

# **EARLY EXPOSURE OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS TRAINING PROGRAM AS THE PREPARATION OF STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN ARAU COMMUNITY COLLEGE TO FACE THE WORKING WORLD**

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## **Abstract**

This study was conducted to identify the interests and aptitudes with special needs (learning disabilities) towards entrepreneurship before and after exposure to Entrepreneurial Skills Training Program. Through this study, it was found that the activities have been able to increase the interest of students with learning disabilities as well as a tendency toward entrepreneurship. They also give a positive reaction when the products were sold. Through this activity they can also improve their communication skills and teamwork between them. All the students involved with the activities carried out, sure can become a better future. Therefore, these students should be given encouragement and inspiration as well as adequate training to prepare them to become future entrepreneurs.

**Keywords:** Career, entrepreneurship, interest, aptitudes, learning disabilities students

## **Introduction**

Nowadays, the field of business and entrepreneurship came into the limelight among the citizen of Malaysia to generate new sources of revenue. In fact, business in the era of globalization has also been growing rapidly and only at the fingertips which is through social media. Recognizing the importance of this area, it is appropriate that students with learning disabilities were also being exposed to entrepreneurial skills to enable them to be independent in their future for survival.

Career is a stage that needs to be faced by every individual to ensure life in the future. According to Tolbert (1974), the selection of a career is a continuous process that begins with the child's perception of the world of work and then progressed to the stage of adolescence

and early adulthood. In addition to salaried jobs, career choice is one of the areas of entrepreneurship, namely by working alone. The Malaysian government has also encouraged the public to do business and become entrepreneurs. Therefore, job opportunities to the people of Malaysia will also increase.

However, to become an entrepreneur, an individual must have the characteristics of an effective entrepreneur before entering this field. One becomes an entrepreneur not because of having a natural personality trait since birth, but other factors also involved and a person can also be trained to become an entrepreneur (Zaidatol & Habibah, 1998). In addition, according to Hisrich & Peters (2000), entrepreneurial career background is influenced by the work of an entrepreneur parents and family play a role in promoting entrepreneurship as a career credibility and supported by Nor Aishah (2002) who found that there is a fairly strong correlation between family's career with entrepreneurial career choice.

Students with learning disabilities are defined as having a neurological disability that affects the ability to understand, remember or convey information. They usually suffer developmental delays in one or more of the converse process, reading, writing, calculation or other school subjects. Ministry of Education (1995) defines learning disabled students as students who have been identified and confirmed by professional experts as suffering from difficulties in teaching and learning process. They consisted of children who have low mental ability and behavior modifications are low.

At the secondary level students with learning disabilities have been given vocational education. Through the Individual Disability Education Act (IDEA, 1990), transition plans and vocational training for youth with special needs must be put as a priority. Positive effects have been identified from vocational training and transition plans for youth with special needs, have anticipated that in the early stages of preparation of students for the working world as possible is critical, and has the potential to enable students to become productive members of the society (Fabian, 2007; Livelli, 1999).

The study by Jones and Williams (2011), indicate that the vocational education program provides a positive effect on performance in school and after school. Therefore, the curriculum of vocational students with learning disabilities need to emphasize the aspects of the selection of skills appropriate to the needs of individuals. According to White (1992), lack of interest of students on a work arises because of their failure to adapt abilities and skills acquired in school. In addition, the curriculum of vocational students with learning disabilities should also emphasize towards exposing students with the skills to socialize; career counseling; increase self-confidence / self; independent living; vocational training; adapt to the job, reading and spelling skills; organizing skills and financial administration; application of entrepreneurship and self-control skills that are key to success in any career field (Sitlington 1998; Gerber, Gisburg & Reiff 1992; Bristow 1990).

In Community College, the Entrepreneurship module is also one of the compulsory subjects for students with learning disabilities whom pursued the basic certificate. However, the question is to what extent these students interested in entrepreneurship and can make these areas as a work to generate future income? Support and adequate training towards entrepreneurship should be given to the students because they have the potential to become a successful entrepreneur if trained well. Exposure must be given to the students to become entrepreneurs. Attitudes, interests, and their perceptions of entrepreneurship as a career should

be corrected and supply so that entrepreneurship was chosen as one of the jobs after they graduate.

Therefore, this study was conducted to identify students with learning disabilities tendency toward entrepreneurship as well as their willingness to engage in business once they graduate from community college someday. In addition, students with learning disabilities are also given early exposure through entrepreneurial skills training program to attract them towards entrepreneurship.

### *Research Problems*

- 1) To what extent do students with learning disabilities interested in entrepreneurship or business?
- 2) How do students with learning disabilities can be trained to become an entrepreneur after they graduate?
- 3) How early intervention affect students with learning disabilities in improving their interest and confidence to engage in business once they graduate?

### **Methods**

This study was conducted through a survey in Arau Community College which offers Certificate of Basic Food Processing program specifically for students with special needs (learning disabilities). An entrepreneurial skills training program was conducted over one day with students with special needs (learning disabilities).

*Participants of the study:* The respondents consisted of 11 students with special needs and learning disabilities who were attending Basic Certificate in Food Processing Arau Community College. They consist of students with learning disabilities in a variety of categories that simple. All of these students are in the same class in the second semester of the Basic Certificate of Food Processing.

*Procedure of the study:* The study is divided into three parts, which are: 1) Preliminary Survey Method using interview to identify the background of students with special needs (learning disabilities), and the interest and inclination towards entrepreneurship (pre-test); 2) a one day Entrepreneurial Skills Training Program involving the production and sales of products produced in the college compound. Observations were made on the students involved throughout the activities carried out; 3) Final Survey Method using interview to identify interests and tendencies of the students toward entrepreneurship after Entrepreneurial Skills Training Program conducted.

Prior Entrepreneurial Skills Training Program conducted, participants were interviewed to collect information about the background of the participants as well as to identify their interest in entrepreneurship. After that, they were given directions to compensate, producing bakery products which is honeycomb bread (*Roti Sarang Lebah*) according to the formulation which has been learned in class. After completion of production, the participants were given instructions to make product sales in the compound of the college in which they are divided according to the tendency of sales activity after being questioned by researcher. After the sales activities, participants tidy up the sales booth and production laboratory. When all activities have been completed, participants were interviewed again to determine their interest in entrepreneurship after the program.

## Result

Interview protocol for Initial Survey Method consists of two parts, background of the participants and six questions interests and tendencies toward entrepreneurship.

*Table 1 - shows the background profile of research participants.*

Background (n= 11)	Classification	Percentage ( % )
Sex	Man (n=6)	55
	Woman (n=5)	45
Age	18 – 20 years	100
Marital Status	Single	100
Education level	SPM	100
Father Occupation	Business (n=2)	18.2
	Self-employed (n=3)	27.3
	Public Service (n=3)	27.3
	Private Sector Workers (n=3)	27.3

In terms of gender, the participants consisted of 6 boys and 5 girls. All special education students have learning difficulties aged between 18 and 20 years. All the students are not yet married. In terms of level of education, these students have a level of secondary education which has a Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM). The father occupation showed 55% of the respondents fathers are working with the employer followed by the self-employed (27%) and the remainder (18%) are doing business.

*Table 2 - Questions about the interview protocol tendency toward entrepreneurship before intervention*

No.	Questions
1.	After finished study, what would you do?
2.	Would you like to do business?
3.	Have you ever been involved in business?
4.	Are your family members involve in business?
5.	Are you likely to cooperate with others?
6.	How do you react when dealing with the public?

From question 1, almost half said that they want to work in the hotel (45.5%) as a chef. Two of the participants (18.2%) want to work with the government as a teacher. Only two of the participants (18.2%) who wish to do business. When asked about their interest in the field of business, only half answered they are interested in business and the remaining answered either a lack of interest or not interested. A total of five participants had been involved in business activities on a small scale and help family members who carry out business activities such as eateries. For the fifth question, almost all participants answer they can collaborate with others except for one participant who answered it difficult to collaborate with others. When asked

about the reaction when dealing with people, almost all answered embarrass, nervousness and nervous except one participant answered confident when facing the public.

Observations during the intervention of Entrepreneurial Skills Training Program, some of the participant are found to be independent and some are dependent on the direction of the lecturer. There is also a participant who showed no interest in cooperating with other partners during their production. During sales activities, some participants voluntarily want to be at the sales counter after being asked by the researchers. Participants' reactions when all sales are sold out are very happy and asked to bring this program again in the future.

Table 3 shows the summary of the interview protocol and the theme of the trend toward entrepreneurship after the intervention. All participants understand about the activities that have been carried out on the day of production of honeycomb bread products and product sales as well as showed the interest towards the activities. When asked the most preferred activities on that day, most of the participants answered selling bread. After being asked if they would engage in business activities in the future, all of them said they would engage in business activities in the future and believe that they can become a better businessman/woman.

*Table 3 - Summary of interview protocol  
and the theme of the trend toward entrepreneurship after intervention*

No.	Question	Summary
1.	What do you learned today?	Learn to do honeycomb bread business and communication skills to draw the attention of customers.
2.	Do you like the activities that had been carried out?	Yes
3.	What do you like the most about the activities that had been done today?	Doing business and making products
4.	How would you use the skills that you learned today in the future?	I learned how to convince the customer to buy my products and ways to market products.
5.	Do you want to involve in business in the future?	Yes
6.	Do you feel you can become a better businessman/woman?	Yes

## **Discussion**

Entrepreneurial Skills Training Program is conducted with the aim of helping students with learning disabilities by providing activities that can help individual development and learning.

The findings show that intervention of Entrepreneurial Skills Training Program conducted on students with learning disabilities in Arau Community College has been successful in increasing their interest in business and entrepreneurship. Before the intervention carried out, all of the participants expressed embarrassment, nervousness and afraid when facing the

public. However, after the sales, all of them showed a reaction of joy and hope this event will be held again in the future.

Through these activities, the cooperation between the participants and the skilled participants can be identified. Participants who are less skilled and less cooperative during the activities carried out can also be identified. Indirectly, through this activity it has given confidence to the participants for dealing with the public and enhanced communication skills among them.

However, the impact of this research will be more visible if these activities are resumed and held in the longer term. Impact of this program will be able to prepare the students with learning disabilities for working world someday. This program can also be considered as one of the transition process to provide early exposure to students with learning disabilities before entering the working environment.

### **Conclusion**

Students with learning disabilities have the potential to engage in business activities and become successful entrepreneurs after graduating from Community College someday. However, the steps for their preparation must be highly organized and effective. As a backup, the program must be conducted in a simulated transition in college to provide early exposure and familiarize them with business activities. Besides, their vocational skills also need to be improved in addition to self-management skills, financial management, communication and interaction skills are also very important to polish their potential to become an entrepreneur one day for survival.

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