WASEDA UNIVERSITY

SUMMARY OF DISSERTATION

The Contribution of Entrepreneurship Education for Regional Development in the Lao P.D.R: Course Development and Its Effects

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“Laos is a non-entrepreneurial society”, Leo Dana (2007). Laos used to be under a centrally planned policy for one decade after the establishment of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic in 1975. The absent of private sector promotion during this period, along with the religious believes of the people in Theravada Buddhism, was said to have caused Lao people to be non-entrepreneurial. With the strong promotion of private sector beginning in the late 1980s, Laos needs to develop entrepreneurial thinking, and prepares its human resources to support the market-oriented economic policy so that there is sustainable economic growth and poverty alleviation.

Entrepreneurship is a new concept in education system in Laos. No entrepreneurship program was taught at the university level prior to this research project. In order to develop a localized entrepreneurship program for the National University of Laos, this research project adopted an action research principle. It begins with a survey of entrepreneurial orientation, conducted at the Faculty of Economics and Business Management (FEBM), the National University of Laos (NUOL). The survey includes the knowledge and skills needed to become entrepreneurs, obstacles to become entrepreneurs and support needed. The result of the survey is used as baseline information for the development of teaching material. The outcome of the survey indicates that students need more practical business experiences, knowledge, and skills with the support from academia, government official and business community to increase their motivation and confidence to become entrepreneur. Therefore, the program designed is called Lao Entrepreneurship Education for Regional Development (LEERD).

The second phase of the research is the development of teaching material, followed by the course experimentation, and measurement of the short-term impact of the program. The report in this paper also covers the development and experimentation of LEERD program. The material was revised many times, after a series of workshop for lecturers at FEBM, the first experimentation with the students at FEBM, and the experimentation with students at Brawijaya University in Malang.
Indonesia. The course experimentation utilized the training material developed by the author. The primary focus of the research is to investigate whether LEERD program changes the entrepreneurial orientation of the trainees, whether students' interest/desire/confident to become entrepreneur increases after the training program, and to identify the effects of the entrepreneurship program on learners. The primary target group was 18 students from the final year at the Faculty of Economics and Business Management, National University of Laos, aged between 21 and 24. These students participated in series of lectures and entrepreneurial activities for six months, one semester in academic year 2006-2007. Basic contents of the program focus on four main concepts: management of customers, management of assumptions, entrepreneurial mindsets, and business planning. Within the four main concepts, two types of tools were presented: strategic tools that deal with business development, and functional tools that deal with business skills. Strategic tools include consumption chain, attribute map, reverse financials, milestone planning, SWOT analysis, five forces analysis, and Kaizen. Functional tools involved creativity, innovation, idea momming and brainstorming, elevator speech, learning style, team working, and business planning. The teaching methodology used in the program is triangular method, coordination between lecturer, students, and local enterprises.

The results show that learners regarded both curricula and contents of the programs as highly useful for developing entrepreneurial knowledge and skills, which leads to high personal knowledge achievement, and extensively increases motivation for entrepreneurship and innovation. The training programs also help increasing the students' confidence to become entrepreneurs and risk taking. It increases students' inspiration of becoming an entrepreneur in terms of goal fulfillment, avoiding uncertainty of unemployment, better income prospects, being independent, enjoyed being challenged, and improvement of living standards; which are the basic characteristics of entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurship education program also changes the perspective of learners positively towards the usefulness of friends, education institutions, SME promotion agencies, business people, and local government. The research also finds that the opportunity recognition spreads to other provinces rather than concentrating in the Capital City. Other positive changes are seen in wanting the government to promote business ownership as a career and providing courses on business ownership in education system. These changes are found to be supportive to the objectives of the training program in (1) improving linkages among business community, university students, and academia; (2) enhancing local/rural businesses, and (3) producing entrepreneurs who lean towards poverty alleviation in rural areas.