



Empowering Human Capital through Comprehensive Entrepreneurship Training (CETP) Project for Rural Entrepreneurship Model (REMODE) in Freshwater Industry in Kelantan, Malaysia

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Abstract

One of the six National Key Result Areas (NKRAs) of Malaysia is to raise the living standards of low income households. The Vision 2020 which inspires Malaysia to be a developed country will not be meaningful if there is a wide gap between the rich and the poor. Realising this the government is taken bold initiatives, aiming to eradicate poverty by enhancing and sustaining the productivity of low income households. While the Government of Malaysia has made significant progress in reducing the number of low income households, yet 4% of the citizens is identified as extreme poor. The Rural Entrepreneurship Model (REMODE) for freshwater industry which is spearheaded and pioneered by Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) is an attempt to empower human resources in rural area through the means of entrepreneurship. The uniqueness of the program is it utilizes the existing ecosystems and empowers human resources of selected community by developing and nurturing entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship accordingly. The first REMODE entrepreneurship program will be conducted in Kelantan, one of the poorest states in Malaysia and where a majority of the poor Malays comes from. Availability of fresh water areas in the said state provides vast and untapped opportunities in freshwater industry. After deliberation, a potential viable project identified is the Red Tilapia Farming, judging from abundance of idle lands available as well as technicality and costs of rearing the fish are within the reach of local community. Developing a Comprehensive Entrepreneurship Training Project (CETP) is a prerequisite of the success of the said model. In other words CETP is a trajectory of entrepreneurship of the said industry. This project shall focus on four tiers. First tier is to conduct the social-impact assessment (SIA) and second tier is to develop training need analysis. Third tier is to develop training modules and the last tier is to implement CETP. The complete circle of the programme will take 5 year time. Against the above background the aim of this paper is to share CETP, by so doing knowledge regarding empowerment of human resources of local community. In addition suggestions from readers will be considered to ensure this project will be a successful one.

Background and Rationale of the Research Programme

"While Malaysia has made remarkable progress in fighting poverty these last 40 years, however, fewer than 4% of the citizens are still classified as living in poverty. In managing the divide between Malaysia's economically well-off and the disadvantaged, the raising of living standards of low-income households (LIH) was designated as a NKRA" (Annual Report, 2010: p. 153). The government is well fully aware of this situation and taken a bold effort to address the problem. Hence various programmes have been put into place. During the year 2010, a total of 44,643 extremely poor households and 15,868 poor households were lifted from poverty through programs such as 1AZAM, provision of low cost homes and other initiatives by the Government. "In its Human Development Report 2010 (HDR 2010), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) highlighted that from 1970 to 2010, per capita income in developed or rich countries increased 2.3% a year on average compared to just 1.5% growth for developing countries. However, there were exceptions, with several developing countries – including Malaysia, together with Botswana, China, Thailand – identified as having grown faster than any developed country. In fact these countries were cited as having undergone truly spectacular economic growth by the World Bank: between 1970 and 2010, China's per capita income escalated twenty one-fold, Botswana's ascended more than nine-fold and both Malaysia's and Thailand's climbed more than five-fold" (Annual Report, 2010: p. 135).

In spite of significant developments, the job of eradicating poverty is incomplete and it requires concerted efforts from various agencies (public, private, NGOs and educational institutions) to completely eradicate poverty. It has been long recognized that institutes of higher learning have played significant roles in poverty alleviation. Through education, students of poor families can earn proper jobs and income through their qualifications, in turn they will free their families from shackle of poverty. But what happen to poor family who not lucky enough who none of their family members attend higher education? If no bold have been taken they will be stuck in the circle of poverty. Direct intervention from universities through various research activities especially problem-based research is deemed necessary and promising. At present, more and more researchers have embarked on economic projects with rural communities to empower them. Approaches have been taken rather to teach rural community to fish, not to give them fish. It is hope after sometimes rural participants can self sustain and able to improve their income.

This intention is possible through education and a small sum of financial help. A suitable programme for poverty alleviation should suit to local environment, where the availability of abundance resources which untapped should be fully utilized. In rural areas, abundance of land remains unused due to lack of expertise as well as financial means. Entrepreneurship capabilities which are recognized amongst importance assets for success in business endeavor will also be inculcated as the researchers believe everybody can be entrepreneur if he or she receives a proper education and gives an opportunity.

Through the field observation as well conversation between the researchers of UMK and the communities in the district of Bachok, Kelantan the team found poverty issues are largely due to human incapability to sieve available opportunities. While entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship activities are expected to capitalize local economic growth, in reality it does not seem to happen. The fundamental issues which are considered as stumbling block pertaining to the present entrepreneurs among others due to lack of commitment to the business, lack of knowledge in managing the business, insufficient labourers, low motivation, and lack of information on the availability of subsidy and supports from the local agencies.

The fundamental questions addressed through this research programme are: (1) How to establish and execute a comprehensive entrepreneurship training programme (CETP) to train the poor households and/or potential and/or existing entrepreneurs?; (2) What kind of education and training programs (capacity building) needs to be provided to the community and existing entrepreneurs?; (3) How can the existing ecosystem or environs be used to develop and enhance the community involvement in entrepreneurship aquaculture activities?; (4) How to further elevate the socio-economic level of the bottom 40% households in Kelantan through entrepreneurship education; (5) What kind of intervention mechanisms need to be in place?; (6) Is it possible to develop a generic REMODE programme that can be used by researchers and practitioners to train entrepreneurs in other industry sectors?

Objectives of the Project

Objectives of this project are as follows:-

1. To identify the present social and economic values of the locals in particular the bottom 40% households.
2. To establish entrepreneurship training modules and program for entrepreneurs in aquaculture industry.
3. To establish aquaculture farming skills to facilitate the aquaculture business.
4. To execute training and development activities as mentioned in objective 2 and 3.

Hypotheses

The proposed hypotheses are:

1. The entrepreneurship training programme will enhance the entrepreneurship mindset, attitudes and personality of the communities.
2. The entrepreneurship training programme will boost the entrepreneurship attributes of the communities.
3. The business and operations training programme will enhance the sustainability of the business among the entrepreneurs.
4. The training skills in aquaculture farming will increase the yield of the products (fish).

Brief Description of Project Approach

This project will utilize both quantitative and qualitative approaches. For quantitative approach the questionnaire survey pertaining to demography, entrepreneurship mindset as well as business and technical knowledge will be adopted. For qualitative approach the following methods such as content analysis, interviews, and focus group interview and expert review will be applied. Developing training modules will take into consideration of nature of participants and demand for success in aquaculture farming. This requires refinement of modules and approaches of training. Inputs from local communities are also important to ensure training and modules approach easily comprehend by participants. In this aspects both parties, researchers and rural participants will have inputs. Since the purpose of the training is to increase social and economic status of the latter, their inputs are very important. After all they are the ones who will do the job.

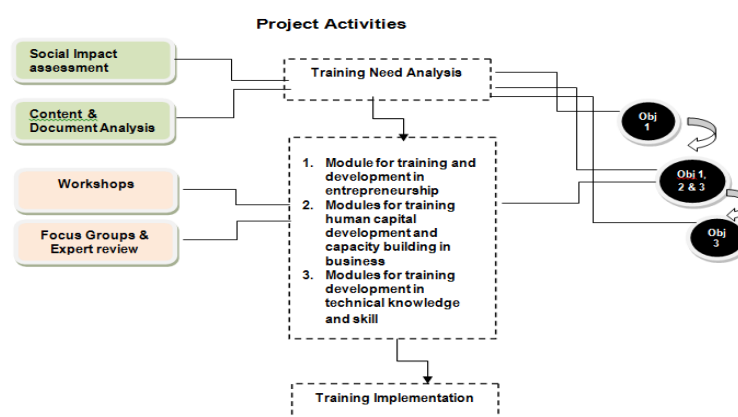
Total of 200 targeted respondents throughout the state of Kelantan will be involved in this study. Selection criteria for respondents which are categorized as hardcore poor are those earning less than RM2,300 per month located in Gua Musang, Tumpat, Jeli and Bachok, Kelantan. Out of these, a few percentage of them will selected as entrepreneurs in the said business. The criteria of selection based on a number of requirements which will be established by the researchers.

Since this study involves longitudinal study, each and every participant will be closely supervised and relevant data will be gathered during 3 stages - before, during and post-training period. Comparative analysis can be conducted to measure individual progress as a result of training and development of the project.

Stages of Training Programme

The four interrelated training and development stages of the research is shown in Diagram 1:

Diagram 1: Training and Development Activities



Phase 1

To conduct Social Impact Assessment will be conducted among the respondents in aquaculture industry. The purpose is to establish demography profile, income generating activities, to identify the ecosystem necessary to facilitate the aquaculture business.

Phase 2

To conduct Training Need Analysis (TNA). The purpose is to identify the level of knowledge in entrepreneurship, business management and other aspects related to aquaculture business among the respondents.

Phase 3

To develop the appropriate training programme and modules resulting from the TNA. A pre-training and post training evaluation form will be established. Expert review will be conducted to enhance the training contents. Three broad training programme will be developed:

1. Training and development program in entrepreneurship-
Changing the mindset, personality, attitude, motivational talks
2. Training and Development in business operation and management
 - a. Business planning
 - b. Cash flow management
 - c. Human recourse
 - d. Marketing
 - e. Logistics and supply chain
3. Training and Development in technical knowledge and skills
 - a. Fish breeding
 - b. Hatchery and pond management
 - c. Fish- based products
 - d. Fish nutrition
 - e. Logistics in aquaculture
 - f. Branding, labelling and packaging

Phase 4

To implement the entrepreneurship training programme among the 200 respondents. The first training programme will be conducted within 6 months. After the 6 months, once the potential entrepreneurs back at their sites, continuous coaching and mentoring will be provided by the researchers from each project team. The evaluation or post-test will be conducted on a periodical basis of 6 months by the researchers in this programme. The purpose is to evaluate and analyse the respondents' progress in terms of mindset, entrepreneurship attributes and skills in managing the business.

Conclusion

In conclusion, direct intervention from a university training and development to a certain rural community will act a litmus test. Embarking on a project which deemed suitable for available community will uplift social-economy of a portion of potential community through training and entrepreneurship programme. Since the project will take 5 years time to complete, the whole cycle the results of the project is yet to see, but close monitoring for each stage in paramount important. Proper planning and execution of aquaculture industry and entrepreneurship education is hoped to benefit rural community that involved in the project. This project will be replicated to other part of Malaysia which shares the small situation in Kelantan once it is proven successful to empower local community through entrepreneurship.

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