

## UNIVERSITY–INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIP FOR ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS

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### ABSTRACT

*Over five decades, the collaboration between the university and the industry has evolved to fit the requirements of the current human capital in the industry. Today's workforce demand not only for education but also experience and expertise. Therefore, to develop the future generation of work force who can work in global environment the university and industry should collaborate with new model which goes beyond the conventional practise. Therefore, this study proposes a model of collaboration between the university and industry which may help to improve the current practice. Based on the proposed model, the industry will provide real life projects to the university that can be developed in the form of case study by addressing the industry's needs and demands as well as mentorship. The mentorship process happens by structuring a scheduled session during the projects implementation where the students will present their work to the elected mentor. This model of collaboration can help the university to gain first-hand experience and become more familiar with the latest trends in the industry. For industry players, this collaboration can provide innovative and creative ideas that would be generated by the students and in long-term will assist them to identify talented students for future employment. Finally, this collaboration will help students to have better soft skills which can increase their employability and consequently can reduce the rate of unemployment and its impacts.*

**Keywords:** *Partnership, collaboration, human capital, Berjaya Immersion Methodology, entrepreneurial skills.*

### INTRODUCTION

Today's workforce demand is not only for education but also experience and expertise. Therefore, to be able to provide the workforce with human capitals who are not only knowledgeable but also have a certain level of experience and expertise, the university does not only have to educate its students in any particular field but also should be able to provide hands on experience so that when the students graduate, they are ready to fulfil the needs of

the industries. To be able to do so, the university has to step up and innovate its education programs so that it is able to provide the needs of their students and prepare them with the necessary tools to survive the demands of today's employment market. As for the industry, having human capital who not only has knowledge but also a certain level of experience and expertise at the beginning of their employment, can reduce its costs, either in term of monetary or time, in training new employees. It is also beneficial to the industry in term of productivity and competitiveness (Petuze, Calder, Greitzer, & Lucas, 2010).

The globalization in economy has grown and intensified the need for sharing of knowledge and expertise. Hence, to gain the competitiveness edge by university and industry, they need to collaborate and develop strategic partnerships that go beyond the traditions way of funding discrete research projects. In doing so, the university will be the anchor for centre of competence in providing the human capital with the necessary tools to survive the social challenges and therefore become the drive force for the economic growth.

## **THE UNIVERSITY AND INDUSTRY COLLABORATION**

The collaboration between universities and industries has been going on for decades. However, the globalization of economy has intensified the need for such collaboration.

*“Just as castles provided the source of strength for medieval towns, and factories provided prosperity in the industrial age, universities are the source of strength in the knowledge-based economy of the twenty-first century.”*

(Lord Dearing, 2002)

Such quote from Lord Dearing shows that the collaboration between the university and industry can be one of the foremost important aspects in the economic development. This collaboration can provide the human capital in the industries with knowledge, innovation and transform the economy towards the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Hence, the university and industry should take steps beyond the conventional way where the industry only simply fund the university's projects. In fact, collaboration in the new era of economy requires a strategic partnership by combining the discovery-driven culture of the university with innovation and entrepreneurial-driven culture of the industry. Nevertheless, to establish a long-term and fruitful collaboration, each should be able to overcome the work cultural and communicational difference that can jeopardise the whole partnership and some extreme cases even be condescending to the parties' potentials if they work unaccompanied.

Collaboration between university and industry in Malaysia is vital as the current statistics show that between 30%-40% of university graduates could not manage to find suitable jobs within six months after graduation or they work in areas that do not commensurate their certificates (“The Star Online,” 2013) . Thus, to overcome this issues and to match the university graduates' knowledge and capability with the current markets' needs, the university and the players from the industry should work collaboratively to

prepare the students for the future employment and perhaps be able to place them appropriately in the industry based their qualification and training.

## **BERJAYA IMMERSION METHODOLOGY**

Berjaya Corporation Group is one of Malaysia's successful home-grown conglomerates. Berjaya University College of Hospitality (BERJAYA-UCH), as a part of the conglomerate, believes that collaboration between the university and industry can help to educate and prepare students with the appropriate skills for employment.

BERJAYA-UCH has managed to develop an innovative methodology model which is known as BERJAYA Immersion Methodology (BIM). This model has been developed to establish the fact that a fruitful collaboration between university and industry can be beneficial and possible. BIM is an experiential learning strategy developed based on the Constructivist Theory that places the students at the heart of learning.

In the traditional method of teaching, a lecturer is a person who provides information and knowledge while the students take notes and memorise the concepts so that they are able to answer the questions in tests or examinations. This method only make the students to memorise and understand the concepts/principles at the basic level but would not be reliable in dealing with real life challenges and issues that they are going to face in the future workplace (Trigwell, 2010). Therefore, recent researches suggest in order to prepare the students for the actual employment, education system has to transform.

According to the Constructivism Theory (Piaget, 1967), individuals gain knowledge and meaning of concepts from an interaction between experiences and ideas. In the view of constructivist, learning is a constructive process in which the learner is building an internal understanding of the knowledge through a personal experience. This representation is subject to progressive modification, its structures and linkages form the ground to which other knowledge structures are attached (Bednar, Cunningham, Duffy, & Perry, 1995). Constructivism encourages active learning and by providing the students with hands on experience.

BIM provides a platform for the students to learn through first-hand experience in authentic environments by transforming the classroom as a part of laboratory where they can role play. Experts in different fields are also invited as guest lecturers to the campus to interact with students through sharing of knowledge, experience and expertise. At the same time, the students are exposed to the interaction with the industry players outside the campus.

In this particular methodology, students are assessed based on their performances in the projects which are usually group-based. Students carry out peer evaluation of the members in the group as well as self-evaluation. These two evaluations are triangulated by the lecturer's observation of the students' performance in their group. Occasionally, experts from within and outside the campus are invited to assess students' works and hands-on

skills. Even though it is basically a student centred learning model, lectures are conducted whenever necessary or appropriate.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSITY-INDUSTRY COLLABORATION**

Over five decades, the collaboration between the university and the industry has evolved to fit the requirements of the current human capital in the industry. Furthermore, the collaboration has proven to transform the industry and modernize the university's role in providing appropriate and relevant human capital for the industry.

University-industry collaboration can be realized based on several kinds of activities. These activities can be classified in two categories; (a) collaborative or joint research; (b) consultancy projects. Collaborative or joint research it usually refers to a formal collaboration between university and a company or a group of companies which aims on research and development of new technology or product and in some cases even can received public funds from government (Hall, Link, & Scott, 2001). This kind of collaboration is involved in thorough process and agreements to avoid conflict for intellectual property right and commercialization part (Van Looy, Ranga, Callaert, Debackere, & Zimmermann, 2004). As a result, not many universities are keen to join this kind of join activities to avoid potential legal consequences. In addition, in reality not many of this kind of collaborations are happening between university and industry currently in Malaysia.

The second type of common collaboration between university and industry can be established through consultancy projects. Consultancy projects are usually referred to research or advisory services that is provided by one or group of academicians to the receptive firm or association (Perkmann & Walsh, 2008). Consulting projects are usually driven by industry partner, it is highly based on their demand, and the expectation from industry partner is to receive high quality service as they pay for the service (D'Este & Perkmann, 2011). Therefore, during this kind of collaboration usually students do not have a significant role or a minimized role that cannot gain hands-on and real life experiences. In addition, since the number of these projects is limited, few numbers of students usually will be selected to be part of the project but the majority of them will not get the chance.

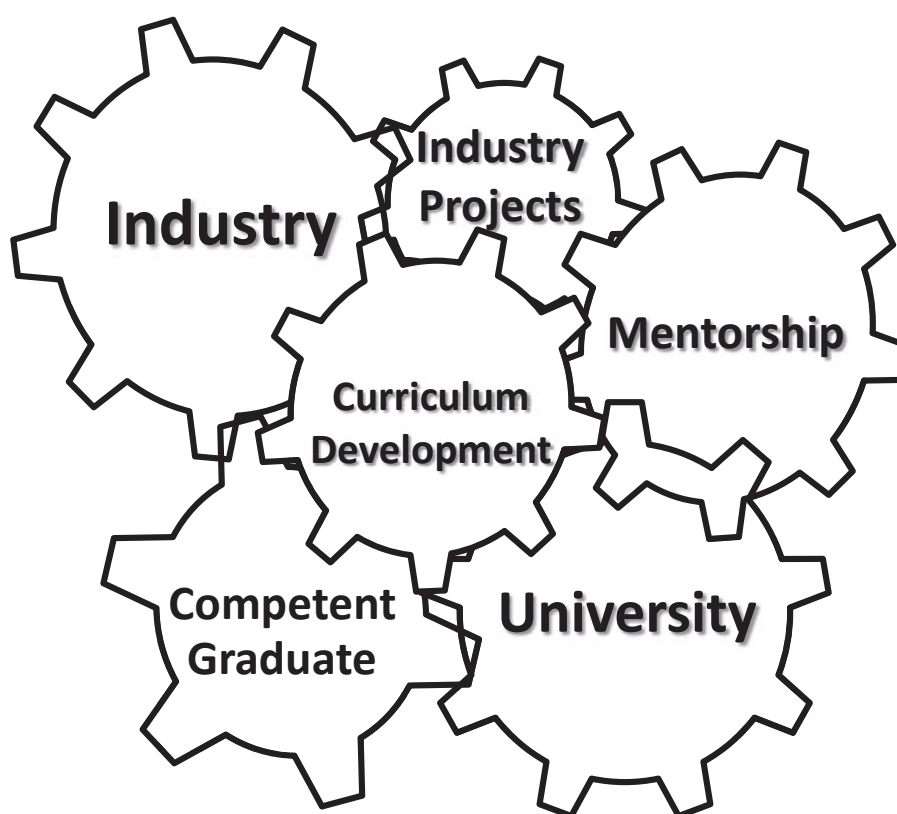
## **THE PROPOSED MODEL FOR UNIVERSITY-INDUSTRY COLLABORATION**

The university-industry collaboration would not be beneficial to both parties if they do not work together to achieve a common goal which is to have a successful and strategic partnership. A strategic partnership should be developed for a long term so that the impact of the collaboration not only can be seen in terms of research and teaching innovation and also as a part of technological development in the industry's Research and Development (R&D).

Therefore, to shift the collaboration between the university and industry, we would like to propose the following model (Figure 1). Based on this model, the main collaboration

between the university and industry can be developed through three integrated components. In the collaboration, the industry will provide real life projects to the university that can be developed in the form of case study by addressing the industry's needs and demands.

The projects, therefore, will be a part of the students' assignments and learning process. The role of the industry does not end as a provider of the projects but it also plays an active role in mentorship. In other word, the students will received the project as part of their coursework and a representative of the industry is elected by the industry to mentor and guide the students. The mentorship process happens by structuring a scheduled sessions during the projects implementation where the students will present their work to the mentor.



**Figure 1: University-Industry Collaboration**

This collaboration can be successful if both parties (university and industry) focus on curriculum development as the main factor of the collaboration. In fact, the curriculum should be developed and revised by the particular industry as well as the university by forming a committee that overseeing the whole collaboration. The success factors for this collaboration can be listed as follow:

- a. This collaboration is a synchronized series of activities. Both of the university and industry should try to understand each other's culture and

match each other's pace in implementing projects. The academician authorities should be open-minded to accept relevant comments and feedbacks from the industry who is involved in the partnership as a constructive way for improvement rather than a criticism by the practitioners. On the other hand, the industry will elect personals who are patient, knowledgeable and be able to adjust their demand based on students' pace. In other word, industry should be mindful that students are not professional consultants. However, they are innovative and creative in nature. Therefore, the industry should consider this collaboration as a platform to generate creative ideas and thoughts.

- b. The collaboration should be based on informal agreements and would not carry any financial commitment or other liabilities for both parties. Formal agreement may cause complication and lengthy bureaucratic procedures that can hinder the whole process. It is based on open source concept where the outcome of the projects is available and accessible by both parties.
- c. Recommendation letter by the company / industry involved can go a long way for the students who have done a good job during their practical. It is a form of motivation and appreciation on a well done job. Even though, it may deem as unnecessary and irrelevant but it is actually very important as a proof of students experience in the chosen industry which can be a part of their resume.

## **BENEFITS OF THE UNIVERSITY-INDUSTRY COLLABORATION**

Collaboration between university and industry does not go without having any benefit or else it would have not been successful and encourage both parties to be a part of it. Sharing a mutual vision for the implementation of the collaboration is beneficial to the university and the industry. The university, industry and society, each will benefit from the collaboration as stated below:

- a. University benefits in terms of creating opportunities for the lecturers to keep up with the latest trends and issues in the industry. Thus, the lecturers can improve their teaching style and enhance curriculum development process. It also can give the university a cutting edge in the education industry. By implementing the collaboration, the university provides their students who are the major players in this collaboration with experience in their chosen field which is vital to the students' future. Students are able to interact and build a professional relationship with the managers and the directors of the companies. It also helps to develop their soft skills and nurture the students to be skilful professionals. In addition, they can have an opportunity in getting a job offer one or two semester before their graduation from university.



- b. Company benefits from the university-industry collaborations through stimulation of the companies' internal decision-making process. Even though, the students lack in professionalism, they make it up in form of creativity. Therefore, through this collaboration we can lead them to a big pool of creativity and innovation by the young generation. In addition, the companies have an opportunity to work with a group of students for at least one semester which can help them to evaluate the students for future recruitment. The employee selection process can be improved and would have better outcome because throughout the projects implementation, the company can evaluate the students' soft skills, critical thinking abilities and their decision making abilities.
- c. Social benefits from university-industry collaboration through innovative products, technologies and competent graduates. This collaboration will help students to have better soft skills which can increase their employability. Consequently, it can reduce the rate of unemployment and directly can contribute to the country's 2020 vision.

## **CONCLUSION**

The university and industry collaboration in Malaysia mostly focus on work placement through practicum program. However, university-industry collaboration is more than just providing the students with hands on experience and the industry with highly competent, creative and innovative employees to be. It also can present both parties with other forms of benefits which can fulfil their needs such as consultation and achieve their vision in a more effective way.

The collaboration is not a sponsorship program but rather a partnership between the university and the industry which can accelerate innovation, encourage better communication between the university and industry and be able to bridge the two worlds, education and employment. Consequently, this partnership will provide the university and the industry with a cutting edge in their fields through an ongoing improvement in methodology and products.

The university-industry collaboration can also develop and accelerate the technology innovation. Through mutual understanding between the university and the industry, the university can provide the industry with a laboratory where they can carry out and develop various kinds of researches and projects. It provides flexibility and thus, gives both parties more room to manoeuvre in achieving their goals. The university, thus, do provide the industry with consultation and the university involvement with the industry do keep them up to date with the current information and therefore can provide their students with education which prepares them with tools for employment. In doing so, the economy can keep growing with appropriate and skilful human capital.

Lastly, the collaboration is borderless in term of its benefits and impacts on the role of the university and industry in the economy, to encourage and widen the purpose of this

collaboration, the university and the industry need to be more open their communication and encourage more partnership in order to step up into the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

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