

## **Innovative Thinking, Characteristics, and Competencies of Malay Technopreneurs in Small and Medium Enterprises**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to identify the innovative thinking, characteristics, and competencies of Malay Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) technopreneurs who graduated from skills training centers. Based on Katarzyna's entrepreneurship theory and the entrepreneurship model by Man et al. and Kuratko innovation model, the three main constructs of the study were selected, namely innovative thinking, characteristics, and competencies of technopreneurs. This study utilized a case study design and the data were collected using varied instruments. The participants were 32 successful Malay technopreneurs in Peninsular Malaysia with a technical and vocational background. The snowballing technique was used to select the participants. The research instruments consisted of technopreneur profiles, questionnaires, interview protocols, observation checklists, and document verification. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The main findings showed that the participants believe that they have innovative thinking, possess characteristics of technopreneurship, and have the competencies of technopreneurship. However, the Malay technopreneurs' major weaknesses as identified in the interview included the lack of support and networking, low leadership competence, poor marketing, lack of raw materials and human resources (skilled workers), and financial difficulties. The findings also showed several new themes emerged such as entrepreneurial personality, internal and external supports, and incubator. In conclusion, this study found that to be successful technopreneurs, they need to have innovative thinking, technopreneurial traits, competencies, and other elements such as perseverance, spirituality, family support, and digital skills. In implication, based on the empirical data, a new framework for technopreneurs is proposed that consisted of key elements such as critical and strategic thinking, problem-solving skills, internal endurance and spirituality, effective networking, talented workers and joining idea-incubator.

**Keywords:** Malay technopreneurs, innovative thinking, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), TVET graduates, Malaysia