

## **POLICIES AND PRACTICES FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION: THE MALAYSIAN EXPERIENCE**

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**Abstract** - Entrepreneurship education is considered one of the key instruments that increases the entrepreneurial attitudes of potential entrepreneurs. The Malaysian government has made tremendous efforts in promoting entrepreneurship education by improving the current policy on entrepreneurship education, providing various entrepreneurship programmes to increase the number of young entrepreneurs, and highlighting the need to empower entrepreneurship education among graduates of Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). This paper therefore aims to examine the achievements of the Strategic Plan on Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (2013-2015) on promoting entrepreneurial education in Malaysian HEIs. The achievements were measured through Key Performance Indicators that were developed by the Ministry of Education. Findings of this study noted that four out of six thrusts, including the first thrust, which is to empower the Entrepreneurship Centre in every HEI, the second thrust, which is to provide holistic and well-planned entrepreneurial education and programmes, the fourth thrust, which is to enhance the competency of HEIs' entrepreneurship trainers and facilitators, and the sixth thrust, which is to increase the effect of the implementation of HEIs' entrepreneurial education and development, have been successfully achieved. Meanwhile, the other two thrusts that include the third thrust, which is to empower entrepreneurial development programmes, and the fifth thrust, which is to provide a conducive environment and ecosystem for entrepreneurship development, have failed to be achieved. Therefore, it is important for the Ministry of Education and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to join hands in making sure that the current policies and programmes as well as the curriculum and content on entrepreneurship are improved.

**JEL Classifications:** A22, I21, I28

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship Education, Entrepreneurial University, Malaysian HEIs

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The world has been developing into a place where the economic state implies the success of every country around the globe. Every country is determined to find various ways to boost its economy and one of the well-known alternatives is through entrepreneurship. Indeed, many governments around the world believe that entrepreneurship is the key to the development of the economy (Hebert & Link, 2011). In addition, many scholars and economists are also in favour of the fact that entrepreneurship is an important factor in the development of a society (Abu-Saifan, 2012). Thus, taking cues from scholars, policy makers have formulated the entrepreneurship education at the tertiary level with positive efforts to control the unemployment issue among graduates (Nizam & Rejab, 2010).

The unemployment problem among graduates has been a major issue in Malaysia in recent years (Ahmad, 2013). The Economic Planning Unit (2013) reported a fluctuation of the unemployment rate in Malaysia between 2008 and 2013. The Ministry of International Trade and Industry (2014) further reported in its weekly bulletin that around 0.4 million people were still unemployed as of February 2014. According to Lebusa (2011), the actual situation today is that more and more graduates, particularly young and fresh graduates, are joining the unemployment queue. This particular group experiences difficulties in securing its first job (Ismail, 2011). This is due to the lack of job opportunities available where in today's competitive job environment, total job opportunities are unfortunately limited (Ismail, 2011; Ooi, Selvarajah, & Meyer, 2011). Hence, entrepreneurship particularly entrepreneurship education is one of the best solutions to reduce the dependency of graduates on being employed (Ariff et al., 2014). According to Rasmussen and Sørheim (2006), entrepreneurship education

positively affects employability in terms of job experience, creativity in the current job, and annual income earned. Moreover, entrepreneurship education enhances students' awareness of the business world. It can provide students with an "understanding of business – its purposes, its structure, and its interrelationship with other segments of the economy and society" (Cheung, 2008). Besides, Lebusa (2011) also argued that the entrepreneurial skills that the students acquire through entrepreneurship education should nurture their ability to solve problems innovatively, instil creativity and self-confidence, and encourage high readiness for change. In other words, it does not matter what the students' career choices or personal situations are; the main idea is that every individual will benefit from learning an innovative approach to problem solving by becoming more self-reliant and developing his/her creativity through the study of entrepreneurship (Henry, Hill, & Leitch, 2005).

Upon realizing this, the Malaysian government has implemented several policies in the development of entrepreneurship in Malaysia. Among the policies are the New Economic Policy (NEP) (1971-1990), the National Development Policy (NDP) (1991-2000), and the New Economic Model (NEM) (2010). On top of that, the Higher Education Entrepreneurship Development Policy was launched on 13 April 2010 by the Ministry of Education (MOE) as the means to boost the development of more holistic and well-organized entrepreneurship programmes. Specifically, the implementation of the policy aims to produce graduates from Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) with thinking and entrepreneurial attributes as well as to increase the number of entrepreneurs among graduates who are engaged in businesses. Along with the implemented policies, the government has also introduced various entrepreneurship programmes in the development of entrepreneurship in Malaysia. All these initiatives reflect the Malaysian government's awareness on the importance of entrepreneurial activities and the significance of adopting entrepreneurship as a way to boost employment and economic development (Othman, Othman, & Ismail, 2012). However, despite the policies implemented by the Malaysian government, studies done on the effectiveness of policy implementation are still lacking. Therefore, this paper aims to examine the achievements of the Strategic Plan on Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (2013-2015) that is based on the Higher Education Entrepreneurship Development Policy (2010) on promoting entrepreneurial education in Malaysian HEIs by measuring the achievements through Key Performance Indicators that were developed by the Ministry of Education.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Given that schools can have a particularly important influence on students' awareness of future plans and aspirations, the education system is a key area where it is appropriate to interfere and introduce entrepreneurship as a possible alternative to being dependent on employment (Dinis et al., 2013; Frank et al., 2005). Several literatures have also proposed the idea that early formal entrepreneurship education affects students' attitude, influences their future career direction, and at the same time, affects their entrepreneurial propensity when they become adults (Dinis et al., 2013). This is because academic education offers students an opportunity to be aware of the latest developments in their selected fields by providing them a clearer view on how to implement them in a future business. In addition, it is also evident that entrepreneurs who are academically educated are more important in developing regional economies than academically low level entrepreneurs (Taatila, 2010).

### **University's Role in Promoting Entrepreneurship**

There has been much discussion in the academic community on the effect of education on future entrepreneurs' creation and the connection between university training and new ventures' success (Franke & Lüthje, 2004). Since the education offered by a university mostly influences the career selection of students, universities can be seen as potential sources of future entrepreneurs (Turker, 2009). Universities and other educational institutions are expected to produce graduates who are well equipped with an entrepreneurial vision (Tessema Gerba, 2012). Many universities around the world now offer courses that are related to entrepreneurship with the goal of promoting entrepreneurship as a future career among their students (Trivedi, 2014). Ooi et al. (2011) also indicated that the role of universities was found to be significantly associated with entrepreneurial intention among the students. A study conducted by Dohse and Walter (2010) provides empirical evidence that students at universities offering entrepreneurship education are more likely to develop a positive attitude towards pursuing an entrepreneurial career. Thus, it is important for universities to provide an entrepreneurially friendly environment in promoting and fostering the entrepreneurial culture (Ooi et. al., 2011).

In line with the policies and strategies that have been implemented by the government, entrepreneurship education was introduced by institutions of higher learning in Malaysia as early as the 1980s, but it had not been getting the attention from the community for quite some time (Othman, Hashim, & Wahid, 2012). On the other hand, a study by Cheng, Chan, and Mahmood (2009) reported that many universities and higher education institutions in Malaysia had started to introduce courses related to entrepreneurship or majors in

entrepreneurship since the mid-1990s. However, it was not until around the year 2000 when a significant increase in opportunities for degree-level entrepreneurship education had taken place. Since then, there has been an increasing number of core academic courses, elective courses, entrepreneurship programmes, entrepreneurship degrees, and postgraduate courses. For instance, in the Multimedia University (MMU), a programme in Bachelor of Multimedia (Media Innovation and Entrepreneurship) has been launched with entrepreneurship as a core course. In addition, it is compulsory for all MMU students, regardless of their majors, to take the subject known as the “Introduction to Cyberpreneurship”. Besides MMU, entrepreneurship is offered in almost all universities in Malaysia (Othman et al., 2012). Entrepreneurship is one of the subjects offered in the Bachelor of Business Administration programme at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) while at University of Malaya (UM), entrepreneurship is offered in the Department of Business Strategy and Policy. Apart from that, entrepreneurship is a core subject in most of the higher education institutions in Malaysia at the Master of Business Administration (MBA) level (Cheng et al., 2009).

### **Entrepreneurial Curriculum and Content**

Entrepreneurship education is possibly the most effective way of embedding an entrepreneurial culture in HEIs by nurturing an entrepreneurial mind set among the students and increasing the future supply of graduate entrepreneurs (Fenton & Barry, 2014). In order to provide an entrepreneurial environment to the students, universities must be able to formulate or design and develop a curriculum that would fulfil the students and industries’ demands. Moreover, as the students are exposed to entrepreneurial courses, it would definitely influence their inclination towards entrepreneurship (Ooi et al., 2011). Thus, based on the established syllabi from developed countries as a model for implementation, universities were asked to formulate their own customized entrepreneurship programmes. However, Malaysia and other developing countries’ educational systems are still far from achieving the standard of developed countries’ infrastructures (Nizam Zainuddin & Rozaini Mohd Rejab, 2010). Therefore, curriculum and programmes that are relevant to potential tendency of entrepreneurship should be carried out to achieve the objective of acculturating entrepreneurship among students (Mahajar, 2012).

Entrepreneurship education covers various audiences, objectives, contents, and pedagogical methods (Fayolle & Gaylli, 2008). In terms of contents of entrepreneurship, according to Jones and English (2000), what is taught on entrepreneurship varies among universities. However, they have chosen an overview provided by Brown (2000) as an excellent overview of the developing nature of curriculum within the entrepreneurship education. Brown (2000) cited several authors in describing the components of an effective curriculum but the most interesting one is presented by Kourilsky (1995) who divided curriculum components into three groups: opportunity recognition, the marshalling and commitment of resources, and the creation of an operating business organization. Still, according to Mansor and Othman (2011), there is considerable disagreement on what constitutes an entrepreneurial curriculum model and what courses should be taught in entrepreneurship programmes. This is because the curriculum for entrepreneurship education needs to consist of business education-oriented emphasis on required career skills. The topics involved in curriculum development programmes should also be relevant to the scope of the requirements of career skills and disciplines (Hussain & Othman, 2014). In terms of pedagogical methods, pedagogy is a significant topic that is generally discussed in academic institutions (Ismail, 2010). However, according to McKeown, Millman, Reddy Sursani, Smith, and Martin (2006), 86% of Higher Education Institution (HEI) programmes in the UK still practice traditional teaching and learning methods. Traditionally, entrepreneurship has been taught in classrooms using a didactic approach or widely known as ‘teacher centred’ where the teacher is teaching actively while students gain knowledge. Therefore, there are other ways in which a realistic image of the entrepreneur can be brought into the classroom, such as accessing a website, watching a television series, and using a training pack (Hytti & O’Gorman, 2004).

According to Ismail (2010), besides developing the students’ understanding of business, more attention needs to be paid to the improvement of their entrepreneurial skills, attributes, and behaviours. The step that can be taken includes introducing modules and courses specifically designed to develop the awareness and characteristics of the entrepreneur within the students (Kirby, 2004). Therefore, the content and teaching methods for entrepreneurship education should be designed specifically and differently from other general business management courses. The designed content of entrepreneurship education should relate the relationship personality structure and attitude towards entrepreneurship that ultimately influences entrepreneurial intent and aspiration to start a business venture (Ismail, 2010).

## **Entrepreneurial Programmes**

Since entrepreneurship is often linked to promoting economic growth, innovation, and job and venture creations, some wide-ranging programmes and services have been executed to provide better infrastructure for new ventures (Tessema Gerba, 2012). According to Ismail (2010), entrepreneurial education includes both informal and formal methods. The formal aspects of entrepreneurship education emphasize on presenting the theoretical and conceptual frameworks concerning entrepreneurship. The informal aspects of entrepreneurship education combine and integrate with the formal aspects of education. Thus, in addition to formal education, extra-curricular activities have also been implemented in HEIs, in the form of associations, clubs, and so forth. Some universities have a special support structure that serves as a centre of excellence for small businesses, providing services to students and SME entrepreneurs. These centres are operated primarily by students (Othman et al., 2012). Among the centres are the Entrepreneurship Development Institute at UUM, Malaysia Entrepreneur Development Centre (MEDEC) at UiTM, Small Business Development Centre at UPM, Bureau of Innovation and Consultancy (BIP) at UTM, and Innovation and Consultancy Centre at USM (Othman et al., 2012). These activities clearly demonstrate the development of entrepreneurship education in HEIs, in line with the government's aspiration to create a distinctive commercial and industrial community in Malaysia (Othman et al., 2012).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study uses a cross sectional design to measure entrepreneurship education in Malaysian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) focusing on public universities. The respondents are from the Entrepreneurship Centres in 20 public HEIs, as they have strong knowledge on entrepreneurship education practices in their universities and have access to data concerning entrepreneurship programmes. A set of questionnaire is used as the research instrument. The questionnaires were distributed to the selected respondents via emails. Completed data was collected from 10 respondents who represent ten public HEIs in Malaysia. Some data was also retrieved from the Ministry of Education's database to provide a thorough analysis of the key performance indicators (KPIs).

### **Research Instrument**

The questionnaire was designed using simple and unbiased wordings whereby respondents from each university can easily understand the questions and provide answers based on the data that they have. Questions were adapted and modified from the list of Key Performance Indicators that have been documented by the Ministry of Education through the Strategic Plan on Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (2013-2015). The questionnaire consists of 6 sections that represent the six thrusts in the Strategic Plan on Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (2013-2015). In each section, there are both close-ended questions that provide two choices, 'Yes' and 'No', as well as open-ended questions.

**TABLE 1: STRATEGIC PLAN ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION (2013-2015) KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

Thrusts	KPIs
1. Empowering the Entrepreneurship Centre in every HEI	a) All HEIs have their own Entrepreneurship Centres that are upgraded to a responsibility centre by 2013 b) All Entrepreneurship Institutes in HEIs have their own advisory board by 2013 c) 30% of income is generated by the Entrepreneurship Centre in HEIs by 2015 d) A database is developed in MOE by 2014
2. Provide holistic and well-planned entrepreneurial education and programmes	e) 30% of courses in HEIs have learning outcome of management and entrepreneurship skills by 2015 f) 15% of practical element are included in the teaching of the entrepreneurial subject by 2015 g) A comprehensive guideline to improve industrial involvement is developed by HEIs by 2013 h) 50% of students are involved in entrepreneurial activities and programmes by 2015
3. Empowering entrepreneurial development programmes	i) 6000 entrepreneurs are born among HEI graduates in a three year period as follows: 2013: 1500 2014: 2000 2015: 2500
4. Enhance the competency of HEIs' entrepreneurship trainers and facilitators	j) 500 internal trainers and facilitators with expertise in entrepreneurship by 2015
5. Provide a conducive environment and ecosystem for entrepreneurship development	k) Students' satisfaction index towards the entrepreneurship ecosystem achieves 80% by 2015
6. Increase the effect of the implementation of HEIs' entrepreneurial education and development	l) One standardized KPI instrument by 2013

*Source: Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi Malaysia (2013)*

After the respondents have answered the questionnaire, a descriptive approach is used in analysing the data from the questionnaire. It is important to note that the descriptive approach used only describes the data collected; it cannot determine cause and effect and it cannot draw conclusions from any of the relationships.

## RESULTS

As presented in Table 2, among the total of 10 respondents, all of the respondents or 100% answered 'Yes' when they were asked whether they have Entrepreneurship Centres that have been upgraded to a responsibility centre in their universities. However, when they were further asked whether the Entrepreneurship Centre was established in 2013, 60% of the respondents answered 'Yes' while the other 40% answered 'No'. Half of the respondents also responded positively when they were asked about the existence of an advisory board at the Entrepreneurship Centre. However, when they were further asked whether the advisory board was established by 2013, only 20% of the respondents answered 'Yes' while the other 80% answered 'No'. 40% of the respondents answered 'Yes' while the other 60% answered 'No' when asked whether their Entrepreneurship Centres generate 30% of the university's income by 2015. When the respondents were asked whether they have developed a database in the Ministry of Education by 2014, 40% of the respondents answered 'Yes' while 60% of the respondents answered 'No'.

**TABLE 2. THRUST 1 KPI (EMPOWERING ENTREPRENEURSHIP CENTRES IN EVERY HEI)**

KPI: All HEIs have their own Entrepreneurship Centres that are upgraded to a responsibility centre by 2013			KPI: All Entrepreneurship Centres in HEIs have their own advisory board by 2013		
	n	%		n	%
Yes	10	100	Yes	5	50
No	0	0	No	5	50
Total	10	100	Total	10	100

  

KPI: 30% of income is generated by the Entrepreneurship Centre in HEIs by 2015			KPI: A database is developed in MOE by 2014		
	n	%		n	%
Yes	10	100	Yes	5	50
No	0	0	No	5	50
Total	10	100	Total	10	100

**TABLE 3. THRUST 2 KPI (PROVIDE HOLISTIC AND WELL-PLANNED ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION AND PROGRAMMES)**

KPI: 30% of courses in HEIs have learning outcome of management and entrepreneurial skills by 2015			KPI: 15% of practical element are included in the teaching of the entrepreneurial subject by 2015		
	n	%		n	%
Yes	6	60	Yes	7	70
No	4	40	No	3	30
Total	10	100	Total	10	100

  

KPI: A comprehensive guideline to improve industrial involvement is developed by HEIs by 2013			KPI: 50% of students are involved in entrepreneurial activities and programmes by 2015		
	n	%		n	%
Yes	5	50	Yes	4	40
No	5	50	No	6	60
Total	10	100	Total	10	100

As presented in Table 3, among the total of 10 respondents, 6 of the respondents or 60% answered 'Yes' while the other 40% answered 'No' when they were asked whether they provide 30% of courses that have learning outcome of management and entrepreneurial skills in their universities by 2015. When the respondents were asked whether there are 15% of practical elements included in the teaching of the entrepreneurial subject by 2015, 70% of the respondents answered 'Yes' while the other 30% answered 'No'. Half of the respondents also responded positively when they were asked about the development of a comprehensive guideline to improve industrial involvement by 2013. When the respondents were asked whether there are 50% of students who are involved in entrepreneurial activities and programmes by 2015, 40% of the respondents answered 'Yes' while 60% of the respondents answered 'No'.

**TABLE 4. THRUST 3 KPI (EMPOWERING ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES)**

KPI: 6000 entrepreneurs are born among HEI graduates in a three year period					
	n	%		n	%
R1	78	16.9	R6	30	6.5
R2	52	11.2	R7	10	2.2
R3	50	10.9	R8	72	15.6
R4	100	21.6	R9	50	10.8
R5	20	4.3	R10	-	-
			Total	462	100

Table 4 shows the KPI for the third thrust, which is to empower entrepreneurial development programmes. When measuring this KPI, the respondents were asked to state the number of entrepreneurs that have been produced by their universities in a three-year period (2013, 2014, 2015). Among the total of 10 respondents representing 10 universities, the highest number of entrepreneurs that have been produced is recorded by R4 with 100 entrepreneurs produced at his/her university, followed by R1 with 78 entrepreneurs produced at his/her university. R8 and R2 recorded 72 and 52 entrepreneurs, respectively. Both R3 and R9 recorded similar numbers of 50 entrepreneurs at their universities, followed by R6 with 30 entrepreneurs. The other two respondents, R5 and R7, recorded 20 and 10 entrepreneurs, respectively. Meanwhile, R10 has not provided the number of entrepreneurs that have been produced by his/her university making the total number of entrepreneurs who are born among HEI graduates in a three year period at 10 public HEIs at 462. However, when analysing further on this, the recorded data available at the Ministry of Education shows that the total number of entrepreneurs born among HEI graduates is 1210 in 2013 and 1465 in 2014 whereas the data for 2015 is currently not yet available.

**TABLE 5. THRUST 4 KPI (ENHANCE THE COMPETENCY OF HEIs' ENTREPRENEURSHIP TRAINERS AND FACILITATORS)**

KPI: 500 internal trainers and facilitators with expertise in entrepreneurship by 2015

	n	%		n	%
R1	183	39.8	R6	128	27.8
R2	-	-	R7	15	3.3
R3	20	4.3	R8	4	0.9
R4	20	4.3	R9	50	10.9
R5	40	8.7	R10	-	-
			Total	460	100

Table 5 shows the KPI for the fourth thrust that is to enhance the competency of HEIs' entrepreneurship trainers and facilitators. When measuring this KPI, the respondents were asked to state the number of internal trainers and facilitators with expertise in entrepreneurship at their universities by 2015. Among the total of 10 respondents representing 10 universities, the highest number of entrepreneurial experts is recorded by R1 with 183 entrepreneurial experts at his/her university, followed by R6 with 128 entrepreneurial experts at his/her university. R9 and R5 recorded 50 and 40 entrepreneurial experts, respectively. Both R3 and R4 recorded similar numbers of 20 entrepreneurial experts at their universities, followed by R7 and R8 who recorded 15 and 4 entrepreneurial experts at their universities, respectively. Meanwhile, both R2 and R10 have not provided the number of internal trainers and facilitators with expertise in entrepreneurship at their universities making the total number of internal trainers and facilitators with expertise in entrepreneurship by 2015 at 10 public HEIs at 460.

**TABLE 6. THRUST 5 KPI (PROVIDE A CONDUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT AND ECOSYSTEM FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT)**

KPI: 500 internal trainers and facilitators with expertise in entrepreneurship by 2015

	n	%
Yes	3	30
No	7	70
Total	10	100

Table 6 shows the KPI for the fifth thrust that is to provide a conducive environment and ecosystem for entrepreneurship development. When the respondents were asked whether the students' satisfaction index towards entrepreneurship ecosystem has achieved 80% by 2015, 30% of the respondents answered 'Yes' while the other 70% answered 'No'.

**TABLE 7. THRUST 6 KPI (INCREASE THE EFFECT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HEIs' ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT)**

KPI: One standardized KPI instrument by 2013

	n	%
Yes	6	60
No	4	40
Total	10	100

Table 7 shows the KPI for the sixth thrust that is to increase the effect of the implementation of HEIs' entrepreneurial education and development. When the respondents were asked whether they have one standardized KPI instrument, 60% of the respondents answered 'Yes' while the other 40% answered 'No'. However, when they were further asked whether the standardized KPI instrument was developed by 2013, half of the respondents or 50% answered 'Yes' while the other half answered 'No'.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, it can be concluded that four out of six thrusts in the Strategic Plan on Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (2013-2015) have been successfully achieved as of now. Those four thrusts include the first thrust, which is to empower the Entrepreneurship Centre in every HEI, the second thrust, which is to provide holistic and well-planned entrepreneurial education and programmes, the fourth thrust, which is to enhance the competency of HEIs' entrepreneurship trainers and facilitators, and the sixth thrust, which is to increase the effect of the implementation of HEIs' entrepreneurial education and development. Meanwhile, the other two thrusts that include the third thrust, which is to empower entrepreneurial development programmes, and the fifth thrust, which is to provide a conducive environment and ecosystem for entrepreneurship development have failed to be achieved.

This paper has provided empirical evidence on the achievements of the Strategic Plan on Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (2013-2015) among Malaysian HEIs. It has been shown that the efforts by the Malaysian government in promoting entrepreneurship education among HEI graduates still require some improvement. Therefore, it is important for the Ministry of Education and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to join hands in making sure that the current policies and programmes as well as the curriculum and content on entrepreneurship are improved in order to produce holistic graduates with entrepreneurial and balanced skills as stated in the latest Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) (2015-2025) as well as to develop the nation's human capital through education as envisioned in Vision 2020. Future research should discuss the needs and demands from the perspective of HEIs' students in helping the Malaysian government to provide better entrepreneurship education so that entrepreneurship education in Malaysia would be able to attain a completely new level of success in educating future entrepreneurs.

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