

Fostering Entrepreneurial Mindsets among University Students Through Experiential Learning:
Evidence from Tanjung Bizfest Project
(Memupuk Pemikiran Keusahawanan Dalam Kalangan Pelajar Universiti Melalui Pembelajaran
Berasaskan Pengalaman: Kajian Kes Tanjung BizFest)

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ABSTRACT

Tanjung BizFest was an entrepreneurial program initiated and conducted formally by the Jawatankuasa Kerja Perkembangan (JKP) Keusahawanan of Tuanku Kurshiah Residential College, Universiti Malaya. This study was guided by the following objectives: (1) to determine the impact of experiential learning of the entrepreneurial skills among the university students, and (2) to assess the extent of the soft skills developed among university students through the program. This case study takes a quantitative descriptive approach whereby the data tool is a set of post-program surveys. The main target participants for the study were the two main stakeholders in the Tanjung BizFest event, namely the student vendors as well as the organizing team. The results are clear- 95% of vendors reported that the event had increased their income and motivation, and 100% of the organizing committee gained essential soft skills in management and problem-solving. The results also suggest that this program provides a model that can be replicated by other Malaysian institutions of higher learning for the development of practical entrepreneurial skills. The case study on Tanjung BizFest offers conclusive evidence that student-run experiential projects are highly effective in encouraging an entrepreneurial mindset and practical work skills among students. Through this program, it will be able to create a mock business environment within the campus community and afford students an opportunity to acquire hands-on experience in organizing, marketing, and financial management.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Skills, Higher Education, Effectiveness of Leadership, Soft Skills Development, Experiential learning

ABSTRAK

Tanjung BizFest merupakan program keusahawanan terancang yang dimulakan dan dikendalikan secara rasmi oleh Jawatankuasa Kerja Perkembangan (JKP) Keusahawanan Kolej Kediaman Tuanku Kurshiah, Universiti Malaya. Kajian ini berpandukan objektif berikut: (1) untuk menentukan impak pembelajaran berasaskan pengalaman terhadap kemahiran keusahawanan dalam kalangan pelajar universiti, dan (2) untuk menilai tahap kemahiran insaniah yang dibangunkan dalam kalangan pelajar universiti melalui program tersebut. Kajian kes ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kuantitatif, dengan instrumen data utama adalah set tinjauan pasca-program. Peserta sasaran utama untuk kajian ini melibatkan dua pihak berkepentingan utama dalam acara Tanjung BizFest, iaitu vendor pelajar dan pasukan penganjur. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan hasil yang jelas - 95% vendor melaporkan peningkatan pendapatan dan motivasi keusahawanan, manakala 100% ahli jawatankuasa penganjur memperoleh kemahiran insaniah yang penting dalam pengurusan dan penyelesaian masalah. Hasil ini turut mencadangkan bahawa program ini menyediakan model yang boleh direplikasi oleh institusi pengajian tinggi Malaysia yang lain untuk pembangunan kemahiran keusahawanan praktikal. Kajian kes Tanjung BizFest menawarkan bukti muktamad bahawa projek berasaskan pengalaman yang dijalankan oleh pelajar adalah sangat berkesan dalam menggalakkan pemikiran keusahawanan dan kemahiran kerja praktikal. Melalui program ini, ia dapat mewujudkan persekitaran perniagaan simulasi dalam komuniti kampus, sekali gus memberikan peluang kepada pelajar untuk memperoleh pengalaman secara langsung dalam pengurusan, pemasaran, dan kewangan perniagaan.

Kata Kunci: Kemahiran Keusahawanan, Pendidikan Tinggi, Keberkesanan Kepimpinan, Pembangunan Kemahiran Insaniah, Pembelajaran berasaskan pengalaman

INTRODUCTION

Tanjung BizFest was an entrepreneurial program initiated and conducted formally by the Jawatankuasa Kerja Perkembangan (JKP) Keusahawanan of Tuanku Kurshiah Residential College, Universiti Malaya. It was to address a universal issue concerning undergraduates in contemporary societies: how to bridge the gap between the theoretical knowledge of entrepreneurship learned within classrooms and the lack of practical, real-world experience in applying it. The program will be able to create a mock business environment within the campus community and afford students an opportunity to acquire hands-on experience in organizing, marketing, and financial management.

Therefore, this case study attempts to analyze the success level of Tanjung BizFest in reaching its proposed objectives. The current study, therefore, is guided by the following objectives: (1) to determine the impact of experiential learning of the entrepreneurial skills among the university students, and (2) to assess the extent of the soft skills developed among university students through the program. The university students are defined as two primary stakeholder groups: the student vendors operating the businesses and the

committee members who organized the event logistics and operations. The findings of this study are important because they provide a model that can be replicated by other Malaysian institutes of higher learning for the development of practical entrepreneurial skills. The following analysis will specifically quantify the success of the program in raising income generation and entrepreneurial motivation among the vendors and evaluate the high rate of skill acquisition in key areas like leadership and problem-solving among the organizing committee. This twin focus ensures a comprehensive evaluation of how experiential learning benefits both operational and managerial participants.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Tanjung BizFest is a planned entrepreneurial program formally conducted by Jawatankuasa Kerja Perkembangan (JKP) Keusahawanan of Tuanku Kurshiah Residential College, Universiti Malaya. The implementation of the program took about six months, from 18 December 2024 to 10 June 2025, in a central area named Tanjung within Tuanku Kurshiah Residential College (KK3), University Malaya.



FIGURE 1. First Tanjung BizFest at Tanjung, Tuanku Kurshiah Residential College (KK3), University Malaya

A total of 24 members of the committee were involved in organizing the event, while 39 student vendors from different colleges took part as business entities. The vendors included those selling products ranging from food, drinks, handcrafted products, clothing, and services. The event strategy aimed at

imitating a real-life setting of a business environment on campus, thereby allowing the students to learn firsthand about the concept of organizing, marketing, interacting, as well as managing a business. The organizers of the initiative thought the event would help imbue the participants with skills of entrepreneurship.

ISSUE

The most important topic in this case study revolves around the identified difference between theoretical knowledge of entrepreneurship taught in higher education establishments such as universities, versus the skill set required to implement it. This academic-practice gap often stems from a curriculum focused heavily on theoretical models rather than dynamic market challenges. Undergrads learn rudimentary knowledge about business, but they don't have the opportunity to apply their knowledge. Consequently, students often graduate with lower entrepreneurial self-efficacy, struggling to translate concepts from the classroom into actionable strategies.

This phenomenon does not only affect operations at a business level, but it is also a manifestation of a deeper challenge concerning employability and readiness from a leadership perspective. The modern job market increasingly demands demonstrated practical skills and leadership initiative over purely academic achievement. Most students display knowledge proficiency from an academic perspective, but, ultimately, they lack the level of experience necessary to overcome challenges, make strategic inputs, or act on entrepreneurial undertakings. The set of soft skills which are often considered critical, including leadership, communication, problem-solving, collaboration, as well as time management, gets neglected within a context devoid of expertly designed experiential learning frameworks. These managerial and interpersonal competencies are foundational for success in any career path and reinforce the urgent need for structured development outside of traditional lectures. Initiatives such as the Tanjung BizFest can be considered a means to fill this knowledge vacuum within a simulated real-world environment, thus creating a smooth career path for mastering theoretical knowledge. This validates the use of hands-on, practice-based programs as essential tools for achieving holistic graduate readiness.

THEORY OF ANALYSIS

This case study takes a quantitative descriptive approach whereby the data tool is a set of post-program surveys. The main target participants for the study were the two main stakeholders in the Tanjung BizFest event, namely the student vendors as well as the organizing team. This would ensure that the selection was holistic, covering insights from both the beneficiaries of the experiential learning model-the

vendors-and the implementers, the organizing team.

The dataset includes:

- i. 24 responses from the organizing committee.
- ii. 20 responses from student vendors.

In both surveys, a 5-point Likert scaling system was used (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree), which enabled a quantitative assessment of participants' views on the level of the program's success in reaching the set targets. This standardized measuring tool lends credibility and reliability to the assessment of self-perceived skills and motivation. Data gathered were analyzed using descriptive statistics to analyze the percentage of responses. The reason this statistical method was chosen is because the main objective of the study is an in-depth analysis of the effect of a certain intervention, rather than generalizing findings to broader national populations.

In addition to the quantitative results, qualitative information has been collected through the use of open questions, so participants have been able to express their views on challenges faced as well as suggestions on how improvement could be achieved. Triangulation of data sources by using structured numbers and subjective narrative feedback can achieve a comprehensive assessment of the program. The approach allows for the objective evaluation of the success of Tanjung BizFest in fostering entrepreneurial skills, as well as areas in which future development of this program is required.

From the analysis of the post-program survey responses, there are two significant observations related to the objectives. The first one pertains to Tanjung BizFest's effects on the entrepreneurial characteristics and income-earning capacities of student vendors. Meanwhile, the other looks into skills development for organizing committee members. The clear demarcation between these two groups of stakeholders ensures that the differing benefits derived from the program-operational skills for vendors, managerial and leadership skills for the committee are duly considered.

In order to move beyond descriptive analysis, this paper uses Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle as a theoretical underpinning. Concrete Experience is provided in the form of running a stall or managing logistics in the Tanjung BizFest event itself, while Reflective Observation is achieved through a survey conducted after the event. Such a process is critical in order for students to move beyond raw experience to Abstract Conceptualization, where soft skills like crisis management and financial planning are internalized as transferable professional competencies.

TABLE 1. Vendor Perceptions of Program Effectiveness

Survey Question	5 (Strongly Agree)	4 (Agree)	3 (Neutral)	2 (Disagree)	1 (Strongly Disagree)
The program helped me generate supplementary income.	18 (90%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
The program increased my motivation to be active in entrepreneurship.	18 (90%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
The program helped expand publicity for my product/business.	16 (80%)	3 (15%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	0 (0%)

Source: Final Activity Report Tanjung Bizfest Session 2024/2025

Finding 1: Impact on Vendor Entrepreneurial Skills and Income

To determine how much the program helped to create entrepreneurial motivation and income generation, data analysis was conducted using feedback from 20 student vendors. As shown in table 1 above, there was a highly favorable outcome.

Together, 95% of vendors agreed or strongly agreed that the program helped them earn additional income. In a similar manner, 95% of vendors found that their passion to become entrepreneurs was enhanced after participating in Tanjung’s event. In addition to these remarks, 95% of participants understood that Tanjung BizFest increased the exposure of vendors’ products or ventures.

TABLE 2. Organizing Committee Skill Development

Survey Question	5 (Strongly Agree)	4 (Agree)	3 (Neutral)	2 (Disagree)	1 (Strongly Disagree)
I acquired new skills (e.g., leadership, time management, communication, and problem-solving).	20 (83.3%)	4 (16.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
I am clear about my responsibilities throughout the program.	16 (66.7%)	8 (33.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
The cooperation between committee members was good.	15 (62.5%)	7 (29.2%)	2 (8.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Source: Final Activity Report Tanjung Bizfest Session 2024/2025

Finding 2: Development of Committee Skills

Considering the concern raised by the lack of practical and soft skills possessed by university students, data collected from the organizing committee members consisting of 24 participants was used for analysis.

The results show that Tanjung BizFest provided a successful experiential platform for skill development. As illustrated in Table 2 above, 100% of those surveyed were in agreement or strong agreement that new skills had been attained in participating in the program in terms of leadership skills, time management skills,

communications skills, or problem-solving skills. In other words, there was a high level of understanding concerning those assigned tasks within the committee.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results obtained in this case study are highly informative for both theoretical foundations and practical implementation related to education in entrepreneurial development across Malaysian institutions of higher learning. The Tanjung BizFest results prove that experiential learning can greatly improve participants' entrepreneurial drive, earning capacity, and crucial soft skills, specifically demonstrating improvement in leadership, communication, problem-solving, collaboration, and time management.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

In this case, three important observations emerge. In particular, experiential education like Tanjung BizFest helps to fill the gap between teaching entrepreneurial concepts in a classroom environment. Second, participation in business activities enhances important soft skills in leadership, communication, problem-solving, and time management that are desired qualities for employability and entrepreneurial skills. Thirdly, the event model illustrates how co-curricular courses in entrepreneurship can function well as risk-minimized platforms for testing concepts or managing operations to instill business confidence.

PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

From a theoretical point of view, the results validate Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory. Kolb's model stresses learning based on direct experience and observations (Kolb, 1984). High success rates in the development of skills for the organizing committee confirm that this hands-on approach is indeed highly effective in transferring such complex competencies. The event has successfully provided participants with the necessary Concrete Experience—running the stalls, managing the logistics, solving unexpected problems—and subsequent success reported in skills acquisition after participation shows that they moved through the latter stages of Kolb's cycle, internalizing the lessons through Reflective Observation into Abstract

Conceptualization. This goes a long way in providing strong support for practical application in the theory within co-curricular programming.

Moreover, the committee's achievement of a 100% skill acquisition rate verifies that the campus setting's low-stakes, high-reward attributes function as a critical catalyst. Unlike fixed classroom models, autonomy given to students in designing vendor layouts and addressing technical issues allows for learning through trial, which serves as the chief motivator for leadership development as found in this study.

In line with Malaysian studies that emphasize hands-on exposure to entrepreneurial activities to promote self-efficacy and intention to become an entrepreneur (Ismail et al., 2018), results validate that hands-on exposure to entrepreneurial activities enhances self-efficacy. This means that the practical and physical process of the BizFest itself enhanced the confidence and motivation needed for future entrepreneurial ventures, which is often mentioned in Malaysian literature as an important enabling factor. From an implementation point of view, Tanjung BizFest's success reiterates the need for organizing entrepreneurship activities in an academic environment. It bridges this gap between important but perhaps theoretical classwork and tangible, measurable skill acquisition.

In addition to that, there are additional contributions to policy discourse. The effectiveness shown by this case study provides tangible evidence to support national policy mandates. According to the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (2021), one of the objectives related to developing an entrepreneurial mindset is found in its Entrepreneurship Action Plan for Higher Education Institutions 2021-2025. This national action plan thus seeks to create graduates who are holistic, entrepreneurial, and balanced. The measurable outputs from Tanjung BizFest—95% income generation and 100% skill development—are clear evidence that these ambitious policy intentions are not just theoretical ends. The case provided represents an example for which these objectives are actually attainable. Therefore, this study strongly suggests that policies must ensure prioritization of institutionalization and scaling of such student-led experiential platforms across other Malaysian higher learning institutions to ensure policy goals with regard to graduate readiness and economic resilience are met.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- i. Mentorship Enhancement: In future

undertakings, there should be mentorship sessions involving alumni entrepreneurs or small business partners because mentorship has been shown to improve entrepreneurial skill transfer (Kunaka & Moos, 2019).

- ii. Sustainability and Follow-Up: The vendors' data needs to be tracked longitudinally to monitor whether entrepreneurial motivation and income generation are maintained (6-12 months after completion of the program).
- iii. Resource Support: Institutions are advised to focus resources on developing student business ecosystems, which can provide innovation and test business platforms.
- iv. Future Research A comparison of case studies conducted in numerous residential colleges could supply more insight into how design elements, demographics, and institutional culture shape entrepreneurial outcomes.

However, several limitations are recognized. Firstly, the sample size of $n = 44$ is specific to Tuanku Kurshiah Residential College and may not represent the broader undergraduate population in Malaysia. Secondly, the data is based on perceptions of students immediately after the event and does not extend to measuring the long-term sustainability of entrepreneurial ventures or the long-term retention of soft skills. Future researchers are encouraged to use a longitudinal design to survey participants 12 to 24 months after graduation.

In conclusion, Tanjung BizFest proves that hands-on entrepreneurial activities run by universities are not only effective in fostering entrepreneurial ambitions but are also capable of fostering employability skills. The major takeaway for universities is that practical education not only enhances business skills but also builds qualities of leadership and adaptability in accordance with Malaysian economic conditions.

CONCLUSION

The case study on Tanjung BizFest offers conclusive evidence that student-run experiential projects are highly effective in encouraging an entrepreneurial mindset and practical work skills among students. The results are clear - 95% of vendors reported that the event had increased their income and motivation, and 100% of the organizing committee gained essential soft skills in management and problem-solving. By bridging the previously recognized 'academic-practice gap,' this

current study shows that experiential learning is not just an additive component of education but a vital bridge for graduate employability.

This paper further reinforces the need to bridge the gap that has persistently existed between theoretical learning and application in higher education institutions. The event has stood out as an ideal model that clearly demonstrates the objectives of the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia's Entrepreneurship Action Plan for Higher Education Institutions 2021–2025. The best form of learning does not only take place in the class but also in places where learning by doing is promoted.

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