

# Key Factors of Malaysian Public Universities' Entrepreneurship Programs in Enhancing Graduate Employability: Systematic Literature Review

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**Abstract** – This study examines the impact of entrepreneurship programs in the context of Malaysian public universities on graduate employability through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) guided by the PRISMA model. A total of 390 articles published between 2010 and 2025 were sourced from Google Scholar, Emerald Insight, and ScienceDirect. The analysis highlights those initiatives, such as the New Breed Marketing Entrepreneurs (NBME), KPT-Career Advancement Programme (KPT-CAP), and digital entrepreneurship training, aligned with the Higher Education Institutions Entrepreneurship Action Plan 2021-2025, have effectively enhanced skill development and graduates' employability. Additionally, the review considers the influence of earlier national policies, including the Ninth Malaysia Plan (RMKe-9) 2006-2010, which aimed to boost employability through entrepreneurship and industrial training to meet the objectives of Dasar Keusahawanan Nasional 2030, where this strategy is to bring Malaysia into entrepreneurial nations by 2030. Key factors identified include the enhancement of generic skills—critical thinking, creativity, and communication—and the cultivation of an entrepreneurial mindset. The findings emphasize the role of university-industry collaboration, Work-Based Learning (WBL), and institutional policies' alignment with labor market needs. Continuous curriculum improvement, qualified facilitators, and long-term program assessment are essential. Strategic expansion of industry partnerships and experiential learning is recommended to better prepare graduates for employability and self-employment in a rapidly evolving economy.

**Keywords:** *Entrepreneurship Program, Institutional Policies, Generic Skills, Work-Based Learning (WBL), Graduate Employability*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Graduate employability continues to be a crucial topic in conversations about Malaysia's higher education system, particularly considering our increasingly complex economic environment. This atmosphere is characterized by fierce competition and ongoing changes, which require graduates to excel not just in academics but also to cultivate a variety of generic skills, such as entrepreneurship, to maintain their relevance and competitiveness in the job market (Ma'dan et al., 2020; Sopian et al., 2022). As a result, Malaysian public universities have launched numerous entrepreneurship education initiatives to enhance graduates' employability (Ahmad Bustamam & Abdul Halit, 2018; Nizam Zainuddin & Rozaini Mohd Rejab, 2010). Entrepreneurship programs in higher education aim to develop future entrepreneurs and essential skills, provided they are delivered through appropriate methods by instructors with relevant entrepreneurial expertise in producing “job creators” instead of “job seekers” (Yusoff et al., 2014; Zahari Ismail & Zamberi Ahmad, 2013). Key skills sought by employers today include critical thinking, problem-solving, innovation, and leadership (Singh Sandhu et al., 2011; Yen et al., 2023). Studies show that engaging early with entrepreneurial education fosters entrepreneurial thought in graduates and enhances their confidence as they begin their careers, especially in business (Abd Rahman et al., 2023; Usman et al., 2019). The effectiveness of the entrepreneurship program varies based on how it is implemented and the design of the curriculum, along with the collaboration formed between institutions and the industry (Khairuddin et al., 2023; Obed Rashdi Syed & Shahid Rasool, 2024).

Furthermore, some research points out a gap between entrepreneurship education policy and its practical implementation in higher education institutions (Feranita et al., 2022; Sulaiman et al., 2024).

This study seeks to systematically examine the real impact of entrepreneurship programs on the employability of graduates. It focuses on the effectiveness of these programs in the context of Malaysian public universities, drawing on literature from 2010 to 2025. This methodology aims to deliver a more precise empirical insight into how entrepreneurship education catalyzes the improvement of graduates' employability.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a systematic literature review (SLR) approach with a descriptive methodology. According to Khairi et al. (2020), this method yields clear and transparent results by emphasizing the significance of empirical evidence in research. The data are gathered from significant search engines, including Google Scholar, Emerald Insight, and ScienceDirect. All articles and journals are sourced from the publication period spanning 2010 to 2025.

This study adheres to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, allowing the researcher to systematically and comprehensively identify, evaluate, and synthesize relevant prior research in an organized manner.

This PRISMA model is completed by undergoing four important processes in evaluating each article that meets all the research criteria: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. These flow processes support the research by structuring a systematic search method (Ghani et al., 2021; Moher et al., 2015). Additionally, the advantage of this systematic literature review (SLR) is that it ensures only the articles conforming to the criteria outlined in the research topic are examined and analyzed. The PRISMA model guarantees high accuracy and provides an organized and systematic overview of the study (Gillath & Karantzas, 2019).

### **2.1. Identification**

The initial step involves identifying relevant articles and journals for this study through database search engines, particularly Google Scholar, Emerald Insight, and ScienceDirect. The main objective is to find relevant literature related to the research topic. The search utilized keywords such as "entrepreneurship program", "entrepreneurship education", "graduate employability", and "public higher education institution". The identification process encompasses articles and journals published within the timeframe highlighted above. The results reveal that 390 articles and journals were obtained from the three databases, as illustrated in Figure 1.

### **2.2. Screening**

The criteria established by the researcher strictly guide the selection of articles and journals. All chosen articles and journals must pertain to the entrepreneurship program and entrepreneurship education, particularly within the context of Malaysian public universities, towards graduate employability. During this screening, any duplicates found across the three databases will be removed to ensure the accuracy of the data and eliminate redundancy in the materials for analysis. At this phase, the focus includes reviewing relevant titles and abstracts that are closely aligned with the research topic. At this stage of screening, 146 articles and journals have been selected.

### **2.3. Eligibility**

At this stage, the process involves re-screening and re-evaluating 79 articles through a thorough reading of their titles and abstracts. Additionally, it includes analyzing and examining the methodology, findings, and discussions. This step ensures that the selected articles and journals consistently align with the research objectives. Consequently, 40 articles were rejected for not addressing the entrepreneurship program and education about graduate employability. Furthermore, several articles were discarded due to vague discussions in the findings section, with some primarily focusing on model development.

## 2.4. Inclusion

As a result, 26 articles were included in the inclusion stage for further analysis (Table 1).

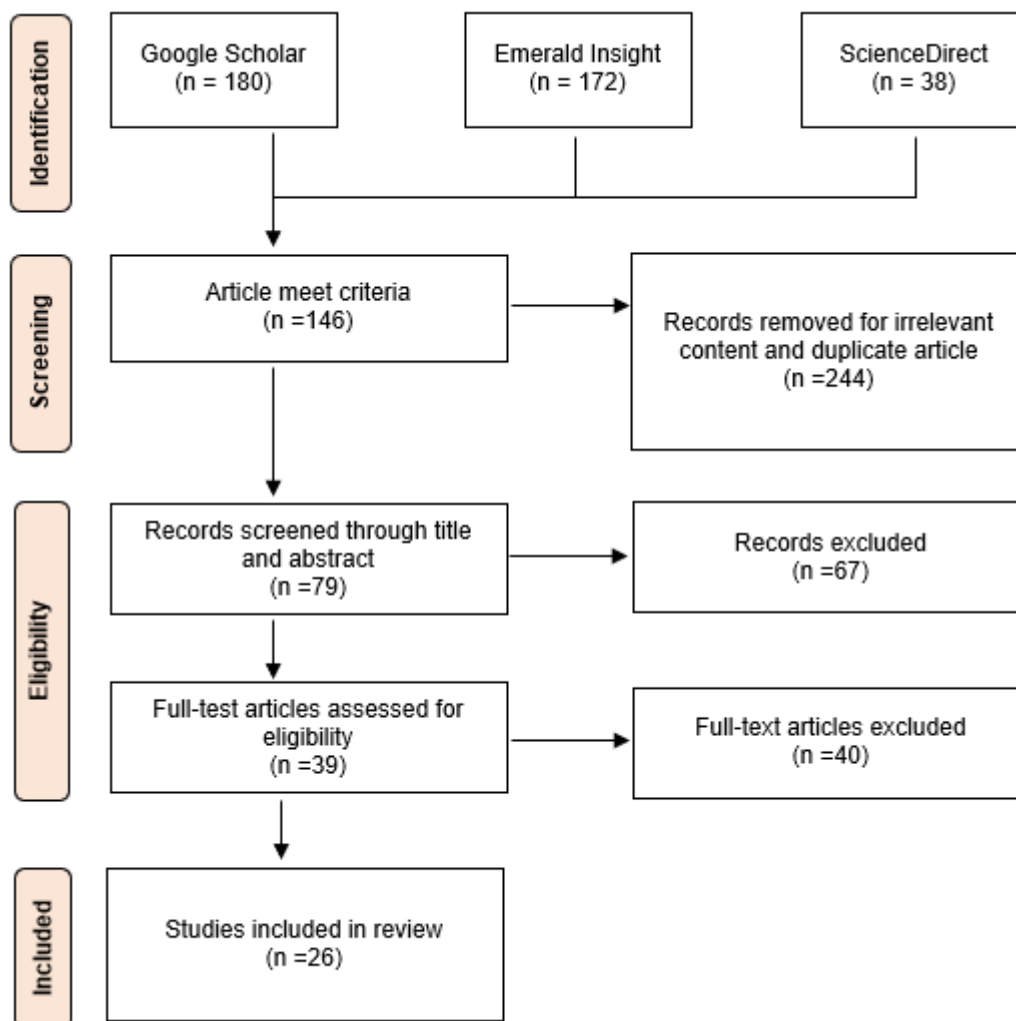


Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Chart

Table 1: List of Selected Articles

No.	Author	Important Key Factors That Impact Entrepreneurship Programs in Malaysian Public Universities on Graduate Employability		
		Policy-Industry Alignment as a Major Employability Driver	Comprehensive Improvement of Graduates' Generic Skills	Boosting Employability through IPTA-Industry Collaboration and Work-Based Learning (WBL)
1	Obed Rashdi Syed, & Shahid Rasool. (2024)	X		X

2	Zamberi Ahmad, S. (2013)	X	X	
3	Nizam Zainuddin, M., & Rozaini Mohd Rejab, M. (2010)	X	X	X
4	English, P., de Villiers Scheepers, M. J., Fleischman, D., Burgess, J., & Crimmins, G. (2021)	X	X	X
5	Loh Rahim, H., Zainal Abidin, Z., & Rosly, H. E. (2016)		X	
6	Gunaseelan, K., Subramaniam, T. S., Sern, L. C., Jabor, M. K., & Rathakrishnan, G. (2022)	X	X	X
7	Pham, M., Nguyen, A. T. T., Tran, D. T., Mai, T. T., & Nguyen, V. T. (2023)	X	X	X
8	Awang, N., & Salleh Hudin, N. (2017)	X	X	X
9	Abd Rahman, A., Sahid, S., Mohd Nor, M. Y., & Mansor, A. Z. (2023)		X	X
10	Yeoh, S. P. (2014)	X	X	X
11	Feranita, F., Mouawad, R., Amin, M., Leong, L. W., & Rathakrishnan, T. (2022)		X	X
12	Huq, A., & Gilbert, D. H. (2013)		X	X
13	Ibrahim, M. F., Ali, A. J., Fangling, B., Ahmed, Z., Abdullahi, N., & Ali, S. (2024)		X	
14	Zahari Ismail, M., & Zamberi Ahmad, S. (2013)		X	X
15	Khairuddin, Z. N., Mohd Sauh, S., & Asmaai, M. (2023)	X		
16	Lim, H. E., Soon, J.-J., & Duan, H. (2021)		X	
17	Ma'dan, M., Ismail, M. T., & Daud, S. (2020)	X	X	X
18	Usman, M., Din, B. H., & Ibrahim, A. Z. (2019)	X	X	
19	Sapian, M. K., Mat Jizat, J. E., Zainol, Z., Nallaluthan, K., & Hanafi, N. (2022)	X		X
20	Sulaiman, S., Mohd Yusof, S. N. L., & Ali Amaran, M. (2024)	X	X	X

21	Mohamad, N. M., Jaaffar, A. H., Abd Majid, N., & Isa, A. (2024)	X	X	X
22	Yen, W. T. M., Yen, Y. Y., Choy, C. S., Nee, T. W., & Ming-Li, T. (2023)	X	X	X
23	Ahmad Bustamam, U. S., & Abdul Halit, S. N. (2018)	X	X	X
24	Bustamam, U. S. A., Mutalib, M. A., & Yusof, S. N. M. (2015)		X	X
25	Singh Sandhu, M., Fahmi Sidique, S., & Riaz, S. (2011)	X	X	
26	Garba, M. M., & Abubakar, S. L. (2019)	X	X	
<b>Total</b>		<b>18</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>18</b>

### 3. DISCUSSION

The introduction of diverse entrepreneurship programs at Malaysian public universities plays a vital role in enhancing graduates' employability. A significant initiative is the New Breed Marketing Entrepreneur (NBME) program, which the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA) has put into action under the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security Malaysia. FAMA is tasked with advancing the local agricultural produce market. This partnership between FAMA and public higher education institutions focuses on nurturing young entrepreneurs in digital marketing and has successfully trained over 3700 young entrepreneurs (MMU, 2023). Furthermore, the Career Advancement Programme (KPT-CAP), developed and managed by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE), provides training and short-term placements across various sectors, including entrepreneurship, intending to boost job market abilities (Ahmad Bustamam & Abdul Halit, 2018; Mohamad et al., 2024). The Ministry of Higher Education's Entrepreneurship Action Plan 2021–2025, referred to as Pelan Tindakan Keusahawanan KPT 2021–2025, aims to strengthen and enhance the entrepreneurship ecosystem in Malaysia's public higher education institutions. This is accomplished through comprehensive policy alignment, capacity building, and strategic partnerships among institutions, industries, and relevant agencies (Khairuddin et al., 2023; Sulaiman et al., 2024). The effectiveness of these programs is underpinned by various studies that show a positive correlation between entrepreneurship education and graduate employability, particularly in developing generic skills, boosting self-confidence, and promoting entrepreneurship among graduates (Bustamam et al., 2015; Gunaseelan et al., 2022; Nizam Zainuddin & Rozaini Mohd Rejab, 2010; Usman et al., 2019; Yeoh, 2014). Additionally, collaboration between educational institutions and industries in executing entrepreneurship programs enhances professional networking and eases graduates' transition into the job market (Obed Rashdi Syed & Shahid Rasool, 2024; Pham et al., 2023). As a result, this ongoing initiative not only aims to fulfill the nation's goal of producing capable graduates but also strengthens the role of public higher education institutions in human capital development through innovation and entrepreneurship, providing graduates with multiple advantages and significantly improving their employability prospects.

This discussion will briefly examine the three key factors of entrepreneurship programs in Malaysian public universities, enhancing graduates' employability. These key factors include Policy-Industry Alignment as a Major Employability Driver, Comprehensive Improvement of graduates' generic skills, and Boosting Employability through IPTA-industry collaboration and Work-Based Learning (WBL).

The criteria for each key factor, referenced in **Table 1** above, have been systematically organized following a comprehensive review of the selected articles and journals for evaluation. Each key factor's classification is detailed in **Table 2** below, which includes:

**Table 2: Criteria of The Key Factors of Entrepreneurship Programs in Malaysian Public Universities  
Enhancing Graduate Employability**

Key Factor	The criteria of each key factor highlighted in the previous studies
<b>Policy-Industry Alignment as a Major Employability Driver</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Evaluate strategies in public higher education that enhance graduate outcomes and employability.</li> <li>2. Discuss the gap between entrepreneurial education policies in higher education and industry needs, proposing enhancements.</li> <li>3. Analyze how entrepreneurship education affects graduate employability, considering the impact of institutional policies.</li> <li>4. Discuss entrepreneurship programs in Malaysian public universities against global standards.</li> </ol>
<b>Comprehensive Improvement of Graduates' Generic Skills</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Employers' views on graduates' skills.</li> <li>2. Work-based learning for social entrepreneurship.</li> <li>3. The effect of entrepreneurship education on employability.</li> <li>4. Graduates' attitudes towards entrepreneurship education and its impact on their skills.</li> <li>5. Entrepreneurial careers addressing graduate unemployment.</li> <li>6. The role of entrepreneurship education in improving employability through skill development.</li> </ol>
<b>Boosting Employability through IPTA-Industry Collaboration and Work-Based Learning (WBL)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. University-industry collaboration enhances graduate employability via entrepreneurship programs.</li> <li>2. Impact of entrepreneurship education on the employability of graduates, along with industry collaborations.</li> <li>3. Impact of entrepreneurship programs in higher education on employability, emphasizing external collaborations.</li> <li>4. Work-based learning in social entrepreneurship.</li> <li>5. Key factors that affect graduate employability: industry involvement.</li> <li>6. The impact of entrepreneurship programs on students' entrepreneurial mindset and industry exposure.</li> <li>7. Impact of entrepreneurship education on employability through collaboration.</li> <li>8. Evidence from public universities, including industry partnerships.</li> </ol>

The evaluation and detailed examination of the 26 chosen articles reveal that all three key factors—Policy-Industry Alignment as a Major Employability Driver, Comprehensive Improvement of Graduates' Generic Skills, and Boosting Employability through IPTA-Industry Collaboration and Work-Based Learning (WBL)—are essential for bolstering and positively affecting entrepreneurship programs in Malaysian public universities, thereby improving graduates' employability. Each key factor has been cited in more than 65% of previous studies, thus, it has been proven that these three key factors are among the pivotal elements that contribute to the positive impact of the entrepreneurship programs in Malaysian public universities on graduate employability. Draugalis et al. (2008) stated in his research where reporting which in this context, specifically referring to systematic literature reviews—a response rate above 60% is considered good and acceptable for drawing valid

conclusions. The percentage distribution result has been derived by following calculation:

**Figure 2: Percentage Distribution Formula**

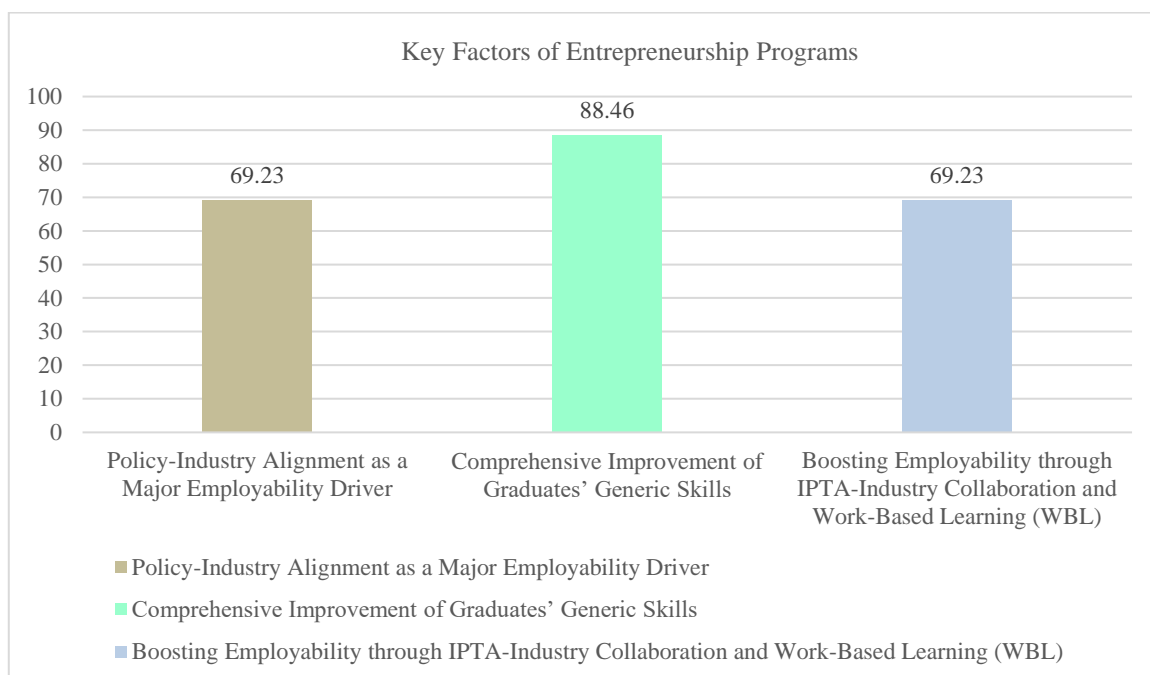
$$\frac{X}{Y} \times 100 = Z$$

where:

$X$  = Number of authors discussed respective key factor

$Y$  = Final number of articles chosen in the inclusion stage

$Z$  = Percentage distribution of key factors (%)



**Figure 3: Percentage Distribution of Key Factors Discussed in Previous Studies**

### 3.1. Policy-Industry Alignment as a Major Employability Driver

Aligning public higher education policies with industry needs is vital to enhance graduate employability in Malaysia. The curriculum must reflect the current demands of the workforce, facilitating the development of graduates equipped with the generic skills, technical knowledge, and entrepreneurial capabilities the industry values. Research by Khairuddin et al. (2023) & Zamberi Ahmad (2013) highlights that the gap between higher education policies and industry demands results in a substantial skills shortfall among graduates. The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education), referred to as Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia (Pendidikan Tinggi) 2015-2025, emphasizes the Fourth Shift, "Producing Holistic, Entrepreneurial and Balanced Graduates." This initiative encourages Malaysian public universities to enhance industry involvement in curriculum development and to incorporate work experience through work-based learning. Research by (Ma'dan et al., 2020) supports this approach by emphasizing the importance of policymakers actively engaging with the industry to ensure that the offered programs remain relevant and effectively prepare graduates for the workforce.



Moreover, industry participation in the entrepreneurship program and the organized industrial training help cultivate an entrepreneurial mindset, while boosting graduates' self-confidence and enhancing their employability (Ahmad Bustamam & Abdul Halit, 2018; Mohamad et al., 2024). Study by Yeoh (2014), Lim et al. (2021) and Gunaseelan et al. (2022) shows that the entrepreneurial education program, which is based on the real industry, such as digital entrepreneurship and business incubator, successfully prepares an opportunity for an alternative career, and at the same time, can generate self-employment opportunities among the graduates. In this context, the study highlights the need for dynamic policy alignment between the institution and industrial demand, encompassing digital technology skills, critical thinking, and communication skills, which align with the needs of the 4.0 industrial revolution (Garba & Abubakar, 2019; Pham et al., 2023).

A study by (Yen et al., 2023) also emphasizes that employers in Malaysia evaluate generic skills and adaptability as the main factors in hiring graduates. Therefore, collaboration between Malaysian public universities and the industry must be strengthened through a systematic best match policy, which includes sharing data on the job market, industry input on curriculum, and continuous evaluation of the academic program's effectiveness. Initiatives such as the Malaysia Future Skills Framework and Industry-Academia Collaboration (IAC) under the Ministry of Higher Education are the critical steps to ensure the success of this synergy. A study by Usman et al. (2019) supported that the implementation of the entrepreneurial program, which is based on the industrial input, will enhance the graduate employability. Also, the previous study by Sopian et al. (2022), which analyzes the graduate data between 2016 and 2019, also proves that graduates who come from programs that are matched perfectly with industrial needs have a higher rate of employability compared to those who do not.

### **3.2. Comprehensive Improvement of Graduates' Generic Skills**

The entrepreneurial program, implemented in Malaysian public universities, has proven to enhance the employability rate of graduates by strengthening a variety of generic skills, including critical thinking, creativity, communication, leadership, and an entrepreneurial mindset. This program not only contributes to the enhancement of generic skills but also fosters graduates' maturity in decision-making, problem-solving, and resilience in facing challenges in the workforce environment, including entrepreneurship (Gunaseelan et al., 2022; Nizam Zainuddin & Rozaini Mohd Rejab, 2010; Yeoh, 2014). Studies show that approaches such as experience-based learning or Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) and participation in an entrepreneurial program enable graduates to apply the theory learned in real-world situations, thus enhancing critical and innovative thinking (Huq & Gilbert, 2013; Sulaiman et al., 2024).

Furthermore, entrepreneurship programs create an environment that nurtures and promotes creative skills while boosting graduates' motivation to initiate and grow new business ventures (Abd Rahman et al., 2023; Feranita et al., 2022). Graduates participating in such programs typically experience improvements in communication, leadership, and teamwork—qualities that employers highly value in the workforce (Obed Rashdi Syed & Shahid Rasool, 2024; Yen et al., 2023). A study by Awang & Salleh Hudin (2017), Ibrahim et al. (2024), and Usman et al. (2019) also stated that entrepreneurial education helps in creating a competitive mindset and makes the graduates more ready to face any uncertain changes in the economic environment, and at the same time, improves and enhances their employability. Besides, the entrepreneurship training that the Malaysian public universities have organized is also able to prepare the graduates who are brave risk takers and able to sustain and maintain their relevancy in the business world, which is very challenging and ever-changing (Bustamam et al., 2015; Mohamad et al., 2024). Thus, in overall the entrepreneurship program which are holistic and based on the real practice and real experience give more positive implications for the graduates in developing the critical generic competencies for the enhancement of career and compete in the dynamic workforce (Ahmad Bustamam & Abdul Halit, 2018; Ma'dan et al., 2020; Singh Sandhu et al., 2011). According to Loh Rahim et al. (2016), employers prefer graduates who are equipped with other skills which is more than the basic knowledge that they should have.



### 3.3. Boosting Employability through IPTA-Industry Collaboration and Work-Based Learning (WBL)

Active collaboration between Malaysian public universities and industry through work-based learning (WBL) significantly boosts graduates' employability rates in Malaysia. WBL provides graduates with real-world exposure through industrial training, project attachment with companies, and professional guidance, allowing them to develop the practical skills and entrepreneurial mindset desired by employers (Huq & Gilbert, 2013; Ma'dan et al., 2020). This approach not only deepens graduates' understanding of industry needs but also strengthens their professional networks and enhances employability (English et al., 2021; Mohamad et al., 2024; Yen et al., 2023). Studies indicate that graduates involved in entrepreneurial programs, based on practical experience like WBL, are more prepared to tackle employment challenges and have a greater inclination to become entrepreneurs, thus fostering self-employment and reducing reliance on the private and public sectors (Abd Rahman et al., 2023; Nizam Zainuddin & Rozaini Mohd Rejab, 2010; Obed Rashdi Syed & Shahid Rasool, 2024). The effectiveness of this approach is further supported by research showing that entrepreneurship programs designed through industry collaboration can improve critical thinking, creativity, and resilience among graduates in today's economic landscape (Ahmad Bustamam & Abdul Halit, 2018; Bustamam et al., 2015; Yeoh, 2014). Therefore, integrating WBL into entrepreneurial education not only enriches graduates' experiences but also enhances the competitiveness and employability of graduates from Malaysian public universities in a challenging and dynamic job market.

## 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the optimal alignment between the policies enacted by Malaysian public universities and the demand of industry is crucial not just as a supportive strategy, but also for significantly improving the employability of graduates. A coordinated effort among government, educational institutions, and industry is vital to ensure that higher education policies remain aligned with the evolving job market and current technological advancements (Khairuddin et al., 2023; Ma'dan et al., 2020). In this context, the entrepreneurial program implemented by Malaysian public universities has positively impacted graduates' employability by improving their generic skills, critical thinking, innovation, and resilience (Mohamad et al., 2024; Pham et al., 2023; Usman et al., 2019). Graduates participating in this program will be better equipped to tackle the increasingly competitive job market and will have the ability to create their career opportunities (Ahmad Bustamam & Abdul Halit, 2018; Yeoh, 2014). In this regard, Malaysian public universities are encouraged to continuously expand and strengthen strategic collaborations with industry, as well as to enhance the implementation of entrepreneurship programs that have a significant positive impact. This approach ensures that the graduates produced are not only academically knowledgeable but also possess the skills necessary to succeed in the future job market (Obed Rashdi Syed & Shahid Rasool, 2024; Sulaiman et al., 2024; Yen et al., 2023).

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