

An Exploratory Case Study on a Social Enterprise Company that Focuses to Improve Malaysian School Counselling Department: SASTRA Education Development

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ABSTRACT

Social Enterprise Companies is becoming a new form of vehicle applied by social entrepreneurs who are addressing social problems. This case study discusses on SASTRA Education Development, a social enterprise company that was incorporated in 2014 to address and support the challenges in Malaysian School Counselling Department. It elaborates the purpose of its establishment from a preliminary research in 2012 and how SASTRA had evolved. The COVID-19 Pandemic has pushed SASTRA to revisit its strategies by adopting E- Learning which will be a new norm. Revenue stream needs to be improved for being sustainable and to continue in addressing the social problem. Hence, this paper highlights on SASTRA Education Development achievements from research to practical solution. Theories and models relates to SASTRA is highlighted.

Keywords: E- Learning, Social Enterprise, Social Entrepreneurship, Covid – 19, Institutional Theory

JEL classification: A13, F43

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1.0 Introduction

This case study elaborates on a practical solution implemented at the Malaysian School by applying a social enterprise business model based on preliminary research since 2012 to 2014. This case study aims to provide readers and social entrepreneurs a practical solution to tackle a problem that they anticipate to solve and study in the future. The Malaysian School Counselling Department have been undergoing challenges to operate and function in its core responsibilities and has been struggling to deliver its objective. Research findings indicated that 4.2 million Malaysian youth from age 16 are facing mental problems which have cause many issues to rise such as crime and unethical activities, (Hizam, et al., 2020). According to Zandi et al.,(2019), there a numerous factors that are causing it to happen. Therefore, the problem needed an entirely new approach and SASTRA Education Development was incorporated as a Social Enterprise Company on 12th May 2014 in Malaysia to address the growing issues at the Malaysian School Counselling Department. According to Sivalingam et al.,(2020), Social Entrepreneurs or Social Enterprises are prepared to address social problems in an innovative approach by providing real new solutions for the existing problem. This case study explains the need for SASTRA to be formed in practical solutions to pilot its findings to reposition and improve the counselling department in Malaysian schools with an approach of “Human and Career Development Center”. Various Career Development Programs was introduced by SASTRA with the approval and support from Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE). In addition, the project aimed to contribute directly to achieve the targets of the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013- 2025.

1.1 Problems and Background Study

In 2010, the Government of Malaysia launched the Government Transformation Programme known as (GTP) to transform the country into a developed and high-income nation. The GTP developed Seven National Key Result Areas (NKRAs), as National Key Performance Indicators (NKPIs) and one of key was to “*Improve Student Outcomes*” by aiming to strengthen the core of Malaysian societal layers to ensure that quality education is accessible to all Malaysians and the Ministry of Education Malaysia was responsible for it.

On the other hand, the Economic Transformation Program (ETP) developed Eight (8) Strategic Reform Initiatives (SRI) to improve industries in Education, Oil, Gas and Energy, Palm Oil, Financial Services, Private Healthcare, Wholesale and Retail, Tourisms, Information and Communication Technology, Business Services, Electrical and Electronics, Agriculture. One of the SRI focused in “*developing a quality workforce and reducing dependency on foreign labour*” and hoping to increase job opportunities for Malaysian.

Preliminary research was carried out from 2012 to 2014 with the support from an independent investment company (FEM) that was ready to provide *Social Enterprise Start – Up Grant (SESG)* to support the Malaysian government initiatives to create talents that Malaysia was aiming for. The finding indicated that the National Economic Advisory Council (2010) have been targeting to achieve Malaysia Gross National Income(GNI) to US\$523 Billion or MYR\$1.7 Trillion by 2020, so that it will allow Malaysia to position as a High Income Nation and employment to be improved.

3.3 Million Jobs were aimed to be created to mitigate unemployment issues among the graduates and also collectively address the unethical rising social issues in Malaysia due to unemployment. However according to ETP (2012), Malaysia was losing skilled talents due to the lack of employment opportunities that Malaysia has to offer.

1.1 Problems in Talent Development

Based on preliminary research since 2012 to 2014, it was known that many Malaysian are leaving the country and there is continues “Brain Drain” and lack of talents in Malaysia. Many of them could not find employment and various reports also pointed out that the talent bank in Malaysia is not attractive for foreign investments which led investments to move to other surrounding countries. Hence, there were several approaches was taken during the preliminary research to understand and address the growing issues related to poverty, underprivileged children and the rising issues of unemployment. Surprisingly, this statement can be argued by reviewing the 2019 report by World Bank that Malaysia is still not developing enough talents and talented Malaysian are still leaving for better opportunities (World Bank Report, 2019). To add on, this is an impact to the human capital situation in Malaysia and there are critical occupations that needed to be addressed for Malaysia to grow further stated Talent Corp (2019).

The preliminary research comprehended, that unemployment and talent development is still lacking and it is significant to address carefully by revisiting the schooling systems. After further analysis of various reports, literatures and visits to rural and urban schools in Malaysia, preliminary research discovered that there are additional alarming issues are on the rise at the national schools and a practical solution was needed. As an example, Zandi et al.,(2019) stated that various literatures, reports and statements and articles since year 2000 indicated that student are highly involved in notorious crimes and misdemeanours in areas of truancy, vandalism, bullying, selling drugs, sexual misconduct, gangsterism and militancy. The Malaysian School Counselling Department that supposed to deal with these issues were struggling to mitigate it due to lack of stakeholder cooperation. In addition, there are mismatch between demand and supply in the labour market and the schooling systems and industries are not working to speed, so students are finding different options as employment.

Kok et al., (2012) pointed out that the Malaysian counselling department was setup to support students via counselling and career guidance. However, the department itself have become very unpopular among students and parents and had been labelled as a place for problematic students and branded negatively due to stigmatization. This stigmatization actually causes a great deal of frustration for school leadership and counsellors. The negative perception associated with the school counselling department was not helpful. Furthermore, the preliminary research in 2012-2014 discovered that Malaysian School Counselling Department was a possible solution for many problems as the department was frequently addressed by various articles and personnel.

At the same time, the Ministry of Education Malaysia was responsible for “*Improve Student Outcomes*” based on the GTP and launched the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013- 2025 which addressed that there is a need to improve the Malaysian School Counselling Department with other pressing factors (MEB, 2013). Therefore, the preliminary research from 2012- 2014 continued and confirmed that the problems can be addressed if there were a “*Practical Workable Model*” piloted in the national schools. Hence, a Social Enterprise Model was studied as a solution to implement the practical solution in the Malaysian National Schools. Global partnerships included corporate and non-profits were established to seek for support to address the rising problem in Malaysian School Counselling Department and regards to talent development. The preliminary research findings were presented for *Social Enterprise Start – Up Grant (SESG)* in early 2014 which give rise to SASTRA Education Development to be incorporated as a social enterprise and it needed to be self-sustainable by 2017.

2.0 Review of Literature

The researchers have organized this case study for upcoming social entrepreneurs who are aiming to address issues towards poverty, underprivileged children and unemployment. The study of SASTRA specified on how a problem with extensive research with the support from various stakeholders has turned to be a fully functional social enterprise company, which is addressing issues in developing talents with a career development approach in the Malaysian schools. These research concepts can be applied globally by any social entrepreneurs who are seeking to make this world a better place and support the future generations who will continue to be responsible global citizen that will value humanity.

2.1 The Execution Process – 2014

In 2014, the project started officially after the preliminary research was completed when the project initiator managed to secure a *Social Enterprise Start – Up Grant (SESG)* from an independent investment company (FEM). The SESG Grant was specifically approved for “*practical research implementation*” that should focus on ways to improve the Malaysian school counselling department. According to Sivalingam et al.,(2020), practical solutions are highly related to Institutional Theory, whereby “*If anyone wants to make significant changes in their organisation or institution, take an entirely new significant direction rather than just following the crowd will not be a successful strategy*”.

Hence, a new approach was proposed to Ministry of Education Malaysia to overcome the numerous challenges in the counselling department by repositioning it as Human and Career Development Centers with up skilling and reskilling programs focusing at urban and suburban. According to Sivalingam & Mansori (2020), “*Upskilling and Reskilling*” is very important which relates to lifelong learning programs. Schooling systems needs to clearly define what are they trying to achieve in the national schools and it was time that career development programs are part of the national schooling curriculum in Malaysia.

2.2 The Social Enterprise Model and Theory for SASTRA

SASTRA Model was designed uniquely by adapting Five (5) well know Social Enterprise Business Model. According to Force (2017), There are nine (9) Social Enterprise Business Model available that can be chosen by social entrepreneurs which includes, 1 : *The Entrepreneur Support Model*, 2 :*The Market Intermediary Model*, 3 : *The Employment Model*, 4: *The Fee- for- Service Model*, 5 : *The Low Income Client Model*, 6: *The Cooperative Model*, 7: *The Market Linkage Model*, 8:*The Service Subsidization Model* and 9 :*The Organizational Support Model*. It positioned to reinvest 100% of its profits for the development of the enterprise.

SASTRA’s aim was to ensure the operation expenses are well managed and every dollar has impacted the beneficiaries which are the students, teachers and the school itself. It believes that when these stakeholders are improved, the surrounding will change and the communities will benefit. This will eventually create better living life and citizen who are responsible for their action and directly will contribute to the growth of Malaysian economy. SASTRA was keen to hire, train and develop fresh graduates who have genuine interest to support the needy and improve the counselling department with the Human and Career Development Center Concept. SASTRA emphasized and believes that being a social enterprise company, impact should be clearly well-defined before focusing on revenues. It further stressed that making sure the revenues generated are well managed with transparency and governance. SASTRA Social Enterprise model was developed based on four theories which are 1 : *Transformational Theory* (Bernard M Bass ,1985), 2 : *Human Capital Theory* (Becker, 1962), 3 : *Stakeholder Theory* (Freeman, 1984) and *Institutional Theory* (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

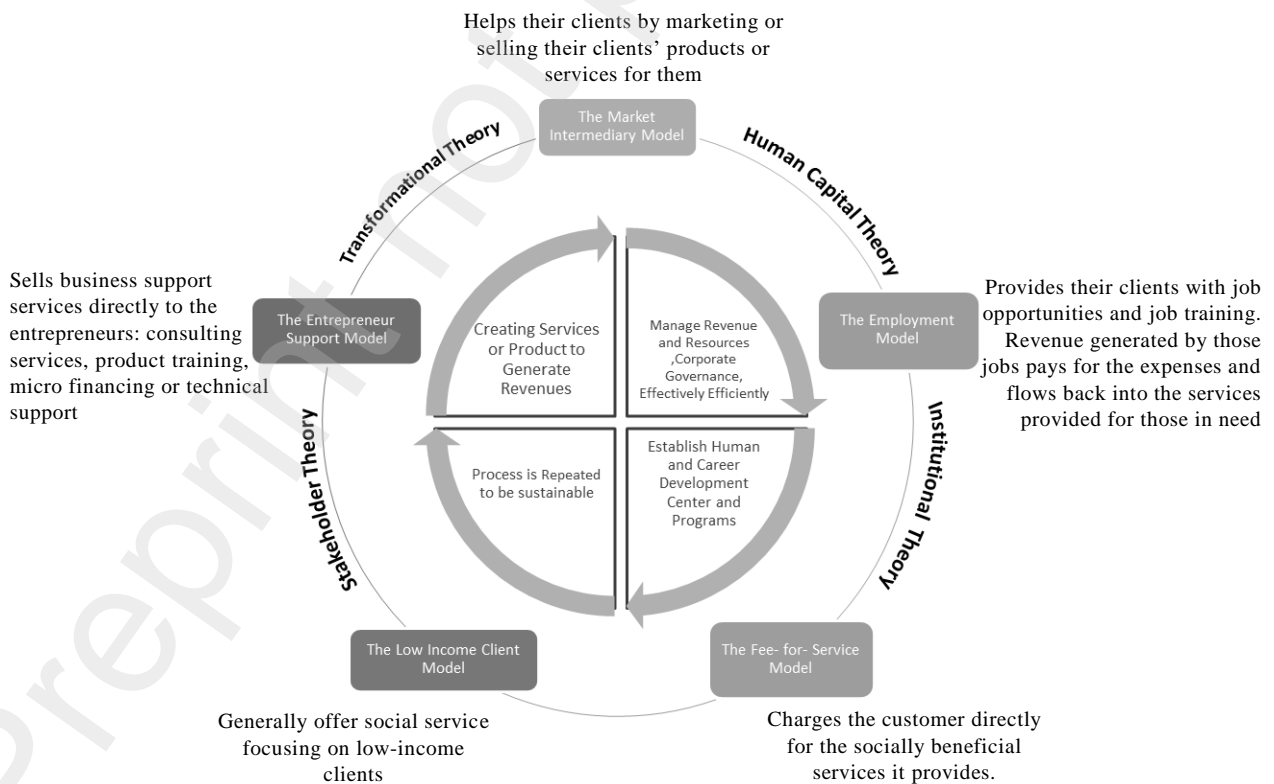


Figure 1: SASTRA Social Enterprise Business Model: Source: (SASTRA, 2020)

2.3 Operations and Execution

In May 2014, SASTRA operations was initiated by firstly identifying and mobilizing Board of Trustees who have genuine interest in addressing issues in education and willing to volunteer them self as the first core competency team and ensure governance and relevant policies are put in place.

Secondly, it went on to create a team of advisors who were willing to volunteer and share their experiences and expertise. Thirdly, it identified passionate fresh graduates who are "genuine" in making a difference in education as the operations team in schools by creating employments opportunities. The *Social Enterprise Start – Up Grant (SESG)* was used to provide employment for the fresh graduates and internship programs.

Since inception, SASTRA fully focused on Malaysian schools by introducing the Human and Career Development Concepts to its supporting partners and provided seed funding for Teach for Malaysia (TFM) Fellows who are already working in schools as educators as the first approach. TFM is a Non- Profit that works alongside with the Ministry of Education Malaysia to improve teaching and the relationships still continues healthy to date with SASTRA. SASTRA aim was to ensure the *Social Enterprise Start – Up Grant (SESG)* is well utilized and was willing share to organisation which had a shared vision. However, it have to noted that SASTRA encountered some organisation and individuals were merely seeking funding and opportunities whom had “self-interest” and claiming they are helping the schooling systems. SASTRA Board did not hesitate to stop working with those who were claiming to be social entrepreneurs and enterprise.

By 2015, SASTRA was able to identify and establish collaboration with the first school in Malaysia from the State of Selangor (SMK Taman Ehsan) that was selected to pilot the Human and Career Development Center Concept under Shift 9 Strategies by MOE. In addition, The Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) welcomed SASTRA’s initiatives under the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013- 2025 Shift 9 Strategies, by approving SASTRA to identify one school at each state that were ready to pilot the Human and Career Development Centers Concept and execute the Fellowship Programs and modules which was designed towards upskilling and reskilling by SASTRA. SASTRA reached an estimated 2000 school children living in complex, fragile environments in Malaysia with the support from all its stakeholders. This was an increase by more than 75% since 2014.

Furthermore, SASTRA Fellowship Programs was successfully implemented at selected schools and by 2017. SASTRA managed to establish 2 Human and Career Development centers located at 2 States in Malaysian Government School (Selangor – SMK Taman Ehsan and Kedah- SMK Lubok Buntar) and were in the process to initiate SASTRA HCDC Implementation Grant to other schools that are keen to adopt the HCDC model. This grant is provided by the revenue SASTRA generates and it was important.

2.4 Piloting Revenues bases on 5 Social Enterprise Model

SASTRA Revenue generation was piloted based on Five (5) well know Social Enterprise Business Model. Table 1 indicates the services.

Model	Description	Revenue Piloting Services
The Entrepreneur Support Model	Sells business support services, product directly to the entrepreneurs: consulting services, training, micro financing or technical support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consulting Services and Training Services • Adopt A School Program • Drinking Water Project
The Market Intermediary Model	Helps their clients by marketing or selling their clients' products or services for them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Footwear by collaboration • CSR Branding as National Contribution
The Employment Model	Provides their clients with job opportunities and job training. Revenue generated by those jobs pays for the expenses and flows back into the services provided for those in need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internship and Personal Development Programs • Research and Advisory services
The Fee- for-Service Model	Charges the customer directly for the socially beneficial services it provides.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career Development Programs by offering free place for needy children
The Low Income Client Model	Generally offer social service focusing on low-income clients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career Development Programs with basic commitment fees

Table 1: SASTRA Revenues by Services: Source: (SASTRA, 2020)

Since 2014 to 2017, SASTRA was merely concentrating on impacting the students via its Fellowship program. All the revenue generation were tested out in the market by introducing various services and product in 2016. According to SASTRA (2020), there were various hurdles it had to face to generate the revenues to achieve the aim of be self-sustainable by end of 2017. With very limited working capital via the SESG Grant, it had to ensure that the project continues and therefore it begun to re-evaluate operations where it can to reduce cost. At this stage, the social impact was clearly “defined” and it was time to focus on the “enterprise” part. However, funding and further capital investment was not able to be secured and SASTRA begun restructuring.

2.5 Re-Evaluating Operations and Cost Reduction

SASTRA was still very focus on creating meaningful employment position and addressing the issues at the Malaysian Schools. Therefore, in 2017 it begun to implement stage 2 of its strategy by handing over the HCDC project directly to the piloted schools and supported by monitoring and guiding the stakeholder to achieve the HCDC aim. This was executed by:

- i Firstly, relocating and reducing the office expenses. The Chairman of Board of Trustees at that time provided his office space to be used as main location beside legal expertise when SASTRA needed. This has reduced 95 % of the office expenses.

- ii All team members involved in the Human and Career Development Center Project to be located in the HCDC schools. This move had confirmed who were still keen to be part of the project. This is when SASTRA encountered that some interns and graduates were expecting “*quick opportunities*” but were not willing to commit to be located in school when SASTRA beneficiary are involved. This led to;
- iii The Fellowship Program modules to be handover to SASTRA Alumni to lead and transfer knowledge to new comers with the support of Board Members and Volunteers. Funding’s were provided directly to the alumni and the school teachers. This action allowed SASTRA Alumni to demonstrate their leadership ability to serve for others unconditionally. Like how, SASTRA started off to do its best for the children in needs by fully sponsoring the Fellowship program and creating jobs for interns and graduates. It hopes that the alumni will lead as mentors and empower more children to become excellence in their own skills sets and abilities based on the SASTRA Value Formation Modules that will reduce unethical activities.
- iv To identify and invest in alumni who are keen to become social entrepreneurs by exploring other ventures that will have mutual benefits.

2.6 SASTRA Human and Career Development Center and Fellowship Establishment

SASTRA launched the *Malaysian Schools Human and Career Development Center (HCDC)* pilot project in 2014 with an intention to enhance Malaysian Secondary Schools Counselling Departments to Human and Career Development Center. The Malaysian Schools Human and Career Development Center (HCDC) and its Programmes were established with one ultimate aim which is to take responsibility to contribute towards the Malaysia Education Blue Print 2013-2025 under Shift 9 (Partner with Parents, Community and Private Sector at Scale). The HCDC was aimed to optimize schools counselling departments to focus more on reskilling and upskilling the students in addition to the counselling services which its offers.

There were various issues related to the Malaysian secondary school counselling department based on the preliminary research findings and it was important to view the department’s functions in a holistic manner. This case study have complied some interpretations since 1986.

- i 7 years ago and nearly 3 decades since the studies by Zulkifli (1986), Aminah(1988) and Tan (1989) (Low et al., (2013) on Stigmatization issues in Malaysian School Counselling Department.
- ii The recent study was by Hizam et al.,(2020), stated that the stigmatization on the counselling unit is a major issue that need to be highlighted and there is a need for a new approach that can be rebranding or shifts of the current name.

- iii Chai (2000) argued in the past that, only 16.6% of students actually utilised the counselling services for emotional or mental problem due to unwillingness to reveal their difficulties to another person.
- iv Mukhtar. A. & Muslizah (2004), the “head of the school” is the key factor in how effective the school and the department functions.
- v According to Rashid (2003), career development programs is vital to be develop in schools however, there are limited career intervention program are focused in schools.
- vi Low et al., (2013) pointed out due to lack of funding and cooperation with stakeholders, most counselling department is not able to create the facilities that are needed.

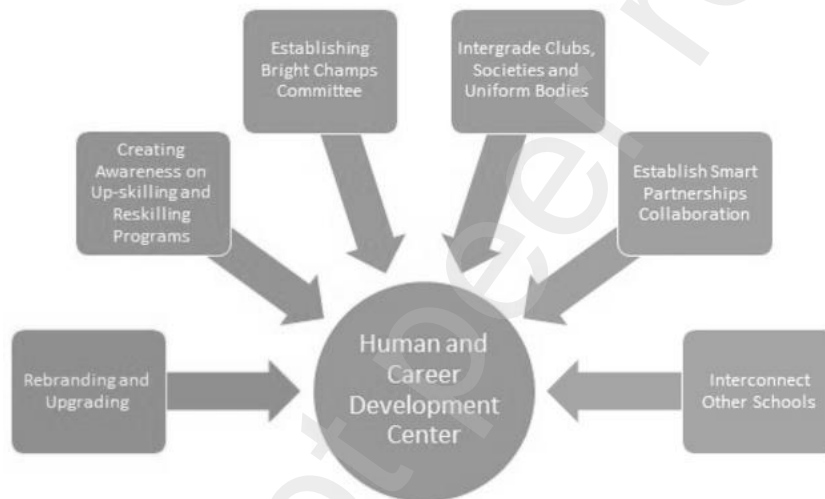


Figure 2: SASTRA HCDC Operation Model to Remove Stigma in School Counselling Department
 Source: (SASTRA, 2020)

Therefore, SASTRA HCDC Implementation was based on a Human and Career Development Center (HCDC) Implementation Grant which was aimed to assist the national school by creating awareness that the Malaysian school counselling department are not only used during problems or for problematic students. Moreover, it aimed to remove the stigma of whoever visit the center are labelled as “Bad Individual”. SASTRA HCDC Implementation Grant is open for all Secondary School in Malaysia who is ready to take action on the implementation of HCDC.

The Grant covers in various forms such as “Direct financial assistance for the upgrading the counselling department and rebranding it to Human and Career Development Center, Supporting in HCDC planning, Fellowship Programs Transfers and Providing Self-sustainable revenue generation” for the department and it was all subject to approval with prerequisite.

The prerequisite was to ensure the school is committed and not only reaching out for funding purpose only. The following are example of the Mandatory Prerequisites

- i School Personnel (School Leadership, Teacher, PIBG, Head of Departments and Head of Club, Uniform Bodies and Society) to attend on briefing once school has been informed on conditional approvals of Grant before final approvals.
- ii A location in school for the HCDC center to be allocated by school close to UBK unit (optional). If respective school has limited space, a school visit will be carried out before final approvals.
- iii A combination 50 students representing from (PRS, Uniform Bodies, Prefects, Club & Society – Male/Female) to be enrolled for Minimum 22 Hours SASTRA Fellowship Program and 1 year to execute responsibilities.
- iv A Committee of HCDC to be set up by respective school with allocation of Duty Rosters and award extra points for students commitment under co-curriculum activities.

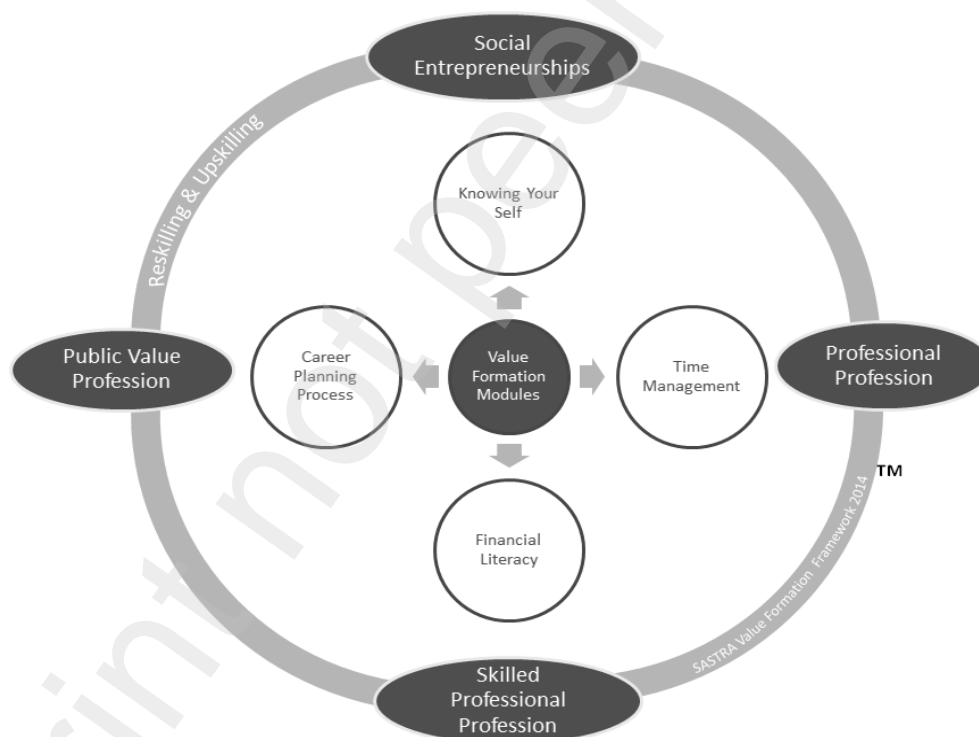


Figure 3: SASTRA Value Formation Module Framework Source: (SASTRA, 2020)

3.0 Findings and Results

SASTRA implemented two different approach to introduce the Human and Career Development Center. The first strategy was establishing the Human and Career Development Center by applying the process in Figure 2 and the second strategy was to introduce the Fellowship Program with any school who are keen.

3.1 SMK Taman Ehsan Selangor

SMK Taman Ehsan a secondary school located at Kepong (Selangor) was selected with the support of school leadership that welcomed the new concept to Pilot the “Shift 9 MEB” as the *First School in Malaysia*. After various discussions, revising strategies, time and combination of expertise from Private and Public sector have strengthened the project as a team and achieved the objective to pilot the HCDC concept. SMK Taman Ehsan took the lead in State of Selangor by strategic collaboration with SASTRA, Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE), State Education Office (Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri, JPN) and District Education Office (Pejabat Pelajaran Daerah, PPD). 4 batches of students graduated under SASTRA Fellowship. The school have allocated a working office for SASTRA Team as part of the Human and Career Development Center. SMK Taman Ehsan completed the five Stage (5) Processes in Figure 2 and is prepared to transfer their experience and knowledge to other schools as the 6th Process in coming future. This is aimed to be done by launching workshops with State and District Education Department.

3.2 SMK Lubok Buntar Kedah

In 2016, SASTRA begin Stage 2 Process in Figure 2, by piloting SASTRA Fellowship Programs with the support from English Society, Counselling Department and other departments for 100 students from SMK Lubok Buntar. All expenses were 100% fully supported by SASTRA. SASTRA, Counselling Department, English Society continued to explore possibility of working towards positioning SMK Lubok Buntar as Role Model School for State of Kedah and also as a Northern Satellite School. It has to be noted that there were different approach towards SMK Lubok Buntar as the HCDC project was a collective effort from various clubs who invited SASTRA while SMK Taman Ehsan approach was from the “School Leadership and Board of Governors”. SASTRA provided 1 full time team member and also hire students who completed SASTRA Fellowship under internship program to support SMK Lubok Buntar. SASTRA initial seed funds and collectively partnerships with other stakeholder also result a teacher to introduce “Performing Arts” studies.

4.0 Conclusion

To summarize this case study, the Malaysian School Counselling Department have been undergoing challenges to operate and function to deliver its objective. The findings revealed that Malaysian youth are facing mental issues and there is need for counselling services to be improved in the Malaysian schools. Literatures and reports indicated that there is rise on criminal and unethical activities among youth and the unemployment have added more challenges. The Government of Malaysia launched various programme to create employment however, there are still gap in producing the right talents. Preliminary research was carried from 2012 to 2014 to support the Malaysian government initiatives to create talent that Malaysia was aiming for.

A practical solution was needed and therefore, SASTRA a social enterprise was formed to find practical solutions by piloting to reposition and improve the counselling department in Malaysian schools with the support of *Social Enterprise Start – Up Grant (SESG)*.

The HCDC project have established 2 out of 14 targeted Human and Career Development Center as of 2020 by overcoming various challenges and SASTRA continues to find ways to achieve the remaining targets hopefully in coming years. Since 2018, SASTRA have manage to continue its operation with the support of 275 volunteers including teachers, board members, alumni and stakeholders who are supporting this shared vision approach. Moreover, the Covid – 19 Pandemic had made SASTRA journey very challenging and the water sales has reduced and there are very limited funding for HCDC Grant.

Furthermore, various activities have been on hold and SASTRA is repositioning to expand it delivery of courses via an E- Learning and blended learning approach. The study also pointed out that SASTRA continues to be committed in find new ways to operate and increase its revenues and hopefully it will continue to support on job creations and developing social entrepreneurs who can support collectively towards the Human and Career Development Center Project.

It also have to be noted that, this practical project have benefited various stakeholders such as providing fully sponsored programs for Refugee children supported by IDEAS Academy and The United Nations Higher Commission Refugee (UNHCR). It managed in collaborating with more than 50 outreach partners in Malaysian National Government Schools. Furthermore, it supported international organization such as social enterprise company LYFE, in New Zealand and a 40 year old Foundation "Be Friend a Child", Scotland UK who was addressing similar issue related to talent and human capital. In addition, strategic partnership was established with Gawad Kalinga to raise social entrepreneurs in Philippines and supported Abdul Kalam Mandapam Panchayat Union Middle via in kind support and knowledge transfer. Moreover, providing university students with employments which result one of them to receive The Queens Award from Buckingham Place in the UK. SASTRA was selected and invited as Top 6 out of 50 Social Enterprise Nominee in Malaysia by Hope Award 2018, a collective Award by Ministry of Sports and Yayasan My Harapan.

It can be confirmed that a social enterprise approach can bring solution for problems and it is important to clearly define the purpose of establishing the enterprise. There are various models that can be used. By carrying out this case study, it is hope that future social entrepreneurs will be able to support the Malaysian School Counselling Department. Moreover, future researcher can apply a practical solution based on various methodology and theories for their research. Hence, the study provides 4 recommendations.

5.0 Recommendation

- i **To Ministry of Education Malaysia:** To continue to support social enterprise who are keen to develop the HCDC implementation by providing sufficient funding.
- ii **To Corporation:** To support the services that social enterprise offers which will bring differences in a problem that is faced by the society. This will also help to create employment and impact the schooling systems: "One Employee for One School Program"
- iii **To Grant Provider:** To allocate Practical Research Grant so that valuable research and employment can be created as a solution.

- iv **To Future Researcher:** To have a study within one state after increasing the HCDC concepts within a state. A quantitative study of “Before and After” study is recommended.

6.0 Acknowledgement: From Practical Piloting to Theoretical Research

In mid of 2018, as SASTRA continues to monitor the project and alumni, the *Project Initiator was Awarded a Research Scholarship from Yayasan Tengku Abdullah under Universiti Kuala Lumpur* to continue the research when a proposal was accepted to further his research regards to counselling department improvements.

This led to a Ph.D. research which is on going and to be completed by early 2021. The research was set to investigate and identify the “Factors that can Influence to Enhance the Counselling Department in Malaysian Secondary Schools”. In line with the research problem and research questions, the objectives of the research were designed:

- i To identify and determine what factors can influence to enhance the Malaysian secondary school counselling department.
- ii To identify and prioritize which factors, have higher important contribution to enhance the Malaysian secondary school counselling department.
- iii To identify the interrelationship among the identified factors and theories relevant towards improving counselling departments.
- iv To establish a framework that can be implemented at secondary national schools for counselling department and make recommendation for future studies.

To conclude, there were Forty Seven (47) factors we identified to improve the Malaysian Secondary School Counselling Department and Eight (8) factors were crucial to improve the counselling department which will leads to increase and develop the talent bank and eventually contribute to human capital and expand the Malaysian economy. In addition, a Practical Counselling Department Improvement Framework was developed and it will be handed over to Ministry of Education Malaysia as “National Contribution” from the scholar upon successfully completing the Ph.D. research study.

Furthermore, the 2021 Malaysian Budget has also allocated *MYR\$ 1 Billion* towards “Reskilling and Upskilling”. It is hoped that the funding are well utilized and employments are created for 800 thousand people who are affected due to the Covid-19 Pandemic. The 2021 Budget is the largest budget in history of Malaysia totalling *MYR\$ 322.5 Billion* and Education Ministry will be receiving and allocation of *MYR\$ 50.36 Billion* compared to *MYR\$ 64.12 Billion* in 2020 totalling 21.5% lesser to manage in this challenging time. There is a slight increase in Entrepreneurship Development and Cooperative Budget of 1.7% from 2020 and this might help the social enterprises. The case study also would like to highlight that Malaysia is having challenges in various aspect which includes politics. No matter which government takes office, it is highly recommended that the Malaysian School Counselling Department is in a need for change and hope the Malaysian Government and Ministry of Education will turn its eye to this case study which includes views of past researchers that have been pointing out their research findings with valuable recommendations.

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