New Business Venture into Private Higher Education in Malaysia through Dynamic Capabilities

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Abstract: Higher education institutions (HEIs) are traditionally seen as society's robust institutions but are currently experiencing new difficulties as a result of shifts in both government and society's expectations of their roles as education providers. There is a global call for new models and practices which need HEIs in the private sector to develop what was once business-oriented management competencies. Hence this study addressed the global call for HEIs in Malaysia to be more entrepreneurial and explored the experiences of entrepreneurs who had ventured into the education industry with the aims of business diversification, capacity building, lifelong education and nation-building. The qualitative study explored the context of private universities in Malaysia which included the socio-historical background and experience of seven founders, and their management approaches in establishing their HEIs as successful, sustainable and respectable education providers. A grounded theory approach was adopted to gather data through in-depth interviews with the participants. Their emic perspectives of the challenges and opportunities experienced while managing their respective universities was analysed thematically. The findings revealed that new ventures into private higher education must be spearheaded by individuals with entrepreneurial leadership who would be able to develop and enhance the dynamic capabilities necessary for successfully managing a university. These leaders must also capitalize on the opportunities available and form a team of agile and resilient staff who can withstand and manage changes in the environment. The study also provides a guideline for managing private universities in a more cost-effective manner.

Keywords: Dynamic Capability, Entrepreneurial Universities, Higher Education Institutions, Leadership

1.   Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) have in recent times faced unprecedented challenges which include reduced funding, limited resources and reduced student numbers especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, there has been shifting expectations from the government and society from the traditional view of HEIs as education providers to preparing learners for the demands of the 21st century. This is indeed a wake-up call for the HEIs which were traditionally regarded as society's

most resilient institutions. For many decades, the majority of Malaysians have perceived education as a philanthropic activity with an intangible product that were carried out by non-profit organisations. The activity was classified as "non-business" and was conducted under the auspices of "non-profit organisation; such an entity was defined as dedicated to a particular social cause that used its resources to pursue the noble aim rather than distributing earnings to shareholders. These organisations were often to be tax-exempt non-profit organisations that operated in religious, scientific, research, or educational settings (Ciconte & Jacob, 2009; Sacristan et al., 2016). In Malaysia, the higher education industry has evolved from being a mere provider to an exporter of higher education (Chin, 2019), depicting the government's seriousness in developing the industry as a hub while aligning the actions, policies, and strategies to addressing the social and economic needs of the people (Mitter, 2003; Akter, 2020). In 2005 alone there were approximately 565 private universities in Malaysia, including five foreign branch campuses (Marzita, 2005). Through concerted efforts, the vibrant HEI industry in Malaysia has also created opportunities for lifelong learning for people in pursuing their higher education. In light of the development in the private higher education industry that has spawned new types of enterprises for corporates, entrepreneurs, firms, and organizations, it is timely to explore the views of the entrepreneurs whose leadership is juxtaposition of profit and philanthropy.

2.   Background of Study

The early years saw many private schools being set up in Malaysia, with the majority being established for charitable, missionary, and educational purposes; not for the purpose of making a profit (Rahimah, 1998). Private schools were given a variety of brand names based on the ownership and purpose of the curriculum. For many years after independence, it was impossible to create a private university in Malaysia due to the government's objection as demonstrated in the late 1970s case of the "Merdeka University", which was the brainchild of the then opposition political party. This revealed that education was a "controlled item" at that time. Wan (2007) revealed that private HEIs in Malaysia were only officially recognised in 1996, with the enactment of the Private Higher Education Institutions Act (PHEIA) 1996, as well as the amendments made in the Universities and University Colleges Act (UUCA) 1971 and the Education Act 1961.

The landscape shifted dramatically as the government began to liberalise the education industry, particularly tertiary education. Numerous colleges were formed and developed into "university colleges" before evolving into full-fledged universities. Numerous private schools, tuition centres, and other education-related businesses began their journeys to become higher education providers. Today we can observe several established private universities expanding and being recognised as "good" universities or university colleges by the authorities and general public. Among them are Asia e University (AeU), Saito University College, Taylor's University, Sunway University and Wawasan University. Nevertheless, the emergence of private universities in Malaysia has essentially made knowledge a commodity, an observation that Olssen and Peters (2005) aptly questioned in their paper on knowledge economy: "Is knowledge a commodity?"

With a multitude of public and private universities in Malaysia, the question of quality of education and the role that these universities play in society has become pertinent. This is due to the issue of unemployment as the number of graduates had escalated but remained unemployed; they lacked the competencies expected by the workforce. What has gone wrong? Preparing graduates for employment and equipping them with the essential skills to compete against 'man and machine' is a contemporary issue that is being debated in a variety of situations (Sanchez, 2018). Prior research has alluded to the underlying argument about who is responsible for making students more employable as they progress through the educational system, which involve the primary stakeholders, employers,

education providers, governments, and students themselves (Rasiah, Turner, & Ho, 2019; Kunagaratnam, 2018).

Employer feedback shows the emergence of a "skills gap" and the critical necessity to teach generic skills in addition to disciplinary knowledge (Rasiah, 2009). With the increasingly disruptive market in which jobs and skills are being displaced especially with the onset of IR4.0 rapid advancement in technology, it is pertinent that universities design their curriculum to produce highly skilled graduates with entrepreneurial competencies. Higher education students should be trained not to expect for a job ready for them when they graduate, but to use their skills to charter their own careers, with more focus on entrepreneurship.

Not surprisingly, there has been a global push for new models and practices in recent years, requiring HEIs to develop managerial capabilities previously reserved for corporations. This worldwide concerted effort is viewed as a higher purpose that will steer HEIs towards entrepreneurship and innovation pathways. This in turn would contribute to regional economic, technological, and socioeconomic development through traditional educational and research functions. Engaging the socioeconomic needs and competitive market demands would transform HEIs to become more entrepreneurial in nature (Rosman, Ahmad Suffian, Norlaila, Nik Fazlin & Najihah, 2020; Stolze & Sailer, 2021).

Further, the universities of today can no longer do business as usual in their traditional roles of providing education and carrying out academic research if they want to sustain. There is an imperative need for the leaders of existing and future universities to embrace entrepreneurial traits and strategies. This will develop and enhance their universities' dynamic capabilities to enable transformation by seizing opportunities and risks, and exploring global and regional dynamics that are aimed at altering the universities' resource base through alliances or acquisitions, which is the forte of entrepreneurs.

Therefore the present study explored the experience of seven founders cum leaders in the context of private HEIs in Malaysia to gain insights into their entrepreneurial ventures of making their HEIs as successful, sustainable and respectable education providers. HEIs have been urged to acquire dynamic capabilities in order to respond to global problems, particularly in the face of pandemics or unpredictable economic conditions. It should be noted that how dynamic capabilities can help universities fulfil their new mission of addressing socioeconomic needs and market demands is still an unexplored concept. In this study, we propose some mechanisms that established and future universities must undertake to become more entrepreneurial in nature. These recommendations at the end of this paper are based on the findings of this study that revealed how the leaders of established private universities developed their institutions' dynamic capabilities to become key players in producing graduates in areas of specialisations (Chong & Amli, 2013).

This research delved deeper into the establishment and growth of these private universities to find out how higher education industry remained resilient, recession-proof, and accessible to newcomers based on present trends and future projections. The study is in the right direction as Malaysia is a well-established learning hub in the region. The findings of the research offers some guidelines for future entrepreneurs who are keen in establishing a private HEI.

3.   Literature Review

3.1   Private Higher Education in Malaysia

Private higher education institutions in Malaysia are classified into three categories: colleges, university colleges and universities (Ghasemy et al., 2018). As defined by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOE, 2020), colleges are self-contained educational institutions that prepare students to further their studies at other universities. Additionally, they have the authority to offer courses leading to degrees from other universities. A university college is an independent institution of higher education that is able to award degrees but does not have the full-fledged status of a university. Finally, private universities could award bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees (Maria et al., 2018).

Therefore education has become a booming industry in Malaysia with an increase in the number of private universities, university colleges, and colleges. According to Arokiasamy et al. (2009), private universities were established in two stages: Stage 1 (1999-2002) and Stage 2 (2003-2007). Shariffuddin et al. (2017) added that numerous external and internal factors contributed to the transformation of HEIs in Malaysia. Globalization, internationalisation, and world-class rankings are some of the external factors while internal factors include government policy changes in the middle of the 1980s such as the corporatization and privatisation policies. These factors have been the catalyst for the major changes in private HEIs in Malaysia. Among the HEI transformations that could be further investigated is the change of university colleges to university status (Shariffuddin & Razali, 2016) and teacher training colleges to universities or "university status" as in the case of Sultan Idris Teachers Training College to Universiti Perguruan Sultan Idris.

3.2   Leadership in Managing a University

Managing a university or institution of higher education requires two distinct dimensions of leadership: practical manager and academic. According to Kenny (2009), the manager is responsible for both academics and support staff. Academics are individuals who have a strong belief in theories, and practise and preach theories in a variety of disciplines. They constitute the majority of university staff. These individuals are typically chosen from the most brilliant graduates and have earned at least a master's degree, if not a doctoral degree (Ramsden, 1998). Thus, the manager is challenged to manage intellectuals, and possibly manage students as direct customers. For a private university, management facets must include a third component, namely "how to get more students, how to make more money" which is the bottomline of any business. Hence, a private university must engage academics and paying students who have high expectations for "quality services" (Kenny, 2009).

Moreover, private university management must also deal with the administrative staff. Normally university staff is divided into two categories: academics, who form the most important component, and what is commonly referred to as supporting staff. According to the management philosophy nomenclature, there are three levels of management: top, middle, and lower (front-line). Typically, academics lead all three levels of university management. The vice-chancellor leads the top management, deans for each faculty lead the middle management, and lecturers as course tutors, programme leaders, or senior lecturers lead the lower management. All managers (from top to bottom) receive assistance from non-academic staff. For example, the vice-chancellor requires support from a registrar for general management and a bursar for financial matters, deans from the assistant registrar, and the bottom-line manager from clerks and other lower-ranking members of the supporting staff.

On top of dealing with the administration, the management of students at a university is a very complex process, as it is a continuous process that occurs over a long period with the goal of satisfying customers. Students are lifelong customers of the university; they become customers when they enrol for the first time, continue to be customers throughout their years of study, and continue to be customers as alumni. This is a unique relationship between a university and a student, quite unlike any other

relationship between a business and its customers. Thus, managing students at the university is a top priority, and to that end, a department commonly referred to as "student affairs" is established and is often led by a deputy vice-chancellor. In the private sector, the onus is on the leaders of the private HEIs to ensure that their institutions remained competitive and met the current job market demands and beyond. Hence the present study explored the experiences of entrepreneurs who had ventured into higher education and had become leaders of the universities that they had founded.

4.   Methodology

The qualitative research that was conducted between December 2020 and May 2021 involved in-depth interviews with seven founders of established private HEIs in Selangor and Federal Territory, Malaysia. As this is a qualitative research methodology, the sample size of seven selected private higher education leaders is aligned with recommendations of scholars such as Boddy (2016) who mentioned that for qualitative sampling, the number of participants is sufficient even if it is only one. The main criteria for selecting the participants in this study is that they were entrepreneurs who had established HEIs and were heading them. Hence they were referred to as "Founder Executives" or specifically, Founder Executive 1- Founder Executive 7 (FE1-FE7) respectively.

During the interview, semi structured questions were narrated by the researcher and the interviewees' responses were audio recorded. According to Shaked (2021), this type of interview would be the optimal method for gathering qualitative data as asking the same questions to all the interviewees would generate distinct examples in the replies from this inquiry, while the answers retain richness to open questions regarding various themes. The instrument was designed to elicit information about the interviewees' experience in three main areas, namely how they founded the institutions, how they are managing them at present, and what their visions for the institutions' are.

Only one interview was conducted face-to-face while the remaining interviews were carried out via phone calls as a result of the movement control order and social distancing during the Covid-19 pandemic. According to Melchers et al. (2021), when comparing response rates between using the face-to-face interview versus the telephone interviews, there was no difference in the results, and the findings were consistent regardless of the media of communication. We found the findings to be similar as the interview was conducted using a structured interview questionnaire protocol. Moreover, the interviewees were also given open-ended questions to which they had written their responses. This data was also compared to the interview responses for further validity. Therefore, it can be concluded that the research findings are valid and reliable, aligned with Deterding and Waters (2021) who mentioned that structured interview questions unravelled similar findings when respondents are given the same questions. Nevertheless we also took into consideration Solarino and Aguinis (2021) emphasis that when dealing with high-profile interviewees, there would be challenges in the way they responded to questions. To preserve the structure of responses and avoid veering off topic, audio-recording was done and research notes were taken. To add to the validity of the findings, follow-up questions via face-to-face or telephone interviews were conducted for further clarification or if the terminology used was complex.

The interviewees' experience and expertise in establishing and successfully managing their universities were explored during the interview and in the open-ended questions. Their insights were further analysed to describe the precise resources they had when they first ventured into setting up their universities. They were probed to share intricate details about establishing a university. Consent was obtained from the interviewees to ensure that they able to voice their views on the subject in a fair and confidential manner; they were also informed earlier in the study that the findings may serve as a guide

for future researchers and entrepreneurs. The interview data was transcribed verbatim and categorised according to emerging themes. The following section presents the findings of the study.

5. Findings and Discussion

The thematic analysis of the data procured from the seven entrepreneurs who had founded universities produced the following themes: Leadership and Entrepreneurial Intelligence, Dynamic Capabilities, finance, technology, staff, marketing and Business Development.

5.1 Leadership and Entrepreneurial Intelligence

One of the most significant findings that emerged from the analysis of the data in this study is the pertinent role of entrepreneurial leadership. Entrepreneurial intelligence and leadership were the primary factors which motivated the participants to establish HEIs in the country, as revealed in the following table:

Table 1: Summary of the motivation to establish HEIs

FE1	In 1988, he initially wanted to promote the beauty of the Japanese language and culture but decided to offer Malaysia's first Diploma in Graphic Design, effectively making his HEI the local pioneer in design education. His vision was two-fold: 1) Educate and nurture young talents in design, and 2) Identify and unleash their passions.
FE2	In 1993, he established an institute to meet the demand for technologically skilled graduates. He envisioned school leavers equipped with professional qualifications and who would be highly sought after by employers. He offered a unique fusion of technology, innovation and creativity in his HEI
FE3	Close to a third of the doctors registered with the Malaysian Medical Council are alumni of the Medical College - the single largest contribution to professional medical manpower in the country by a private institution… His investment exceeds USD 200 million. Today, this environment-friendly campus is the first university in Malaysia to comply with the Leadership in Environment and Energy Design Platinum certification

The socio-historical narratives from the three participants above (FE1, FE2 and FE3) clearly demonstrates that the participants who pioneered and established the private HEIs were entrepreneurial and had leadership qualities. The success of their ventures depended on their entrepreneurial intelligence where they were able to foresee that HEIs needed to excel in more than teaching and research missions. With the onset of globalization and the numerous challenges associated with it, universities need such entrepreneurial leaders who had the foresight to see what was needed for the country's development and provide talents to make the country a global player. FE1 filled the need for graphic designers, FE2 saw the need for technology experts and FE3, medical experts. While they fulfilled the nation's needs for expertise, they too inadvertently changed the HEI landscape from government funded traditional teaching and learning HEIs to private entrepreneurial entities. Surely

such a paradigm shift requires strong leadership (Yokoyama 2006; Wakkee et al. 2019). When an institution lacks effective leadership, it is perceived as impeding its own development and performance. This is one of the greatest challenges that HEIs face in remaining relevant and sustainable, especially in a climate of increasing competition and untold challenges. Hence the most pertinent lesson learnt in this research is the paramount need for leaders who demonstrate entrepreneurial leadership.

5.2 Dynamic Capabilities

Many countries have transformed their higher education systems in the past three decades, altering the autonomy, public funding, mission, and responsibility of higher education institutions. Audretsch (2014) emphasized on the new roles of universities which are increasingly expected to act as drivers of regional economic, social, and cultural growth, with the ultimate goal of ensuring that societies prosper in the course of entrepreneurial pursuits. In fact, the participants who were interviewed in this study showed deep interest in society's prosperity although they were entrepreneurs with business acumen. This is evident in the following cases. FE4 stated that in April 2006, the government gave the approval to begin the university. It was built on the premise that "Education Gives Hope for a Better Future". Therefore it was first approached as a corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative. FE4 shared:

"Whenever I do charity, my heart moves. It is not just about corporate social responsibility. It is about caring, something that comes from the heart. My wish is that people with money will help those less fortunate so that the world is more just and fair to all. When my means were small, I gave less and when I expanded my business, I increased my contributions to those in need – Malays, Chinese, Indians in Malaysia and disadvantaged communities overseas."

A similar concern for society was expressed by FE5 who established a HEI in 2001.

"Aimed to help the urban poor by providing the opportunity of affordable and high-quality education to the urban poor which is commonly known as B40 group."

The objective of FE5 was to offer affordable educational opportunities to all. Through strategic partnership with their educational foundation, he added a new dimension to private education which was social responsibility. He offered scholarships and financial assistance to students, and free training for teachers besides rewarding students who excelled in examinations yearly.

FE4 and FE5' willingness to expand resources for non-profit noble purposes like CSR reflects "dynamic capabilities" in their leadership and as part of their HEI ethos. Generally dynamic capabilities can be defined as an organisation's capacity to purposefully create, extend or modify its resources base. As far HEIs are concerned, their 'resource base' can be in the form of tangible, intangible, and human assets. For instance, providing free training for their teachers and offering scholarships to them and their less affluent students as a 'resource base' that could further increase the HEIs reputation and branding among society, which in turn would benefit the HEI.

Besides the non-profit oriented activities, the entrepreneurs too had extended the resource base of their HEIs so that their universities owned, controlled, or had preferential access to specific capabilities. They had forged alliances with the government, foreign universities, industry partners and professional bodies, big tech companies like Google and Microsoft. They also acquired new HEIs. Evidence of this could be seen in FE5's and FE3's decisions. FE5 had collaborated with Liverpool John Moores University in the United Kingdom since 2005 to offer bachelor's and masters' degree programmes. FE3 led his HEI to obtain the prestigious Leadership in Environment and Energy Design

Platinum certification which was Malaysia's first environment-friendly campus. Admittedly, it is not easy for HEIs to develop or enhance their dynamic capabilities and their leaders need to be equipped with competent entrepreneurial skills to ensure that their venture remains a success.

5.3   Finance

It is pertinent that universities have strong leaders who are financially competent as cash flow and gearing are common challenges faced by higher education institutions (Gelter & Puaschunder, 2021). University leaders must sustain cash flow during periods of low enrolment in order to meet all financial obligations. As part of a corporate strategy, the participants had revealed that they had established HEIs as part of the corporate social responsibility. The target risk returns are often a strategy as in the case of FE4. His corporate group had ventured into establishing a HEI to channel funds not only for tax exemptions but also to maintain investments in CSR for the corporate business entity. Indirectly this benefitted the HEI as it enjoyed a higher enrolment as a result of low tuition and CSR goals.

Nevertheless founding entrepreneur as leaders need to have a sharp financial acumen as the costs involved in establishing and running the day-to-day business of HEIs is high. In FE3 case, the investment of the medical HEI exceeded USD 200 million but this was "rewarded" with the enrolment of the most number of medical students in the country. FE6 had acquired a 48 acre sprawling campus in Bandar Saujana Putra to establish the HEI, an investment that had attracted international students from 75 countries. In both cases, the leaders took huge calculated risks financially but were successful. Moreover, the start-up capital for HEIs was in the range of RM100, 000 to RM50 million which were self-financed, bank loans or shareholder equity. According to Islam and Abd Wahab (2021), local banks and equity financing from shareholders fund small and medium enterprises that used technology and ventured into fields such as education.

5.4   Technology

Technology and business intelligence are another challenge for many universities due to high investment costs and the difficulty of effecting change among its employees. However, collaborating with the right technology partners will enable the university to develop its dynamic capabilities, increase its capacity and maintain a strong IT infrastructure. For example, FE6 was driven by the demands and capabilities of IR4.0 and envisioned technology driven classrooms, as evident in the excerpt:

FE6 :   *"..towards the cultivation of professional skills that will allow graduates to be fully equipped for the years ahead through their passport to success which embodies P.R.I.D.E (Professional, Industry Ready Education) and Masterclass Series, regardless of what field of study they pursue."*

The HEI was awarded the status of "Online University" by the Ministry of Education. This has allowed the HEI to provide "borderless education to many through Engaged Learning Experience and Innovative Teaching (ELEVATE)" which is education beyond the physical classroom. It offered learners a range of Open and Distance Learning programmes that is made to "redesign the future of academic learning", according to the founder. In other words, leaders such as FE6 inversted in technology and planned their strategies and plans towards education beyond classrooms and textbooks.

Similar to his FE6 peer, FE7 too offered "courses in Cloud Computing, AI and Big Data, Cybersecurity, Internet of Things" which were meeting the demands of the 21st century. Although FE7 welcomed the first batch of students in May 2013 and established HEI based on the recommendations

by the Cabinet Committee on Human Capital Development, the HEI was geared towards addressing contemporary and futuristic needs.

During the pandemic period, the country's education sector understood the need to adapt to the use of technology. Admittedly, it had been rather challenging for some universities to prepare their academic staff and students to transform from face-to-face to virtual classrooms. This was understood by the pioneers who ensured that their students were skilled in learning online. In short they understood the need to prepare learners for 21st century workplace. Hence HEI leaders/ entrepreneurs and their employees must be agile and resilient in adopting technology driven resource base failing which the sustainability and survival of these universities will be compromised.

5.5   Staff

To retain quality, staff must be effectively trained; or else, the HEIs' reputation and brand image would suffer. It was found that in the initial stages, only a small number of staff were required to set up the institution:

Table 2: Staff and Student number during the Initial Intake

Higher Education Institution	How many students and members of staff were initially enrolled?
Founder Executive 1	30 students, 3 staff
Founder Executive 2	60 students, 12 staff
Founder Executive 3	40 students. 10 staff
Founder Executive 4	32 students, 20 staff
Founder Executive 5	42 students, (N/A)
Founder Executive 6	Less than 100 students, approximately 50 staff
Founder Executive 7	24 students, 25 staff

However in the case of HEIs collaborating with international foreign universities, the resources required were large. So a larger faculty, management and administrative staff were employed at the set-up stage. At the initial stage, the private HEIs had attracted approximately 100 students or fewer, as shown in Table 1.0. Graziosi et al. (2021) concurred that any new set-up of a university would tend to attract lower numbers of students. In order to improve the student intake, it was is necessary to employ administrative personnel who were competent and highly qualified teaching faculty members.

In the case of FE5, staff were recruited both locally and internationally and they ranged from seniors (professors who retired from other universities) to fresh PhD graduates. The combinations of senior staff and the younger cohort of PhD graduates augured well for the university as the seniors who had experience and was thought to "be able to lead initially, mentoring can take place, and succession planning will materialise in due course to ensure continuity of the university. The ratio of academic to non-academic is kept almost equal and the staffs are expected to multi-task and demarcation is kept to a minimum wherever possible".

Needless to say, it takes good planning and foresight on the part of the founder executive to ensure that the staff population adequate and efficient. It was also important to offer staff continuous professional training and up skilling courses to meet student demands for an enriching learning experience.

5.6   Marketing

HEIs cannot continue to promote themselves using traditional marketing methods as they must be bold enough to experiment with a variety of cutting-edge marketing techniques. An emerging trend is the incentivized e-Word of Mouth Marketing (eWOM) technique where students co-create value by sharing their learning experiences on social media and web portals. Marketers are increasingly focusing on social marketing, encouraging customers to share material and recommendations, and placing a greater emphasis on consumer "expressions" rather than "impressions" (Keller & Fay, 2012), as this is an empowering method of marketing. Universities that have endorsed and recognized programmes with high employability and industry-academic collaborations can leverage their dynamic capabilities to explore business development. In addition, international student agents must be effective in their efforts to recruit foreign students.

Sometimes, due to insufficient data mining and marketing initiatives, a university's marketing campaign will have no impact and will not generate any long-term value for the institution. As a result, the organization must have a concrete strategy post-marketing campaign to leverage data obtained from participants or the general public and to engage with them, following roadshows or exhibitions in order to achieve better results from not only traditional marketing stints but also digital content that is engaging and will push the audience to take action, such as contacting and enrolling with the institution.

5.7   Business Development

One of the main challenges that a private HEI university faces is that higher student enrolment takes time. This means that marketing efforts to promote student enrolment must be undertaken for each cohort. When a university is unable to keep up with the life cycle of education pursuits of both their students, then the university is deemed to have failed in its function as an education service provider.

Universities must also stay current on government policies and mandates to be able to offer new programmes (i.e. Industrial Revolution 4.0 courses). Since higher education institutions have operated under a traditional model, they have always been reliant on manual labour and tasks. Therefore, universities must enhance their dynamic capabilities by establishing their brand name as 'Smart' universities by embracing and optimizing technology. This technical advancement also benefits online, blended learning and hybrid teaching and learning approaches. Intelligent stakeholder management is accomplished through benchmarking against international universities, resulting in the university leaders keeping up with global trends in the higher education institutions.

The higher education sector is all about massification and internationalization. The liberalization of higher education that is not accompanied by lower compliance costs would hinder rapid progress. As a result, the selected university founders have emphasized the need for the stakeholders associated with the Ministry of Education to be aware of concerns affecting higher education institutions, such as immigration controls. The founders reiterated that the education sector is never tolerant of bad publicity at any time, which should be avoided at all costs.

6.   Research Conclusions and Recommendations

This research has identified several key findings based on the in-depth interview with the founders of the selected universities on the emerging themes that appeared from the textual analysis of the qualitative data in setting up a university in Malaysia. One of the most significant findings that

emerged from the analysis of this study is the pertinent role of entrepreneurial leadership and intelligence. Leadership and entrepreneurial intelligence are certainly primary factors which motivates anyone to establish a university. The cumulative entrepreneurial skills of the founders bring forth solutions to issues faced along the way. It is also imperative that leaders of universities be equipped with business intelligence and excellent networking skills, as these play a crucial role in operating the university successfully. Compliance cost, regulatory pressures and stakeholder engagements are also essential tools to ensure the business continuity of the university. A review of the literature suggests that contemporary universities may be defined as organizations that combine management practices and collegial professional values (Seeber et al. 2015), and the goal of universities becoming more entrepreneurial should be explored as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon (Kaša et al. 2019). Being equipped with entrepreneurial intelligence should be made a prerequisite for university leaders if higher education were to serve its purposes of providing holistic education to its students. This is aligned with prior research that suggested that developing strong dynamic capabilities for successfully managing a university requires entrepreneurial leadership (Schoemaker et al. 2018) and an entrepreneurial vision (Wakkee et al. 2019). It is also pertinent to acknowledge that the higher education sector is driven by brand intelligence, which describes the method in which the brand values are portrayed. Hence the sector does not tolerate negative publicity in all its forms.

Yet another important finding that appeared in the analysis is that of the skillful abilities of the founders to capitalize on opportunities that ensured the business sustainability of the university. The founders of the selected universities certainly had a vision for a sustainable future of their universities in the rapidly changing times that the higher education sector faced. The analysis revealed that for any university to sustain in such a competitive and complex higher education environment, both locally and globally, it is certainly important for higher education institution leaders to put their leadership and entrepreneurial skills to the test by seizing whatever opportunities come their way, trying out alternative solutions and thinking in all dimensions to sustain the business. These universities succeeded only because their resources were strategically aligned to opportunities that their leaders capitalized on. The operations and diligent management of a university are key in ensuring its business sustainability. This must begin from the onset, with the set-up of the university, to operations and management of its resources and dynamic capabilities and its milestones of achievement.

Hiring the right staffs/employees is yet another very important findings of this study. As Ray Kroc, the man who built McDonald's into the immensely successful global business it is today, once alluded that "You're only as good as the people you hire". Such a powerful statement says it all about the extremely important resource that organizations must have and build on to develop their dynamic capabilities. No one can establish a successful organization on their own. That is why great business executives understand that attracting, developing, and retaining excellent people is critical to their organizations' success. The founders of the selected universities mentioned the need to manage disruptions by responding quickly and taking the necessary steps to develop an agile and resilient workforce. The key to the success of the selected universities was that their leaders developed strategies that enabled their employees to adeptly handle change. With the advent of globalization and, more recently, the Covid-19 pandemic, worker agility and resilience have taken precedence over specialized skills, thus universities must cultivate talent that is receptive and confident to take on change. An agile and resilient workforce, at its heart, enables organizations to respond quickly to changing conditions. This workforce has a diverse skill set and responds quickly thanks to a lean decision-making framework. It can also detect and manage risk, as well as absorb change and uncertainty without compromising efficiency.

Another major aspect of successfully running a university that emerged from the textual analysis of the interview data was the significant role of open communication. Engaging with students, employees, local communities, vendors, suppliers, the relevant authorities, and the global community in this aspect ensures strong and healthy relationships are built with the various stakeholders. Stakeholder management is extremely important as universities as organizations are basically a coalition of participants. This will definitely ensure that the university infrastructure supports the student and teaching faculty staff communities for a better-quality education experience.

Apart from this, should the university be fully operating online in the present scenario? Technological infrastructure is best to support teaching and learning. Hence the Founder /Executive must carry out excessive due diligence on cybersecurity and IT systems efficiency to ensure a seamless learning experience. Leaders of future universities would need to know how to step up their role, be creative and continue their responsibilities by developing the dynamic capabilities of their universities. Yuan et al. (2018) emphasized the need to develop or enhance higher education institutions' dynamic capabilities, as it can create value in the universities' technology transfer processes. This can be seen in the manner in which these leaders dealt with the unforeseen Covid-19 pandemic, the technological adoption strategies they had implemented prior to and during the pandemic enhanced the universities' dynamic capabilities and showcased the leaders' agility and that of their academic and administrative staff, which allowed their universities to sustain its education business in recent times.

Finally, universities need to be highly ambitious, as no university founder interviewed made any reference to institutions that were founded with no specific goals in mind. As a result, as higher education institutions, the goals must motivate faculty and students, as well as global communities. There are several trends that promote learning – nursing and healthcare, industrial design and even IT and Cryptology. There are also universities that are set up for climate change mitigation and even a university for the United Nations. Therefore, the niche factor of introducing new programmes that are industry-relevant will entice potential students being one of the key success factors in setting up a university. Setting high goals such as obtaining 1000 students from the onset, targeting 20,000 annual enrolments and reaching 100,000 students within the first five years are large targets that will craft the operational efficiencies and performance of the employees.

One founder even indicated that setting a benchmark against an international university such as Harvard was yet another success factor for sustaining a university's lifespan and brand name. In order to achieve these goals, there should be adequate support and funding provided to the faculty members to engage in research and development. In producing highest quality journal papers and other research outcomes. It is also necessary to provide training and development for the faculty members to be exposed to international standards and practices, enhance their teaching, research, and abilities to engage socio-economic needs and market demands and contribute to the university's development.

As stated by Stolze and Sailer (2021), insisted that dynamic capabilities indeed influence how universities can be transformed into more entrepreneurial institutions. The findings really showed that the dynamic capabilities of the leader influenced the success and how fast and how far the university can go in achieving the vision and goals.

The university, at the end of the day, is a business. As any other business that has been managed by the founders of the selected universities, venturing into setting up a new university is one that inspires as well as challenges. Interestingly, the establishment of universities during the Covid-19 pandemic recovery phase has both advantages and disadvantages. There is a lot of pressure on students to get back to their lives and their studies post-Covid recovery. As a result, once the movement control orders and

travel prohibitions are repealed, universities anticipate an influx of registrations. Furthermore, the Covid recovery phase invigorates various business communities that are focused on improving talent skills, resulting in further opportunities for specialized skills and industry collaboration. Furthermore, the Covid recovery phase offers international students the opportunity to develop and explore specialized skills and learning.

Meanwhile, the university that focuses on fulfilling National Policy and Plans are considered favourably, as Malaysia fuels up for post Covid pandemic recovery, hence the licence to operate, as well as the niche programmes offered which coincides with local national plans (National Policy on Energy and Transport 2016-2030) or international agencies economic models (EU Green Deal 2020 and the UN SDGs), would attract not only investors and students but also ministry-level stakeholders and international engagements.

The disadvantages of establishing a university include the current economic downturn and a fragile political environment, which would hinder large-scale executive by private businesses in the country difficult. As a result, for experienced owners of diverse firms, the insights provided by selected university leaders into the establishment of a university is rather invaluable. This approach to study the market and tap into market intelligence should be carried out for any new business venture studies in the future.

7.   Acknowledgement

8.   References

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