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Leveraging Information Technology to Stimulate Social Entrepreneurship among the Underprivileged Community

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Abstract

Information Technology is often associated with the modern and sophisticated things where the most users are usually related with good financial means. Not surprisingly, most success stories on the utilization of Information Technology mostly come from those people who are able to use high-tech devices. For the poor, the gadget and internet usage is still a luxury and requires an additional expenditure beyond their basic necessities.

However, the poor should be able to enhance their financial opportunities if the university can recommend the appropriate information technology to them. The technology does not always mean high-tech and expensive. The effectiveness in the Information Technology usage could be learnt by the student and lecturer before they do the community service to obtain the optimum benefit for good impact for their economic welfare. Unfortunately, most of the community service programs are often associated with the only basic needs of the community and the greater potential of information technology is never introduced by the university students and lecturers.

This paper will describe a strategy to encourage university's Social Entrepreneurship to empower underprivileged communities by leveraging Information Technology, as part of the implementation of university's awareness which should combines the academic advancement and concern for poverty. The expected final result of the proposed social entrepreneurship is to establish financial independence among the poor and their neighborhoods.

Keywords

Internet, Leveraging IT, Service Learning, Social Entrepreneurship, Underprivileged Community

I. Introduction

Service Learning is a great breakthrough in the learning process which combined with the community service. The involvement and skills learnt by students through the learning process, is expected to deliver positive change for the community optimally. Local needs can be answered by the students and they can feel the real experience in applying the lessons, according to the current conditions [5].

However, implementing the science alone is not enough at the present. A community empowerment through entrepreneurial spirit is needed in order to create a sustainable change. The results expected are the problems on the community can be solved and also able to deliver sustainable social impact to the underprivileged community. Therefore, the current Social Entrepreneurship is seen as the answer for the people and as a noble mission that universities should able to manifest in depth to deliver benefit the community [1].

The Catholic University interprets social works as inevitable tasks because those are associated with the implementation of science and concern for the poor. Various activities at the university, both by students and faculty have to lead to the goal. Students through Community Service as part of curriculum and lecturers through Community Service as part of the responsibility to fulfill three roles are known as Tri Dharma of Higher Education. Interestingly, the empowerment of communities often has become an integral part in several research activities. It shows the need of lecturers to apply their research results for the sake of community.

In the existing example "Build Model and Implementation of SMEs Central Based on Internet and Community's Participation", the utilization of Information Technology also has been a part in community empowerment. The Small-Medium Enterprises in Central Java via the web portal of SMEs' community have ability to attract buyers, suppliers, financial institutions, and other stakeholders. The need of SMEs to have a wider network can be solved by the researchers who provide a web portal and training the use of internet [6].

At another example "The integration of Creative Industry Based on Information Technology and Community's Participation to Empower the Art Creative Industry", empowerment of the art community of puppet that poor financially through social media is needed to attract more audiences, event organizers, and opportunities in business of accessories. The need to show their capability, open the wider networking, and increase the coverage of promotion to emphasize their potency can be solved by providing the community web which able to encourage the participation of actor, fans, and people who care. The underprivileged community is able to get the better positive opportunities by involving in this effort. The innovative approach to deal the complex social needs is one of characteristic of social entrepreneurship [4].

Fig. 1: Web Portal of SMEs Gives Impact in Wider Networking for the Community

Fig. 2: Community's Web Portals to Open More Opportunity for the Community

The two examples above demonstrate the effort to use the Information Technology as a tool for entrepreneur in reating the wider opportunities involving the participation of disadvantages communities. Those two approaches of IT utilization in order to empower the poor communities can be used to enhance the service learning in creating the spirit of Social Entrepreneurship [3]. Students have the opportunity to learn the entrepreneurship spirit for helping others.

The students do not have to learn the technical side of web development, but should understand how their effort can be used for business and give impact to the people. They could use Wordpress as the software to build the website. Wordpress is a free and open-source application for blogging. It has the same functions like other blog services, but able to handle the static pages [2]. Wordpress is one of blog software that hosted and installed on the owner server [7].

The final result, the activity does not only answer the basic problems of the underprivileged community, but also provide a sustainable impact in terms of financial independence. Community participation can be raised and other people who are care to this community can actively involved by using Information Technology. It will result a mutuality relationship in the form of economic activity and opportunity for the poor.

II. Concept of Leveraging Information Technology

Implementation of Social Entrepreneurship using Information Technology will encourage the involvement of students and lecturers to teach and apply their knowledge by adding the utilization of Information Technology and Entrepreneurship. They initially have to analyze the needs of the people who will be helped, their entrepreneurial opportunities, and information technology that suitable with the entrepreneurial opportunities there.

Information technology that attached to the Social Entrepreneurship have an aim to eliminate barriers of bureaucratic, distribution, and geographical. Strengthen the reach of product's information to be conveyed in entrepreneurship can be the target also. The important thing, IT could sharpen, affirm, and strengthen the impression of the product's features or service's benefit. The expected Information Technology should be simple and easily applied by people without any background of computer knowledge [6]. Nevertheless, the impact of the benefits resulted should not be reduced by the easiness.

In the case of empowerment the Art Creative Industry, Information

Technology is used to draw the attention of audience to see the beauty of the art performance via video clips that have been packaged in 15 minutes. Through Information Technology, the art performances can be packed more concise where each part can stimulate the audience's interest.
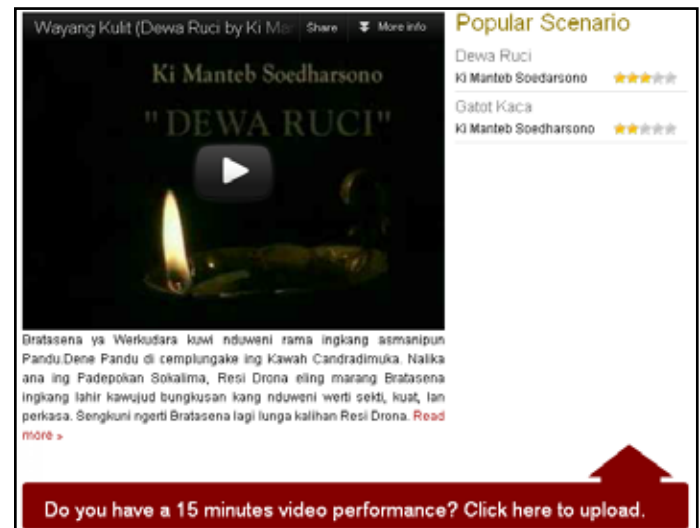

Fig. 3: Information Technology Utilization to Draw Attention of Audience

The other features are able to invite web visitors to engage in the assessments of the art performances [8]. The effort to involve the visitors would create the ownership that could trigger a sense of partisanship to the art performances. They might invite the art community to show the performance at their meaningful events or they might use the products associated with the art as a part of their pride. The entrepreneurial opportunities could be greater when the Internet can bring the audiences in greater numbers from around the world.

When students and lecturer able to create other opportunities like the example above by adjusting the conditions at the location of service learning, the impact of a more sustainable social entrepreneurship can be felt by local people. Therefore, it is required the formulation of the concept in the use of information technology in the social entrepreneurship for the poverty alleviation:

1. The needs and potency of local communities should be analyzed initially.
2. The entrepreneurial opportunities based on the analysis of the local need must be explored
3. The information technology that used to encourage the potential entrepreneurs should be gathered
4. The service learning could be implemented after add the entrepreneurial opportunities
5. Workshop and Implementation on using information technology should able to sharpen the entrepreneurial opportunities
6. The impact of the program must be evaluated in the end of program

From the above concept, the attached technology is not limited to the internet only, but also other technologies or features. The use of features of Short Message Services (SMS) on simple gadget or other broader technologies could be the example. However, the main principle is not only answering the existing problems, but also the easiness of leveraging information technology for the any people who are unfamiliar with computer. The measurement is the amount of benefits that can be perceived by the people in community and potency of sustainability.

III. The Implementation of Concept

To implement the concept, the university does not have to create a new program but simply modify the existing community service in the curriculum. In Soegijapranata Catholic University (SCU), the Community Service course is the implementation of university's awareness to stimulate the underprivileged community in developing themselves using their existing potency. The participants will stay in the location for several weeks to do the tasks related to the target.

Social Entrepreneurship is needed to enhance the Community Service course in order to sustain the economic potential in society. The proper use of Information Technology by the student will increase the supply and sustainability of the existing potential opportunities in the location. Information technology must be adapted to the conditions of society without any background knowledge of computer. Easiness is the main keywords for stimulating them to agree and able to use it for their purposes. The benefits resulted should greater when they able to participate. Therefore, the analysis of real condition in the location needs to be done previously.

In order to increase the realization of the concept with more structured implementation, it is required to have the module that combines multidisciplinary knowledge as the tools to analyze the needs of poor community in that location and found the economic potential that could be raised through this program. In the end, students and lecturer must become the actors in increasing the impact for the poor by practicing the Social Entrepreneurship in the area.
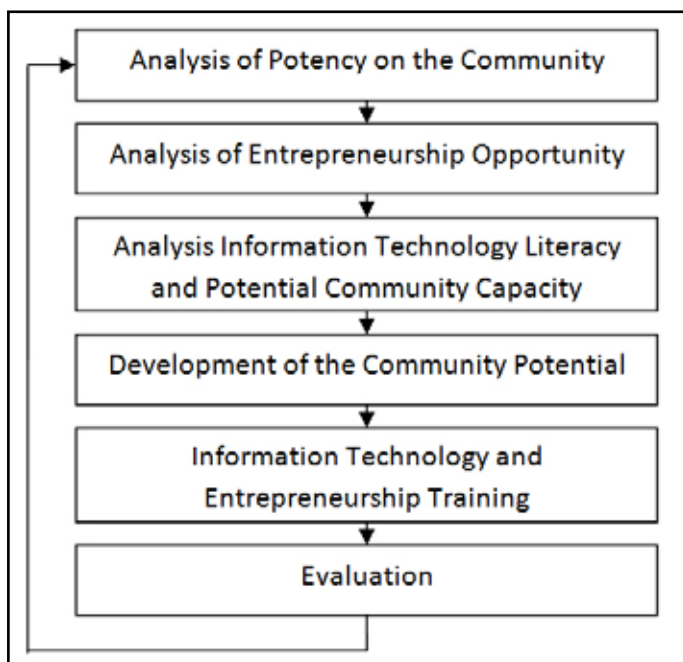

Fig. 4: Steps on the Implementation of Concept

IV. Conclusion

In standing for the poor, not only the fulfillment of basic needs alone should be solved but also the development of the potential in underprivileged community. These efforts will create the economic opportunities for the people to live better in sustainability. It is not only use the conventional media, but also the utilization of information technology to sharpen the impact from the activities on Social Entrepreneurship, both in terms of scope and excellence of product features. The chances of sustainability of the service learning can be more awake. Furthermore, the community can independently continue the efforts to life better.

Training and assistance is needed in order to strengthen the potential of the poor to step ahead in more stable phase. Those activities do not require a new program but could use the existing Community Service program with a deeper passion to develop the entrepreneur's spirit in the student who cares to other as the awareness' university implementation.

In technical side, the students as the participants of community service are not required to master the programming. They can use WordPress as the software to build the website to develop their social entrepreneurs' spirit because the focus is not on the website but their effort to give better impact to the underprivileged community by leveraging the Information Technology on the entrepreneurship.

V. Acknowledgments

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