

**MALAYSIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS' ROLE TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT FOCUSING ON KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER PRACTICES
FRAMEWORK**

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DEDICATION

Praise be to Allah S.W.T and thanks be upon Him. This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Haji Mohamed Bin Johari and Hajjah Zakiah Binti Haji Basah, who have supported me financially and spiritually all these years. It is also dedicated to my brother, sister, sister in-law, nieces, nephews and my wife, who have given me joy and meaningful lives.



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ABSTRACT

Local Governments are facing very demanding and dynamic situation in development agenda when dealing with sustainable development. When the development's activities do not start with the sustainability elements at Local Governments, the negative impacts are imminent and it will cause hazards to society, economy and environment. Hence, the knowledge of sustainability needs to be inculcated in Local Governments' practices. It needs to be shown in the stage of planning approval since this is where the development begins. In relation to that, the research objectives are to identify the constraints in knowledge transfer practices of sustainable development in the planning approval at Local Governments, to study the perceptions of stakeholders involved in the planning approval stage at Local Governments regarding knowledge transfer practices towards sustainable development, to study the knowledge transfer practices towards sustainable development at Local Governments and to develop the framework of knowledge transfer practices towards sustainable development into the planning approval stage at Local Governments. Therefore, respondents involved are 55 selected Malaysian Local Governments for questionnaire, 17 selected Malaysian Local Governments for interview and 9 selected stakeholders. The results of this study show that there is lacking in clear direction which bring to the unsupportive policy and management, the perceptions of stakeholders suggest that Local Governments need to show their capabilities in handling sustainable development at the planning approval stage and overall result demonstrates that staffs have low percentage of below 30% in acquiring and participating in activities related to sustainable development. In relation to that, it contributes to the lack of knowledge on sustainable development. Hence knowledge transfer practices towards sustainable development at the planning approval stage are needed as suggested in the analysis of interviews. Therefore, this research has developed a framework of the knowledge transfer practices towards sustainable development at planning approval stage in Malaysian Local Governments, which is to improve the process of the planning approval for sustainability delivery.

ABSTRAK

Sepanjang dekad yang lalu khususnya, Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan telah melalui satu keadaan yang mencabar dan dinamik dalam agenda pembangunan bila berurusan dengan pembangunan mapan. Apabila aktiviti pembangunan tidak bermula dengan unsur-unsur kemapanan di Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan, kesan negatif akan berlaku dan ia akan menyebabkan bahaya kepada masyarakat, ekonomi dan alam sekitar. Oleh itu, kemapanan dalam amalan Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan perlu ditunjukkan dalam peringkat kebenaran merancang kerana ia adalah di mana pembangunan bermula. Sehubungan dengan itu, objektif kajian ini adalah untuk mengenal pasti kekangan dalam mengurus pemindahan pengetahuan pembangunan mapan dalam peringkat kebenaran merancang di Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan, untuk mengkaji persepsi pihak-pihak berkepentingan yang terlibat dalam peringkat kebenaran merancang di Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan mengenai pemindahan pengetahuan amalan pembangunan mapan, untuk mengkaji amalan pemindahan pengetahuan pembangunan mapan di Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan dan untuk membangunkan rekabentuk amalan pemindahan pengetahuan pembangunan mapan di peringkat kebenaran merancang di Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan. Justeru, responden terdiri daripada 55 buah Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan Malaysia yang terpilih untuk kajiselidik, 17 buah Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan Malaysia yang terpilih untuk ditemuduga dan 9 pihak yang berkepentingan yang terpilih untuk ditemuduga. Hasil kajian ini menunjukkan terdapat hala tuju dan dasar yang tidak jelas yang tidak menyokong pihak pengurusan, pandangan pihak-pihak berkepentingan yang mencadangkan supaya Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan perlu menunjukkan keupayaan mereka dalam mengendalikan pembangunan mapan di peringkat kebenaran merancang dan keputusan keseluruhan menunjukkan bahawa kakitangan mempunyai peratusan yang rendah di bawah 30% dalam mempelajari dan menyertai aktiviti yang berkaitan dengan pembangunan mapan. Oleh itu, kajian ini adalah untuk menyumbang kepada rekabentuk untuk dipraktikkan dalam pemindahan pengetahuan dalam pembangunan mapan di peringkat kebenaran merancang di Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan. Seterusnya, kajian ini dapat membantu dalam meningkatkan amalan pemindahan pengetahuan kearah pembangunan mapan pada peringkat kebenaran merancang di Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

<i>CIDA</i>	Canadian International Development Agency
<i>GBI</i>	Green Building Index
<i>LA 21</i>	Local Agenda 21
<i>LASD</i>	Local Authorities for Sustainable Development
<i>LI</i>	Level of Implementation
<i>MHLG</i>	Ministry of Housing and Local Governments
<i>NGO</i>	Non-governmental Organisation
<i>OECD</i>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<i>RM</i>	Malaysian Ringgit (Ringgit Malaysia)
<i>SD</i>	Sustainable Development
<i>SPSS</i>	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
<i>SERI</i>	Socio-Economic and Environmental Research Institute
<i>UNDP</i>	United Nations Development Program
<i>UNESCAP</i>	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
<i>UN</i>	United Nations
<i>UNEP</i>	United Nations Environment Program

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX	TITLE
A	List of publication
B	Interview form for Local Governments
C	Interview form for stakeholders
D	Questionnaire form for Local Governments
E	Interview form for validation of framework

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Local Governments need to be prepared in facing a future that is very demanding and dynamic in the development agenda. They are now experiencing various challenges and one of them is in the implementation of sustainable development concept as in the environmental, economical and social aspect (Rowe 2000; Hussai 2006). In addition, the concept of sustainable development was first proposed by the Brundtland Commission in 1972. This definition has evolved since the United Nations Earth Summit held by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) in Rio de Janeiro (1992). Over the past decade, many definitions are discussed comprehensively, however, without the ability of an organisation to fully grasp the understanding of its value, the objectives of sustainable development will not be achieved. Therefore the term refers to as knowledge transfer is essential for any organisation to prosper (Reagans & McEvily 2003; Richards et al.

2010). In addition, the absorptive capacity of knowledge is closely linked to the level of the organisations' prior knowledge.

The prior knowledge can be integrated into the planning approval stage where it is the stage of evaluation and approval of the development agenda. This is because the ability of organisations to innovate and successfully achieve technological and organisational changes is an important factor in the knowledge transfer towards sustainable development at Local Governments. Accordingly, those are a major concern in Local Governments globally when dealing with the implementation of sustainable development (Rowe 2000; Singaravelloo 2010; Wolman & Page 2002). This means that the knowledge of sustainable development at Local Government needs to be present especially in the process of planning approval stage. This study aims to encourage knowledge transfer practices towards sustainable development. Moreover, this study is to develop a framework of knowledge transfer practices towards sustainable development in the planning approval stage at Malaysian Local Governments.

1.2 Background of Study

How can Local Governments become an effective machinery to facilitate national growth and enhance the sustainable development? Agenda 21 can be the answer for that subject in handling the sustainability issues. Agenda 21 is a comprehensive plan for sustainability deliverables to be taken globally, nationally and locally (Barrutia et al. 2007; Pamme 2005). It reflects the action in every area in which local community have impacts on the environment and economy aspects. Therefore, the planning approval stage at Local Government is the appropriate place where the sustainability matters can be implemented and enforced.

During the United Nations Earth Summit held by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) in Rio de Janeiro (1992), a sustainable development was defined as *“Improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting eco systems”*. Depending on the context in which it is used, sustainability

can be best be implemented in the planning approval where the sustainability issues can be delivered to the people that is affected by the socio-economic development. Hence, the Bruntland's definition stated that the development should meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Adams 2012; Urquidi 2008). This definition has an impact on the economic, social and environmental development and was later formally adopted worldwide.

In order for sustainable development to achieve its objective, it must be integrated into the planning of development in any organisation. Therefore, a holistic approach is essential if the full sustainability agenda to be implemented (Bourdeau, 1999; Gilham, 1998; Hai et.al., 2009). This means that the process of planning approval is the suitable place for sustainability deliverable to be considered as it is where the approval of any development for the new town and regional planning development takes place. In addition, there is a need to create increasing economic values while using natural resources sustainably and making a broader contribution to the community's social aims and objectives (McLaren 1998a; Goh & Yang 2010). Moreover, Local Governments are where the local community infrastructure underpins the nation's economy and provides significant support to the state and national development projects (McLaren 1998a; Evans & Theobald 2003). This extends beyond the traditional concern of Local Governments' practices, which is about profitability and increasing shareholder value.

Since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, everyone has a role to play in developing sustainable development (Barrutia et al. 2007; Courtney 1999). In relation to the development of human settlement, it is mainly on housing development with the construction industry the main player. Therefore, construction industry must initiate actions to reduce the negative impacts of development and sharpen this competitive edge (Zainul 2009; Du Plessis 2007). This means that Local Governments must bring about changes and economic growth accordingly.

Local Government should play an important role in encouraging sustainable development. Sustainable development for the organisation needs to be developed and implemented according to its concept. Currently there have been several actions in the Malaysia's sustainable development agenda. Sustainable development issues were

formed in the Seventh Malaysian Plan (1995-2000) and the formulation of the Total Planning Doctrine indicates that the concern for one of the element in sustainable development, which is environment, begins to gain firmer ground (Omar 2008; Tooley et al. 2009; Hezri 2004). Moreover, the initiatives taken by Malaysia in response to the needs identified in Agenda 21 as well as those identified through its own development programme, namely the five-yearly Malaysia Development Plans and the longer-term Outline Perspective Plans. It included initiatives undertaken by the Federal Government of Malaysia (the central government), the State Government and private sectors. In 1995, amendments were made to the Town and Country Planning Act 1976 which stressed the need for better environmental protection (Dola & Mijan 2006; Omar 2008). This means that good governance within each country and at the international level is essential for sustainable development, where environmental, social and economic policies are responsive to the needs of the people. However, it fails to mention specifically where and how sustainable development should best be integrated at Malaysian Local Governments. Therefore, in performing Local Governments' functions, the staff must be knowledgeable in protecting and utilising the resources towards sustainability objectives. Thus, knowledge in sustainable development should be essential in order for the approval of project development for local community.

Sveiby (2001) iterates that people use their capacity-to-act in order to create value in mainly two directions; by transferring and converting knowledge externally and internally to the organisation. This means that by introducing knowledge transfer practices, many organisations could improve the flows of knowledge around their organisation and make it accessible when and where needed. Hence, the knowledge transfer practices are use to add sustainability value, such as through planning development, improved development processes or new products and services. Thus the knowledge transfer practices of sustainable development could help Local Governments become more effective with sustainability delivery by sharing knowledge across different divisions and organisations.

Barclay & Murray (2000), Pea (1987b) and Richards et al. (2010) argue that knowledge transfer is becoming increasingly important in organisations. Consequently, there is also a great need of knowledge to enable an organisation to implement, manage,

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