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The Barriers in Collaborative Linkages Among University-Industry-Policy Entities on Environmental Matters in Sarawak

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ABSTRACT

The relationship and collaboration process between university-industry-policy entities have been the subject of increased interest especially when dealing with environmental matters. Collaboration approach is an effort that unites different entities together in a shared objective. However, there are few challenges or barriers which make it difficult to develop collaboration relationships between entities. Although the linkages are often mentioned about the collaborative linkages among university-industry-policy entities, none has information on the barriers of collaborative linkages especially on environmental matters in Sarawak. Thus, there is a need to identify the barriers and success factors in order to develop successful collaboration. This study addressed the gap through a mixed method of qualitative and quantitative approach where the data were collected from 199 respondents based on a face-to-face interview using structured questionnaires in Sarawak. The study explores the status of collaboration in Sarawak and its barriers. Findings indicated that the collaboration status in Sarawak is still in an infant stage resulting from barriers of collaboration which are lack of funding, private knowledge, lack of commitment, difficult to implement collaboration, weak/lack policies, poor awareness, top management view/support, acceptance of collaboration, bureaucracy and differences in company culture.

Keywords: Collaborative linkages, collaboration barriers, environmental concern, University-Industry-Policy Entities, Sarawak



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The relationship and collaboration process between university-industry-policy entities have been the subject of increased interest especially when dealing with environmental matters. Collaboration approach is an effort that unites different entities together in a shared objective. However, there are few challenges or barriers which make it difficult to develop collaboration relationships between entities. Although the linkages are often mentioned about the collaborative linkages among university-industry-policy entities, none has information on the barriers of collaborative linkages especially on environmental matters in Sarawak. Thus, there is a need to identify the barriers and success factors in order to develop successful collaboration. This study addressed the gap through a mixed method of qualitative and quantitative approach where the data were collected from 199 respondents based on a face-to-face interview using structured questionnaires in Sarawak. The study explores the status of collaboration in Sarawak and its barriers. Findings indicated that the collaboration status in Sarawak is still in an infant stage resulting from barriers of collaboration which are lack of funding, private knowledge, lack of commitment, difficult to implement collaboration, weak/lack policies, poor awareness, top management view/support, acceptance of collaboration, bureaucracy and differences in company culture.

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INTRODUCTION

There are many ways to define collaboration. Lai (2011) describes collaboration as a mutual engagement of participation that is coordinated in effort to solve an issue together. Jassawalla and Sashittal (1998) shared the same thought of collaboration as the coming together of diverse interest and people to achieve a common purpose of interaction, information sharing and coordination of activities while the meaning is generally treated as the cooperative way that two or more entities work together towards a shared goal.

Collaboration is important among various organizations as the approach is viewed to be the tools for success especially in tackling issues related to the environment (Gajda, 2004). Rigby and Edler (2005) states that those who collaborate have advantages such as having higher quality of result. Other benefits identified are the access to expertise, or skilled manpower of each organization in which there is knowledge sharing by shared opinions and ideas (Melin, 2000). The significance of collaboration is

evident in many developing countries. For example, a study on collaboration effect in Chile and Colombia has portrayed the propensity of firms to enhance innovation after the implementation of collaborative approach with the universities (Marotta *et al.*, 2007).

Therefore, collaboration is an approach that is strategic to combat environmental issues. Many environmental issues arising have concluded that federal controlled efforts are not sufficient to tackle the environmental issues and the responsibility to address the problems should not be on only one central government to manage (Durant *et al.*, 2004; John, 1994). Therefore, a collaborative approach among various entities which are the university, industry and policy entities are critically important in order to create environmental awareness and responsibility and at the same time produce positive results on tackling the environmental issues.

The importance of collaboration is highlighted in Malaysia in the 11th Malaysia Plan (2016-2020). The Malaysia Plan stresses on the strategy to strengthen environmental awareness and create public responsibility in the pursuit of green growth for sustainability and resilience. To execute the plan, many programs which include the public, governments, universities or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were organized to instill a sense of shared responsibility towards the environmental matters in an integrated effort (Eleventh Malaysia Plan, 2015).

In Sarawak, there is rising recognition among the university-industry-policy entities on the importance of collaboration. Few universities in Sarawak have begun to establish their own unit in order to favour collaboration. For example, the UiTM-Industry relation unit (UILC) was established with the objectives to create linkages, start-up collaboration and programs, and also create memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the university, industry and government. Local universities in Sarawak namely CURTIN and UNIMAS (Universiti Malaysia Sarawak) had also addressed considerable potential for collaboration when both universities signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to develop and promote academic links and collaboration. In addition, Sarawak Energy Berhad (SEB) along with UNIMAS and Curtin University had collaborated on matters related to the environment which is in the areas of aquatic and terrestrial ecology, geomorphology and limnology. According to Sarawak Energy, among its strategies is to continue to seek more research collaboration with various universities to enhance the information of scientific knowledge of the environment (Sarawak Energy, 2013).

Despite the awareness on the importance of collaboration and the support from the government, there are still barriers which hinder the formation of collaborative relationships especially among university-industry-policy entities on environmental matters in Sarawak. In order to develop a successful collaboration, it is essential to identify the risk components and challenges which affect the success of collaboration. The main objective of the study is to investigate the perceived barriers of collaborative linkages among university-industry-policy entities on environmental matters in Sarawak.