



Perceptions towards Entrepreneurship at Higher Education Level

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Abstract. This study attempts to reveal how students at higher education in Indonesia perceived entrepreneurship after graduation. The research method in this study was group discussion between the tutors and the 22 research participants who were at the final year of their vocational higher education study in Indonesia. A set of questionnaires were also distributed to them find out about whether they would prefer initiating entrepreneurship to jobs seeking and what they would expect to do after graduation. Findings showed that these 22 research participants tend to prioritize jobs seeking with a company in line with their higher education qualification and to have their career path to comply with their profession instead of initiating entrepreneurship. This implicates that entrepreneurship is still being the second career priority for most higher education students in Indonesia compared with jobs seeking after their study completion.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Alumni, Jobs seeking

1 Introduction

As entrepreneurship has become a coursework mostly taught in higher education level in Indonesia, aimed at providing students with the insights on the entrepreneurship world when they have graduated. They are expected not to be dependent on jobs seeking or working with the companies. The reasoning behind this is that higher education has become an institution that can assist to mediate the creation of newly established and more innovatively established companies. In a broader sense, higher education has become a medium of dissemination for skills and knowledge [1]. Allocation for such a coursework, therefore, is intended to be able to change their perception that jobs seeking is the only source of income after they have completed their study at higher education level [2].

The other rationale why this course is taught in higher education level as [3] revealed is that higher education is the primary institution that plays an important part in training its students to be able to obtain, to alter and to extensively use their entrepreneurial knowledge. Furthermore, [4, 5] affirm that higher education students are expected to be able to spread their know-how and skills they have gained in their campus to the community where they can play role to create new business sectors or to develop

new business model within their community. Not only are their know-how and skills useful for the community, but also provide contributions to the labor market [6, 7]. Further, new business formats and models mediated by higher education students embedded in the entrepreneurship coursework has also opened up new opportunities for the increasing number of research in the concerned field [8, 9, 10, 1]. Thus, higher education level students are expected to become agents of change in business sectors and new business formats within the community.

Although there have been previous studies in entrepreneurship perceptions such as those by [11] that reveal globalization and economic development, [12] that unveil entrepreneurs in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), and [13] that discuss the factors that affect a will to become an entrepreneur, none of these studies discuss the entrepreneurship within the Indonesian higher education context as it is in the current study that is focused on how higher education students in Indonesia view entrepreneurship from their own perspective when they are confronted to the choice between jobs seeking and entrepreneurship when they graduate. The after-graduation issue has been tightly related to seeking jobs that require higher education graduates to make their living through ideally reasonable employment.

There would be two choices for them, i.e., to work with a company in which they become employees and have their careers with it, or to start their own business in which they become self-employed and have their careers as small-scale entrepreneurs. What is expected from these graduates in Indonesia as outlined in the coursework is that the higher education alumni can have their own business that can create employment for others. When they start a small-scale business, for example, they are expected to be able to grow business to the medium and large-scale businesses. This is not easy as it has been imagined even with a small-scale business. Risk of losses is always there, particularly for those of any business pioneers. The risk of losing money, in particular is always possible for those that run their small-scale business

The complexity of starting a business would be a challenge to be confronted by small-scale, medium or large-scale business pioneers including those of higher education students that it is necessary that they be given orientation on obstacles they need to deal with in starting a new business, for example the marketing strategies, as [14] describes that they need to know when they have to improve their marketing performance, for examples in nowadays culinary business sectors that the pioneers should be familiarity with the digital marketing strategy, in which social media has become the medium of marketing for them. The other thing they need to know is the business management perceptions that require them to innovate through experimenting with different types of new cooking products to maximize their profits. Of course, culinary business requires skills from the business owners who should not be dependent entirely on the ability of their subordinates or their chefs who work for their culinary businesses at a starting point.

This study seeks to find out about the perception of higher education students in Indonesia in responding to entrepreneurship. Observation on their attitude revealed that higher education students have always been focusing on finding jobs having completed their study. This seems to be the simplest one they can think of that the only solution after graduation would be to make their living by working with someone else by which

they can start their career path in such jobs. The current situation with job vacancies available online and offline mediated by the job fairs reveal that applicants have always been abundant. These applicants are prepared to stand in line for such fairs exhibited in the trade centers or malls. It is a forum where the employers can see their future recruits. In fact, job fairs have always been full of enthusiasts and job seekers to fill in the positions offered by the employers. In Indonesia job fairs are mediated by the Man-power Department at provincial and local levels where they recruit both experienced candidates or fresh graduates for the positions offered. A few employers would rather have cooperation with the higher education in which case recruitments are normally conducted at the students' institutions.

2 Methods

Research participants of this study were the final year higher education students who were at the stage of finalizing their study. There were 22 of them recruited as the research participants in this study. Their recruitment was based on consideration that they were at their final of their study that they were about to leave their higher education study, and that they had been given a coursework on entrepreneurship in 2 academic credits. All these participants obtained their entrepreneurship coursework consisting of know-how on how to initiate a self-employed business or how to be an entrepreneur when they graduate.

Examples given in the coursework provided them with the micro business that required them to conduct observation on small-scale entrepreneurship run by individuals or middle-scale business. At the later stage, they needed to know that an entrepreneur needs to employ a person or a few people to assist him or her with the business. Part of the assignments given to the research participants was a need to make observations on any business they had preferred and got back with their analysis on the business. The coursework given was also stressed on the business practicality rather than that of the academic-based knowledge.

Simple questionnaires were also distributed to these research participants, who were at their higher education study to find out about their perceptions. The questions in this questionnaire were designed open-ended instead of multiple choice. It was intended that they could answer them on their own without any distractions as it was in the multiple-choice format or in the Likert scale format. Such open-ended questions were aimed at directing them to answer honestly without any hesitation. In answering these open-ended questions, they were also engaged in group discussions with us, the writers. Different dialogues were made to discuss their answers. Affirmation, confirmation, clarification were repeatedly discussed in their answers to the questions. They had to decide what to write in their answers without any interference.

3 Results

Findings based on the research participants' responses to questionnaires distributed and group discussion in which entrepreneurship issues were discussed, revealed in the following themes.

3.1 Rejection to Being Self-employed

Only a few participants students responded that it is worth having and running their own business by becoming self-employed after they had graduated from their higher education institution. Most of them expressed their disagreement to entrepreneurship. These participants expressed their preference that they prefer work as employees in the company rather than being self-employed running their own business, as narrated in the following excerpts.

I don't want to be an entrepreneur because I want to get a job first. Entrepreneurship, well!!!! Not for the time being, I am afraid. I didn't think about it at all, because after graduation I would look for a job. I have no intention of becoming a businessman. It was unthinkable at all for me to think about entrepreneurship after graduation. I did think a little bit about it when I graduate from college, but that's just an idea. The thing is I haven't thought about it at all because I am not qualified for business. I didn't think about it because after graduation I would immediately look for a job.

This response represent that most participants think that it is a lot easier to work than to initiate their own business. They view that finding jobs is not as complicated as running their own business. The relationship between competency gained from higher education is tightly related to filling in the job vacancies available when they become higher education alumni. Although entrepreneurship came across their mind, they were not clear what business they were going to have. All these responses indicated that they would reject the idea of setting up their own independent business as introduced in entrepreneurship coursework.

3.2 Finding a Job is more prioritized than setting up Entrepreneurship

When being confronted to the choice of finding a job and starting an independent business after graduation, most of participants prefer to find jobs as they expressed in the following words.

I am thinking of finding jobs, as the priority to get capital for further business later on. When I complete my study, I will look for a job to get experience first, while setting up an entrepreneurship should be the second priority at the later stage. The plan after graduation I choose will be to work in a company. Whenever there is an opportunity for entrepreneurship, I think it will at the later stage. I'd like to find a job after graduation or alternatively I will continue my study to a higher level of tertiary study. In my opinion, it is best to look for a job to get the business capital. So you don't have to borrow money from the bank when you want to start your business. When you work

having found a job, you could enhance your skills and get experience. I will find a job that suits my ability. This is something in which I am interested. Although there are two options between work and business, I would tend to find a job still.

The statements illustrate that the priority is to find a job rather than having to start a business or to be self-employed. Participants tend to compete for jobs rather than competing in the entrepreneurship sector. Even if both choices would equally be difficult and be confronted to unexpected obstacles, it was revealed that entrepreneurship had become the second priority after they had got jobs. Entrepreneurship is assumed to have been related to capital or financial initiation without which it will not work the way it should be. This means that to start a business in the participants' minds should always be with a sum amount of money. Explicitly they did not mention the amount of capital needed because they did not know what type of business to start with.

Another statement is the need for experience that they can gain from their career when they work in a company. This experience is beneficial form them as a starting point to decide to start a business as an entrepreneur later on. Their responses denote that business initiation is something that they were not aware of at all. Entrepreneurship does not exist in the participants' minds. What has been formatted in their finds is just a profession with a certain social status as an employee of a company when they work. It is the only source of income they can think of and the only way they deserve to fight for having completed their higher education study.

3.3 Looking for a job is the top priority than setting up Entrepreneurship

Of all participants, very few students thought of becoming self-employed, most of them said that they would be better off working first than being self-employed, as worded in the following excerpts.

I don't want to be an entrepreneur because I want to work first. Not for the time being, though. It never crosses my mind the idea of entrepreneurship, not at the moment. Because after graduation I would look for a job. I have no intention to entrepreneurship. It is something I have never thought about even after graduation. Maybe there is an idea to think about it when you graduate from college. But, I haven't thought about it because I don't have qualifications in that sort of field of business. I thought best would be to immediately look for a job right after graduation.

Most participants responded that the easiest way to do things in life is to work rather than having to be involved in entrepreneurship issue. The intention of having particular competency in higher education is related to jobs seeking after becoming a higher education alumni. A few participants responded that they did think about pursuing with entrepreneurship, but it was not clear what type of business they were going to do and in what field of business in more specific it would be. This means that the participants did have any thoughts on the independent business through which it could be mediated by entrepreneurship.

4 Discussion

Findings led to the fact that job seeking has become a priority than being an entrepreneur. Working with a corporate is closely related to one's career perspective as [15, 16] reveal. On the other hand, being an entrepreneur could just be a step stone to gain experience for a few career paths in which a productive person changes his or her occupation by stepping over from one to another job of which case, he or she might as well gets involved in entering and leaving the entrepreneurship world. This finding is in line with the current finding in this study where being self-employed is not as popular as having employment with the company in which career path becomes so distinctive and promising. Therefore, there is no wonder that job seeking is more common and popular than working in individual in a self-employed profession where everything is under the one-man show initiation to begin with.

[15, 18, 19] found that most of entrepreneurs find their new business when they are working with someone else under which they are being employed. While [20] found that very few people (approximately 10% of them) with self-employment status are still employed by the companies indicating that self-employment is not an easy option for them with many different arguments. People are then confronted to having an explicit career path in the company combined with running their own business on a part time basis after their working hours. The option between working with an organization with fully-well-set-up management and financial system would not have the same pattern with that of a self-business mode, the latter of which the role of individuation initiation is dominant. The risk of losses in such business is also vulnerable.

All these findings indicated that higher education students in Indonesia have been stuck to one single career choice that jobs seeking has become the only alternative they can think of and they push their luck to it after graduation. What this study can contribute is that entrepreneurship should be an alternative for higher education graduates by which they can also have their career paths or their individual professions when they graduate. Not only should competition be focused on jobs seeking but also for entrepreneurship. It should be viewed as a challenging opportunity for higher education graduates not as a complicated alternative. Findings suggest that future entrepreneurship coursework should be focused not only on products but also on services related to the higher education field of study, for examples air-conditioning, small garage services, cleaning services, small-scale contractor business, security services, and many other services. More examples should be elaborated and provided in the entrepreneurship coursework for higher education students in the future to open their insights for further opportunity.

5 Conclusion

All the themes found in the findings led to the conclusions that higher education students in Indonesia still stick to the idea of getting jobs with the corporates and have their career path with them. They do not have any thoughts of setting up their own

business even at the small-scale one. Orientation towards employment with a company is still dominant compared to having their own business.

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