

Chapter 21

General Enterprising Tendency (GET) and Recommendations to Boost Entrepreneurship Education in Sarawak

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the General Enterprising Tendency (GET) test used to examine the enterprising tendency among business students in Sarawak. The findings from a sample of 75 final year business students indicate low scores in five key enterprising tendencies, namely: need for achievement, need for autonomy, calculated risk taking, drive and determination and creative tendency (innovativeness). To explore the reasons for these low scores, focus group interviews with the students were conducted and reasons for the low enterprising tendencies and barriers for entrepreneurial development were identified. The authors provide some recommendations to rejuvenate the interest in entrepreneurship culture among business students and eliminate entrepreneurial barriers. This paper has a practical implication for universities and business schools to re-examine their current business and entrepreneurship curriculum, as one of the purposes of a business school is to produce entrepreneurs or business leaders to contribute to economic growth and development.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In a period of volatile economic uncertainty worldwide, riddled with competitive and global challenges, every nation is looking towards the creation and the development of entrepreneurship. Malaysia is not an exception. In Malaysia, the state of Sarawak is the biggest among the 13 states and is strategically located in South East Asia in the island of Borneo. Sarawak is fast becoming an investment hub for mining and agriculture with its abundance of natural resources (LNG and petroleum) and forestry sectors. These primary sectors make up 40% of the state's total real gross domestic product (GDP). Other sectors like manufacturing, wholesale, retail trading and construction contribute to 30% of the GDP (Gabriel, 2010). All this contribute to new businesses and opportunities for entrepreneurship to exist. Entrepreneurship development is a crucial catalyst for achieving the level of diversity, innovation and independent decision making required for survival and gaining a competitive edge in the global market.

The Federal Government of Malaysia in 2009 allocated RM1.9 billion in the budget for industrial and commercial programmes including the development of industrial estates and entrepreneurs in Sarawak (Abidin, 2009). Thus, the Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy (SCORE) was created to provide a platform for entrepreneurs to expand and develop business ventures with the aim of achieving the goals of accelerating the state's economic growth and development, as well as improving the quality of life for the people of Sarawak. By the year 2020, Malaysia hopes to achieve the development of entrepreneurship to provide the economy with the engine growth as an alternative long-term economic development strategy required to achieve its full industrial nation status. Thus, with regard to the development of entrepreneurship, the government needs to emphasize a knowledgeable, productive and skilled workforce that can be trained and developed at the earlier stage especially at higher educational institutions in the form of co-curricular activities and programmes offered. In order to achieve this, a ministry for entrepreneurial development was created in 1995.

The establishment of the Ministry of Entrepreneur Development in 1995 clearly indicates the growing importance of the government's role on the issue of entrepreneur development (Ariff & Abubakar, 2005). The Malaysian economic master plan for 2010-2020 emphasizes more on the development of entrepreneurship and Small and Medium Enterprise (SME). The main aim is to create an eco-system which can help entrepreneurial progress in a comprehensive way such as support in finance, capacity building and logistics (Abidin, 2010). Therefore, there is a great support especially for young graduates who want to start up their own business and become entrepreneurs. However, the general enterprising tendency among young graduates seems to be low. In a study by Sirat et al. (2004), only 30 out of 2275 graduate respondents were involved in business activities. In another study by the Ministry of Higher Education in Malaysia, out of 19,000 undergraduate respondents, only 74 were working as employers whereas 147 graduates were working on their own (Ministry of Higher Education, 2005). These statistics are indeed alarming as entrepreneurship development among students seems to be lacking even though entrepreneurial development is crucial for the progress and development of the nation.

It is therefore imperative that a successful plan and effective strategies be implemented to inculcate an entrepreneurship culture amongst youth through entrepreneurship education. Faioite et al. (2003) and Othman et al. (2006) assert that entrepreneurship education and training are important for economic development, particularly in improving the quality and quantity of future entrepreneurs. In Malaysia, entrepreneurship education at all higher learning institutes has led to an expansion of their co-curriculum especially in the academic and practical aspects (Prime Minister's Department, 1996; Hassan, 2003; Armanurah et al., 2005).

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