

TRANSFER OF ISLAMIC BANKING KNOWLEDGE FROM GCC ISLAMIC  
BANK HEADQUARTER TO ITS SUBSIDIARY IN MALAYSIA

ALI ABUSALAH ELMABROK AMREEGHAH

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the  
Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Technology Management



Faculty of Technology Management and Business  
Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia

DECEMBER 2017

## DEDICATION

To the soul of my beloved father 1948–2016

&

To the memory of my brother Mohammed 1984–2008.

**They are truly being missed.**



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I deeply thank Allah, for his guidance and blessings.

This thesis is the culmination of my journey of Ph.D. which was just like climbing a high peak step by step accompanied with encouragement, hardship, trust, and frustration. At this moment of accomplishment, I am greatly indebted to my research guide PROF. DR. NG KIM SOON, who accepted me as his PhD student and offered me his mentorship, fatherly love and care. This work would not have been possible without his guidance and involvement, his support and encouragement on daily basis from the start of the project till date. Under his guidance I successfully overcame many difficulties and learnt a lot. Also, I greatly appreciate and acknowledge the scholarship support received from Ministry of higher education of both countries (Libya and Malaysia). Besides, I would like to thank the respondents who have spent their precious time and patience for participating in this project.

Finally, I acknowledge the people who mean a lot to me, my parents, for showing faith in me and giving me liberty to choose what I desired. I would never be able to pay back the love and affection showered upon by my parents. Thanks to my sister NADA for her selfless love, care and dedicated efforts which contributed a lot for completion of my thesis. I owe thanks to a very special person, my wife, SALIMAH for her continued and unfailing love, support and understanding during my pursuit of Ph.D degree that made the completion of thesis possible. And my two little angels "AISHA and RATEEL" I love you to the moon and back. And not to forget my friends Dr. Mohamed Edbeib and Dr. Majdi El Bireki.

May Allah bless all of us!

Ali Abusalah Elmabrok Amreeghah

December 2017

## ABSTRACT

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Islamic banks' subsidiaries which have invested in Malaysia have seen the going gets tough. They are strapped by paltry returns and stymied by stiff competition from the local Malaysian banks. Since the increasing competition and the slowdown of the economy have encouraged multinational banks to seek new ways to improve their internal efficiency and their performance, it has given the pivotal importance of knowledge transfer for the competitiveness of multinationals, but the process of transferring knowledge effectively across dispersed units of International Islamic banks has only attracted little and rather fragmented research interest. Thus, there is hardly evidence about how this large-scale knowledge transfer has been achieved and what knowledge has actually been transferred to the GCC Islamic banks investing in Malaysia. Therefore, the aim of this research study is to develop a comprehensive Islamic banking knowledge transfer framework that serves as a basis for future research agenda. The study focused on the cases of the Islamic banks' subsidiaries in Malaysia that are fully owned by GCC Islamic banks. The respondents were the experts who are well aware of their business to answer the survey questionnaire. This study is mixed method type of research study. A survey questionnaire was used as a guideline to compose specific questions related to the conceptual model. This is followed by interviews that were conducted with the respondents to investigate the model's constructs and then to analyse the generated propositions in order to address the main research questions. This study tested the research propositions and found that, the integration between HQ bank and its subsidiary bank, the strategic role and the ability of the subsidiary bank to engage in Islamic banking knowledge transfer are

related to the development of Islamic banking knowledge transfer capabilities. Besides that, the development of Islamic banking knowledge transfer capabilities, as well as organizational and cultural distances between HQ bank and its subsidiary bank are related to the Islamic banking knowledge transfer performance. In short, the findings of this research study have not only contributed to the literature, but also provided valuable information to both managers and policy makers on the matter of transferring the knowledge of Islamic banking. The study recommends the top management to implement KT practices that need to be made known and felt by all levels of bank units' members. Managers have to pay attention to the development of communication technologies, personal contacts, training efforts and relations of trust between the employees, because it is an important factor for a successful knowledge transfer process. Finally, the findings of this study are useful, but need to be strengthened by future research work.



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## ABSTRAK

Anak syarikat bank Islam Majlis Koperasi Teluk (GCC) yang telah melabur di Malaysia telah menyaksikan laluan semakin sukar buat mereka. Mereka terikat dengan pulangan yang rendah dan tersepit dalam persaingan sengit dengan bank-bank Islam Malaysia tempatan. Persaingan yang semakin meningkat dan kelembapan ekonomi telah menggalakkan syarikat multinasional untuk mencari jalan baru bagi meningkatkan kecekapan dalaman dan prestasi mereka, ia adalah sangat penting bagi mengekalkan daya saing syarikat multinasional, tetapi proses pemindahan ilmu secara berkesan di seluruh unit berlaku dalam kalangan bank-bank Islam antarabangsa, namun tidak banyak penyelidikan yang telah dilakukan dan jika ada, ianya agak tidak sekata. Justeru, hampir tidak ada bukti tentang bagaimana pemindahan pengetahuan besar-besaran ini telah dicapai dan jenis apakah pengetahuan yang sebenarnya telah dipindahkan kepada bank-bank Islam GCC yang melabur di Malaysia. Oleh itu, tujuan kajian ini dijalankan adalah untuk membangunkan satu rangka kerja perbankan Islam dan pemindahan pengetahuan kewangan yang komprehensif yang aman ia berfungsi sebagai asas kepada agenda penyelidikan pada masa hadapan. Kajian ini telah memberi tumpuan kepada kes-kes anak-anak syarikat bank-bank Islam di Malaysia yang dimiliki sepenuhnya oleh bank-bank Islam besar GCC. Responden kajian ini adalah terdiri daripada pakar-pakar yang sangat berpengalaman dalam perniagaan mereka untuk menjawab soalan kaji selidik. Kajian ini adalah kajian kaedah campuran. Soal selidik telah digunakan sebagai garis panduan untuk membina soalan khusus yang berkaitan dengan model konseptual. Ini diikuti dengan temu bual separa berstruktur yang telah dijalankan dengan responden untuk menyelidik pembinaan model dan untuk menganalisis

janaan cadangan dalam usaha menjawab persoalan kajian utama. Kajian ini telah menguji cadangan penyelidikan dan mendapati bahawa, integrasi ilmu antara ibu pejabat bank dan anak syarikatnya, peranan strategik dan keupayaan anak syarikat bank untuk melibatkan diri dalam perbankan Islam dan pemindahan pengetahuan tentang kewangan adalah berkaitan dengan pembangunan perbankan Islam dan keupayaan pemindahan pengetahuan kewangan. Selain itu, pembangunan perbankan Islam dan keupayaan pemindahan pengetahuan tentang kewangan, perbezaan organisasi dan budaya antara ibu pejabat bank dan bank anak syarikat adalah berkaitan dengan prestasi perbankan Islam dan pengetahuan tentang kewangan. Secara ringkasnya, hasil kajian ini bukan sahaja menyumbang kepada literatur isu pemindahan pengetahuan antarabangsa dan perbankan serta kewangan Islam, tetapi juga memberikan maklumat yang berharga kepada kedua-dua pengurus dan pembuat dasar tentang isu pemindahan pengetahuan perbankan dan kewangan Islam. Kajian ini mencadangkan pengurusan atasan untuk melaksanakan amalan KT yang perlu diketahui dan dirasakan oleh semua peringkat unit anggota bank. Pengurus perlu memberi perhatian kepada perkembangan teknologi komunikasi, hubungan peribadi, usaha latihan dan hubungan kepercayaan antara pekerja, kerana ini merupakan faktor penting untuk proses pemindahan pengetahuan yang berjaya. Akhirnya, penemuan kajian ini amat berguna, tetapi perlu diperkukuh dengan kajian pada masa akan datang.

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

GCC	-	Gulf Cooperation Council
HQ	-	Headquarter
MNC	-	Multinational Corporation
KT	-	Knowledge Transfer
KM	-	Knowledge Management
BNM	-	Bank Negara Malaysia
MIFC	-	Malaysia International Islamic Financial Centre
AMCC	-	Arab Malaysian Chamber of Commerce
MIDA	-	Malaysian Investment Development Authority
SSM	-	Suruhanjaya Syarikat Malaysia
INCEIF	-	International Centre for Education in Islamic Finance
FDI	-	Foreign Direct Investment
IJV	-	International Joint Venture



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the study

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has been described as a fast-paced and ever changing world (Schwandt and Marquardt, 2000) because of the impact of globalisation, advances in technology, the importance of developing a knowledge society, and the shifting of demographics (Lucas and Rivera, 2006; Prange, 1999; Swain, 1999; Toffler, 1990). The unpredictable nature of such changes has forced many organisations around the world to make significant transformations to survive and to succeed (Edmondson and Moingeon, 1996; Jorgensen, 2004; Schwandt and Marquardt, 2000). As a result, a strategic focus on learning has become a critical lever in helping institutions to adjust to changing business conditions and to remain competitive (March, 1991; Volderba, 1996).

In this context, knowledge has become one of the most strategically-significant resources (Grant, 1996) and there is increasing recognition that the competitive advantage of firms depends on their ability to create, transfer, utilise and protect knowledge assets (Teece, 2000). Since very few firms are able to develop a wide range of knowledge internally, firm accessibility to a broader knowledge base through external learning has attracted the attention of both practitioners and scholars in strategic management who analyse the knowledge transfer process both from an intra-organisational and inter-organisational point of view. Over the past decades, strategic alliances have become not only one of the most successfully internationalisation modes used by firms (Inkpen, 2003), they have also become the

most used organisational form for absorbing and creating new knowledge (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990; Van et al., 1999). The explosive growth of international strategic alliances as a firm's way to enter markets as well as a mode to acquire new knowledge has affected the complexity of academic research about international cooperation and the knowledge transfer process because of the existing links between international knowledge transfer, strategic alliances formed and cross-cultural variations.

Duan et al., (2010) mentioned that knowledge is shared between geographically dispersed individuals and organisations across cultural and national boundaries. Therefore, understanding how knowledge can be transferred from one organisation or sub-unit to another is extremely important. Knowledge transfer is one of the most important stages in knowledge management. However, it is laborious and time consuming. It happens through Multi-National Corporations and transnational organisations (Coakes, 2006). From a knowledge-based perspective, Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), Zack (1999) argued that managerial capabilities and knowledge-based resources are the most relevant to the achievement of a firm's competitive advantage (Bae and Lawler, 2000; Fey and Beamish, 2000; Barry Hocking et al., 2004) and financial performance is the outcome of past or present competitiveness (Depperu and Cerrato, 2005; Musasizi, 2010; Usunier, 1998; Teece, 1981).

A major competitive advantage of multinational corporations is their ability to exploit locally created knowledge worldwide (Gupta and Govindarajan, 2000; Kogut and Zander, 1995; Nohria and Ghoshal, 1997; Ambos and Schlegelmilch, 2002). As Multi-National Corporations aim to replicate their success across borders, they 'will need to focus not just on what they know, but how they gain that knowledge and diffuse it throughout the enterprise' (Riesenberger, 1998). In this context, knowledge plays an important role for the internationalisation of banks and the ability to compete successfully in foreign financial markets.

At the initial stage, domestic banks have substantial advantages compared to their foreign competitors due to their information about local markets and customer requirements (Steiner and Eller, 2008). In order to overcome this information disadvantage and to compete with domestic banks effectively, foreign banks need to possess ownership advantages in the form of knowledge-based assets. In terms of a more dynamic economic environment, the intangible knowledge-based resources are

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