

EXPLORING THE STATE OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN MALAYSIA

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To my beloved ones- husband, parents, son, daughters and siblings. Thank you.



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ABSTRACT

Social entrepreneurship in Malaysia is relatively new and is still in the introduction stage. Some studies have shown it to be increasingly difficult to sustain due to limitations to access opportunities and resources. However, the introduction of Social Entrepreneurship Blueprint 2015 had triggered interests among entrepreneurs and provided more opportunities for them to explore the roles of social entrepreneurship sector. In the Malaysian perspective, a comprehensive framework of social entrepreneurship state needs to be developed as a catalyst for sustainable development. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the current landscape and the development of social entrepreneurship in Malaysia, and then propose a framework of social entrepreneurship which can be applied by interested parties. A qualitative phenomenological method research design was employed, which involved two main sources of data: in-depth interviews and reports from social entrepreneurship organisations. Based on purposive sampling techniques, the in-depth interviews were completed involving a total of 19 participants from social entrepreneur, government agencies, NPOs and academics. The study used ATLAS.Ti software application to analyse and interpret data collected from semi-structured interviews. The results discovered that, the social entrepreneurship sector in Malaysia is still in an infancy stage, but it is thriving. The major characteristics of social entrepreneurship found within the samples were related to business viability and impact driven. Based on the findings, challenging elements were found within the participants, namely, challenges posed by internal environments and those by external environments. The results are significant to contribute a comprehensive social entrepreneurship framework development of social entrepreneurship in Malaysia. This framework serves as a substantial tool for the entrepreneurship policy makers to explore the impact of social entrepreneurship activities and to provide opportunities for social entrepreneurship explorations of entrepreneurial activities which have positive impacts on the socio-economic development in Malaysia.

ABSTRAK

Keusahawanan sosial di Malaysia agak baru dan masih dalam peringkat pengenalan. Beberapa kajian menunjukkan bahawa semakin sukar untuk melestarikannya kerana keterbatasan untuk mengakses peluang dan sumber. Walau bagaimanapun, pelancaran Pelan Pembangunan Keusahawanan Sosial 2015 telah mencetuskan minat di kalangan usahawan dan memberi lebih banyak peluang kepada mereka untuk meneroka peranan sektor keusahawanan sosial. Dalam perspektif Malaysia, kerangka komprehensif program keusahawanan sosial perlu dikembangkan sebagai pemangkin pembangunan lestari. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menerokai landskap semasa dan pengembangan program keusahawanan sosial di Malaysia, sebelum mencadangkan kerangka keusahawanan sosial yang dapat diterapkan oleh pihak yang berminat. Reka bentuk penyelidikan kaedah fenomenologi kualitatif digunakan, yang melibatkan dua sumber data utama: wawancara mendalam dan laporan dari organisasi keusahawanan sosial. Berdasarkan teknik persampelan bertujuan, temu ramah mendalam dilaksanakan, melibatkan seramai 19 orang peserta terdiri daripada usahawan sosial, agensi kerajaan, organisasi tidak berasaskan keuntungan dan ahli akademik. Kajian ini menggunakan aplikasi perisian ATLAS.Ti untuk menganalisis dan menafsirkan data yang dikumpulkan dari temu ramah separa berstruktur. Hasil kajian mendapati bahawa, sektor keusahawanan sosial di Malaysia masih pada tahap awal, namun semakin berkembang. Ciri-ciri utama keusahawanan sosial yang terdapat pada sampel ialah daya maju perniagaan dan perniagaan berdasarkan impak. Berdasarkan penemuan, terdapat dua elemen yang mencabar seperti yang maklumkan oleh peserta, iaitu, cabaran yang wujud disebabkan persekitaran dalaman dan cabaran persekitaran luaran. Hasil kajian yang signifikan dapat menyumbangkan kepada kerangka kerja keusahawanan sosial yang komprehensif dalam pengembangan program keusahawanan sosial di Malaysia. Kerangka kerja ini berfungsi sebagai wadah penting bagi pembuat dasar untuk mengukur kesan aktiviti keusahawanan sosial dan memberi

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATION

SE	Social Entrepreneurship
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
GEM	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
MaGIC	Malaysian Global Innovation & Creativity Center
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NPO	Nonprofit organisation
CIM	Co-operative Institute of Malaysia
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

At present the significance of entrepreneurship is widely acknowledged, and the role of entrepreneurship have increased enormously and incorporated certain efforts that make the phenomenon substantially complex to describe (Carlsson, Braunerhjelm & McKelvey, 2013). Among the notable influences of entrepreneurship include building nation's economy, driving factor of economic growth (Audretsch, 2007), job creation (Aparicio, Urbano & Audretsch, 2016), innovations (Alvord *et al.*, 2004; Crudu, 2019), and improve the quality of life (McMullen & Warnick, 2016). Furthermore, the entrepreneurship field has been regarded as an alternative for resolving complex development challenges of 21st century. Challenges in terms of social, economic, and environmental-related issues (Petrella & Richez-Battesti, 2014; Kim & Lim, 2017). This signifies that the entrepreneurship field has gained consideration from various stakeholders (Wilson & Post, 2013; Lumpkin *et al.*, 2013) such as public institutions, university academics, and policymakers (Madhooshi, Hossein & Samimi, 2015; Satar & Natasha, 2019). Thus, resulting in increased focus on areas such as entrepreneurial research, publication, funding, and policies.

The massive implication and development of entrepreneurship triggered a new classification and scope to entrepreneurship field, known as social entrepreneurship. It has grown significantly both in activity and theoretical research, over the years and has become a social, economic, and cultural phenomenon (Pless, 2012; Busch, 2014). According to the Social Investment Landscape in Asia Report (2018), countries like the United Kingdom, United States, South Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, Singapore,

Myanmar, and Australia regard social entrepreneurship as a key national agenda. They established agencies to support the growth of social entrepreneurship in their countries.

On the other hand, social entrepreneurship in Malaysia is a growing sector, which has managed to actively deliver social values and addressing the social and environmental issues in the community (Arshad, 2020; Ishak & Che Omar, 2015; British Council Report, 2018). The positive impact of social entrepreneurship triggered the government to consider it in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan the country's 2016-2020 development plan as one of the national agendas for socio-economic development (Economic Performance Unit, 2015; 11MP: 2016-2020). This initiative made a notable remark of social innovation in its framework of strategies which aimed to realise the government's mission of achieving high-income status (Economic Performance Unit, 2015).

Due to the importance of social entrepreneurship sector, it is vital to understand the current landscape, and understand the strategies implemented in developing the program. In order to address these issues, this thesis uncover the organisational characteristics in delivering social value to business sustainability. To achieve this, the present study aims to provide an overview of the development of social entrepreneurship in Malaysia, especially regarding the significance of this sector in the socio-economic development.

To achieved this task, the present chapter is structured as follows: the problem statement, research questions, and objectives, significance of the study, scope of study and operational definitions in order to set direction for the research. The overall structure of the thesis is also presented at the end of this chapter.



1.2 Background of Study

The deteriorating market performance and present conditions as a mechanism for providing solutions to contemporary economic, social and environmental problems led to the emergence of “social entrepreneurship”. The social entrepreneurship terminology is relatively new in Malaysia (Bahrein *et al.*, 2018; Arshad, 2020), and the majority of Malaysian social entrepreneurs have emerged in the past five years (The State of Social Enterprises in Malaysia, 2018). Social entrepreneurship is yet to break even in Malaysia, and almost half of all social entrepreneurs are still consistently inept to cover operational costs.

The emergence of social entrepreneurship in Malaysia began in 1986 through the Centre for Policy Research at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), led by Prof. David Gibbons and Prof. Sukor Kassim. Currently, it is known as Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia (AIM). The project aims to reduce rural poverty by providing micro-loans to the poor. AIM uses the group-based Grameen Bank (a Bangladeshi microfinance organisation) model, which has been replicated by many Micro-Finance Organisations (MFO) worldwide. It was estimated based on the necessities of food and other basic needs which would be considered as absolutely poor households, while households with average monthly household incomes below half of the Poverty Line Income (PLI) would be categorised as hard-core poor households. The AIM only selects those households whose average monthly household income falls below the PLI, which includes both poor and hard-core poor households as “Sahabat”.

Referring to the Malaysian Social Enterprise Blueprint 2015-2018, social entrepreneurship has been expanded in Malaysia through Malaysian Global Innovation and Creativity Centre (MaGIC), which is responsible for fulfilling the mandate given by the government to develop the social entrepreneurship sector in Malaysia through a special allocation of RM20 million (Malaysian Social Enterprise Blueprint, 2015). The vision of social entrepreneurship is to make Malaysia a regional leader in economic development. In this regard, more social entrepreneurship (“impact-driven” enterprises) and investing practices that focus on the generation of social and environmental values as well as an economic return are critical to generate an inclusive and sustainable development. This is achieved through its mission to make the social entrepreneurial potential drive long-term benefits to society and the environment.

In addition, there is an increase in the number of various comprehensive training programs, development of instruments, and policies such as business support system, government infrastructure and initiative (Malaysia Social Enterprise Blueprint, 2015). The primary objective of these efforts is to improve the socio-economic well-being of the society and to be regarded as a key performance indicator of the government. Therefore, this thesis posits the vital need to better understanding of the present situation of social entrepreneurship in Malaysia as it reflects the developmental phase of social entrepreneurship programs.

However, the reality is different from the objectives and mission. Thus, understanding the concept of social entrepreneurship should be clarified especially to the younger generation in order to avoid confusion and misinterpretation. The government recognises the potential of social entrepreneurship which is not only addressing the country's pressing issues but also redefining how businesses should work in order to achieve a people-centric economy. Figure 1.1 provides an overview of key events in the history of social entrepreneurship in Malaysia in promoting social entrepreneurship.



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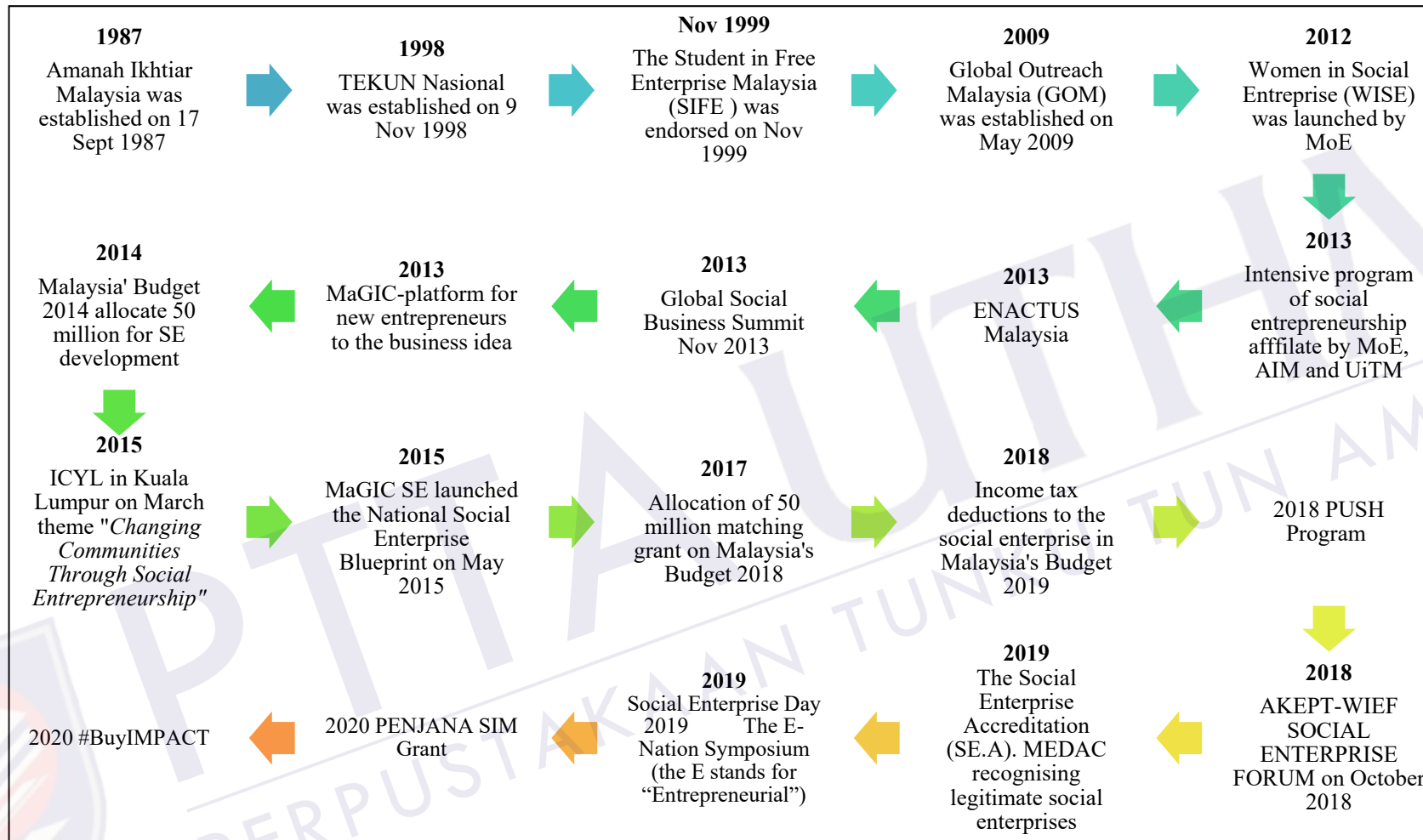


Figure 1.1: Programme to Support Social Entrepreneurship in Malaysia
(Malaysia Social Enterprise Blueprint 2015; MaGIC, 2020)

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5. Silver Award: A Framework for Social Entrepreneurship in Malaysia. Education Community Development & Social Innovation Cluster: The International Research and Symposium and Exposition (RISE) 2020, UTHM.



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PTTA
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