneurship. They showed perseverance and determination, and the ability to take calculated risks, initiatives and responsibility. They were goal- and opportunity- orientated, bent for problem solving, and able to retain an internal locus of control (Bolton & Thompson, 2004). Based on these views, it is high time for us to find out to what extent the national programme influence the entrepreneurial personality among the trainees who had participated in the programme after completing their secondary level education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The national service programmes or National Service in Malaysia have been introduced in order to meet certain objectives. The main objective of countries having this compulsory National Service is that of defending the country's sovereignty whereby those who have undergone and completed the national service will form the pool of reservist soldiers who can be called upon to serve the country when the need arise. Among such countries are Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and Israel. However, in recent years, national service or conscription has been used by countries facing military enlistment difficulties. In the case of Malaysia, the national service program had three main objectives: i) to inculcate patriotism among the youth; ii) to promote inter-ethnic unity; and iii) national integration and iv) to build character by emphasizing noble values.

The programme, which has military-type aspects of an outward-bound program, included some military training as well as courses in personal development and values. The main objectives of the National Service are to: - 1) develop a young generation who are patriotic and with love and devotion for their country; 2) enhance unity among the multi-racial communities in the country; 3) instil a spirit of caring and volunteerism among society 4) produce an active, intelligent and confident generation; 5) develop positive characteristics among the younger generation through good values; and 6) develop a generation that is obedient and loyal to the government.

Since its first intake which started in December, 2003, there has been various fine tuning and improvements to the structure and curriculum of the PLKN programme. This is necessary in order to further improve the outcome of the PLKN programme. In line with the current socio-economic situation of the country, it was felt that the PLKN programme could also be used to inculcate and motivate the PLKN trainees to be interested in entrepreneurship. This is because graduate unemployment becomes prominent issue of Malaysian government.

According to Wan Zain (2012), almost every year, universities and colleges produced new graduates; however, job opportunities were still limited. He reported that in the latest statistic showed that about 76,200 graduates are still unemployed and the numbers will continue to rise with new graduates passing out each year, all competing for employment. For the policy makers, this is indeed, an upsetting trend for which the government should look into ways and means to bring the figures down to a more manageable level. Thus the issue of graduate unemployment is a serious one and need to be addressed as soon as possible.

Hansaard (2005) strongly stated that lack of soft skills such as lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem, poor in English and computer skills are main causes of unemployment. Other reasons include the graduates' preference for becoming paid employees over becoming self-employed and the current tertiary academic institution's system that promote rote learning

are believed to be significant factor that contributing to current problems. (Fong 2005; Muszafarshah & Woon 2004). One of the strategies that the Malaysian government is proposing is to get the youths who include the universities graduates to be involve in entrepreneurship as a possible solution to the problem of graduate unemployment. This is resulted due to many economists and politicians that agreed entrepreneurship improve employment opportunities and wealth creation (Dana, 2001; Garavan & O'Connell, 1994; Kong, 1996).

One possible solution is for the unemployed graduates to be self-employed, that is to be an entrepreneur instead of relying on both the private sector and the public sector to provide these graduates with jobs. Thus, entrepreneurship ideally should be inculcated and encouraged as early as possible, preferably when they are in school itself. Another platform where the youths of Malaysia can be inculcated and encouraged to become entrepreneurs is when they are undergoing the National Service. This is the essence of the this study which explores entrepreneurial spirit of the PLKN trainees whether the trainees can be encouraged, nurtured and motivated to be entrepreneurially inclined during the course for their 3-month training.

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The ultimate objectives of the PLKN are to develop a young generation who is patriotic with love and devotion for their country, enhance unity among the multi-racial communities in the country, instil a spirit of caring and volunteerism among society, produce an active, intelligent and confident generation, then, develop positive characteristics among the younger generation through good values and lastly, develop a generation that is obedient and loyal to the government.

Many issues and problems concerning youths in Malaysia persist with many of them involved in social ills such as '*rempit*' (*illegal racing*), taking drugs and others. Among some of the news that are common in the mass media are pertaining to youths involved in a variety of violence and crimes which reflects badly on the state of affairs in Malaysia (Chow, 2012). If this unhealthy development is not checked and prevented in a systematic and integrated manner, it will give tremendous implications to the nation, society and religion. In addition, most of our youths today seem to have lost identity as an Eastern society in general, and Malaysia in particular, as the impact of acceptance of various influences and external values is negative in nature.

Apart from that, unemployment of graduates also at alarming level in the most of the developing countries especially among graduates. Malaysia is not an exempted from this social phenomenon. Statistics have shown that Malaysia's unemployment rate has slightly increased from 3 percent in 2012 to 3.1 percent in 2013 indicating that unemployment rate still at ongoing debating stage although relatively lower than other developing countries (World Fact book: Unemployment Rate, 2014).

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explores entrepreneurial spirit of the PLKN trainees whether the trainees can be encouraged, nurtured and motivated to be entrepreneurially inclined during the course for their 3-month training. Based on the problem statement, this research will be guided by the following research questions:

- Is there a relationship between physical training module and entrepreneurial personality?
- Is there a relationship between nation building module and entrepreneurial personality?
- Is there a relationship between character building module and entrepreneurial personality?
- Is there a relationship between community service module and entrepreneurial personality?

From the above discussion, a theoretical framework linking the four research questions was developed as shown in Figure 1.

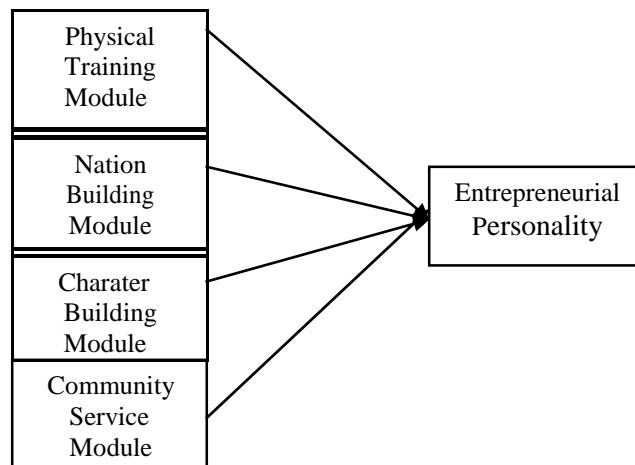


Figure 1 Effects of physical training, nation building, character building and community service module on entrepreneurial personality

METHODOLOGY

For the purpose of this study, data were collected from undergraduate students of Universiti Utara Malaysia who have completed 3 months intensive PLKN training in the camp throughout Malaysia. Therefore, this study focused only on candidates that registered with Universiti Utara Malaysia as an undergraduate student. The sample was chosen based on the availability of data from a list of students that obtain from the UUM student affairs department. The number of undergraduate students registered with various courses under UUM- Sintok totalled 14229.

According to Sekaran (2003), the sample size for a given population of 14229 is 375. To ensure the sample is sufficient in addressing the objectives of this study, internet mediated questionnaires were sent to multiple classes such as the Introduction to Entrepreneurship, Fundamental of Marketing and Fundamental of Management to the respondents that consist of semester 1 to 8 from various undergraduate programmes.

A total of approximately 6500 undergraduate students from Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) were selected in this study and only subject to those who have successfully completed 3 months PLKN programme.

The primary data for the study were collected through the survey method. Questionnaires are essential to and most directly associated with survey research (Babbie, 2004). For the purpose of this study, the researcher employed five previously used instruments, which had also been validated found to be reliable and valid, and were subsequently used in many other studies. The first section of the research instrument seeks respondent's personal particulars. It contains statements asking about respondent's gender, age, race, ranking in family, aggregate monthly income of parents, father and mother's level of education and father and mother's present occupation. The second section of the research instrument seeks respondent's education background. It contains the statements asking about respondent's programme, semester, college, school and residential hall. The third section of the research instrument measures four modules of PLKN, reflected by four measured variables, namely: (1) physical training, (2) nation building, (3) character building, and (4) community service. For the all independent and dependant variables items were adapted and modified from Yahya D., Abdul Sukor S., and Mohd Naem A. (2005), Wan Syukry W.D. (2004), Wan Su H. (2008). The scores used to represent each descriptor in all the above three instruments were on a Likert scale continuum from 1 to 5. The five-point scale is chosen for this study because, according to (Allen & Rao, 2000) the wider distribution of scores around the mean gives more discriminating power and also it is easier to establish covariance between two variables with greater dispersion (that is, variance) around their means. For the context of this study, online survey method was used for data collection in this study.

Ultimately, online survey enables to reach respondents through desktop PC, portables, digital televisions, tablet and smartphone with Internet access. In this research, respondents were sent an invitation e-mail to participate to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was hosted by a web site called www.limesurvey.com, which allows researchers to design questionnaire without loading any design software. In order to ease access of online survey, hyperlink of survey was posted in the learning zone of Universiti Utara Malaysia. Learning zone (learningzone.uum.edu.my) is a software application for the administration, documentation, tracking, reporting and delivery of e-learning education courses or training programs. Each individual was requested to respond within two weeks of receiving the questionnaire.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

More than half of the respondents were female which represented (26.1%), whilst the male respondents accounted for (73.9%). Beside gender, data on the age of respondents were also obtained. As shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents comes from the "21-22" age group, representing (62.9%) the total numbers of respondents, the second largest number of respondents comes from "23-24" age group of which formed (23.2%) and the smallest number of respondents comes from "more than 26" age group of (1.2%). In terms of the respondents' ethnic, a number of (54.8%) were from Bumiputera, followed by Chinese (36.2%), and finally Indian (9.0%). In the terms of ranking family background, most of the respondents were "middle born" and they represent (49.3%) of the respondents, while the "first born" was (27.0%), followed by "last born" (23.2%), and the smallest percentage of respondents namely "only-child" were (6.0%).

The next data for demographic profiling was on aggregate monthly income of the parent site, whereby the “RM1001-RM2000” category obtained 120 respondents (34.8%), followed by the “below RM1000” representing 72 respondents (20.9%), “RM2001- RM3000” category covered 59 respondents (17.1%), followed by the “RM3001-RM4000” category representing 50 respondents (14.5%), and for “above RM5000” category obtaining 26 respondents (7.5%), and lastly the “RM4001- RM5000” category covered 18 respondents (5.2%).

Table 1 Profile of the respondent

Variables	Descriptions	Frequencies	%
Gender	Male	9	26.1
	Female	255	73.9
Age	19-20	38	11.0
	21-22	217	62.9
	23-24	80	23.2
	25-26	6	1.7
	>26	4	1.2
Ethnic	Bumiputera	189	54.8
	Indian	31	9.0
	chinese	125	36.2
Ranking in family	First-born	93	27.0
	Middle-born	170	49.3
	Last-born	80	23.2
	Only-child	2	6
Income of Parents	Below RM1000	72	20.9
	RM1001-RM2000	120	34.8
	RM2001-RM3000	59	17.1
	RM3001-RM4000	50	14.5
	RM4001-RM5000	18	5.2
	Above RM5000	26	7.5
Father’s Education	No schooling	10	2.9
	Primary	94	27.2
	Secondary	169	49.0
	Certificate	38	11.0
	Degree	30	8.7
Mother’s Education	No schooling	14	4.1
	Primary	86	24.9
	Secondary	179	51.9
	Certificate	42	12.2
	Degree	24	7.0
Father’s Occupation	Self-employed	119	34.5
	Government/Private	148	42.9
	Unemployed	6	1.7
	Retired	0	0
Mother’s Occupation	Self-employed	38	11.0
	Government/Private	82	23.8
	Unemployed	189	54.8
	Retired	16	4.6

In terms of respondents' father's level of education, about 49.0% were from "Secondary", followed by "Primary" (27.2%), (11.0%) for "Certificate", and "Degree" was (8.7%), and then lastly were "No schooling" about (2.9%). In terms of respondents' mother's level of education, it is that shown the majority of the respondents' mother attended "Secondary" (51.9%), the second group completed "Primary" which formed (24.9%), followed by "Certification" level (12.2%), then "degree level"(7.0%), and the finally "no schooling" (4.1%).

The majority of the respondents' father was "government/private" sector representing 42.9% (148), while "self-employed" were 34.5% (119) and the "unemployed" representing 1.7% (6).

The respondents' mother's occupation showed that the largest percentage was "unemployed" 54.8% (189), the second largest were 23.4% (82) for "government/private" sector, followed by self-employed 11.0% (38), and the smallest percentage was retired, 4.6% (16).

Nunnally (1978) suggested the Cronbach's value greater than .70 that indicates good internal consistency. Hair *et al.* (1998) also proposed the internal consistency between .60 to .70 represent the lower limit of acceptability. Therefore, as can be seen from Table 2, it can be concluded that all variables at level of pilot and actual test indicating good internal consistency as suggested by Nunnally (1978).

Table 2 Reliability test

Variables	Cronbach Alpha	
	Pilot test	Actual
Physical Training Module	.952	.930
Nation Building Module	.974	.954
Character Building Module	.968	.954
Community Service Module	.979	.946
Personality	.968	.955

Table 3 Multiple regressions for module of PLKN

Coefficient B	Standardized Coefficient Beta	T-value	R2	F-value	P	
Physical Training Module	1.984	.707	11.037	.499	341.106	0.00
Nation Building Module	2.476	.737	20.159	.543	406.375	0.00
Character Building Module	2.084	.733	19.905	.537	396.204	0.00
Community Service Module	2.305	.732	19.841	.535	393.683	0.00

*p< .05, **p< .001

Table 3 shows the four dimensions of the trainee toward National Service Training Program (NS) which explain 54.2% (R2=.543), and the standardized coefficient Beta (β) for the physical training module is significant and positive (β =.707*, $p < 0.05$). Therefore, the hypothesis that states "There is a positive relationship between physical training module and entrepreneurial personality among youths" supported this research.

The standardized coefficient Beta (β) for the nation building module is positive and significant ($\beta=.737^{**}$, $p > 0.01$) supporting the research hypothesis that states, “There is a positive relationship between Nation Building Module and entrepreneurial personality among youths”.

Similarly, the standardized coefficient Beta (β) for the character building module is positive and significant ($\beta=.733^*$, $p > 0.05$) supporting the research hypothesis that states, “There is a positive relationship between Character Building Module and entrepreneurial personality among youths”.

Finally, the standardized coefficient Beta (β) for community service module is positive and significant ($\beta=.089^*$, $p < 0.05$) supporting the research hypothesis that states, “There is positive relationship between Community Service Module and entrepreneurial personality among youths”.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that there is a positive relationship between module of the National Service Training Program and entrepreneurial personality among youths. This relationship may be attributable to increasing demands from youths to seek for quality education from educational institutions that could equip them with the entrepreneurial competencies in preparing them for future careers. Moreover, the National Service Training Program is ideally considered the place in shaping entrepreneurial cultures among youths while they are studying. Hence, it is important for the government to provide entrepreneurial- friendly environment by encouraging and fostering an entrepreneurial culture. In doing so, the government must be able to design or develop the module entrepreneurial personality that would fulfil the youth demands as well as the industry. Furthermore, the exposure to entrepreneurial courses in a module of the National Service Training Program would certainly, to some extent, influence youth's personality towards entrepreneurship.

Despite the interesting results produced by this study, several limitations need to be acknowledged, since the validity of the result depends on several key research design and method. There are a few inherent limitations within the study that needed to be addressed. The first limitation is related to the place where the study is being conducted. The research was conducted only among the Universiti Utara Malaysia students who have undergone the National Service Training Programme. For this reason, it is difficult to generalize the finding of the study for the whole population National Service Training Programme in Malaysia. Besides that, the results also cannot be generalized to other higher education institution in different areas or two separate industries. Future research should be done by using diverse locations. The second limitation is restriction of time which led to narrow results.

Therefore, future research needs to take into time period for the meticulous of research. The third limitation is to test other factors that can influence entrepreneurial personality among youths such as risk taking consideration, creative and innovative.

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