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A REVIEW ON THE CONCEPTUAL APPROACH TO AGROPRENEURIAL EDUCATION: CULTIVATING ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION AMONG MALAYSIAN GRADUATES

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Abstract:

Agriculture is an important part of Malaysia's economy. In recent years, more people have become interested in agropreneurship, which means starting businesses in agriculture. This paper looks at how university education can help graduates become agropreneurs by focusing on three key areas: agropreneurial curriculum, agropreneurship experiental learning, and university support. Using ideas from entrepreneurial learning theory and institutional support theory, this paper suggests ways universities can encourage students to become agropreneurs. A goo d curriculum should teach agribusiness, sustainable farming, money management, and market strategies. Agropreneurship experiental learning such as farm training, internships, and mentorship helps students apply their knowledge in real situations. Support from universities, like funding, business incubation programs, and expert advice, makes students feel more confident about starting an agro-business. This paper suggests that if universities improve their curriculum and provide more support, more graduates will choose agropreneurship as a career, helping Malaysia's agriculture sector grow. The study can help universities, teachers, and policymakers create better agropreneurial education programs. Future research can test these ideas to see how well they work in real life.

Keywords:

Agropreneurship, Entrepreneurship Education, Agropreneurship Experiental Learning, University Support, Agropreneurial Intention, Agricultural Business

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Entrepreneurial Learning, Entrepreneurial Learning Theory, Institutional Support.

Introduction

Agriculture has long been a fundamental pillar of Malaysia's economy, contributing to food security, employment, and rural development (Mohd et al., 2021). However, with evolving technological advancements and sustainability concerns, the sector requires innovative approaches to ensure long term growth. One such approach is agropreneurship, which integrates entrepreneurship within agriculture, empowering graduates to transform agribusinesses through innovation and market-driven strategies (Hussain et al., 2020). Despite its potential, many graduates lack the necessary training and exposure to agropreneurial opportunities, limiting their intention to pursue agribusiness ventures (Razak et al., 2019).

Higher education institutions play a crucial role in fostering agropreneurship by incorporating specialized curriculum content, experiential learning opportunities, and institutional support (Abdullah et al., 2018). Entrepreneurial learning theory suggests that experiential learning strengthens problem-solving abilities and enhances business readiness (Kolb, 1984). Meanwhile, institutional support theory emphasizes the importance of structural support, such as funding, advisory services, and networking platforms, in shaping entrepreneurial aspirations (Scott, 2008). By leveraging these frameworks, universities can develop agropreneurial education programs that enhance students' business acumen and encourage their participation in agricultural enterprises. Recent community-based initiatives, such as the Agropreneur Community Training Programme (ACTP), have illustrated how immersive, hands-on learning environments can foster entrepreneurial competencies and strengthen rural youth engagement in agribusiness (Jaafar et al., 2022). At the institutional level, programs like Universiti Teknologi MARA's Diploma in Agropreneurship (AT113) exemplify curricular innovation by integrating agritechnology, business strategy, and market analysis into formal education pathways (Ismail et al., 2023). Complementing these efforts, national schemes such as the Young Agropreneur Grant (Geran Agropreneur Muda) offer financial incentives and technical resources, thereby enhancing structural support and catalyzing youth-driven agricultural enterprise (Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, 2024).

This paper examines the integration of agropreneurial curriculum content, experiential learning, and perceived university support as key factors influencing agropreneurial intention among graduates in Malaysia. The findings aim to offer insights into how higher education institutions can strengthen agropreneurial competencies and support graduates in pursuing sustainable agro-based careers.

Conceptual Framework

Entrepreneurial education plays a significant role in shaping graduates' career aspirations, particularly in agropreneurship, which merges agricultural knowledge with entrepreneurial skills (Kolb, 1984; Scott, 2008). This study adopts entrepreneurial learning theory, which asserts that hands-on learning enhances knowledge retention and business readiness (Kolb, 1984). Additionally, institutional support theory highlights the influence of structural resources such as funding, mentorship, and incubation centers on entrepreneurial intentions (Scott, 2008). These theories support the argument that agropreneurial curriculum content, experiential

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learning, and university support foster agropreneurial intention among graduates (Razak et al., 2019).

Agropreneurial Curriculum Content

A well-structured agropreneurial curriculum ensures graduates acquire the necessary skills to thrive in agribusiness. Studies have shown that incorporating topics such as agribusiness management, sustainable farming, financial literacy, and market analysis improves students' entrepreneurial competence (Abdullah et al., 2018). Digital agriculture is also essential, equipping students with technological skills needed for modern farming, including precision agriculture, smart irrigation, and data-driven decision-making (MDEC, 2025). Furthermore, an interdisciplinary approach—blending technical knowledge with business strategies—strengthens graduates' ability to innovate within the agricultural sector and adapt to evolving market demands (Yusoff et al., 2015). This holistic curriculum not only enhances employability but also fosters self-reliance among graduates, encouraging them to become job creators rather than job seekers. By integrating experiential learning and industry collaboration, students gain real-world insights that bridge the gap between theory and practice, as demonstrated in agropreneurial programs that combine classroom instruction with field-based mentorship and enterprise incubation (Musa et al., 2021).

Agropreneurship Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is widely acknowledged as a pivotal component in cultivating entrepreneurial competencies, particularly within agropreneurial education (Kolb, 1984). Practical modalities such as farm-based training, structured internships with agro-enterprises, business simulations, and mentorship schemes offer students authentic exposure to agribusiness operations, thereby enhancing their confidence, decision-making skills, and problem-solving capabilities (Razak et al., 2019). Entrepreneurship boot camps and institutional collaborations with industry actors further embed students within agropreneurial ecosystems, fostering contextual understanding and strategic thinking (Hussain et al., 2020). In the Malaysian context, competency-based training models such as those implemented by MARDICorp Academy have demonstrated the efficacy of integrating technical internships, digital agriculture tools, and entrepreneurial modules to prepare graduates for the demands of IR4.0 agribusiness (MARDICorp, 2023). Likewise, immersive programs like the Monash Startup Bootcamp have shown that team-based experiential learning, coupled with industry mentorship and competitive pitching, significantly enhances entrepreneurial readiness and innovation capacity among participants (Tan et al., 2024). These experiential opportunities not only facilitate the transition from theoretical knowledge to practical application but also cultivate adaptive thinking, leadership acumen, and a proactive mindset essential for navigating the complexities of contemporary agribusiness (Abdullah et al., 2018).

Perceived University Support

University support is a crucial element in fostering entrepreneurial intentions among students (Scott, 2008). Institutional resources such as business incubation centers, advisory services, financial assistance, and networking opportunities significantly influence students' confidence in pursuing agropreneurship (Mohd et al., 2021). Higher education institutions must also provide mentorship from experienced agropreneurs, grant funding for agribusiness startups, and facilitate industry-academic linkages to bridge knowledge gaps (Razak et al., 2019). Studies indicate that students who perceive strong university support are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship (Abdullah et al., 2018). Empirical evidence from Universiti Putra Malaysia's Top Agropreneur Incubator Program demonstrates how strategic partnerships and living-lab environments can enhance students' entrepreneurial readiness and

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agribusiness competencies (Kamarudin et al., 2024). In addition, integrating entrepreneurship modules across disciplines such as those offered at Taylor's University and UKM reinforces entrepreneurial mindset development and encourages cross-sector innovation through experiential learning and startup incubation platforms (Taylor's University, 2024; UKM, 2025). A supportive university culture that celebrates entrepreneurial success stories can further inspire students to pursue agropreneurial pathways with conviction.

Agropreneurial Intention

Agropreneurial intention refers to a graduate's motivation and willingness to engage in agricultural entrepreneurship (Razak et al., 2019). Factors such as self-efficacy, financial security, exposure to entrepreneurship, and institutional support greatly influence students' intention to pursue agribusiness careers (Hussain et al., 2020). Research suggests that early exposure to entrepreneurial activities enhances students' interest in agropreneurship (Abdullah et al., 2018). Moreover, agropreneurial education fosters creativity, leadership, and market-oriented thinking, which are essential traits for successful agropreneurs (Mohd et al., 2021). A study by Yusoff et al. (2025) found that entrepreneurial orientation and proactive learning environments significantly strengthen agropreneurial intention among Malaysian agricultural students. Similarly, Abdul Rashid et al. (2024) highlighted that financial literacy and positive financial attitudes are critical enablers of entrepreneurial motivation in the agricultural sector. Experiential learning opportunities such as farm-based training and industry immersion have also been shown to positively influence students perceived behavioural control and readiness for agropreneurial ventures (Musa et al., 2021). Cultivating a strong sense of purpose and relevance in agriculture encourages students to view it as a dynamic and impactful career choice. With the right guidance and experiential learning, these intentions can evolve into innovative ventures that contribute meaningfully to the agricultural sector.

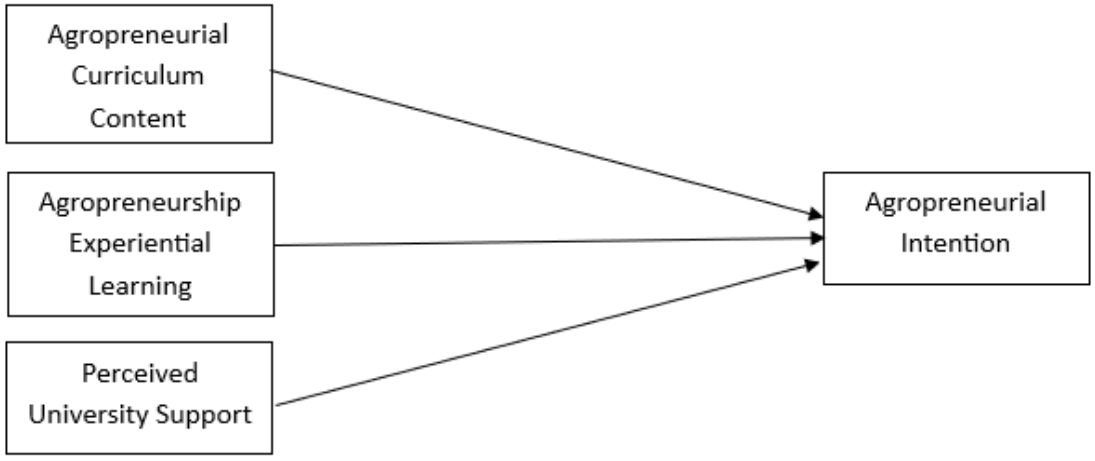

Figure 1: Conceptual Research Framework

Implications for Higher Education Institutions

Higher education institutions play a crucial role in shaping the future of agropreneurship by enhancing curriculum development. It is essential for universities to integrate both technical agricultural knowledge and business strategies into their agropreneurial programs (Abdullah et al., 2018). This approach ensures that graduates are equipped not only with farming techniques but also with the entrepreneurial mindset required to successfully manage agribusiness

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ventures. A well-designed curriculum should include topics such as agribusiness management, sustainable farming practices, financial literacy, and digital agriculture to prepare students for the challenges of the agro-industry.

Experiential learning is a key component of effective agropreneurial education. Universities should collaborate with agro-industries to provide students with practical exposure through hands-on training, internships, and entrepreneurial boot camps (Kolb, 1984). These opportunities allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world agricultural settings, improving their problem-solving skills and confidence in agro-business management. By engaging with industry professionals and working on actual agricultural projects, students can gain valuable insights into market trends, innovation, and business sustainability.

Institutional support significantly influences students' willingness to pursue agropreneurship. Universities should establish funding schemes, business incubation centers, advisory networks, and mentorship programs to provide the necessary resources for students to develop and launch their agribusiness ventures (Scott, 2008). Access to financial assistance and expert guidance boosts students' confidence and motivation, making them more likely to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities in agriculture. Strong support structures also foster networking, helping graduates establish connections within the agropreneurial ecosystem.

Finally, continuous assessment of agropreneurial education programs is crucial to ensure their effectiveness. Universities must implement regular feedback mechanisms and curriculum updates based on industry needs and student experiences (Mohd et al., 2021). By conducting evaluations and adapting courses accordingly, higher education institutions can refine their agropreneurial training to better prepare students for the evolving agricultural sector. This process ensures that graduates are equipped with relevant knowledge and skills, ultimately contributing to Malaysia's agricultural sustainability and economic growth.

Challenges and Opportunities in Agropreneurial Education

Despite growing recognition of agropreneurship as a strategic avenue for economic and agricultural revitalization, several challenges continue to impede the effective implementation of agropreneurial education in Malaysia. One of the foremost issues is the limited integration of entrepreneurship into agricultural curricula, which often remain heavily theoretical and disconnected from real-world agribusiness dynamics (Yusoff et al., 2025). Many universities lack the infrastructure and industry partnerships necessary to provide meaningful experiential learning, such as farm-based training, business simulations, and mentorship programs (Siti Fatimahwati et al., 2021). This gap between academic instruction and practical exposure weakens students' confidence and readiness to pursue agropreneurial ventures.

Another significant challenge is the urban-rural divide in access to agropreneurial resources. Students in rural campuses frequently face constraints such as inadequate facilities, limited internet connectivity, and fewer opportunities for industry engagement (Jaafar et al., 2023). Additionally, perceptions of agriculture as a low-status or non-lucrative career persist among youth, discouraging participation despite government incentives (Rozhan et al., 2020). These attitudinal barriers are compounded by a lack of awareness about modern agricultural technologies and sustainable farming practices, which are essential for competitive agropreneurship.

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However, these challenges also present fertile ground for innovation and reform. Malaysia's Young Agropreneur Programme, launched by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, offers targeted grants, technical training, and market access to youth aged 18–45, aiming to transform agriculture into a viable and attractive career path (KPKM, 2024). The agrotechnopreneurship ecosystem is also evolving, supported by strategic investments in R&D, entrepreneurship policies, and digital agriculture platforms (Rozhan et al., 2020). These developments create opportunities for universities to collaborate with government agencies and private sectors to co-design agile, industry-relevant agropreneurial curricula.

Furthermore, the rise of smart agriculture and climate-resilient technologies opens new avenues for entrepreneurial innovation. By embedding modules on precision farming, data analytics, and sustainable agribusiness models, universities can prepare graduates to lead in emerging agricultural markets (Jaafar et al., 2023). The adoption of the Triple Helix Model, which fosters collaboration between academia, industry, and government, can also enhance institutional support and policy alignment, thereby strengthening the agropreneurial ecosystem.

In summary, while agropreneurial education in Malaysia faces structural, perceptual, and logistical challenges, it is also positioned at the point of transformative opportunity. Strategic curriculum reform, experiential learning expansion, and ecosystem collaboration are key to unlocking the full potential of agropreneurship among Malaysian graduates.

Methodology

This study will adopt a conceptual research design grounded in a qualitative literature synthesis, drawing extensively from prior empirical and theoretical works. The proposed framework will be developed based on Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory and Scott's (2008) institutional support theory, through a critical analysis of scholarly articles, case studies, and policy reports related to agropreneurial education. Foundational references such as Abdullah et al. (2018), Hussain et al. (2020), and Razak et al. (2019) will be used to identify key constructs, including curriculum content, experiential learning, and perceived university support. These studies will provide empirical justification for the inclusion of hands-on training, interdisciplinary education, and institutional engagement as drivers of agropreneurial intention. The methodology will emphasize triangulation of themes across diverse sources to ensure conceptual robustness. While no primary data collection will be conducted, the proposed framework will serve as a foundation for future empirical investigations using quantitative or mixed-method approaches, such as surveys and structural equation modeling, to test construct relationships.

Conclusion

Agropreneurial education stands as a transformative force in Malaysia's pursuit of agricultural revitalization and youth empowerment. This study has underscored the critical role of three interrelated components such as agropreneurial curriculum content, experiential learning, and perceived university support in shaping graduates' entrepreneurial intentions. The integration of agribusiness management, sustainable farming, financial literacy, and digital agriculture within university curricula equips students with the foundational competencies required to navigate the complexities of modern agribusiness (Abdullah et al., 2018; Mohd et al., 2021). Moreover, experiential learning opportunities such as farm internships, business simulations, and mentorship programs foster practical readiness and entrepreneurial confidence (Kolb, 1984; Razak et al., 2019).

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Institutional support emerges as a pivotal enabler, influencing students' motivation and perceived feasibility of agropreneurship. Universities that provide incubation centers, funding schemes, and advisory networks create an ecosystem conducive to entrepreneurial exploration (Scott, 2008; Hussain et al., 2020). The findings align with the Theory of Planned Behavior, which posits that intention is shaped by perceived behavioral control and supportive environments (Ajzen, 1991). Additionally, the challenges identified ranging from curriculum gaps and infrastructural limitations to attitudinal barriers which highlight the need for systemic reform and strategic collaboration across academia, industry, and government (Jaafar et al., 2023; Yusoff et al., 2025).

Encouragingly, national initiatives such as the Young Agropreneur Programme and the evolving agrotechnopreneurship ecosystem present fertile ground for innovation and policy alignment (KPKM, 2024; Rozhan et al., 2020). By embedding smart agriculture, climate-resilient technologies, and entrepreneurial orientation into educational frameworks, Malaysia can cultivate a new generation of agropreneurs capable of driving sustainable development and economic resilience. Future research should empirically validate the proposed framework through longitudinal studies and structural modeling to assess its impact across diverse institutional contexts.

Fundamentally, agropreneurial education is not merely an academic endeavor. It is a strategic investment in Malaysia's agricultural future. Through curriculum innovation, experiential immersion, and robust institutional support, universities can empower graduates to become agents of change in the agro-sector, contributing meaningfully to national food security, rural revitalization, and inclusive economic growth.

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