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**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
– Investigation of the Level of Sustainable Environmental  
Development Understanding and Awareness**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Sustainable development is not a new concept in the scenario of our life as it has been discussed widely in United Nation conferences such as Agenda 21 and Habitat Agenda before been introduced in Malaysia. These development policies encompass three general policy areas: economic; environmental; and social. Malaysia has affirmed its policy on sustainable development in the 7th Malaysia Plan in response to the Agenda 21. This 7th Malaysia Plan describes Malaysia's ability to develop in sustainable manner. Although there are many policies and campaigns being introduced and implemented, environmental problems still persist and a healthy environment is still continuing detrimental. This research, therefore, deliberated a focus on public participation in sustainable development. The objectives of this research were to identify the level of sustainable environmental understanding and awareness among Malaysian citizens and to identify the barriers that caused the lack of public participation in contributing to development sustainability. The communities of formal education institutions in the state of Johor were approached to get their responses towards the persistence of the sustainable understanding and awareness problems by questionnaires survey. The findings of this research identified the causes of the problems and the proposed solutions from the level of awareness and understanding of the respondents. The recommendation listed provides further enhancement in sustaining Malaysia urbanisation problems. Thus, it would help the concerned parties to take matters into consideration.

## ABSTRAK

Pembangunan mapan bukanlah suatu konsep yang baru dalam senario kehidupan kita seperti yang telah dibincangkan dengan panjang lebar di persidangan-persidangan Bangsa-bangsa Bersatu seperti *Agenda 21* dan *Habitat Agenda* sebelum diperkenalkan di Malaysia. Polisi-polisi pembangunan ini merangkumi tiga ruang polisi yang umum: ekonomi; alam sekitar; dan kemasyarakatan. Negara kita, Malaysia, telah mengesahkan penggunaan polisi-polisi ini dalam Rancangan Malaysia ke 7 sebagai tindakbalas kepada saranan Pertubuhan Bangsa-bangsa Bersatu dalam *Agenda 21*. Rancangan Malaysia ke 7 menerangkan keupayaan Malaysia untuk membangun secara mapan. Walaupun terdapat banyak polisi dan kempen diperkenal dan dilaksanakan, masalah-masalah alam sekitar masih berlaku dan persekitaran yang sihat semakin merosot. Oleh itu, penyelidikan ini dikhususkan kepada penglibatan masyarakat dalam pembangunan mapan. Penyelidikan ini mempunyai objektif untuk mengenalpasti aras kefahaman dan kesedaran warganegara Malaysia terhadap pembangunan mapan, dan juga untuk mengenalpasti kekangan atau halangan yang menyebabkan kurangnya penglibatan masyarakat dalam melaksanakan pembangunan mapan. Warga-warga institusi pendidikan formal dihampiri untuk mendapatkan maklumbalas terhadap kefahaman dan kesedaran pembangunan mapan menggunakan soal selidik. Dari dapatan penyelidikan ini, sebab-sebab permasalahan dan cadangan-cadangan penyelesaian telah dikenalpasti tentang tahap kesedaran dan kefahaman pembangunan mapan. Saranan yang disenaraikan memberikan panduan permurnian lanjut dalam memapankan bandar di Malaysia. Ini secara tidak langsung membantu pihak-pihak terlibat mengambil kira pembangunan mapan dalam soal pembangunan.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Background of the Research**

The concept of sustainable development has been introduced by the government since 1996 in Malaysia after realising that problems with pollution have spread all over the country. The developments impact in the country appears are not adhering the guidelines imposed by the authorities as the air, water and land quality were left in poor state. This detrimental of natural resources in long run impacts to the socio-economy and quality of life for Malaysian. Few campaigns have been introduced like 'Love Our Rivers' (Cintailah Sungai Kita) and 'Recycle' (Kempen Kitar Semula). Most of the campaigns are focusing on the natural resources such as rivers, forests and air quality that regarded to environmental sustainability. Environmental problems still persist in Malaysia, although having environmental policies and campaigns introduced and implemented to the public. The doubt arising at how far the above campaigns effectively affects to Malaysian positive attitude to response into this issues. The implementation of the policies has to be queried as whether which the human activities consumption and production patterns were not considered in a proper manner or ineffective ways.

Environmental problems are caused directly or indirectly by the patterns of production by industries, patterns of consumption and behaviour of the consumers. Mat Said A. et. al. (2003) identified that shaping of attitude and values, commitment and skills are needed to preserve and protect the environment begins at an early age. In ensuring the nation implies with sustainable environmental development, Malaysia is facing tremendous challenge which urban air quality, river water quality, deforestation, household wastes and hazardous wastes are some of the examples of environmental issues faced by the nation (Mat Said A. et. al., 2003). Various policies and strategies are currently developed and implemented by the government in accordance to ensure the sustainable development of the nation.

Shamsudin (2000) has argued the planning processes in Malaysia are largely a one-way communication process. No way could participants know how their views are being interpreted and evaluated, less still being informed of their outcome. This argument reinforces the need for a belief of the importance of public participation in the development of shared visions. Public ideas are needed to direct the political and economic debate, so that it will result in the new initiatives to conceive and promote sustainable living solutions (Zakaria, 2006). Malaysia needs to work towards sustainable planning by evolving development guidelines and policies with two-ways roles of attention i.e. from government and community.

The City of Sydney (City of Sydney, 2005) in Australia for example, implemented its development control plan to ensure that public participation with regards of development application and related matter is facilitated in orderly and transparent manner. This development control plan outline procedures for the notification and advertisement of the development applications, applications to modify development consent and the review of development consent; provide an opportunity for public participation in the development application process and invite comments; establish a communication process in relation to the assessment of development applications and related matters; increase public awareness of the development application process, specify circumstances when notification of the development application is not required; identify development applications that will be notified and those persons who will be notified; ensure there is consistency in the

notification of similar applications; and facilitate the efficient processing of applications without compromising the opportunity for public participation.

These examples above provide an indication of how appropriate planning can facilitate sustainable development, and furthermore, how public participation might be encouraged in order to influence the planning process itself. This paper, therefore, was inspired by the questions include: The level of understanding and awareness of Malaysian citizens in response to sustainable environmental development and barriers to get positive attitude citizens that responsible for sustainable development.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

The research will endeavour to focus on Malaysian readiness to participate in Malaysia's sustainable planning and development. The following questions arise in inspiring the research problem:

1. What are the level of understanding and awareness of Malaysian citizens in response to sustainable environmental development?
2. What are the barriers to get positive attitude citizens that responsible for sustainable environmental development?
3. What are the measures should be put in place to improve Malaysian education and awareness on sustainable environmental development?

### **1.3 Aim of the Research**

The aim of this study is to investigate the level of sustainable environmental development understanding and awareness among Malaysian citizens.

### **1.4 Objectives of the Research**

The research objectives essentially three areas of sustainable development in order to answer the problems as stated above. The objectives of this study are listed as follows:

- i) To identify the level of understanding of sustainable environmental development among Malaysian citizens
- ii) To identify the level of awareness of sustainable environmental development among Malaysian citizens
- iii) To identify the barriers that caused lack of public participation in sustainable planning and development.

## 1.5 Brief Research Methodology

This study will be conducted through several phases that will include literature review, data collection, data analysis, findings, and recommendations. After having the literature review determined as a framework for the research questions or hypotheses, a type of conclusive research is selected to get information that is useful in decision-making process or reaching conclusion.

Method of collecting data will be conducted by questionnaire survey. This method of questionnaire survey will be targeted public respondents.

The questionnaire form will be structured in five sections:

- i) Section A: Demographic Information
- ii) Section B: The Level of Public Awareness of Sustainable Environmental Development
- iii) Section C: The Level of Public Understanding of Sustainable Environmental Development
- iv) Section D: The Barriers or Constraints that Causes Lack of Public Participation in Sustainable Planning and Development
- v) Section E: Students and Teachers' Views in Improving Public Sustainable Development Understanding and Awareness

The analysis of the result will be applied by using the Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS), version 11.0 and a descriptive analysis.

## 1.6 Scope of Study

Students and teachers will be approached to take their views, perceptions and suggestions towards the problems. The targeted respondents in the area of Kota Tinggi, Johor are chosen due to close proximity for researcher and limited study time and budget. Method to be used in data collection is questionnaire survey.

## 1.7 Outline of the Thesis

This report consists of six Chapters. A brief summary of each is outlined below:

**Chapter 1** comprises the introductory section which develops the reason for the direction of this investigation. It also states the background of the research, the research problems, the aim of the research, the objectives of the research, a brief discussion on research methodology, the scope of the research study, and the outline of the thesis in each chapter.

**Chapter 2** describes the key terms used in this research. In the first part of the literature review, this chapter defines the words used in 'sustainable development'. Various means have been used to get the suitable, acceptable and nearest meanings of the terms used in this research. Also, the three key elements of sustainable development; social, economic and environmental, are explained elaborately in order to get the total understanding in doing the research.

**Chapter 3** explains the situation and condition of sustainable development in Malaysia. There are a few examples of the environmental sustainable development campaigns conducted by the Malaysian government in order to follow the directives and guidelines provided by the United Nation as stated and described in Agenda 21.

Also, the stakeholders involved in the sustainable development programmes are stated in this chapter.

**Chapter 4** presents the research design and methodology, including the research plan, the method of data collection, the participants involved in this research, the reliability and validity of the data collected from the survey, and the methods of data analysis to be employed.

**Chapter 5** comprises the results of the questionnaire survey and the analysis of the results. It explains the outcomes of the survey in obtaining the feedback from the respondents regarding the level of sustainable development awareness and understanding of the public and the barriers or constraints that causes lack of public participation in sustainable planning and development. Also, the suggestions and views from the students and teachers to improve the sustainable development understanding and awareness are taken, accepted and to be considered.

**Chapter 6** presents the conclusions and recommendations for the future study of this research.

## **1.8 Summary**

This chapter has just started the beginning of the research thesis. It has introduced the research problem and the research questions. The background of the Malaysian conditions has been described, the methodological approach has been introduced, the scope of study has been identified, and the format of the report has been outlined. With this foundation, the thesis can proceed with a detailed description of the research.