IIUM2World: Reaching out to the Illiterates in Rural Community

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Abstract: This paper intends to propose a conceptual solution that provides an e-program for the community in the rural areas, which basically face illiteracy problems. With a proposed conceptual system of Quadruple Helix Model (QHM) which leverage four main actors namely: academia, industry, government, and citizen; also with the collaborative Network-of-Mosques (NoM), this project initiative aims to enhance the condition of the community in the rural areas of Malaysia by delivering such knowledge and virtues, mainly by teaching Malay and English language, also the Islamic knowledge to them through an e-program. Literature reviews were conducted to understand their conditions and environment. A Business Model Canvas (BMC) and Value Proposition Canvas (VPC) were created to highlight the main components in order to carry out this project. The authors conclude with suggestions of future work for next paper.

Keywords: e-learning, IIUM, knowledge, literacy, network-of-mosques (NoM), quadruple helix model (QHM), rural community, virtue.

I. INTRODUCTION

In a developing country like Malaysia, the diversity of urban and rural community in different parts of this country has always been a significant issue. Among the apparent issues that are still happening is poverty, education and illiteracy, which segregates the social status of the community in urban and rural parts of Malaysia. The poor economic condition in rural area contributes to the inability of adults to send their children to schools thus deteriorating their intellectual ability as compared to the more fortunate people in urban areas. Putting the big problems aside, this project aims to focus on enhancing Malay, English, and Islamic knowledge to the people in the rural areas with the QHM collaboration of four actors which is the academia, industry, government and citizen, and the cooperation of NoM.

The community in the urban area is known for the privileges that they get in contrast with the community in rural areas. The children in rural areas live in an environment without proper education. They do not have the same level of literacy as the children in urban areas. They might learn the words by hearing the conversation of mouth-to-mouth, but they are not able to read and write properly. Also, because of the financial issue that they face, the elders cannot afford to send their children to schools, and be exposed to a systematic education.

Apart from education barrier that they face, the people in the rural areas are also not exposed to proper teaching of Islam.

Therefore, by focusing on literacy issue in English and Malay language, also on Islamic knowledge and practice, this paper aims to highlight on programs initiated by the community of IIUM to help the combat illiteracy in rural areas with the knowledge and virtue that have been in practice in the nature of IIUM.

This paper proposes a collaborative program, which will be based on the deployment of the Quadruple Helix Model (QHM), where a country's economic structure lies on four key actors namely: Academia, Industry, Government and

Citizen. This paper will present a business plan using Business Model Canvas, which helps to identify the business needs and Value Proposition Canvas as a tool to identify the customers' needs.

II. PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to [19], rural youth in the 21st century face multiple challenges including high dropout rate due to inadequacies such as lack of qualified teachers, infrastructures and educational facilities. The community in the urban area is known for the privileges that they get in contrast with the community in rural areas. The children in rural areas live in an environment without proper education. They do not have the same level of literacy as the children in urban areas. They might learn the words by hearing the conversation of mouth-to-mouth, but they are not able to read and write properly. Also, because of the financial issue that they face, the elders cannot afford to send their children to schools, and be exposed to a systematic education.

Apart from education barrier that they face, the people in the rural areas are also not exposed to proper teaching of Islam. Dr. Frederico Gil Sander, World Bank economist for Malaysia said that the poor quality of Malaysia's Education system is more worrying than the level of debt in its households. [14] The personal opinion from the pundit [14] opposed to that, with her view that the poor quality of Malaysia's education system is more worrying than any other issues in the country. She mentioned the struggle she to go through to read and write simple English as the students are still so far behind. Let alone in English, not all students have reach the standard of reading and writing in Malay although they have come up to Secondary four level, while global statistics according to UNESCO shows that there are 122 million youths who are illiterate.

For this reason, the discrepancy in the mastery of Malay and English languages still exists between urban and rural area communities in Malaysia [9].Hence, this paper is proposing to help the illiterates from the rural community with the help of QHM collaborative actors and also the strength of NoM as the channel to carry out the proposed project, with the aim to provide an opportunity for the community in rural areas to study Malay and English languages along with Islamic teachings, to combat illiteracy and enhance the status of their lives. This program also aims to provide experience and opportunity for the IIUM community to inspire the less fortunate and instill benevolent skills to help those in need, which will impact their personality and professional journey in the long run.

III. PROJECT BACKGROUND

This paper is produced based on literature research, which is supported by secondary data and information. Several sources were consulted such as journals, statistics reports, as well as previous researches.

The mosque was chosen as the centre to conduct this proposed project because its function is not restricted as a place only for the act of worshipping, but it also has a significant role as a community and education center. In the Muslim World, the mosque played a major part to spread knowledge, and the association of mosque with the education remained one of its main characteristics throughout history. From the earliest days of Islam, mosques have become the center of Muslim community, a place for worshipping, a place for political discussion and also a place for knowledge dissemination [13]. In Malaysia likewise, one of the most important function of mosque have undertaken in such a way to become a center of knowledge where religious education are conducted after daily prayers, besides other activities to suit with the current spiritual needs of the surrounding Muslim community of the country.

A study also shows that "The role of the mosque in traditional Muslim society is three-fold. The first and primary one relates to worship, second is a social activity and the third is political role. In the early Islam, the mosque that initially intended as a place of worship has come to be built to serve other related purposes, such as religious classes, library, lecture hall, guest house and dispensary".

Compared to how education took place in mosques in the earlier days of Islam, which is the form of gathering in a circle or known as 'Halaqa' [13], the current education now takes place in proper classrooms with proper facilities prepared in schools.

With the evolving ways of disseminating knowledge throughout the years, we have come to realize that in Malaysia itself, there are still some proportion from the rural community who are unable to read and write properly although no exact percentage were able to be obtained from literature reviews. With the political, sociocultural and economic processes of

globalization today, Malaysians must possess multiple literacies to help them cope with the changes that come in the wake of globalization in the 21st century [19].

Several similar projects such as MyMosqueNet2Cloud [15] and MyMukim2Cloud [16] was initiated to propose conceptual solutions with the collaborative system of Quadruple Helix Model (QHM), Whole of Government (WoG) and Network-of-Mosques (NoM).For this proposed project in the other hand, the QHM and NoM leverage in such a way that:

- This project is owned by the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)

- The collaborative actors such as Ministry of Education (MoE), Department of Social Welfare (DSW) and the IIUM Community which comprises of the academicians, staffs and students work together and share resources to provide quality service to the illiterate participants.

- This proposed system will be operated in several NoMs across different parts of Malaysia as mosques will be the main channel and place to carry out this project.

IV.   LITERATURE REVIEW

Literacy is traditionally defined as the ability to read and write, with understanding, a short, simple statement about one's everyday life [2]. It is part of an important indicator of human development. Alternatively, literacy researchers and practitioners view literacy as a social process as reading and writing are behaviours involve in social practices. Individuals that are unable to reach the standard levels of literacy can be considered as illiterates [6]. Based on United Nations Development Program (2010), the literacy levels in English language of Asians are below average due to historical and continuing weaknesses in the national education system.

The adult literacy rate among poor and middle-income nations is far worse. The issue of English language has always been a contentious topic in Malaysia [9]. Malaysia has launched many literacy programs targeted at eliminating illiteracy in the country especially in rural areas. The high rate of illiteracy in poor nations not only reflects their poverty but it is also a contributing factor to poverty as people who cannot read and write have huge disadvantage in developing their life [3]. As reported by Bernama [10], the Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM) focuses on creating human capital that are outstanding and highly knowledgeable. One of their main initiatives is to bridge education gap between urban and rural areas. Another initiative is by enhancing the status of Bahasa Malaysia while giving serious attention to English Language.

Among the challenges pertaining urban-rural disparity is highlighted [5] such that: School enrolment and achievements are slightly lower in rural areas including Sabah and Sarawak. While literacy rates for the rural areas of Sabah and Sarawak were significantly lower. In Malaysia, Selangor state is among the states, which recorded a high literacy rate, while Sarawak records the lowest literacy rate [1].

Different race and ethnicity with their family income condition affect the educational attainment in a society [3]. Report from the National Centre of Education Statistics [4] on the Condition on Education 2015 shows that students from families with high income are more likely than those with low income to attend college.

Due to the high-poverty in those neighbourhoods, the community does not get proper education because of inadequate school, the adults were going through the same for not having proper education and/or unemployed, thus children in these neighbourhoods lack adult models for attaining proper education. Based on a research done by Norazman, Faruk and Fatimah [11], parents in the rural areas are aware of the importance of education for their children but most of them are having difficulties in learning and discussing English with their children because the language is rarely used in the area.

Another factor is that, poor neighbourhood tend to be racially and ethnically segregated. For example, Latino children in poor neighbourhood are less-likely to speak English well as they do not have native English-speaking friends, and African American Children are more like to speak "black English" than conventional English. This language issues hinders the success of attaining education [3].

Among the challenges that rural community face in relation to their education [3] are:

First, as rural areas have been losing population, the community experience declining school enrollment and closure. Due to that, students have search for another school that is rather far from their home than their former school.

Second, the populations in rural area are general older with lower per-capita income, this lower revenue makes funding of public schools more challenging, in addition to fund the transportation.

Third, it is often difficult to recruit and retain quality teachers in rural area. Furthermore, the availability of well-trained teachers are also lacking in the rural areas. Sometimes teachers from other subjects are assigned to teach English due to the lack of teachers available [9]. This follows the initiative from MOE to motivate teachers to work in rural and remote areas while aiming to have the teachers university-trained [5].

V. PROPOSED SOLUTION

The proposed project is a plan to implement education guidance program covering Malay, English and Islamic studies for the illiterates from the rural area. The purpose of this project is to help contribute towards education empowerment. The program will be carried out in several mosques across different parts of Malaysia where reading and writing of Malay and English language, and also Islamic education will be the main component of this project. It will be taught through an e-program whereby the participants will learn to read from an interactive computer application and it will be handled by IIUM Community which consists of teachers and non-teachers, such as students and non-academic staff volunteers.

The main goal of this proposed project is to eradicate illiteracy in Malaysia, and also to enhance the service by giving good knowledge and virtue which will be provided by the IIUM Community alongside its key partners to the World, and in this project's context, is the aim to serve the illiterates from the rural community.

Figure 1 shows nine blocks of Business Model Canvas (BMC) based on the business proposed. Business Model Canvas is a simple tool for designing Innovative Business Models which is a simple graphical template describing nine essential components: customer segments, value proposition, channels, customer relationships, revenue streams, key resources, key activities, key partners, and cost structure.
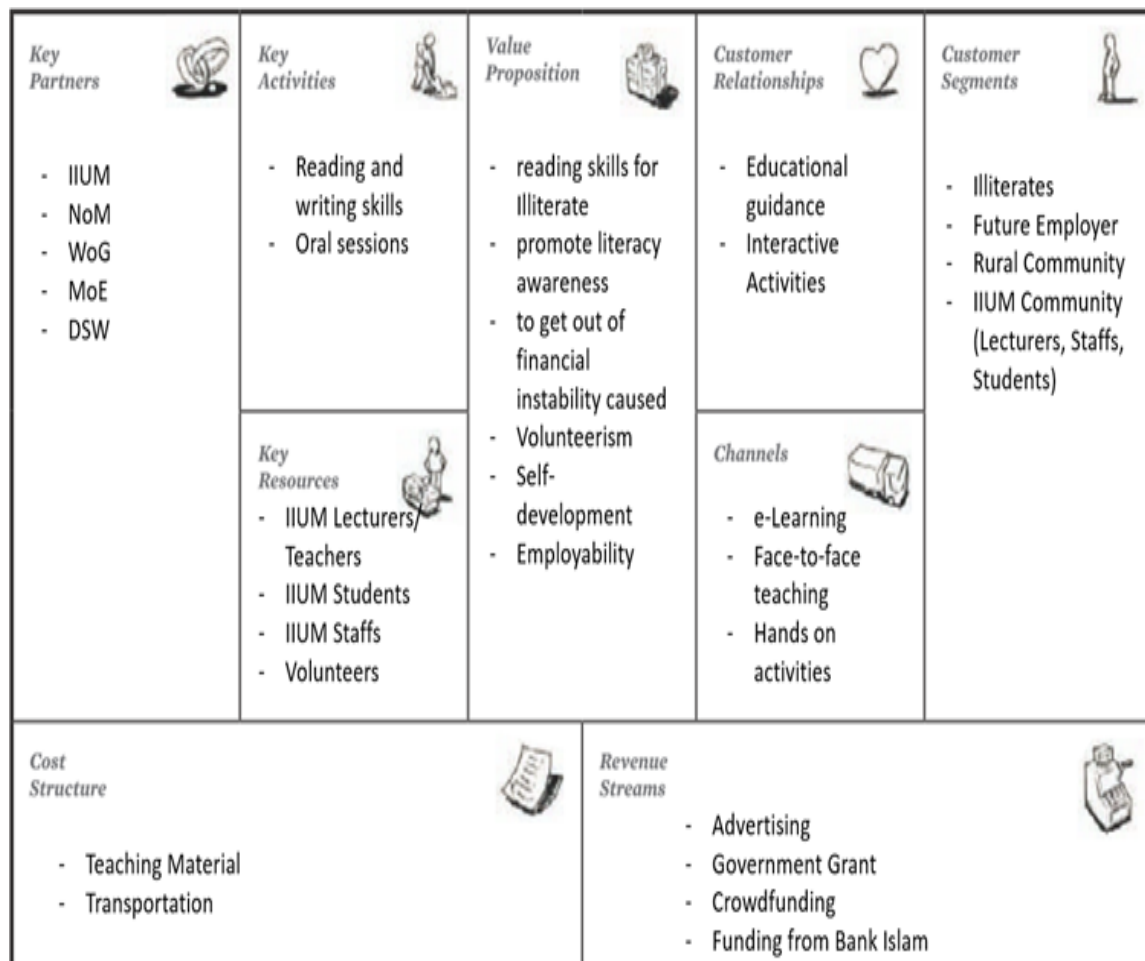

Fig.1. Business Model Canvas (BMC)

The detailed breakdown of the Business Model Canvas for this proposed project is as follows:

A. Customer Segments:

The customers whom this project aims to serve are primarily the illiterates from the rural community, the future employers and IIUM Community, which include the lecturers, staffs and students. The illiterates will benefit from this programme and become literates thus in the future they are more employable, while the IIUM community can benefit by being the main players.

B. Value Propositions:

This project aims to solve customer problems and satisfy their needs with value proposition by providing education for the academic development of the community in rural areas, improve their literacy and financial stability, to get rid of ignorance and discrimination towards the rural community, as well as to provide a training platform for the IIUM community.

C. Channels:

The above said value propositions are delivered to customers through direct communication such as face-to-face teaching and learning, educating through e-learning, and also hands activities where educational inputs will be provided to the rural community.

D. Customer Relationship:

The customer relationship for this project is teaching and learning between tutors and the illiterates, where they will have educational guidance and educational activities. And later they will be able to find suitable jobs in the future.

E. Revenue Streams:

As the proposed project is a volunteering program that serves as a community service, it is free from any charge. The revenue that will are gained is from donations, funding from organizations, and the advertising in portal that will be used by companies to advertise products. Some funding will also be given by Bank Islam, and donations through crowd funding for this cause.

F. Key Resources:

The assets required as key resources for this project are mainly the IIUM Community which comprises of lecturers, students and staffs, also voluntary clubs. Other resources are learning materials including books and also e-Learning portal.

G. Key Activities:

The program involves teaching Malay, English and Islamic practices to the illiterates, which will be done by the IIUM Community.

H. Key Partners:

The key partners and collaborators include the Network of Mosques (NoM) as the program are going to be conducted in various mosques in Malaysia, Ministry of Education (MoE) for teaching and learning materials, IIUM community as the teaching sources, and also companies that are interested to do corporate social responsibility (CSR), also Department of Social Welfare (DSW).

I. Cost Structure:

The costs incurred for this project are mainly the costs of teaching materials and transportation.

Another tool used in this project is Value Proposition Canvas (VPC), which is a tool to design, test, build, and manage products and services. BMC and VPC integrate with each other, where VPC zooms into details on two blocks of the BMC, which are Value Proposition and Customer Segments. VPC consists of two components: Customer Profile and Value Map [12]. Figure 2 below shows the overview of VPC.
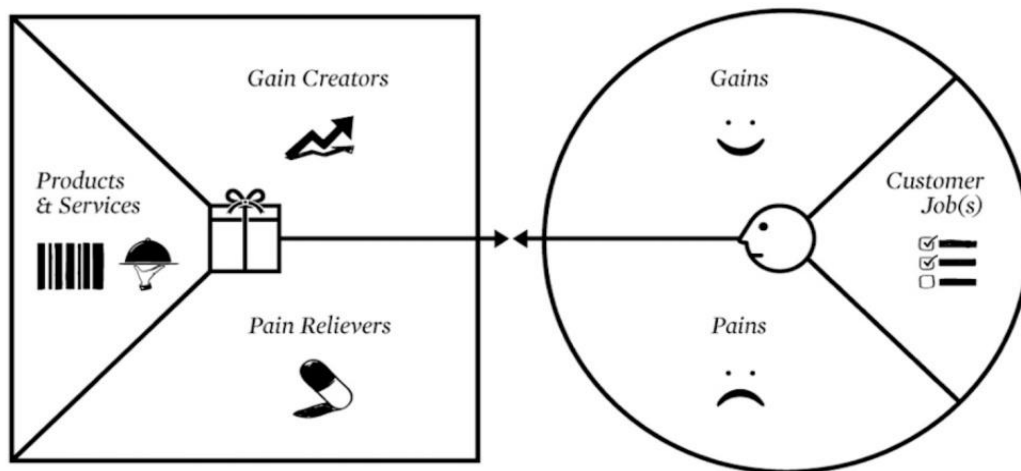
Fig.2. Value Proposition Canvas (VPC)

The Value Proposition Canvas based on the project proposed, focuses on the illiterates in the rural community. The detailed of the VPC are as follows:

A. Customer Profile:

i. Customer Jobs:

The rural community aims to improve standards of living by providing a sustainable livelihood, escape from poverty and live towards a virtuous self-esteem, confidence and learning.

ii. Customer Pains:

Some of the common issues faced by the rural community include illiteracy, poverty, lack of confidence, lack of employment and education opportunities, financial problems, discrimination, insufficient and inadequate educational resources which include qualified teachers, learning materials and infrastructure [18].

iii. Customer Gains:

An ideal sustainable rural community associate with the concept of quality of life which includes family connection, improved mental and physical health, opportunity for progression, employment, enjoying locally relevant services,increasing in community resources, technology advancement, enriching social capital and well being [20].

B. Value Map:

i. Products and Services:

In this proposed project, the products and services include providingEnglish, Bahasa Malaysia and Islamic teaching programme to the rural community. A training on how to use and access e-learning will be given. The volunteers of IIUM play important role in showing the good examples and deeds to the rural communities as well as to teach them the Islamic values.

ii. Pain Relievers:

The programme will increase educational equity for the people in rural areas who could not afford to pay for tuition fees or private tutors [18].

iii. Gain Creators:

This program will benefit the rural communities in terms of knowledge and education that they will gain. As reported in New Straits Times [17], "the government's education transformation programs aim to ensure that no child is left behind in education, not among the ingenious communities in remote and inaccessible areas." Through education, people can stay out of poverty.In addition,with the basic education that they have, they can develop themselves by learning other appropriate skills that will help their families to grow. Thus, more job opportunities will come after that and they can improve their standards and sustain the quality of their life.

VI.   CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

In conclusion, this paper highlights the importance of education in the society, the education challenges faced by the community in rural area and proposes a program to reduce the education gap between urban and rural areas. Based on the aspirations toward achieving the aims of Vision 2020 in rural development, Malaysia has made conscious efforts to improve and develop education through literacy education programs [6]. As part of this effort, IIUM will contribute to offer the knowledge and virtue that they have gained and practiced to reach out to the outer community. Hence, it is hoped that the proposed project will be implemented as part of the plan towards achieving developed nation status in 2020. It is also hoped that this paper will help drive more research into how rural communities should be engaged, in order to deliver sustainable results. Data will be collected by distributing questionnaires based on the literature reviews to the community of IIUM.

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