

Students Perception on Social Entrepreneurship Education in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

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Abstract

Education can play a role in heightening the development of social entrepreneurship (SE) knowledge and skills in a developing country. Malaysia is amongst countries with undesirably low achievement level in the overall social entrepreneurship activity. Hence, efforts need to be enhanced so that the younger generation would be more inclined and motivated to partake in social entrepreneurship to contribute to the existing added value that students already possess. The early cultivation of social entrepreneurship can be detected through informal exposure by students who are actively involved in voluntary projects and developmental community club called ENACTUS. Apart from that, some higher education institutions are offering subjects and short term projects related to social entrepreneurship. The efficacy of SE education will be a yard stick to ensure that more prospective social entrepreneurs are produced in the future. Therefore, a descriptive research has been conducted on 350 ENACTUS members using stratified sampling to explore students and alumni perception on social entrepreneurship. Findings showed that a majority of students agreed if SE education is made a compulsory course in HEI. However, the alumni did not agree with this idea. Although many students and Alumni admitted that they understand the social entrepreneurship concept, nevertheless there are a select few who could not complete their main goal when managing ENACTUS projects. Therefore, they were unable to make their ideologies run concurrently with goals of the projects. This article will attempt to discuss the implications of cultivating the social entrepreneurship culture.

Keywords: Social entrepreneurial education, social entrepreneurship (SE), social entrepreneurs, service-learning and ENACTUS Malaysia.

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship acts as a pathway to the emergence of social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship (SE) is considered a new advent. Nevertheless, initiatives to use the entrepreneurial approach to solve certain social problems have long been done (Noruzi, Westover, & Rahimi, 2010). Social entrepreneurial approach can be used to improve the efficacy and the strength of existing entrepreneurship programmes carried out by volunteer organizations, government sectors, business, and non-governmental organizations.

Nevertheless, entrepreneur business development in Malaysia is developing rapidly in its transition phase from efficiency-driven to innovation-driven as reported by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2013). This report showed that in 2013 there was a decrease in the rate of attitude from the previous years in terms of opportunity perspective, ability of business management and failure risk. This has caused Malaysians between the ages of 18 and 64 to choose entrepreneurship careers. Meanwhile, the level of entrepreneurship education at school

level represents only 2.3% and for post-schoolers are 3.0%, which can be considered as low if compared with Indonesia, Philippines, and Singapore.

These findings are in line with those of Ashmore (1989) and Miller (1983), which opined that entrepreneurial education is a life time learning process, which starts from primary school till various levels of education, including tertiary or higher education institution (HEI). Entrepreneurship element is seen as one of the generic skills among the skills of humanities, which is offered to students of higher learning institutions. Entrepreneurship education offered to youths can reduce the rate of unemployment in Malaysia. This is because of the small decrease (0.3%) in the rate of unemployment, as recorded in July 2014. The record shows that the unemployment rate this year is 2.8% compared with the previous year which was 3.0%.

In conjunction with the aspiration of National Education Philosophy in Technical and Vocational Education (TVE), SE education has the ability to develop student potential to become more creative, to have higher initiatives, and to augment their decision-making capabilities. Meanwhile, enacting TVE curriculum through SE education is seen as emphasising problem-based learning, identifying opportunities, and skills to solve problems. This will have a big impact on students' learning inclination.

The Government has been supportive in encouraging students to explore social innovation as a career choice. Competitiveness in vying for job opportunities is becoming more challenging. Thus, students must think of alternative careers which would not only be significant to their lives, but also would benefit the lives of those in the community, especially those who have been forsaken. It is hoped that the execution of entrepreneurial social education will enhance the efficacy of social education field. In addition, it will contribute to the economic development by increasing their efficacy in social entrepreneur education and increasing the social level of those who have been neglected.

a) Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship is not a new concept or phenomena. Social entrepreneurs have existed for a long time to help solve specific social problems and they have identified their difference to business entrepreneurs (Okpara & Halkias, 2011; Sandler, 2010). Meanwhile, Litzky, Godshalk, and Walton-Bongers (2010) defined this concept as a process, which involves innovative use of resources and seeking of opportunities to be a catalyst to social change, to instil social dreams, and to fulfil social needs. Hence, the importance of social entrepreneurship is that it will also contribute to existing business. Three basic elements that form a more effective planning map of an enterprise or a social firm are reaction towards failed market, transformative innovation, and vibrant finances (Noruzi, Westover, & Rahimi, 2010). Therefore, it can be concluded that this concept refers to the practice from failed market opportunities. In addition, it produces solid social innovation based on existing resources, which intends to solve problems of neglected social groups.

Social entrepreneurs are made up of individuals who are heads of groups, networks, organizations, or conglomerates of organizations who identify opportunities and explore everlasting social innovation based on entrepreneurship principals by minimising social goals (Noruzi, Westover, & Rahimi, 2010). The success of social entrepreneurs comes from the innovations that have been produced (Austin, Stevenson, & Wei-Skillern, 2006; Dees, Emerson, & Economy, 2001; Hartingan, 2006). Researchers conclude that social entrepreneurs are individuals who have entrepreneurial traits; who explore opportunities arising from certain social ills, utilising existing sources to produce solid social innovation.

Therefore, social enterprise refers to organizations or enterprises, built by social entrepreneurs by utilising business methods to attain social goals or lasting environment (Page & Katz, 2010). Managing and developing social enterprises is not that different from managing business enterprises, apart from the objective which is to maximise social goals, rather than profit. Nonetheless, profit is mandatory to ensure the continuity of the

operations of enterprise or firm. Therefore, social enterprises or social firms, regardless of size, conduct social entrepreneurship activities with the goal to provide social innovation for neglected groups.

b) Social Entrepreneurship Education

Education is the main vehicle used by the community to develop new generations and to reform education to affect knowledge (Badawi, 2013). In the context of this research, two main forms of education play an instrumental role, namely technical and vocational education (TVE) and SE education. SE education is relevant and associated to TVE because this programme serves to increase the marketability of individuals to get jobs, to work for the sake of community, and to help attain a vibrant development.

SE education has the ability to eliminate misunderstanding which involves parents and community, apart from the ability revive the culture of social entrepreneurship. Similarly, in the context of Malaysia, business entrepreneurship education clearly still confuses HEI students in defining the concept, which inclines towards business practices to maximise profits (IPPTN, 2010).

Brock and Steiner (2009) discovered that a formidable challenge which involves the teaching of the subject of social entrepreneurship is to determine students' social innovative scale. The product of a big innovative scale is measured by the increase of the social effects from social organizational activity in a variety of ways to fulfil communal social needs (Dees 2008). Hence, the yardstick of social innovation determines how far the practice of entrepreneurship education based on triple bottom line needs to give a huge impact on students' self-aspiration. This requires acquisition of certain skills such as business practice ethics, finance and distribution of resources which depends on mastery of skills in communication, and in analytical and reflective thinking.

Literature review shows that business students' achievement becomes positive when they are taught social entrepreneurship using learning pedagogy based on service-learning. This approach is considered the best and has been successfully used in the contexts of business entrepreneurship education which is supported by many researchers (Calvert, 2011; Litzky, Godshalk, & Walton-Bongers, 2010). The chronology begins through research findings by Dewey (1933) on experiential learning. His finding supports the active and reflective learning approach by students through the Kolb model (1985) to solve learning problems, which involves out-of-classroom activities. This model is framed by an important theory, which demonstrates that experiential learning is effective because it facilitates students' cognitive development which differs in the style of learning. Pursuant to that, this approach can be adapted to service-learning and this pedagogy is also used in the discipline of student learning including SE education (Calvert, 2011). This is because it was solidified through the merging of a framework model which contributes to social entrepreneurship development factor.

Specifically, the model framework by Weerawardena and Wort (2006) clarified the influence of SE education contextual factor to the formation of student behaviour which affects community. Meanwhile, the model framework by Lester, Tomkovick, Wells, Flunker, and Kickul (2005) explained the factors that affect service-learning education experience from projects executed by students, the inclination to develop skills and other values owned by social entrepreneurs. The combination of these framework forms an effective continuity by service-learning to measure efficacy of SE education.

A specific structure needs to be prepared to track critical and important experiential learning of current and future business graduates in terms of experience and contents. This is because it can create bigger development than just personal responsibility, leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Tomkovick, Lester, Flunker, & Wells, 2008).

Ironically, the course offered only involves a few HEIs and most students are not inclined to take the course because it does not attract their interest. Little research has been done social entrepreneurship in theoretical and empirical aspects and they are far between in other countries, even in Malaysia (Bloom & Smith, 2010; Brock

& Steiner, 2009). Therefore, by offering this educational subject in HEI that will be inclined towards service-learning education approach will help to involve task delegation to students. Brock and Steiner (2009) suggested that there are seven important elements that must be included, namely managing social needs or addressing specific social problems, innovation, scale of social entrepreneurship, source distribution, identifying opportunities, solid business model, and measuring result as preparation to groom future leaders in this area.

c) ENACTUS

ENACTUS (entrepreneurial.act.us) was once known as SIFE (student in free enterprise), a non-governmental international organisation under the ENACTUS Foundation of Malaysia (EMF). The establishment of ENACTUS was done in the form of co-curriculum club in a few HEIs in the whole of Malaysia. Since its inception in 2000, the number of ENACTUS members has increased exponentially. The establishment of this club inclines towards voluntary work to develop community and to preserve the environment through an everlasting concept of triple-bottom-line. Young Entrepreneurs Malaysia (YEM) is driven by managers, academicians, and business-oriented people. As the beneficiary of ENACTUS club in HEIs, the main goal is to be committed in improving the quality of life and living standards of specific groups based on entrepreneurial practices.

This club has been successful in creating leaders among students through activities and programmes organized yearly, which include ENACTUS Malaysia National Cup and ENACTUS World Cup (Malaysia ENACTUS Foundation, 2013). The students are then absorbed into the private sector and become entrepreneurs. ENACTUS activities have paved opportunities to students to increase their worldly experiences and initiate new careers by representing their HEI through projects they manage. Faculty advisors from each HEI, together with business leaders as consultants, and network for students are there to ensure that their projects create a high impact for the community and business. Even though EMF did not expose social entrepreneurship directly to its members, each project conducted is in the form of social enterprise, which was obtained through community services. Hence, knowledge and mastery acquired when mitigating ENACTUS projects are in the form of small and big-scale social enterprises, which include service-learning.

2. Statement of Problem

The career aspiration of social entrepreneurs can be encouraged if youths are given early educational exposure when they are young. Ironically, formal institution of learning such as secondary schools and HEIs are discouraging in their effort and support to create young entrepreneurs. The method of social entrepreneurial education differs from one HEI to another, and depends largely on compulsory or elective subjects offered, involvement in community programmes, apart from the students' own initiative to participate as members in ENACTUS clubs. Their participation hinges heavily on their spirit of voluntarism. This notion is supported by research conducted by Ernst (2011). Pursuant to that, social entrepreneurship development in this country is spurred by the role of informal institutions of learning and public community organizations such as corporations, youth organizations, charitable organisations, and government-initiated programmes such as *Yayasan Sukarelawan Siswa* (1 Malaysia For Youth), which offer them opportunities to conduct activities through "learning by doing" to enhance their motivation as social entrepreneurs.

3. Research Objectives

This descriptive research was conducted on ENACTUS members with the goal to explore their perception towards the status in executing social entrepreneurship (SE) education at HEI level. Hence, details of the research objectives are explained as follows:

1. To identify need status of SE education formally, based on the perceptions of students and ENACTUS alumni.
2. To identify the status of understanding regarding the concept of social entrepreneurship from the perception among student and alumni based on ENACTUS projects.
3. To evaluate the understanding regarding the concept of social entrepreneurship among students and ENACTUS alumni.

4. Research Methodology

Research was conducted on a population of 2,359 members of ENACTUS Malaysia. Based on Cochran formula (1977), minimum sample size should contain 342 respondents from population of students and alumni. Stratified random sampling was employed according to student groups and Alumni, which was divided according to universities. The university category consisted of 36 HEI groups registered with ENACTUS Malaysia Foundation (EMF). After the rate for each university category was decided, namely research universities, comprehensive universities, focused universities and private universities, survey questionnaires were distributed to the selected universities using simple random sampling. The researcher also limited the selection of samples, because respondents included must have more than a year's active experience in ENACTUS projects.

Collection of information was obtained using questionnaires. The researcher sought permission from the Ministry of Education, Malaysia (MOE) and EMF to conduct research in each HEI. Distribution of questionnaires was conducted by the researcher during Semester II, Session 2013/2014, through face-to face contact with students and ENACTUS alumni. Then, researcher determined the suitable location, date, and time to meet with ENACTUS Faculty Advisor and President of each HEI. During the meeting, the researcher explained to students and Alumni about the background of research before they were asked to answer the questionnaires. The questionnaire contained one part that asked about demographical questions that are related to the objective of this research. In addition, additional information was also obtained through indirect interviews with ENACTUS members and academic advisors in related research locations.

5. Research Findings

Early review was in descriptive form using frequency analysis because researcher wanted to obtain the perception of ENACTUS members regarding the execution of SE education in Malaysia. This exercise involved 350 ENACTUS members, comprising 213 students and 137 members of the alumni. Based on Table 1, the percentage of all ENACTUS members according to gender for student group and Alumni were the same, approximately about 50%.

Table 1. Profile of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Student	Alumni	Total
Male	104 (48.8 %)	71 (51.8 %)	175 (50.0 %)
Female	109 (51.2 %)	66 (48.2 %)	175 (50.0 %)

Consequently, the findings were used to answer the first research question, concerning the extent of the need for SE education to be a formal subject, in the perceptions of ENACTUS members. About 74.4% agreed that SE education must be conducted formally in each HEI (Table 2). The table shows that among the students, 98.6% of them agreed making SE education compulsory, compared with members of Alumni which showed only 35% of them agreed with the notion. This shows there is a difference in perceptions among the members of the Alumni; that a majority of Alumni (65%) did not agree with suggestion to implement SE education formally in HEI. This Alumni trend is related to interest factor and course load taken every semester by students. Students opined that social entrepreneurship studies are suitable and relevant for the current need.

Table 2. Perception Towards Formal Social Entrepreneurship Education

	Student	Alumni	Total
Yes	210 (98.6 %)	48 (35.0 %)	258 (73.7 %)
No	3 (1.4 %)	89 (65.0 %)	92 (26.3 %)

After identifying the need for SE education formally, the difference is the perception between students and Alumni ENACTUS is now visible. Hence, to answer the second research question researcher must identify the status of understanding of ENACTUS members concerning the concept of social entrepreneurs. Table 3 shows 88.6% of ENACTUS members personally admitted that they understand the concept of social entrepreneurship. Specifically, a large number of students (90.6%) and Alumni (85.4%) understood this concept thoroughly. This is supported by the experience they obtained through community developed by ENACTUS Malaysia in other HEI. Only a few did not understand, specifically they are the alumni members.

Table 3. Understanding of Social Entrepreneurship Concept

	Student	Alumni	Total
Yes	193 (90.6 %)	117 (85.4 %)	310 (88.6 %)
No	20 (9.4 %)	20 (14.6 %)	40 (11.4 %)

The third research question involved long distance evaluation where the concept of social entrepreneurship could be understood by ENACTUS members through information targeted in ENACTUS project (Table 4). Most ENACTUS members admitted that they understood the social entrepreneurship concept based on experience obtained through community development projects. This is exemplified in their inconsistent answers in their understanding of the real concept of social entrepreneurship. They understood it through goal targeted but inclined towards business entrepreneurship. The percentage of this group was 20.6%. This rate was relatively higher than 11.4% (see Table 3) for the overall total who did not understand the concept of social entrepreneurship. Therefore, students should be exposed to the concepts of social entrepreneurship through education so that they can understand the concept and practise it in their daily lives after they have graduated.

Table 4. Perception of ENACTUS Community Development Project

	Student	Alumni	Total
Maximum social goals and minimum profit	175 (82.2 %)	103 (75.2 %)	278 (79.4 %)
Maximum profit and minimum social goal	38 (17.8 %)	34 (24.8 %)	72 (20.6 %)

6. Discussion and Implications of Research

Research findings showed that social entrepreneurship education must be conducted formally and must take into consideration the perceptions of current students as well as those of the alumni members. However, there is a difference of opinions between the two groups about the three research questions.

Majority of ENACTUS members (73.7%) agree that entrepreneurship education must be executed as a formal subject in all HEIs. Nonetheless, when group analysis was performed, alumni members did not agree to make SE education as a formal subject. This is opposed to that students' opinion to make it a formal course in all HEIs. This is because students felt it was a burden to participate in social entrepreneurship activities, over and above their existing courses that they have to fulfil every semester. Therefore, HIE students are less interested in social entrepreneurship activities unless they are offered as a course. In addition, research conducted by McDowall and Micinski (2010) found that the younger generation are less inclined to make the SE education formal, especially when it involves mastery in management, project planning, networking, and communication. Courses offered in SE by a well-known university in America and Europe shows heightened and developed interest to accept exposure to SE EDUCATION (Brock & Steiner, 2009).

Report by *Institute Penyelidikan Pendidikan Tinggi Negara*, Malaysia (IPPTN, 2010) found that 76.7% of HEI students need business entrepreneurship education. This shows that there is a positive relation between students who take entrepreneurship courses and students who wish to be a social entrepreneur in Malaysia (Zahariah, Amalina, & Erlane, 2010). Assimilation of this finding allowed SE education and business entrepreneurship education be executed across various disciplines. In connection to this, teaching and self-centred learning will heighten the relevance of the curriculum (Nga & Shamuganathan, 2010). Improvement in strategy must also be solidified through teaching methods based on service-learning through experience. This would enhance motivation and self-efficacy of students by relating theory and social entrepreneurship practices (Litxky, Godshalk, & Walton-Bongers, 2010).

Conversely, students and Alumni opined that they understood the social entrepreneurial concept, except for a few. This has contributed to the need that SE education must be established in all HEIs. Exposure attained by students form experience of being active in ENACTUS clubs is inadequate for them to delve further into social entrepreneurship field. This is supported by the original goal in creating ENACTUS Malaysia, which is to create students who would have quality leadership traits in the work sector that did not have social entrepreneurs (ENACTUS Malaysia Foundation, 2013). Status of understanding admitted by the students and the alumni took into consideration the trend that social entrepreneurship activities in Malaysia is still in its inception stage based on the General Entrepreneurship Monitor (2009, 2011).

Thus, with regard to the research question on how far their understanding is in applying the concept of social entrepreneurship through the targeting of goals during the management of community development projects, even though the percentage of those who answered correctly was high, the participants were still confused about the practice of social entrepreneurship and business entrepreneurship concepts. This finding reflects the differences in the level of understanding about the business entrepreneurial concept in every HEI in Malaysia (IPPTN, 2010).

Social entrepreneurship education must be inculcated in students so that they can acquire mastery to commercialize their social innovation according to their field of study. The education system which follows the global tide is ever-changing and fulfils the need of the National Education Philosophy. Education policy drafters need to provide their support through agencies and ministries, that compulsory subjects must be combined in HEIs with technical and vocational programmes so that there is continuity between the two. Meanwhile, SE education courses must be enhanced to emphasise basic elements such as identifying opportunities, social innovation, utilization of limited resources and building sustainable business models (Brock & Steiner, 2009).

ENACTUS acts as an incubator for training students and the alumni to be social entrepreneurs. Hence, it implies that the government must create many social entrepreneur incubators to encourage youths to dabble in this field fanned by interest and high motivation.

7. Conclusion

ENACTUS students still need social entrepreneurial subjects to be offered formally. Unfortunately, the alumni do not concur with students' opinions. There is a difference in opinion between two groups of ENACTUS members, regarding the issue whether SE education must be executed to ensure that students have the opportunity to learn social entrepreneurship in detail and applying it in their daily lives. A handful of students and members of the alumni clearly do not understand the concept of social entrepreneurship to mobilise strategies to target main goals in managing community development projects even though they admit that they understand the concept. Therefore, social entrepreneurship education should be formally executed at early educational level so that they are not confused with voluntary work and are able to manage social entrepreneurship projects efficiently. SE education learning is based on learning pedagogy that hinges on services are relevant to enhance the efficacy among students. Efforts to instil social entrepreneurial culture through education can strengthen youths' resolve to create new employment opportunities and contribute to the improvement of developing community economy and a formidable country.

8. References

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