KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER PRACTICES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: MALAYSIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Sulzakimin Hj Mohamed, Seow Ta Wee
Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia
(zakimin@uthm.edu.my, tawee@uthm.edu.my)

ABSTRACT
The infrastructure development managed by local governments which starts from pre-construction to the occupation of the building needs a sustainable development approach for sustainability. Since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, all sectors of society have been in the process of pursuing sustainability within their specific contexts. Development planning involved various stages and design inputs from various design consultants such as architects, town planners and engineers. Staff in local governments should possess knowledge on sustainable development and able to reflect it on their practices. However, it can be seen on the improper management of waste that led to pollution that is not in the practice of sustainable development. Therefore, local governments’ staff should have a better understanding of sustainable development. Accordingly, this research focus is aimed on the role of the Local Governments with regards to knowledge transfer practices towards sustainable development. This study is to contribute to the enrichment of knowledge on the practices of sustainable development at Local Governments.

KEYWORDS: local government, knowledge transfer practices, sustainable development

1. INTRODUCTION
Malaysian Local Governments face the challenges where they need to tackle sustainable development’s issues (Chung & Lo, 2007; Mohamed, Seow, & Goh, 2014). Moreover, the demands for better services are on the rise. Hence, Local Government is often viewed as an institution that provides services to its local communities, where the responsibilities in exercising great influence over the social and economic well being of local communities (Chung & Lo, 2007; Horne & Hayles, 2008; Mohamed, Seow, & Goh, 2014). This means that it is where a local community is served by a government that is local and near to the community.

Moreover, local government takes responsibility for the environment, social and economic development of that the good governance should have proper top to down approach knowledge transfer practices (Becheikh, 2010; Manaf, Samah, & Zukki, 2009; Mohamed et al., 2014). The local government through the policy, programs, plans, and strategies oriented people to choose sustainable development. However, sustainable development cannot develop without an appropriate knowledge in governance. Hence, knowledge transfer can be thought of as a cycle where knowledge is communicated around in the organization and to the community via a variety of methods. Moreover, it is crucial working at various levels of management to promote the sustainable development of local government. This study aims to study the perceptions at Malaysian Local Government towards its role in sustainable development.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
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 Programme (UNEP) in Rio de Janeiro (1992) (Keitsch, 2012; Paper, 2012). The characterization on the impact of economic, social and environmental development was later and accordingly, those aspects are a major concern in local governments globally when dealing with development of a country. However, a clear definition of sustainable development still heavily discussed even though the Brundtland Report’s definition is widely-quoted (Clemencon, 2012; Evans & Steven, 2012). The challenge is to solve matter regarding the needs of citizen in a sustainable manner, so as to generate continuing development and activities that meet the needs of the people and protecting, sustaining and enhancing the human and natural resources for the future.
Moreover, the needs to manage knowledge is essential in minimizing resource consumption while enhancing development (Abidin & others, 2010; Mohamed et al., 2014). The developed countries paid a high price when growing their economies and only realized it when the damage is already been done. In addition, when the activities are not properly managed by the local governments, the negatives impact as flooding are imminent and it will cause hazards to society, economy and environment (Manaf et al., 2009; Mohamed et al., 2015; Sasitharan, Ismail & Ade Asmi, 2012). Public and local governments should be able to understand this and the awareness is important to minimize the hazardous environment to earth.

The local governments’ function involves large resources and variety of mechanisms (Bacot, McCoy, & Plagman-Galvin, 2002; Hussai, 2006; Nooi, 2008). More often than not, implementation and enforcement are not under great obligation to reflect sustainability deliverables. Hence, the knowledge of sustainable development should be inculcated as in training and encouragement from management. Therefore, local governments should not view sustainability as a luxury addition to normal practice or a necessity to drive business and development decisions. It should motivate local governments as well as stakeholders to equip its staff member with adequate knowledge of sustainable development.

3. METHODOLOGY

The purposive sampling is used to get the target sample selection of individuals/groups based on specific questions/purposes of the research in lieu of random sampling and on the basis of information available about these individuals/groups (Brandimarte, 2011; Creswell, 2003).

Hence, the subjects of this study are selected based on:

1. Local Government that promotes sustainable development. City - called City Hall or City Council (e.g. Kuala Lumpur City Hall), Municipality - called Municipal Council (e.g. Ampang Jaya Municipal Council) Special and modified local authority - called Corporation, Development Board, Development Authority or simply Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan.

2. Respondent selected at Local Authority based on the department that related to the issues or agenda of sustainable development which revolve around the issues or agenda in building. The department involved:
   I. The Department of Regional Planning
   II. The Department of Architecture
   III. The Department of Engineering
   IV. The Department of Building and Maintenance

   The department may vary at different Local Government; however the functions are fundamentally the same with different name being used. For example, some Local Authority uses The Department of Development Planning instead of Regional Planning.

3. Respondent in the selected Local Government that his/her work related to the management/policy/implementation or enforcement of sustainable development which revolve around the issues or agenda in building. The respondent chosen:
   I. Manager/Head of unit
   II. Engineer/Architect/Planner
   III. Technician/related staff
   IV. Enforcement officer

4. Consideration is made that those selected for interview would represent a fair distribution of appropriate employees in these departments in such a way that each individual has an equal chance of selection (Babbie, 2010; Bryman, 2006). Selection of the respondents is based on the position in the department and work scope.

4. ANALYSIS & DISCUSSION

All respondent view that Local Governments have played some role in imparting awareness in sustainable development to the private sectors as depicted in Table 1. Since sustainable development issues have been around for more than 10 years now and Local Governments should already impart awareness with sustainable development principles (Sustainable & Studies, 2007; Winston & Pareja Eastaway, 2007). From the interview, three respondents mentioned there were policy, competition and expert advice involved in Local Governments to disseminate awareness of sustainable development. Six respondents believed that the encouragement came in terms of seminar, policy, rules & regulation and training.

In Table 1, eight respondents believed that expert advice, policy, rules & regulations and training are major aspect in disseminating awareness of sustainable development. They argued that these are necessary in ensuring the transfer of knowledge in sustainable development. Respondent R16 replied “..it is necessary to
inform the staff involved that they must have knowledge in sustainable development and be able to convey it …to inform about sustainable development….”. In particular, the role of organizational knowledge depends on how human resources are managed and local governments’ officer must know his/her role (Kane, 2010; Mohamed et al., 2014; Osterloh & Frey, 2000).

Table 1: Local Governments’ role in acquiring and disseminate knowledge in Sustainable Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response from:</th>
<th>Key Themes</th>
<th>Activities such as recycling programme</th>
<th>Seminar on Green</th>
<th>On-line training</th>
<th>Expert advice/ counsel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R4,R7,&amp; R9</td>
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<td>R3,R10, R12&amp;R15</td>
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<tr>
<td>R1,R2,R5,R6,R8,R13,R16&amp;R17</td>
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<td>R11&amp;R14</td>
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Respondents gave various views on how Local Governments acquire and disseminate knowledge of sustainable development. They argued that Local Governments gave various training and activities in sustainable development even though it might not specifically incline towards sustainability elements. 3 out of 17 respondents mentioned there training in sustainable development and expert advice involved. Four respondents mentioned that the training came in terms of activities such as usage of technology, recycling programme, seminar on Green and on-line training. Another eight respondents mentioned that training, recycling program, expert advice and on-line training are involved. Lastly, only two respondents mentioned the involvement of training in usage of technology, recycling programme and on-line training.

Respondent R3 concluded that “…sustainable development is being introduced at local governments, education is the key….policy must be addressed so it can be a guide…”. Respondent R15 suggested “…sustainable development should be learned by those/staff that without proper education by activities such as recycling program, seminar, on line training….apart from that the expertise from stakeholders or related sources …”. (Bratianu, 2010) implies that issues relating to training is valuable for the knowledge transfer practices in an organization. Moreover, Ndlela (2010) suggests that expert advice in sharing the knowledge is important. In relation to that, innovation and process both emerged as areas where there are great examples of good practice but also room for improvement amongst many Local Governments in sharing the knowledge. Thus knowledge transfer practices as in training, on line learning, on job training, mentoring and expert advice are essential part for the role of Local Governments.

The result demonstrates that staffs need to increase their level of awareness in the role related to sustainable development. In view to that, it contributes to the lack of knowledge in the practice of Local Governments in sustainable development. In particular, organizational knowledge depends on how human resources are managed and it is interconnected. Human resources absorb, transfer and create knowledge fostering the achievement of a competitive advantage of the organization. In order to fulfill that objective, it is necessary to create a feasible environment to knowledge communication. From the interview, the initiatives for training in sustainable development taken by Malaysia are in response to the needs identified in Agenda 21 as well as those identified through the five-yearly Malaysia Development Plans and the longer-term Outline Perspective Plans. Therefore, factors that can generate and influence the role of Malaysian local governments as to enhance the sustainability deliverables in planning approval at local governments.

5. CONCLUSION

Over the years, sustainable development has become an important aspect for local government to deliver its services. Sustainable development has added new dimensions to the management in Local Government. With ever increasing dependency on fossil-fuels and a diminishing supply of resources, human need innovative and cutting-edge approaches in its role. Malaysia is aiming to achieve sustainable urban development in its cities. Hence, local governments must have the proper knowledge transfer practices in managing issues related to sustainability. However, this study finds it still averaging low in participating and
acquiring knowledge in its role towards sustainable development. In order to fulfill the required for sustainable development, it is necessary to create a feasible environment for knowledge management. Therefore, the role in sustainable development at Malaysian local governments needed to be given serious attention.

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Author’s Biography

Born on August 9, 1974, Dr Sulzakimin Hj Mohamed is a Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Technology Management and Business, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia. He acts as the Head of Land & Survey Lab for Construction Technology Management. Dr Sulzakimin had his secondary education at Malay College Kuala Kangsar, Perak. He has a Diploma in Land Survey from UiTM, Malaysia, B.Sc in Surveying & Mapping Sciences from UEL, UK, M.Sc in Construction Management from GCU, UK and a Ph.D from UTHM, Malaysia. He had various working experiences before joining UTHM such as at UiTM, POLITEKNIK, SEDC and GEOMATIKA College. He is also active on research and publication involvement related to knowledge transfer practices towards sustainable development where he manages to receive research grants from Ministry of Education Malaysia and Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia.