



## Developing Entrepreneurial Leader Model for Educators in a Higher Learning Institution: A Case in UiTM Sabah Branch, Malaysia

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### ABSTRACT

Lecturers in Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs) are mainly concentrating on their routine work i.e. teaching. Malaysian Institute for Entrepreneurial Leadership under the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) in 2016 conducted the first course related to the Entrepreneurial Leadership among Malaysian HLIs which is known as Entrepreneurial Leaders Program (ELP). ELP concentrated on senior lecturers and above who are also the administrators of HLIs around Malaysia. The course was conducted for seven days with primary objective to create entrepreneurial leaders among educators. HLIs across the globe are facing turbulence and challenges in searching for solutions and opportunities while dealing with the current unpredictable climate and environments. Since few years ago, public universities have been faced with significant budget cuts, thus they have taken steps to increase their own funds through many activities. This scenario coincides with economic upheavals across the globe. Governments nowadays have less resources available to sustain their support for the higher learning institutions like the way they used to. This new phenomenon has led the whole personnel of universities to stand united and demonstrate strong and visionary leadership in becoming more entrepreneurial as a way of responding to the challenges that they face. A few years back, the budget cuts to the universities in Malaysia were done in a very sudden and haphazard fashion. They were not prepared to significantly increase non-government revenue sources. Thus, developing a model of entrepreneurial leaders among educators in HLIs is crucial and timely. This research aims to produce an entrepreneurial framework which is to be implemented, particularly by the lecturers at Universiti Teknologi MARA Sabah Branch.

**Key Words:** Entrepreneurial leaders, Entrepreneurship, Higher Learning Institutions.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

*“Entrepreneurial leaders are individuals who, through an understanding of themselves and the contexts in which they work, act on and shape opportunities that create value for their organizations, their stakeholders, and the wider society.” Greenberg et al. (2011)*

The whole idea of this research has a close relationship with the above quote. It is relevant when the landscape of the Higher Learning Institutions (HLIs) has significant changes throughout the years. In 2013, the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) drafted the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015–2025 (Higher Education) for a solid reason. It was developed by Malaysians for Malaysians that will equip Malaysia for the final leg of its journey towards becoming a high-income nation by the year 2020 onwards (MoHE, 2013). Hence, the Malaysian higher learning system needs to keep evolving to stay relevant and in line with the global market trend. The purpose of the blueprint is to prepare Malaysian youth to thrive in the complex and ever-changing future and this rapid changes require a strong platform with a conducive ecosystem for the HLIs to operate and deal with the current movement. Teaching is no longer the core focus of HLIs. Since the governments across country nowadays have less resources available in sustaining their support to the higher education sector like the way they did before. The players in the HLIs should reposition and expand their roles in different spectrum instead of just being a lecturer. This new phenomenon has led the whole personnel of universities to stand united and demonstrate strong and visionary leadership in becoming more entrepreneurial as a way of responding to the challenges that they face.

## 2. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

A few years back, the budget cuts to the universities in Malaysia were done in a very sudden and haphazard fashion. They were not prepared to significantly increase non-government revenue sources. Thus, developing a model of entrepreneurial leaders among educators in HLIs is seen as crucial and timely. This research aims at producing an entrepreneurial framework to be implemented, particularly by the lecturers in Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Sabah Branch as a pilot project. HLIs across the globe are facing turbulence and challenges in searching for solutions and opportunities while dealing with the current unpredictable climate and environments. (IfEL, 2016). Traditionally, lecturers holding chalks and markers using transparency/LCD projectors, bringing notes to classroom/lecture halls, doing tutorials and some interactive activities such as seminars, role plays, forums, and video/oral/poster presentations. In addition, conducting research and supervision are also part of responsibility being a lecturer. As part of reforming effort of Malaysian HLI to be way forward, lecturers need to be visible, reliable and knowledgeable. It is in line with the ten shifts of the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015–2025 (Higher Education). This paper examines the

first shift of the blueprint which is “Holistic, Entrepreneurial and Balanced Graduates” (refer to Diagram 1.0). However, are the educators of the HLIs ready or flexible in moving towards the drafted shift? Leader by example is the focal point here. How could the HLIs produce entrepreneurial graduates if they are not thinking like one? Lecturers should educate if they wanted to become a genuine educator. There is no guideline for a lecturer to become an entrepreneurial leader except for those who had attended courses pertaining to the entrepreneurial leader. If doing so, has that particular lecturer implemented what he or she had learned and called as the entrepreneurial leader? Furthermore, it is not a surprise that there is no explicit definition or even a model for entrepreneurial leadership where it has features and dimensions of both entrepreneurship and leadership (Koivuniemi, 2016).



Source: MoHE (2013)

Diagram 1.0: 10 Shifts of Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015–2025 (Higher Education)

According to MoHE (2013), “to achieve the first shift, the Ministry and HLIs will focus on developing more holistic and integrated curricula and enhancing the ecosystem for student development”. Among the key initiatives stated in the blueprint, in order to support the said statement is to create the opportunities for academic staff to acquire entrepreneurial skills. Hence, it is high time for a local and public university like UiTM Sabah Branch to start with its own roadmap and a model of entrepreneurial leaders among educators to achieve what has been inspired by the government by the year 2025. In addition, in 2015, UiTM Sabah Branch chose ‘Enterprising University’ as its theme to cater the reduction in government source of budget. The university also aims to materialize the aspiration to fully utilize the existing resources based on the Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS) and to generate income for the university through multi vehicles including its human resource.

### 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

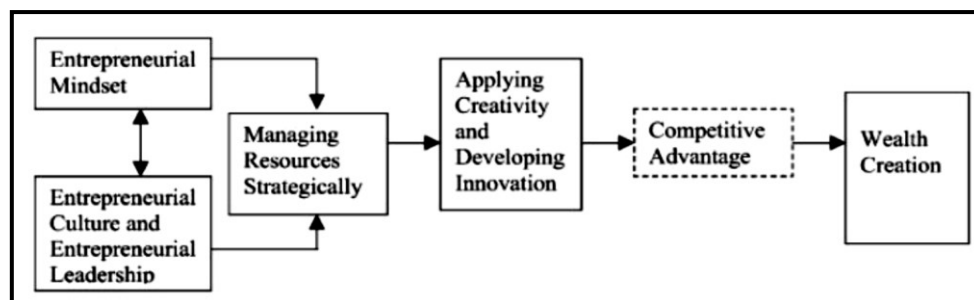
Entrepreneurial leaders came into existence when researchers have tried to combine two concepts i.e. Entrepreneurship and leadership and the goal was to explore new leadership style, the Entrepreneurial Leadership. However, this is nothing new because Schumpeter in 1934 was the first scholar who distinguished managers from entrepreneurs (Cogliser, 2004). From there on, more and more researchers are getting interested in the subject of Entrepreneurial Leadership. In the development of Entrepreneurial leadership, authors like Ruvio *et al.* (2009) argued that an entrepreneurial leader is not necessarily performed in an entrepreneurial environment (Ruvio *et al.*, 2010; Currie *et al.*, 2008). This latter argument meets the focus of the study, which is not only applied to the entity of enterprise, but also to the non-profit and public HLI such as the UiTM Sabah Branch.

Zijlstra (2014) in his study found out that 100% of his respondents supported that entrepreneurial leadership is not useful when the employees are not highly educated. This study claimed that someone with a lower education level needs more autocratic leadership, otherwise he or she simply does not do anything. This acquired someone who wanted to become an entrepreneurial leader to have such a credential background. They are believed to be creative and autonomous. Furthermore, those who are at the executive position are said to be more open and therefore capable to be entrepreneurial led. In a HLI, lecturers on average are at least at a Master level, which means they are qualified to be transformed to become entrepreneurial leaders. On the other hand, why not manager but leader? It seems lecturers are more suitable as managers, but again why leaders? Physiotherapist entrepreneur believes that entrepreneurs are 'inside driven' looking benefits for the company in turn making them more creative, innovative, proactive and constantly looking for opportunities (Koivuniemi, 2016). Kuratko (2007) stated that the 21<sup>st</sup> century or millennium leader understands the inside driven by knowing his or her strengths to create sustainable competitive advantages as the foundation for profitable growth in the organization. It concludes that not only the management but the human capital is also required to continuously seeking for new opportunities and innovative ideas in terms of products, processes, technologies, different administrative routines, and structures. In addition, the ability to be proactively competing in a global market is required in order to succeed in this new era.

### 4. LIMITATIONS AND A PROPOSED MODEL OF ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADER

The proposed model of entrepreneurial leader is introduced in this study due to few shortcomings. Majority of scholars (e.g. Webber and Scott, 2008; Bagheri *et al.*, 2013) studied on the entrepreneurial leaders in the HLIs from the perspective of university students. There is

a lack of empirical evidences on educators as entrepreneurial leaders. The gap in the study is also dictated when the majority of the studies on entrepreneurial leaders were focusing on the traits and dimensions of entrepreneurial leaders. As reported by Koivuniemi (2016), among the traits are entrepreneurial leaders are capable to: a) adopt exceptional dedication and effort from organizational stakeholders; b) convince them of their ability to achieve goals; c) express an essential organizational vision; d) ensure their effort will lead to successful results and e) endure in the face of environmental change. Whereas, in term of dimensions of entrepreneurial leaders include responsibility, proactive, creativity, visionary, risk taking, innovation, etc. [(Zijlstra (2014); Bagheri *et al.* (2013); Strubler (2010); Kempser and Cope (2010); Currie *et al.* (2008); Kuratko (2007); Okudan and Rzasa (2006); Cogliser and Brigham (2004); Vecchio (2003); Chen *et al.* (1998); Kilgour (1992), Strubler and Redekopp (2010); Ruvio *et al.* (2010); Chen (2007); Santora and Sarros (1999); Ireland *et al.* (2003); Gupta *et al.* (2004)]. Covin and Slevin (2002) believed that effective entrepreneurial leaders are always related to strategically entrepreneurial. This means that leaders have an entrepreneurial mind set which helps them to develop a culture which resources are managed strategically (advantage-seeking behavior), yet entrepreneurially (opportunity-seeking behavior). Diagram 2.0 portrays the process of effective entrepreneurial leaders as the following:



Source: Ireland *et al.* (2003)

Diagram 2.0: Effective Entrepreneurial Leadership Framework

Based on the diagram showed above, a thorough modification was made before producing a relevant model to meet the need of UiTM Sabah Branch as illustrated in Diagram 3.0. In the diagram, lecturers will only become entrepreneurial leaders if they have an entrepreneurial mind set. This kind of mind set must be able to transform the university's vision in becoming an enterprising university as a reality. Being one they should have a capability to create an entrepreneurial culture in the university. However, in whatever they do, they must first be able to consider three main components i.e. management, blue print/circular/procedure/strategic plan, and/or authorized bodies such as ministries/agencies/local authorities before establishing any engagements with stakeholders. This is important to secure their

position once dealing with an agreement/contract with/without payment (i.e. Funding, grants or incentive) or in kind obtained from their activities.

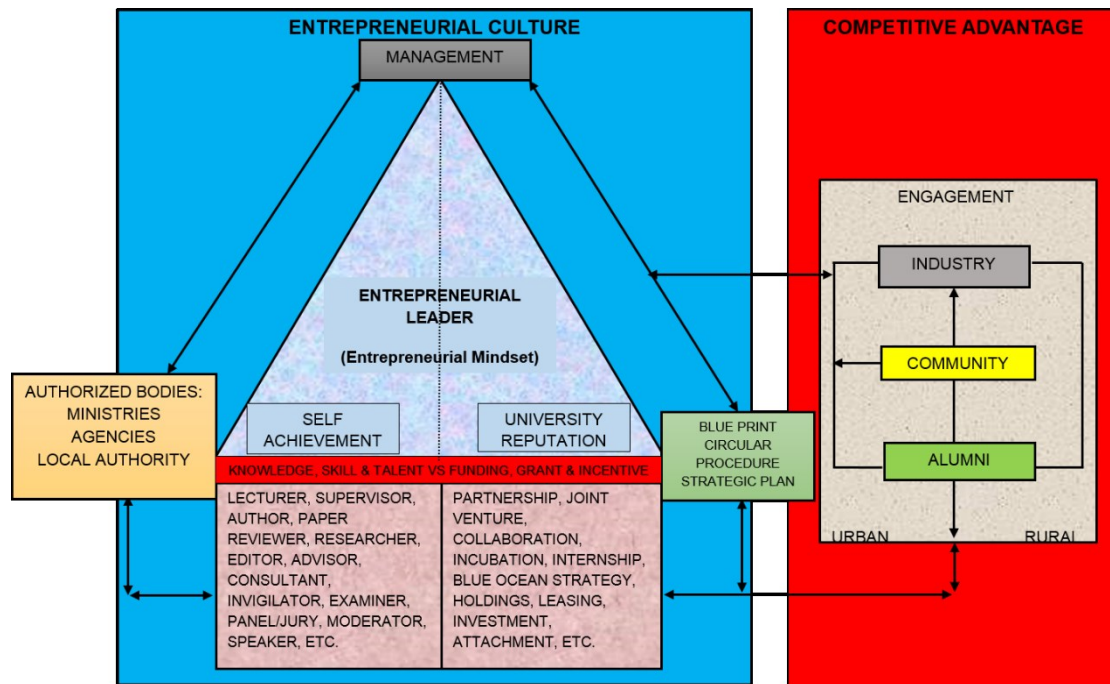


Diagram 3.0: Entrepreneurial Leader Model of UiTM Sabah Branch

The activities could be in the forms of transferring/rendering knowledge (e.g. Giving a lecture /talk), skill (in editing/reviewing), or/and talent (in sports/arts) through different platforms (such as collaboration/joint venture). Competitive advantage will be attained once they have engaged and delivered their service(s) to the stakeholders consist of industry, community or alumni whether located in urban or rural area. The said model has also fulfilled the needs of hierarchy Maslow when entrepreneurial leaders accomplish their self-achievement and in turn uplifting university’s reputation. This model focusses on lecturers rather than students. Lecturers are the game changers from the perspective of university when they deal with the management and the students. Once they implemented the entrepreneurial mind set in their working environment, indirectly they may shift the mind set of students and react to stakeholders’ needs. Entrepreneurial culture is crucial for university’s sustainability, although almost 80 percent of its students are coming from underprivileged group. Increasing funding for such purpose has shown that obtaining a portion of 20 percent of lecturers’ work as consultants is relevant. The spirit of entrepreneurial culture is the spirit of sharing for the good sake of the university as a whole. Being called up by others is due to a university’s trusted brand and definitely there is a price for it! Hence, a portion of 80:20 for consultancy work conducted by lecturers is part of entrepreneurial culture embedded in the university’s policy/procedure of engagement agenda. Engaging in the industry, community and alumni have made things

possible and contributed to UiTM's national recognition as the recipient of Gold Award by Reader's Digest as a Trusted Brand 2018 for the service category (Public University) (UiTM News Hub, 2018).

Being integrated with different bodies as mentioned earlier is insufficient if engagement is not made between the industry, community or/and alumni either directly or indirectly. The impact of the integration is measured based on university engagements. Engagements could be in the form of contractual or non-contractual contributions (i.e. with or without memorandum of understanding or agreement – MoU/MoA) of necessary aid or disseminations of information in rural or/and urban areas. The existence of a university is not just as a teaching and learning institution, but also as a 'socializing university' in which it plays its role as a mentor for its community in various academic and non-academic arenas. Its community's mentality is developed concomitant with the development of the institutional image and reputation, hence, may uplift the institutional brand name as a trusted brand.

In order for what have been discussed as doable or implementable, a lecturer's key performance indicator (KPI) should consider on his/her engagement with the community. Lecturers are proposed to allocate one or two days per week from their flexi hours for social purposes with the aim of generating funds for the university. Lecturers also should also be given training on consultancy expertise such as communication and negotiation skills, technical know-how on cost-benefit analysis especially on a contractual project and networking skill in order to empower them to engage with university's stakeholders.

## 5. CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, a formation of an entrepreneurial leader model is said to be timely for the university at any level of operations in order to embrace entrepreneurship as part of HLI culture. Academic culture should accept the fact that there is no more classic routine of being a lecturer in a millennium era where they only concentrate doing academic tasks inside the university. To be a champion and respectful academician, one must be known and recognized by others globally. His or her expertise and also outcomes should benefit others. A combination of knowledge, skill and talent is crucial for competitive advantage reason and this will be expanded for creating wealth when engaging with stakeholders. Generating fund will come indirectly once engagement is made with stakeholders. It could be in the forms of research, motivational program, publication, community works and other relevant projects. In upcoming study, the researcher will collect and analyse empirical data to determine whether the proposed model is understood and accepted by lecturers of HLIs. It is a hope that the study could contribute towards the gap in entrepreneurial leadership, i.e. a model for lecturers to apply in

becoming entrepreneurial leaders. Once entrepreneurial leaders have been created among educational providers/lecturers, the HLIs would further flourish as it is able to create wealth, i.e. monetary and non-monetary attainments together with self- and university-achievements.

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