

APPLICATION OF THE LEARNING ORGANIZATION IN
A MUSLIM NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION

MUHAMMED FAUZI BIN OTHMAN

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (Management)

Faculty of Management
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

JANUARY 2014

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my dear parents, Haji Othman bin Haji Bachok and Hajah Maimunah bt Hj Badang for their relentless support and prayers for my success and well-being. Not forgetting my mother in law, Hajah Saodah bt Haji Abd Manaf and my dearly late father in law Hj Ali bin Kasim whom was not fortunate to be able to see me complete this work. To all my brothers, Fuad, Fahrurazi and Fakhrudin. May Allah bless us all and bestow His forgiveness.

And a special dedication to my sweetheart wife, Hajah Roziliah bt Haji Ali and all my dear daughters, Fathiah, Nida', Hanna and Humaira'. Their sacrifices will remain close to my heart.

To all family members and friends, especially my PhD mentor, and PhD "ngeteh" group, this dedication is to say thank you for staying dedicated to me. Only Allah is the most Bountiful and the most of Merciful.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the name of Allah, the One and only Lord, most Gracious, most Merciful, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds. Shalawat upon our beloved prophet Rasulullah (pbuh), his relatives and companions, and those following their footsteps until Judgement Day. To Allah the all Benevolent I shall offer my utmost gratefulness and thanks as only with His taufiq and hidayah that I was able to complete this daunting task in completing this PhD dissertation. Without Him, all would have been lost.

I would also like to express my appreciation to my Supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Rosman bin Md Yusoff for his guidance and support. Special thanks to my external advisor Dr. Dawood Al Alami (University of Wales, Lampeter), whom have given valuable insights during my PhD attachment program in the United Kingdom. My thanks also to my dear friends in ABIM Johor, especially to Associate Professor Ustaz Azmi Shah Suratman and Ustaz Abd Razak Aripin for their help and those in the central ABIM committee especially Dr Abd Razak (the former ABIM president) and Haji Amidi Abd Manan (the current ABIM president), to all in ABIM head office who have helped me directly or indirectly, and all my very respected and knowledgeable respondents who have shared light and insight with me to understand and learn from a Learning Organization such as ABIM.

My heartiest and warmest thanks to my treasured family, my father Hj Othman Bachok, my mother Hj Maimunah Badang, my mother-in-law Hj Saodah Abd Manaf, to all my brothers especially Angah, and a special thanks to my wife Ujie, and kids, fathiah, nida' hanna and humaira', thanks a million for motivating me to the very end. I wouldn't have crossed the line without you guys. Not forgetting to my "ngeteh" friends who have helped me through their ideas and support and all those jokes and advice to kept my chin up. I pray that Allah be the best of Saviour and Cherisher for us all. Amin.

ABSTRACT

This study was aimed at uncovering the learning history of Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), a Muslim NGO in Malaysia by employing the theories of Organizational Learning (OL) by Argyris and Schon (1978); and Learning Organization (LO) by Senge (1990). Both theories argued that only through empowering member of organizations through continuous and collaborative learning, organizational survival and competitiveness could be achieved. OL proposes the double-loop learning, the questioning of present principles, strategies and techniques in facing problems and challenges and applying new techniques based on renewed principles and strategies. On the other hand, an LO could be developed when the elements of mental models, personal mastery, team learning, shared vision and systems thinking prosper in the organization. As the researcher was keen to explore deeply into the learning activities in ABIM and experiences in the past 40 years, qualitative methods were employed in the study as it offers deep understanding to the phenomena as well as factors and reasons behind it. The Learning History Method as proposed by Kliener and Roth (1995, 95) to investigate the learning process undergone by ABIM members and at the same time allow the members to assess critically the learning history. It combines the action research meethod with oral history approaches in data collecting and analysis. In-depth interviews were done between January and April 2010. Data from the interview was also triangulated with archival analysis on ABIM's publications such as the Annual Presidents' Address and journals and magazines. Participative observation were employed to gain a deeper sense of understanding. Analysis of the data suggested that all the five elements of LO was strong in ABIM especially in the pre 2008 era. The infusion of the knowledge culture was central in encouraging continuous collaborative learning. Furthermore, the usrah helped members to share knowledge and experience in a vibrant and dynamic manner promoting personal mastery, team learning, shared vision and systems thinking. Organizational learning also produced three added values creating a model of holistic LO concept, with the unique spirit of brotherhood (*ukhuwwah*), sacrifice (*jihad and mujahadah*) and *syura* and *amal jamaie* (dialogue and collective diligence). This is illustrated in the Taqwa Model. Further scrutiny of the learning history showed evidence of double-loop learning in ABIM, as it had radically changed its *manhaj* and *wasilah* (methods and approach) in pursuing dakwah (Islamic propagation). This shows that the LO and OL approaches to organizational renewal and development is relevant and applicable to non-governmental organization such as ABIM and not only in business entities.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan menyingkap sejarah pembelajaran Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), sebuah gerakan NGO di Malaysia. Dua teori iaitu Pembelajaran Organisasi (*Organizational Learning-OL*) oleh Argyris dan Schon (1978); dan Organisasi Pembelajaran (*Learning Organization- LO*) oleh Senge (1990) telah digunakan. OL-LO mendakwa pembelajaran berpasukan dan berterusan dalam kalangan ahli organisasi penting untuk sesebuah organisasi agar mampu bersaing dan bertahan dalam dunia perniagaan kini. OL akan dapat dilaksanakan melalui *double-loop learning* (pembelajaran dwi-kitaran) iaitu dengan mempersoalkan prinsip, strategi dan teknik dalam penyelesaian masalah dan menghadapi cabaran serta mencadangkan teknik-teknik baru berdasarkan strategi dan prinsip-prinsip yang direkayasa. Sebuah LO pula dapat dibentuk melalui model mental (*mental models*), kemahiran diri (*personal mastery*), pembelajaran berpasukan (*team learning*), perkongsian wawasan (*shared vision*) dan pemikiran sistemik (*systems thinking*) kepada ahli-ahli organisasi. Bagi mendapatkan pemahaman mendalam terhadap pengalaman pembelajaran ABIM sejak ianya ditubuhkan 40 tahun yang lalu, kaedah kualitatif digunakan kerana ianya mampu memberikan pemahaman yang mendalam tentang sebab-musabab dan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi fenomena itu. Kaedah pensejarahan pembelajaran (*the learning history method*) oleh Kliener and Roth (1995, 95) telah digunakan bagi mengkaji proses pembelajaran dalam ABIM sambil memberi ruang untuk para ahli menilai pengalaman tersebut secara kritikal. Hasil dapatan dari temubual telah ditriangulasikan dengan data dari penerbitan termasuk dari ucapan dasar Presiden sempena muktamar tahunannya serta buku-buku, majalah serta jurnal yang telah diterbitkan ABIM, di samping penggunaan teknik pemerhatian partisipasi (*participative observation*). Dapatan menunjukkan bahawa kelima-lima elemen LO jelas hadir dalam ABIM terutamanya sebelum tahun 2008. Model mental Islam sebagai ad-deen serta penerapan budaya ilmu telah menjadi tunjang kepada pembelajaran berpasukan dan berterusan. Usrah pula telah menjadi wahana bagi ahli ABIM berkongsi ilmu dan pengalaman dalam suasana yang dinamik dan segar yang akhirnya melahirkan kemahiran diri, pembelajaran berpasukan, perkongsian wawasan serta pemikiran sistemik. Dalam pada itu, ABIM telah melahirkan tiga nilai tambah dengan pendekatan LO secara holistik, iaitu menyemai bibit-bibit persaudaraan ukhuwwah, semangat berkorban (jihad dan mujahadah) serta disiplin syura dan amal jamaie. Ini tergambar dalam Model Taqwa. Seterusnya pengkaji dapat melihat wujudnya pembelajaran dwi-kitaran (*double loop learning*) apabila ABIM beberapa kali ia menukar pendekatan (*manhaj*) dan kaedah (*wasilah*) dalam usaha dakwah serta pembudayaan ilmunya kepada masyarakat. Ini menunjukkan bahawa pendekatan LO dan OL adalah relevan bukan sahaja kepada entiti perniagaan akan tetapi kepada badan bukan kerajaan (NGO) seperti ABIM.

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LIST OF GLOSSARY

<i>Tajdid</i>	Renewed understanding
<i>Islah</i>	Reform
<i>Dakwah</i>	Islamic propagation/message
<i>Ad-deen</i>	Islam as a way of life/system of life
<i>Manhaj</i>	Approach
<i>Usrah</i>	Learning group/sharing of knowlegde and experience
<i>Tamrin</i>	Training sessions

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CHAPTER 1

“.....the empires of the future are the empires of the mind”.

Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister during World War II

1.1 Introduction

As societies and nations evolved from industrial-based to knowledge-based economies, companies, organizations and businesses have also changed their ways of operating in order to survive. Nowadays, the emphasis in organizations has shifted to quality improvement and thus supports the need for continuous learning. However, one thing needs to be highlighted here. When organizations are being forced to learn, it is the people within the organizations who need to change and learn. When learning among members of the organization is increased, the organization benefits from the process and eventually will be able to enhance organizational performance, competence and competitiveness, (Ashok, 2003; Milton, 2008; Samuel, 1999). Knowledge has now been regarded as a very valuable asset to the organization, if not the most valuable one. If steps are not taken to access, use and leverage knowledge, it could leave the organization at any moment. And when that happens, the organization will lose its most valuable asset and in the end could go into extinction (Iandoli and Zollo, 2007)

All over the world today, the wind of change in the emerging markets is greater than ever. Organizations and businesses have merged, new businesses are mushrooming, downsizing and upsizing are happening every where. Organizations have been merged and combined creating a marriage of organizational cultures and practices new to all. Companies have to face real-time challenges brought upon by globalization which is powered by the internet. Learning has become a must. Learning is regarded as a life-saving struggle (Kline and Saunders, 1998).

Today, the economy has shifted from looking solely at tangible returns to more intangible ones such as data, information, ideas and knowledge (Kolody, 2003). With the change of focus from the industrial labor-intensive economy of the World War I and World War II era, the economy has steadily shifted to the more open system (Weiss, 2001). During this period, concerns about the employees, the primary focus towards human relations perspectives and employee development heightened. Studies eventually widen its scope to include concerns about the well-being of human in the organizations to the growth and survival of the organizations (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995, Ashok, 2003). It is therefore found that fundamental to the survival of an organization, the ability to adapt and adopt, cope with changes and respond to the environment of the market and the world is vital. Experience of the organization in facing its problems and challenges from new knowledge and practices and is very valuable. Learning is a must and has to be done collectively (Murray, 2003).

Organizational learning and the creation of learning organizations is seen as an important subset of change and change management. Change introduced to create a competitive and vibrant organization will enable organization to effectively respond to the needs and demands of the market and consumer (Brown and Harvey, 2006) and Toffler (1990), sees change as the roaring current which could overturn institutions, shift values and shrivel our roots. Change must happen to any organization if it is to be relevant in future. In other words, the employer and employees, members of an organization must be able to analyze and learn from their daily experiences, the organization must start to learn as a team, collectively and willingly.

Learning has shifted from being something that gives added value to compulsory organizational activity. Its product, creativity and innovation is coined as the most important thing for sustainable development of an organization (Senge et.al., 2002, 2006). Collaboration, self-directed and experiential learning have been deemed as the ways to follow if an organization is to remain competitive through knowledge sharing and increased productivity.

In essence, the management science studies and researches has found that the element of learning has evolved from being a valuable asset, to being a vital asset, to be done collectively and ultimately being a must for an organization to survive. Hence the importance of this study to look into the matter of learning organizations in an NGO setting in Malaysia, specifically a Muslim NGO with the assumption that NGOs are not business oriented, thus the reasons to survive should differ from a business entity. Furthermore, the foundations of a Muslim NGO which is also an Islamic dakwah movement should vary from other NGOs.

1.2 The Impetus of Learning Organizations

The world today is a place of constant changes. In order for an individual or even an organization to face these challenges successfully, learning should become an integral part of their lives. Learning has become the critical avenue for understanding and adapting to the ever-increasing speed of change (Marquadt, 2002). After the Second World War, the advance of science and technology has been tremendous, and together with it comes the progress of manufacturing, industrial production and services. Adult education as well as training and development of staff, in the industry and services sectors, have gained prominence like never before. (Noe, 2001, Peroune, 2004)

This inevitably brought to the emergence of human resources development, a field of personnel management and development, to stay abreast with the demanding

world of production. “the word Human Resources Development” was first developed by Nadler (1970, 1989). It refers to the responsibility of employers to provide training and development to their employees in the form of education, training and development. This shows that learning is an important part of employee development (Ibrahim, 2003). Learning will enable the creation of knowledge and knowledge will then help the organization to stay abreast in the competitive world.

In the past two decades, knowledge and information has grown very vital until the icon “the information age” was coined. The field of life-long learning has become so important that it is the heart of the industry in the West as well as in the East like Japan and the Korean Peninsula. Learning and adult education in the form of training and development alone constitute more than USD 4 Billion a year (Noe, 2001). A study by the American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) has shown that investments in learning pay off. In the study on U.S major public based traded firms, 1996-98, it was found that investment in training and development (T&D) of employees improved their stockholders’ return by 6 percent and an increase in gross profit margin of 24 percent (Marquadt, 2002).

Organizations especially in the industrial and commercial sector have slowly understood the importance of learning and have supported the effort of training and re-training its staff especially in vocational and technical aspects where return on investment (ROI) could be easily measured and determined. Knowledge has emerged as the most strategically-significant resource of the firm. The ability to learn faster has given the competitive advantage over its competitors and sustainability (Ashok Jashapara, 2003).

The concept of learning and cognition (Nonaka, 1994), proposes a spiral of knowledge creation in which tacit knowledge is converted into explicit knowledge at an individual level and subsequently at the organizational level. Cognitive development can be viewed as organizational changes that affect the interpretation of events and the development of shared understanding among organization members. This will lead to behavioral development, which are new responses or actions based on existing interpretations (Fiol and Lyles in Ashok Jashapara, 2003).

In a true team learning, the joint skills of the team develops as the individuals in the team do so (Senge, 1999; Senge et al. 2002, 2006). This will in turn lead to new horizons and perspectives in the way an organization interprets, evaluate, plan and execute initiatives to face challenges in the corporate and business world. It has been proven that learning, training and development of the human resources could bring human capital accumulation on which organizations may build its competitive advantages and survive in this highly competitive business world (Arif Hassan, 2007). This include contributing to high performance (Samuel, 1999), high quality individuals and organizational problem solving (Shoroder, 1989).

1.3 The concept of Learning Organizations (LO)

The concept of learning took another quantum leap with the proponent of the learning organization. Early proponent of organizational learning (OL) and learning organizations (LO) could be seen even in the late 1800s. For example the concept of learning organization could be traced back to John Dewey in 1897 (Sta. Maria, 2002). The concept of learning and competence development was then develop further by Kolb with four stages of learning (Milton, 2008). According to Milton, the Kolb's four-level of learning could also be used as an organizational model of learning. This will further be discussed in chapter two of this dissertation.

Peter Senge (1990) published his "The Fifth Discipline" in 1990 and brought the learning organization theory into centre stage. Senge believes that in order to achieve continual improvement in an organization, the organization has to practice five elements that enhances the capacity to learn; mental models, personal mastery, team learning, shared vision and systems thinking. He claimed that organization in the future will truly excel if the organization is able to discover how to tap it's members commitment and has the capacity to learn at all levels. In an LO, people continually expand their capacity to create results desired, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured and collective aspirations are set free. In an LO,

people are continually learning how to learn together. Learning organizations are possible if the people in it love to learn (Campbell, 1997). Since then the learning organization concept has been much debated, researched and discussed for the past two decades.

The direction of the field has evolved from the discussion of philosophical and conceptual approach, to the criticism of not being practical enough to be measure, to being able to be empirically measured (especially in the Watkins and Marsick (1993) 7 dimensions of LO) to being divided into two schools of thought of late; one being focused on learning and the other on its products (Gilley et.al., 2001). According to Senge, learning organizations are organizations in which you cannot not learn, since learning is so insinuated in everyday lives. In this organization people learn in groups and continue to enhance their capacity to create new knowledge. In this way, the organization shall have the capacity to anticipate, react and respond to change. LO then is regarded as the solution to the problems faced by organizations due to increased competition and changes in their environment (Pedler and Aspinwall, 1998). On the other hand, Watkins and Marsick (1993) talked about the compelling reasons on why an organization could not avoid learning namely; changes in organizations either in the nature of work or in the experiences it went through from pain and crisis, visions of efficiency and productivity through synergy of the workforce, and desire to the leading organization.

The learning organization is the only way to give a competitive edge to the organization which intends to lead and survive in today's volatile and challenging market (Thayer and Hunter, 2008). Organizations are evolving and those that survive reflect structural flexibility and employee adaptability. Few organizations can function in today's technological and knowledge-based environment unless staff works as part of a cohesive team. More people at more levels in more organization must learn to master and lead change (Kanter, 2001). In fact, the concept of organizational learning and building learning organizations has now become even relevant in non-profit organizations such as education institutions, non-governmental organizations and others. Therefore, it can be said that not only learning is important

to remain profitable and competitive, learning is also relevant to remain in the scene of the world, learning is what makes us evolve and not die (Marquardt, 2002).

Learning also empowers the workforce. By enabling the employees to learn and upgrade their knowledge and skills, we will create an amplified human power (Senge et.al., 2004) As Peter Drucker says, the purpose of the organization or enterprise is to enable ordinary people to do extraordinary things. That is the key. The organization must understand that in order for the workforce to learn, the conditions must be conducive, the learning rewarded, communications and dialogue given ample room (Spector, 2002) However, the organization needs to also understand the adult learners. It is found in recent studies that learning organization culture shows a strong and positive impact on organizational knowledge-creation practices (Ji Hoon Song, 2008) Therefore, in order for the adult employees in the organization to produce and create new knowledge, a conducive learning organization culture should be provided and created for them.

As Knowles (1984) and Jarvis (1987) put it, adults are motivated to learn by internal factors rather than external. Adults also learn for the sake of satisfaction and to gain stature. As the self concept of adults is very much different from children, adults learn at a higher level of satisfaction and completion of the mind, self and meaning. (Jarvis, 1987) (Rogers in Jarvis, 1987).

To achieve the learning organization status, much has to be done. Learning must be the main agenda in any organizations, be it in the industry, governmental, private and non governmental. This is in line with what Senge has proposed that the learning organization will in turn create an environment whereby people continually expand their capability or capacity to create results desired and expansive patterns of thinking is nurtured. (Senge, 1990) Therefore systems and institutions will be in a constantly improvement mode which will make them highly competitive and relevant. In addition, one has to realize that the learning must be a comprehensive and concerted effort. There should be three levels of learning, the individual, the team and the organization. The environment must also be as conducive as it can be

and all these elements influence each other on the degree of learning, vision shared and knowledge created (Sta Maria, 2002)

The term learning organization as mentioned by Dewey refers to the belief that learning is the fundamental method of social progress and reform. Reforms that rest on law enforcement, threatening penalties are transitory and futile (Dewey in Sta. Maria, 2002). However, through learning, organizations and societies could formulate their own purposes, organize resources, analyze problems and factors and shape itself with definiteness. The utopia of the concept comes from Senge whom defines a learning organization as a place where people continually expand their capacity to create results they truly desire, expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, collective aspirations are set free and people continue to learn how to learn together.

In fact the majority of literature defines a learning organization as acquiring, improving and transferring of knowledge that improves individual learning (Campbell and Cairns, 1994). In this way, real learning will get to the heart of what is to be human. Humans, be it individually, in groups or organizations will be able to re-create themselves. People should love being part of a great team which cherishes the meaningfulness of their experiences. People should talk about being part of something larger than themselves, of being connected, of being generative.

It is vital to understand that organization will only learn through its members. Argyris (1978), an earlier proponent of learning in organizations stated that organizations learn through individuals acting as agents for them. The individuals learning in turn must be facilitated or inhibited by an ecological system of factors that may be called an organizational learning system. In many situations, we would observe whether learning will lead to observable behavioral changes. This is the view voiced by Huber (1991) whom claimed that an entity learns through its processing of information while the range of its potential behavior is changed. This means that if an organization or a society embraces learning and education in its system of life, behavioral changes should be evident. The learning that was inculcated in that

particular individual or society could be seen in behavioral changes. For example, in the way decisions are made, the way perception is formed, the way ideas are cherished and knowledge is appreciated.

McGill et al. (1992) on the other hand do not distinguish between organizational learning and a learning organization. He stressed that the most important point is that the learning organization is an organization with the ability to gain insight and understand from experiences through experimentation, observation, analysis and the willingness to examine both successes and failures. In this way, organizations will keep learning through its members by reinventing and innovation and will always be in front in the competition.

Nonaka (1997) whom calls a learning organization by the name of “knowledge-creating company”, argues that a learning organization must be a place where inventing new knowledge is not a specialized activity but it is a way of behaving, a way of being in which everyone is a knowledge worker. Thus the vision of the organization is shared, information is transferred and shared and learning is culture.

However, it is not easy to transform one organization into being a learning organization. The theory of LO is difficult to embrace, it is not just a superficial fix. The change expected to take place should be deeply rooted to deep beliefs and attitude of the organization.. It is a journey of change, incorporating new ways of thinking and interacting that affects all levels and systems in the organization. Only by addressing the attitude and beliefs can true change occur.

It is the people in the organization that use their experience and intuition to transform information into knowledge (Schultz, in Kolody, 2003). According to Irwan Shah (2005), there stood three main hindrance, in the Malaysian culture, in order to realize the learning organizations i.e. strong inclination towards hierarchical structure whereby the young or subordinate will follow whatever is decided by the older and higher office; rather timid in voicing out their views and critiques and not being straight forward in issues pertaining sensitivity and the obscured; and the third

factor is the confusion in understanding the methods of implementing the concept of a learning organization and lack of funding as well as support from the employers as well as the lack of interest in learning amongst the workers and staff of the organization. This is counter productive to the purpose of learning organizations. In learning organizations, dialogues need to be constantly held. In fact, for a double loop learning to occur, present practices and policies need to be critiqued and challenged.

1.4 Organizational Learning and the Learning Organizations

Although some scholars do use the term learning organizations and organizational learning inter-changeably, it is beneficial to note that the learning organization focuses on the form and functions of an organization that learns while organizational learning, on the other hand, focuses of processes within the organizations itself. Argyris and Schon (1978) the earlier proponents of organizational learning (OL) put down several requirements for the process of organizational to happen namely;

- a. learning agents' discoveries
- b. inventions and,
- c. evaluations.

For the process of OL to happen, all the three ingredients above must be embedded in the organization's memory. Without the encoding of personal experiences and knowledge into shared organizational theory-in-use, then OL could not have occurred in an organization. Argyris and Schon proposes the double loop learning which starts as a "single loop" learning when behavioural learning occurs in an organization. This entails the detection and correction of errors leading to modification of rules within the established set of governing variables. Thus this higher cognitive level is referred to as "the double loop" whereby the assumptions and principles of the governing variables are put under scrutiny, being challenged

and examined and subsequently modified to enable the organization to adjust to the market environment sustain itself. Hayes and Allison (1998) refers to Argyrus and Schon's "double loop learning" as "doing things better- for "single loop learning" and "doing things differently or doing different things" for "double loop learning.

Huber (1991) for example refers to organizational learning in terms of four constructs; i.e. knowledge acquisition, information distribution, information interpretation and organizational memory. The argument of organizational memory could be further explain by looking carefully and planning to transform individual learning and memory into organizational memory (Sta. Maria, 2002). Therefore, organizational learning aims at bettering the process of working and productivity through better knowledge and understanding of ones 'trade'. To put it in a simpler equation, ultimately, it is about growing something new (Senge, 1999). Therefore, OL is intertwined with a LO in many aspects as it give us a clearer picture of what is happening in a learning organization

1.5 Learning organizations studies in Malaysia

Although LO and OL has been around for about three decades in the western world of management, the learning organization concept is a newly researched concept in Malaysia even in higher learning institutions. This is particularly apparent in the non-governmental sector. Judging on the overall perception and understanding of the matter, studies about learning organizations and the learning taking place in organizations are still confined to governmental agencies and schools. This could be seen for example in studies done by Salleha (2001, Abd Rahman 2000, Abd Razak (2008) and Jasmin (1999). Related topics such as adult learning, continuation of education, training and development, the knowledge-based economy and human capital development has been debated and researched by many scholars though. In the Malaysian context, several studies have been done to look into the importance of adult learning and continuation of education. It is proven that adult education has

contributed to the enhancement of skills, knowledge and ability and the increase in production among Malaysian industrial and public sectors (Sta. Maria, 2002).

However, the impact of the concept of learning organizations on non government organizations or NGO is still rare if not non existent in Malaysia. This is partly understandable when we look at the emphasis of research and development that is but a small portion of our GDP. The learning and reading culture is still minimal (Dewan Masyarakat, Ogos 2007) and thus the urge of individual learning in and out of the organization is still low. Malaysians bare make it 3 books a year according to recent studies and according to the National Book Policy, we intend to achieve the target of 8 books a year in 2018. It shows that the culture of learning and discovering is still at an infant stage in Malaysia. Although we have seen positive changes, we are still far from achieving a climate whereby learning is the utmost importance in an organization, it is facilitated to the fullest, members of the organization is demanded that they share and voice out their opinion and ideas, and superiors appreciate whatever that is thrown to them in the name of learning. The organization should be skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge (Garvin 2000). In Malaysia, for example, we could see establishment of the Human Resource Development Fund (HRDF) Sdn. Bhd. In which employers are made to contribute compulsory funds to educate and train their employees.

Although LO in commercial or profitable organizations have been extensively debated and studied for the past 25 years, the application of a learning organization concept and setting in the non commercial or industrial setting is still much to be discovered especially in Malaysia. A study by Ahmad and Raida (2003) proved that there is a positive association between training and organizational commitment and that availability and support for training has positively contributed to overall commitment scores. In addition, a number of studies was done in the industry and government sectors, such as Mohd. Napiah (2003) who studied on organization registered with Federation of Manufacturers Malaysia (FMM) Johor; Ong Sheng Yih (2005) who studied on the implementation of the learning organization concept at V.S. Industry; and Nadirah Hassan (2003) who studied at Johor Corporation are among the few studies done. It is therefore seen as a new

exploration to study this topic as how it is being embraced by the NGOs in Malaysia, especially Muslim NGOs such as Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM), Teras Pengupayan Melayu (TERAS), Jemaah Islah Malaysia (JIM) and Persatuan Pengguna Islam Malaysia (PPIM).

The Malaysian society is fast approaching its vision of achieving a developed nation by the year 2020. Among its seven points of application is the vision of being a contributor to technology and not as a mere user. This will only be realized when the society embraces the learning and inquisition spirit, continually learning and educating itself and keeping abreast with current and future technologies. The current Prime Minister Dato' Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi strengthens this concept by the introduction of the Masyarakat Hadhari which also stresses on the power of knowledge as its fourth pillar. Indeed to build a civilized society or masyarakat hadhari, Muslims have to return to the glorious era of the Muslim during the 1st through 7th Hijrah centuries when knowledge and civilization prosper and the many Muslims scholars such as Aviceenna, Rhazes, al-Ghazali, Ibn Fahalan, were born (Mohd. Nakhaie, 2004) This is in line with the teaching of Islam as revealed in the Holy Quran, surah al-Mujadalah : verse 11 which mentions that Allah will give a high place to those are learned as well as posses strong faith in Allah.

Building a knowledge loving society surely will be a big task for the nation. Therefore, learning organization has to be established not only in the industry and commercial sectors. Such organizations should be in the heart of the society and among them, Non Governmental Organizations (NGO) should be among the fore-players.

This is evident in various studies such as Norsman (1997, Sta Maria 2002) and others which proposes that the practice of organizational learning in creating a learning organization is not only vital in commercial and manufacturing environment but also in the voluntary and public sectors. To remain relevant, even public sectors has to be in learning mode. To achieve this, idealists like Senge (1990, Garvin 2002, Watkins and Marsick 1993 and Nonaka 1997) argued that the organization has to be

inclined to allow learning to be apart of the culture if not the culture, where people continually learn how to learn together. The members of such organizations should be fully skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge and at the same time are able to modify their behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights. It should be a place where inventing knowledge is not a speacialized activity, but indeed it is a way of being where everyone is a knowledge-worker.

1.6 Learning organizations versus traditional organizations

There are two significant differences between the content of a learning organization as oppose to other organizations. (Braham, 1996). The first is the employees in an LO learn about the business of their company/organization. They have more information on various business strategies and targets such as sales target, marketing plans and financial statements. These information is no longer for the executives and managerial eyes only since employees will be empowered to make more decisions in the overall context of business. In the traditional organization, employees are usually kept away from decision making and with it from vital information about the organization. Secondly, individuals learn how to use themselves as tools. LO has discovered that “soft is hard” meaning the soft skills such as interpersonal skills, creativity, responsiveness to change, and learning how to learn are skills that serve a person well and is vital to the organization in the global marketplace.

Stata (1989) and Hammer (1993) mentioned that a learning organization should have some of the characteristics below such as; a) empowered employees, b) flexible and team-based working, c) flatter organizational structure, d) cross-functional cooperation and working, and e) incorporation of training and development as an integral part of organizational activity. Of course traditional organizations are built upon a different setting. The structure, for example shows hierarchical form, jobs are done in sectoral manner and employees are not empowered but are viewed as subordinates.

Nonaka (1998) stressed on the ability for LO to make the activity of knowledge-creation as an everyday task, where everyone is a knowledge-worker, not a speacialized one which is done by only one unit or division of the organization. In addition, an LO should eventually make learning as a way of behaving and a state of being.

Other notions includes Garvin's (1993) discussion on knowledge creation-acquisition-transfer and dissemination, and ultimately the modification of behaviours based on the newly acquired knowledge. Koffman & Senge (1993) went another step ahead by describing LOs as "practice fields" and the concept of "community of practice", a concept quite alien to traditional organizations.

On the other hand, Watkins and Marsick (1992 & 1996) talked about the Learning Organization Action Imperatives. In the model shown below, Watkin and Marsick explains that the in the learning organization, learning starts from individuals in the organization, but as it approaches the bottom half of the triangle, learning becomes a complex and expanded activity where collaborative learning is employed in unit, clusters, team and networks. Although the individual could initiate changes, the organization especially the management and leaders should be supportive in creating the infrastructure and culture for learning. The LO Action Imperatives as seen below, proposed by Watkins and Marsick shows that an LO will enable its members to maximize learning through:

- i. empowering people towards a collective vision
- ii. establishing systems to capture and share learning
- iii. encourage collaborative and team learning
- iv. promote enquiry and dialogue, and
- v. create continuous learning opportunities.

These five action imperatives will help the organization towards continuous learning and change, thus making it competitive.

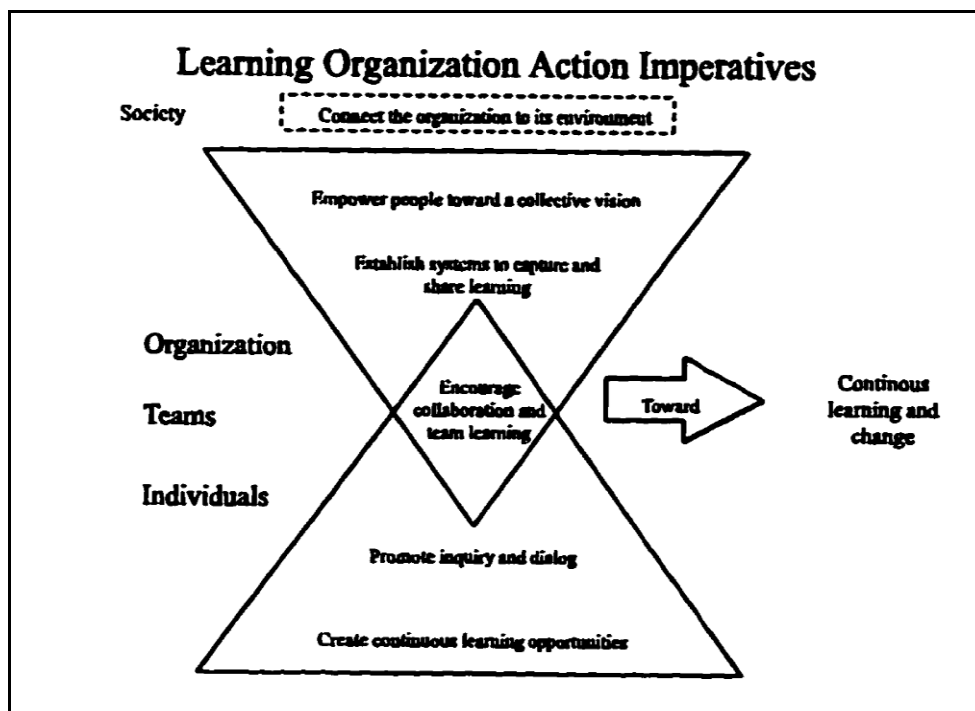


Figure 1.1: Learning Organization Action Imperatives. Adopted from Watkins and Marsick (1992)

The notion of learning organizations and organizational learning is somewhat different from the holistic view of learning in the teachings of Islam. LO and OL proponents views learning as an imperative to help organizations to prosper and do not go beyond this. However, Islam views learning quite differently as explained below.

1.7 Islam the Religion of Knowledge and Learning

The emphasis of learning and knowledge acquisition in Islam could never be over emphasized. Islam as the religion of about 1.6 billion people in the world, second only to Christianity (Mesut et.al., 2006) is the religion of knowledge as we could see that the first revelation received by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is on knowledge itself. Al-Quran, surah al-Alaq: 1-6). It is so important that the prophet Muhammad himself decreed that learning is compulsory to all muslims, male and female alike (Imam al-Ghazali, 2003). It is learning that enlightens the mind thus

making the muslim community (al-ummah) supposedly to be the learned and conscious society. This could be seen in the long history of the Islamic world where the thinker and innovaters like Ibn Sina (Avicenea), Ibn Rusd (Avvaroes), Ibn Batuta and Ibn Majid has shown to the world.

The emphasis of learning in Islam however is quite significantly different from that of the west. Learning is viewed as the one way of empowering the human mind to seek Allah (the One God Almighty), and to undertake his task as the viceroy of Allah. (Ghazali, 1983, 2005; Haron Din, 2007; Abd Halim, 1984). The role of human in this world is to establish Islam as the governing laws of mankind and administer or manage the resources bestowed by Allah using His law and jurisdictions (Abdul Hadi, 2003). This will create an Islamic Civilization or *al-Hadharah Islamiyyah* on the face of the earth. Learning in Islam is not restricted to only help the organization to prosper, it helps individuals to become a good person, a productive member of an organization and a respected member of the society.

There are several objectives of education and knowledge acquisition as proposed by (Abdul Ghani, 1984, Mohd Yusuf Othman, 2001, Abd Halim, 1984) which are:

- a. as a lifelong quest
- b. holistic development of the human being encompassing the *ruh* (spirit), *aql* (mind), *jasad* (physical) and also covering all aspects such as cognitive, affective and vocational)
- c. *Ubudiyyah* (servitude) and *Khalifatullah* (vicegerent)
- d. As beneficiary to administer the world
- e. Holistic in the inculcation of *al-iman* (faith) and *al-ilm* (knowledge)
- f. To gain happiness and success in this world (*ad-dunia*) and hereafter (*al-akhirah*).

As a Muslim NGO which is very serious in introducing a holistic and inclusive concept of education especially among the Muslim community, ABIM has decided to adopt the concept of education as proposed by Islam and translated by the many scholar as we have discussed above. This could be clearly seen in the establishment of ABIM's education system which starts with the Taman Asuhan Kanak-kanak Islam (TASKI), the Sekolah Reandah Islam (SRI), Sekolah Menengah Islam (SMI), and the Kolej Dar al-Hikmah (KDH) which is at the tertiary level. All these learning institution incorporates religious and revealed knowledge into the academic and

sciences knowledge in their schooling system. In addition, ABIM has always actively participated in programs to promote knowledge acquisition, engage in dialogues, organize seminars, publish reading materials such as books, journals and magazine and most of all encourage members to participate in weekly team learning sessions called as *usrahs*.

Although Islam agrees with the importance of vocational, occupational and organizational education and learning, the horizons of learning preached by Islam is much more wide and longitudinal as it sees mankind to the life in hereafter. In Islam, the question of holistic approach, where the emphasis of life in the hereafter and worldly gains, is balanced in every aspects of life (Muhammad Syukri, 2007; Abdul Halim and Muhd Uthman, 2001). The main focus of any development, activity or even learning itself is to maintain obedience to Allah (also called *al-ubudiyyah*) and also the realization of *al-maqasid al-syar'iyah* (principles of Islamic syariah/laws). In the course of that action (*al-ubidiyyah*), Islam does not neglect the need for development and the well-being of life in this world (Mahmood Zuhdi, 2007). In fact, according to al-Ghazali, learning is the ultimate way for a Muslim to know Allah. In the classification of knowledge itself, the highest source of knowledge which is undisputable is from revelation, from Allah Himself (Abdul Salam, 2003). He added that there are three process whereby knowledge could be acquired: through our senses, knowledge through the mind and the process of thinking, and knowledge which is derived from the revered/sacred heart. The ultimate aim of the knowledge acquisition exercise in Islam is to develop *al-insan al-kamil* (the perfect being) with the prophets as the perfect models.

Thus in the concept of learning and organizational learning, it could be said that the same fundamentals applies. Instead of looking at the western concept of LO which focuses on the ability to cope with changes in the market, globalization and the business world, Islam must have a different view which incorporates the responsibility of *al-ubudiyyah*, and the upholding of *al-maqasid-al-syar'iyah*. In addition, as humans are the vicergence of Allah, he/she must also manage the resources available to him/her to create excellence and gain happiness in this world

and hereafter. Learning to perform well in the organization is not excluded. How this could be materialized is yet to be investigated.

Learning in Islam transcends beyond knowing itself. It aims to lead an individual from the state of knowing to the state of being (or from learning to practice, theory to practical) (Sahadat, 1997) It is thus a comprehensive process of psychological, intellectual, emotional and spiritual growth of human personality. (Husain and Ashraf, in Mesut et.al 2006) Thus it is clear that knowledge and learning has a high and special place in Islamic teachings.

In fact, in the realm of vocational and occupation, learning and the process of *tahsin* (ever improving) has always been observed. For example, the prophet Muhammad pbuh said in a tradition related by Imam Muslim, “Truly Allah has enjoined goodness (*ihsan*) with regard to everything. So when you kill, kill in a good way; when you slaughter, slaughter in a good way; so everyone of you should sharpen your knife and let the slaughtered animal die comfortably”. (an-Nawawi, 2001) (In this sense, the prophets preaches the perfection of the skill and instruments to slaughter. It is then clear that when widen to a bigger scope, Islam proposes the perfection of knowledge, skill and ability in all aspects of life as seen in the verse “...truly Allah has enjoined goodness (*ihsan*) with regard to everything...”. This could be seen in the perspective of working in the organization whereby learning and acquisition of knowledge would very much promote productivity, liveliness and competitiveness to organizations be it small or big, commercial or governmental or even non-governmental alike. In short, the management of knowledge through dissemination of tacit knowledge which will entail the realization of a LO among Muslims NGOs would be an important question to be answered if these NGOs are to sustain its survivability into the next decade or even beyond it.

As Muslim NGOs are organizations that are rich with learning experiences and activities, the learning history methodology, as introduced by Kleiner and Roth (1995), will be applied. This is in accordance with need at hand that is to deeply understand and research the systems, policy and developmental stages of learning

culture and tacit knowledge transfer in the Muslim NGOs. It is also suitable as it will look into the learning efforts documented by the Muslim NGOs and the longitudinal struggle with change gone through by the NGOs. (Kline, 1998) This study would employ a qualitative approach by using in depth, semi structured interviews. However, if needs persist, quantitative methods could also be used especially to gauge the level of learning organization practiced by the Muslim NGOs. This could be done by using the through the investigation of the learning efforts in ABIM specifically during the 1990s. Using the concept of organizational learning and double-loop learning as proposed by Argyris and Schon (1978) and the Learning Organization model by Senge (1990), the study wishes to uncover the ability of ABIM to learn from its history, give a critical account of what has transpired and rediscover itself in a learning history document to be produced at the end of the study.

As discussed earlier, the concept of learning in Islam differs from those of the liberal-secular western civilization. Although in some instances, the West acknowledges the existence of spirituality and religious content, it tries to separate these elements from the concept of knowledge and thus in learning itself (Louay Safi, 1996). This stems upon the basis of natural sciences, empirical studies and investigations which was initially proposed by Francis Bacon, Descartes (in Ghazali Basri, 1990) and the like. According to western understanding of knowledge, revealed knowledge or religious knowledge which is heavily believed by the church could not be empirically or scientifically proven, and thus in some instances be rendered as fictional or even fantasies. This eventually led to the separate ways to view knowledge and knowledge acquisition in Islam (Mohd Idris, 1990)

Quite contrary, Islam upholds revelation (holy Quran) and al-Hadis (traditions of the Prophet Muhammad- pbuh) as the highest and undisputable source of knowledge (Abdul Salam, 2003, Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, 1997, Abd Halim, 1991). This will then be translated into the philosophy, aim and implementation of knowledge acquisition in practice. The aim of knowledge acquisition goes beyond making sense of information and the development of knowledge, skill and attitude

(SKA) but ultimately is to develop pious and a god-fearing person (Mohd. Yusuf, 2002; Zaini, 1989). The Tradition of knowledge acquisition in Islam is central to character building and is a part of the process of understanding and knowing God, a spiritual journey. (Al-Ghazali, 1983, 1997; Hassan, 1985; Mohd Kamal, 1985). Learning, in Islam, is the ability to develop one's potentials in all the dimension of a human being i.e. physical, spiritual, emotional and intellectual. Therefore, not only the intellectual and psychomotor potentials are augmented, the affective and spiritual well-being will also be developed. (Abdul Ghani, 1984; Abd Raof, 1989; Al-Ghazali, 2005) Thus, learning is a holistic process. The creation of a tauhidic-paradigm person like this will enhance the quality of the individual/employee. The challenge lies in translating these principles into operational and measurable variables for developing human resources. So far, the majority of the HRD and OL literature and theoretical framework has been on physical and tangible attributes, excluding spiritual and emotional planning, execution and evaluation (Kirkpatrick, 1994; Bloom, 1956; Kolb 1994) .

On the contrary, Islam sees vocational and occupation as a part of a holistic worldview of life and obedience to Allah (Haron Din, 2001). Work and occupation is deemed as a part of general as signaled by a few verses in the Quran (al-A'raf: 168; al-Mulk: 15; al-Baqarah: 168). Therefore Islam sees quality beyond being profitable or competitive per se (Toto Tasmara (2002). The process of enhancing productivity and quality in the work process include the organizational learning and the adaptation towards changing requirements. By being a LO, longevity and survivability of the organization could be achieved. The findings of this study is hope to shed light on how this concept could be operationalized in an LO setting.

1.8 The Importance of Knowledge in Islam.

Perhaps the first motivation for knowledge is the Qur'anic command to all Muslims to seek knowledge. The very first verses to be revealed to our Noble Prophet sallallaahu `alayhi wa sallam (may Allaah exalt his mention) was concerned with reading and writing.

The Qur'an says: "Proclaim! (or Read!) in the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created - Created man, out of a leech-like clot:

Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful, He Who taught (the use of) the pen; taught man that which he knew not." (96:1-5)

In the above passage, man is encouraged to read materials available to him in order to acquire knowledge. The secret of knowledge, according to the Glorious Qur'an, is not esoteric: it is only a system of applying one's faculties to the acquisition of knowledge through extensive reading.

Next to reading is the principle of questioning. The Qur'an says: "Ask the followers of the remembrance (i.e. Divine Book) if you know not." (16: 43)

It is evident from this Qur'anic passage that it is not enough to read, rather it is equally essential for a reader to ask questions as he reads. If a mind is not willing or not awake or too lazy to ask questions, such a mind will not be able to grasp what he reads. Thus critical thinking and questioning constitute the basis of the Qur'anic approach to learning.

Another very important principle of learning to which Qur'an attaches real importance, and which many people overlook is traveling. The Qur'an encourages undertaking travels in search of knowledge, and for the purpose of study of the condition of different lands and people. Mention must be made of Al-Bukhari, who traveled for about 16 years during which he collected 600,000 Hadiths. His collection became the most important of the six authentic books of Prophetic traditions, which have an unquestionable authority, second only to the Qur'an itself.

Finally, a seeker after knowledge, according to the Qur'anic approach to learning, must treat the whole society in which he lives and the entire world at large as his own institution of learning bearing in mind that life is one long learning process. Summarizing this principle, the Prophet (peace be on him) was quoted as saying: "A piece of knowledge from wherever gained is like a lost property recovered; let him who finds it take it as it was his own."

In the organizational or governance perspective, knowledge has been made as one of the most important pre-requisite to success. For example is the story of Thalut and Jalut as described to us by the Quran. Thalut, the leader of the Muslim army during the time of Prophet David was appointed as the leader by Allah because he possessed strength and knowledge (piety) (Surah al-Baqarah: 246-251). The importance of knowledge was also stressed by Allah in the appointment of Prophet Adam (as) as the knowledge bestowed by Allah qualifies Adam (as) to the khalifah on the earth (Surah al-Baqarah: 30). Therefore in order for the human being to be successful, and in the management sense of discussion, for the organization to be successful, it has to empower its members with knowledge.

1.9 Islamic Revivalism in Malaysia in the 1970s.

Since the fall of the Turkish-Ottoman Islamic Caliphate in the 1920s, the Islamic world has struggled to unite all the Muslims in the world and to pursue the true understanding and adherence of Islam. The decadence of the Islamic world from being a civilization epicenter in the Umayyad, Abbasid and Ottoman days, to being colonized by western powers such as the British, Dutch and Spaniards has made the Muslims around the world to yearn the comeback of an Islamic community that professes Islam and practice the Quran and the Sunnah. This has brought the struggle of revivalism in the understanding and practice of Islam among Muslims around the world. Through of several scholars such as Voll, Burget and Dowell (cited in Jan A. Ali, 2012) the term revivalism carries the meaning of reassertion, awakening, renewal, resurgence, reformation and fundamentalism. However, many Islamic revivalists movement of the modern era tend to distance itself from fundamentalism by engaging western ideas, systems and model and associating it with Islamic values. According to Jan A. Ali (2012) these movements are concerned with the replacing of the unIslamic practices in either normative or ritualistic practices in life to that of the pristine Islamic cultural and spiritual values. The ultimate aim of Islamic revivalism is the reaffirmation of the principles of the Syariah

(sharia- Islamic law) and eventually the remake of the society based on the blending of religion and politics. Although Islamic revivalists are highly localized, they all show strikingly resemblance with each other. This could be seen in their main objectives i.e. (i) to return life to the Quran and the Sunnah; (ii) to create the Muslim global community and; (iii) to strive for the well-being of the Muslims.

Through time, these Islamic reassertion movements have evolved into three distinct groups with different approaches (Hunter , in Jan A Ali, 2012; Camroux, 1996; Ameer Ali, 1984). The first group is the group that retreats from the modern and material world, creating a small or micro-community which tries to live on the fundamentals of the Islamic teachings as they see it. The second ones are those who became flexible and accommodative towards the western and non-muslim world. These groups are modernists, made-up of professionals and educated individuals. Instead of withdrawing from the society, they see engagement as a source of dakwah or Islamic propagation, often trying to infuse Islamic values in whatever, whichever and whenever possible in the western of unIslamic systems, models or practices. The third group are those who take up the defensive reaction, always contradictory and in conflict towards the West or non-Muslims, even resorting to takig up arms.

Malaysia has also experienced a considerable rise in Islamic revivalism especially in the 1970s (Barraclough, 1983;). The effect of these movements have in the end changed the landscape of socio-political Muslim society in Malaysia from the heightened of understanding and practicing of Islamic teachings, up to the establishment of Islamic institutions and policies such as those adopted by the ruling United Malays National Organization (UMNO) and its counterpart the Parti Islam seMalaysia (PAS) or the Islamic party of Malaysia. (Barraclough, 1983; Mohd Hashim, 1998). Such policies includes the Dasar Penerapan Nilai-nilai Islam (1983), Dasar Islam Hadhari (2004) and the infusion of Islamic values in the government services including the introduction of Islamic banking and finance, as well as the introduction of Islamic values into

the education system. The PAS state government in Kelantan introduced the “Hudud Bill” which is the basis of Islamic penal code as its effort to return to the Islamic legal foundations.

The manifestations as mentioned above actually stemmed back to the Islamic Revival Movements in the 1970s in Malaysia. Islamic revivalism or sometimes referred to as Islamic revitalism, Islamic resurgence and Islamic reassertion is a struggle, often taking the shape of a group effort, be it formal or informal, which objectives are to reinvent (tajdid and islah) the Muslim community around the world and return the muslims to the teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah and reestablish the Islamic societies with its institutions and systems. Although Islamic revivalism has been brought about by the Arabic-educated Malay scholars such as Syed Syeikh al-Hadi and Syeikh Tahir Jalaluddin and the like in the 1920s, the second wave of Islamic revivalism in the 20th century, which were spearheaded not by ulama’s and lebais but by youths and students in the 1970s were the ones that has left lasting effect to the Muslims in Malaysia (Abdul Rahman, 2009; Hassan, 1990; Nagata, 1982). The Islamists, as they were oftenly referred to, were successful in many facets of their struggle, from changing the mindset of the people towards Islam and practicing Islam as a way of life, up to the large-scale changes in governmental policies, infusing Islam in the political, social and economic systems. The Islamic revilatalists in the 1920s were probably the first inflow of Islamic ideas mixed with the idea of Malay-Muslim ethnic consciousness under the banner and symbol of Islam (Nagata, 1982; Ameer Ali, 1984) The urge to develop the Malay-Muslims well-being, as they were then colonized by the British Empire has fuelled the activists of the scholars in the Kaum Muda or the young faction. They talked about participating in modern education, upheaving Malay economics and social stature as well as to return to the basics of Islam as stipulated by Quran and Sunnah and eventually the creation of a Pan-Islamic society around the globe. The Young Factions used publications to drive their way and spread their words and attacked many orthodox Islamic practices held by the establishment which are labeled as Kaum Tua (Old Factions). This created tension between the two Islamic divide.

On the other hand, the Islamic revivalism movements in the 1970s lived in a post-independence Malaysia, eager to establish a more Islamic Malaysia which was deemed as still following much of the secular British legal and administration system although physically free from their colonizers. Most of the movements were more interested in realizing their dreams of an Islamic society through the establishment of policies, creation of a micro-society, institutions and moreover proposing to the government and the society more Islamic models to be introduced into the society. In this way, Islamic revivalist tend to shy away from the fundamentalist or conservative image they have in the western world but tries to infuse Islamic values towards western ideas and concepts (Nagata, 1980). In fact, Stark (2005) argued that Islamists in Malaysia such as the Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) and Parti Islam seMalaysia (PAS) have shaped the political and social landscape of Malaysia to a larger extent and has surpassed the orthodox and terrorists image given by earlier critics. Hoebink (1999) and Raymond (1994) discussed about how the extensive dialogue and debate on Islamic ideals, secularism and modernization has brought forward reformed understanding that western knowledge, ideas and systems could be enhanced through Islamic values inception as such proposed by Ismail al-Faruqi (1997) and Syed Mohamad Naquib (1978). As a matter of fact, the Islamic revivalism in Malaysia has been quite significant since it has influenced the perspective and approach of the government and the society. The government of Malaysia has since been more inclined to incorporate Islamic values in its policies, including introducing a formal policy to infuse Islamic values into the government delivery system in 1982 (Dasar Penerapan Nilai-nilai Islam) by the then Prime Minister Dr Mahathir and later on by his successor Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi by introducing the Islam Hadhari (Civilizational Islam) during his tenure. This has significantly boost the Islamic image of the government locally and abroad (Wain, 2009; Stark, 2005). However, I could be said that to a certain extent, these efforts are a response to the relentless dakwah effort spearheaded by these dakwah movements such as al-Arqam, Jamaat Tabligh and ABIM (Mohamad Bakar, 1981; Nagata 1982) plus a reactive response to its main political rival, the Parti Islam se-Malaysia (PAS) which is dominated by Islamic scholars and dakwah activists.

1.9.1 The Three Main Islamic Revivalist Group in Malaysia

Many scholars (Nagata, 1989 & 1982; Mohamad Bakar, 1981; Abdullah AlGhanim, 2002; Mohamad Nur Manuty, 1990; Mohamad Hashim, 1998; Kamarulnizam, 1998) have argued that there are three Islamic revivalist group in Malaysia which has emerged around the early 1970s. These three Islamic revivalist groups are the major ones beside political parties which are also interested in making Islam as a foundation for its struggle namely the Parti Islam seMalaysia (PAS) and United Malay National Organization (UMNO). The three Islamic groups which have operated as grassroots and masses movement are Jamaat Tabligh, Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) and Darul al-Arqam. This section will give a brief background of the three groups mentioned above.

Among the three, the Jamaat Tabligh is thought to be the earliest of them all, originated from India under the leadership of Maulana Ilyas al-Kandahlawi (Jan A. Ali, 2012). Many see Jamaat Tabligh as a worldwide dakwah grassroots movement which emphasizes in the return to the principles of dakwah and the practice of Islam as taught by the Quran and Hadith and taking minimal interest in worldly lives giving way to simple and Islamic way of life. According to Alexiey (2005) the Tabligh movement has no formal organization and thus is not overly eager in publishing its organization, nor details in its activities. Dr Mumtaz Ahmad (cited in Jan A. Ali, 2012) purported that the approach taken by The Jamaat Tabligh is not based on books and publications but more on personal experience embodiment of knowledge. Dr Mumtaz argued that many scholars are reluctant to classify the movement as an Islamic Revivalist but rather a reform grassroots movement which uses traditional halaqah methods. This was also commented by Professor Metcalf (2010) whom described the movement as a non publishing, introvert movement, traditionalist and more of a face-to-face or heart-to-heart movement without a formal institutionalized form. In her writing, she also said that without any formal bureaucracy, it is difficult to give an accurate number of its members and the actual structure of its administration. The looseness of the Jamaat Tabligh's movement could even

be seen when it does not affiliate itself to any political ideology, nor any of the four main school of Islamic jurisprudence namely the Hanafi, Syafie, Maliki and Hambali schools. However, informally, the influence of the Hanafi school is evident since the movement started in India. Although the Jamaat Tabligh always maintained its apolitical stand and non aggression towards the establishment in any nation, in the West, sometimes it is still being connected to terrorist links by western intelligence. (see Fred, B and Stewart, S, 2008 or report by Graeme Fuller, former CIA intelligent officer or Alex Alexiev, 2005)

According to Mohamad Bakar (1981) the Jamaat Tabligh movement is non-political in nature and urges the people to strengthen their iman (faith) and amal (practice). Self purification and dakwah (propagation) in the main activity as the group goes from one mosque to another to spread the word of Allah. In Malaysia, Jamaat Tabligh was introduced in the 1970s. Although its former center of operation is at the Masjid India in Kuala Lumpur, currently its main operation center is at Sri Petaling with branches in all states in Malaysia.

The second movement to be discussed is the Darul Arqam. The Darul Arqam adopted its name from the name of one of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) companion, Arqam bin al-Arqam whom had allowed his home to be the center of learning and dakwah in the early years of Islam in Mecca. Although seen by the Malays as a dynamic dakwah group, participating in many facets of life including the social development and economic progress (which it has been proven quite successful), some scholars deemed at the Darul Arqm as a fundamentalists group, conservative and held the orthodox principles of Islam (Fadzillah, 1988; Funston 1981; Von Der Mehden, 1986). Although this might not be the real case, the misunderstandings could be understood as there were some characteristics of the movement which is seen from an outsider would be orthodox and conservative in nature (Haddah, 1982; Mortimer 1982). Among them are the approaches it takes in propagating the message of Islam.

The Darul Arqam was seen as a movement which tries to emulate the traditional Islamic micro community building with its villages established in Kampung Sungai Penchala initially, and then nationwide. The villagers wore turbans and robes to follow the dress-code of Medina/Mecca era of early Islam. The founder and later supreme leader of the movement, the late Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad was in his early years as a child and youth trained in the art of Sufism, focusing much in individual purification and cleansing of the heart. (Kamarulnizam, 1998). Ustaz Ashaari was a religious teacher with the Pusat Islam and a member of PAS for 10 years. In 1968, he and a few of his colleagues started a halaqah (discussion circle) in Dato Keramat in a house called the “Rumah Putih” or white house due to its colour. In 1971, Ustaz Ashaari experimented with Jamaat Tabligh and later ABIM. He was offered the Yang Dipertua (Head) post of ABIM Selangor state but decline and was later appointed as the chief of the dakwah bureau in ABIM Selangor.

Then in 1975, the Darul Arqam moved its base to Kampung Sungai Penchala, in Selangor. It became a model self-sufficient Islamic village for long. In 1994, there were 48 such villages throughout the country. Although the Darul Arqam was able to spread its wings nation-wide, and even to Indonesia and Southern Thailand, it has no official membership, no forms to fill and no fees. This is mainly due to its strength to be able to capture the hearts of the Malays, especially urban Malays (Mohamad Bakar, 1981). Anyone who shares the same views and aspirations of the Darul Arqam, that is to establish an Islamic based society is welcomed. It is estimated that at the time of it being outlawed, it has about ten to twelve thousand members and around two hundred thousand sympathizers (Kamarulnizam, 1998). According to Nagata (1984), because the Darul Arqam preaches its member on purifying one mind and soul, distancing themselves from worldly lives, some members even went to extremes by discarding their TVs, radios, furnitures and the likes. The establishment of the 7th century Arab culture and villages has somewhat brought to lack of social interaction with the outside world.

One interesting thing about the Darul Arqam was its ability to appeal to the urban Malays although its approach is retrospective. In a study done by Kamarulnizam (1998), he found that this was due to several reasons. The first is the charismatic leadership of Ustaz Ashaari Muhammad. Secondly, the Darul Arqam guides its members back to basics of Islam, preaching on the importance of one's relationship with Allah (*hablum minaAllah*) and self correction. Thirdly, as does the Jamaat Tabligh, the Darul Arqam does not use jargons but simple concepts of iman and taqwa which is easy to follow and understand. Many of its member of the Council of Syuyuks (Syeikhs) are educated and urban-based Malays although there were accusations of kinship domination. The reason being, that Ustaz Ashaari's sons and son in law were among the high ranking syeikhs of the Darul Arqam. The Darul Arqam also tries to establish its learning activities through classes, sermons, audio tapes, video tapes and some publications, however since it is not a formal organization and does not have official membership, it is quite difficult to see its learning activities in the eyes of a formal organizational learning perspective as purported in the LO and OL concept.

The third organization, which is of interest in this study, is the Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM). As Nagata (1981, 1982, 1984), Mohamad Bakar (1981), Barraclough (1983), Hassan Mutalib (1990) put it, ABIM was a formal and registered Non Government Organization (NGO) which has played a significant role in dakwah movement and influenced the political and social development of modern Malaysia. Unlike Jamaat Tabligh and Darul Arqam, ABIM showed a strong interest in incorporating and the adaptation of the Western ideas and system in its quest of Islamic propagation (Von Der Mehden, 1986). Its main concern is in education, especially at the tertiary level, and thus always trying to urge its members in the inculcation, discussion and sharing of knowledge. The world "budaya ilmu" or knowledge culture has been made a part of its organizational culture statement (see ABIM homepage for ABIM's organizational culture) and this was seen in its many activities in scholarly manner including the usrahs, tamrins, seminar and publications. This study was

keen to assess this knowledge culture in relation with organizational learning and the formation of a learning organization.

Since its early inception, ABIM has called for reform in education, economic, social and political spheres (Nagata, 1984). And to achieve this, ABIM chose to activate its members in engaging a wide range of discourse, Islamic, western, even socialists and obscured publication. The aim was to be able to converse in many perspectives and eventually arrive to the best conclusion. ABIM was established as a continuant of Pertubuhan Kebangsaan Pelajar Islam Malaysia (PKPIM) as the latter was a platform for Muslim-Malay leaders at school and university level. The next step, as youth, ABIM is the answer (Muhammad Nur, 1989; Zainah Anwar, 1987). ABIM was also a way out for Muslim-Malays with an Islamic flavor as youth movements at that time like the Gabungan Pelajar Melayu Semenanjung (GPMS) and Malayan Association of Youth Council (MAYC) could not offer this. In 1970, the announcement to the founding of ABIM was made at the yearly muktamar (Annual General Meeting) of the PKPIM. In 1972, ABIM was officially registered with the Registrar of Societies. By 1972, ABIM has seven thousand members, 1980- thirty-five thousand and in 1997 an estimated number of fifty thousand members nation-wide. Kamarulnizam (1998) argued that the majority of the ABIM members are educated urban Malays and its power base is in the university campuses. 32% of its members are white-collar professionals while its Central Executive Committee (CEC) is being dominated by degree and PhD holders. This is largely due to its formal nature and academic-knowledge appeal.

Because ABIM is frequently engaged with Islamic scholars locally (the likes of Syed Naquib, Uthman el-Muhammadiy, Pak Natsir, Pak Hamka) and internationally like the Ikhwan Muslimin in Egypt, Syeikh Dr Yusuf al-Qardawi, Syeikh Abbas Madaniy, Syeikh Tahir Jabir el-Elwaniy, Dr Ismail al-Faruqi and the like, critiques of its leadership's lack of Islamic credentials were lessen (Zainah Anwar, 1987). On the contrary, people from various professional backgrounds, lecturers, lawyers, engineers, businessmen and even some laymen started to learn Islam in their usrahs and tamrins. However, other critiques

like the inability of ABIM to appeal and understand rural people has always surfaced.

The non-formal education system is one of the most important part in ABIM. ABIM established its non-formal learning system in the usrahs and tamrins (Hassan Mutalib, 1990; Mohamad Bakar 1981). Members are usually indentified by its usrah units and could be gauged by his/her participation in usrahs. Apart from that, ABIM was also active in promoting seminars, dialogues and discourses.

According to Zainah Anwar (1987), ABIM leaders back then were mostly avid readers, reading publications on Islamic movement by Syed Qutb, Hassan al-Banna, social well-being from Paolo Friere, Henry Pirenne and the lot, Malay-Muslim literature of Pak Natsir and Pak Hamka and many more. As students, ABIM leaders used to frequent lecturers' rooms and homes to get involve in discussions. Among them were Prof Dr Syed Naquib al-Attas. The hunger for knowledge has also led to the publication of books and also the setting-up of the Dewan Pustaka Islam (DPI). Overseas, ABIM also assist others by handing over aids in terms of education, building schools and medical aids through its arm Islamic Outreach ABIM (IOA).

1.10 ABIM as an organization that emphasizes learning

The 1970's has seen the start of Islamic revivalism around the world. (Mohd Bakar, 1981; Nagata 1980, 1982; Stark, 2005). The Islamization efforts in Malaysia has significantly brought change to the political, social as well as economic landscape of Malaysia. As compare to other parts of the world, Islamization in Malaysia fell on "a fertile land" (Ameer, 1984; Stark, 2005) as the agenda of Islamic revivalism was being accepted by the majority population and the bumiputera of Malaysia, the Malays. As the Malays were trying to develop modern identity and

progress, and was the main part of the governing and administration of Malaysia, Islamic agenda was given a due attention. Even the United Malays National Organization (UMNO) the ruling party of Malaysia, a secular and British-friendly party (when it was founded in 1946) was attracted to the agenda of Islamization as it was seen as the main agenda of a newly independent nation. Islam was connected to education, social well-being, progress, economic building and political struggle.

As argued by various scholars, the Islamic revivalism in Malaysia in the 1970s and 1980s was active, fluid and represent a myriad of approaches and perspectives. Among others, Parti Islam Semalaysia (PAS) had chosen the political approach, participating in elections since 1951 up to the present. The Al-Arqam and the Jamaah Tabligh was also influential. (Mohd Bakar, 1981; Nagata, 1980, 1982; Ameer, 1984) The Al-Arqam was especially successful for its economic endeavors, being able to introduce the Islamic brand of goods and products such as tomato and chili sauce, soya sauce, even nasyid artists (choir groups) such as the Nada Murni. Al-Arqam was also famous for its creation of its micro society at the Perkampungan Islam Sungai Penchala, a village which was established to house the Al-Arqam leaders and members and to implement its Islamic aspirations then. On the other hand, Jamaah Tabligh which was an extension of a global Islamic propagation movement centered in India. Its main agenda is to encourage Muslims to return to the sunnah (the ways of the Prophet Muhammad pbuh), going from mosques to mosques to spread the word of iman and amal (faith and practice). ABIM however chose quite a different approach.

Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM) has been around in the Malaysian society for more than four decades. The main purpose of the formation of ABIM is to elevate the condition of the Muslim society or *ummah* in Malaysia by returning to the principles of al-Quran and *as-Sunnah* (Constitution of ABIM, 1998). However, ABIM has chosen the medium of learning to propagate its message. From the time it was established in 1971, ABIM has made education and learning as one of its foremost concern. ABIM was adamant that education is the main instrument to augment the ummah. (Siddiq and Muhammad Nur, 2003) Dr. Osman bin Bakar, a scholar whom was once the Head of The Education Bureau of ABIM expressed that

ABIM emphasizes learning as it would be the main instrument to improve the condition of the ummah. (Osman, 1993) This could also be seen from ABIM's organizational culture which is centered in these five main pillars (www.abim.org.my: 15 Sept 2010), namely

- i. To enliven the spirit and enculturation of knowledge
- ii. Observe ruhaniyyah (spiritual enlightenment) elements
- iii. Adhere to the principal of syura (consensus) and 'amal jama'iy (collective effort)
- iv. Acknowledging and participating in discussion and action pertaining current issues
- v. Conform to the spirit of *jihad fi sabilillah* (struggle for the improvement of the *ummah*)

The establishment and development of the knowledge culture in ABIM is a central issue in ABIM's struggle (Ahmad, 1990; Wan Mohd Nor, 1990; Mohd Kamal, 1985; Hassan Langgulung, 1985; Siddiq Fadhil, 1985, 2011; Hazri and Khairudin, 2004). The knowledge culture is shaped using several strategies such as:

- i. Enculturing the reading culture, exposing members and the society to a wide variety of reading material in various subject matter and genre
- ii. Developing the culture of debate and discussion with the insertion and assertion of its adab (conduct) al-ikhtilaf, husnus-az dzan (positive perspective), and understanding the levels and holistic approach of knowledge. This is evident through-out ABIM's activity including usrah (the main and basic unit of continuous learning), tamrin (training sessions), seminars and public lectures, publications of book, journals and magazines etc.
- iii. Establishment of formal education institutions from the elementary level up to the tertiary level
- iv. Taking part in the infusion of values and understanding knowledge in the the society and to a certain extent, the government policies, including the process of islamization (the reinventing of understanding Islam as a complete way of life)

Since its formation, ABIM has embarked in the process of education the society with its approach of Islamic propagation (*dakwah Islamiyyah*) and Islamic education (at-tarbiyyah). (Mahyuddin, 2004) This could be seen in the approach that ABIM has taken in the last three decades. For example, one only need to see around to see the commitment of ABIM in providing education to the public especially to those whom wanted to have a holistic approach towards life. This could witnessed through

ABIM's effort in establishing its own formal education system. Although the history of ABIM has seen it transformed into various directions, the main business still preserved to this day is education and Islamic education. The education system promoted and established by ABIM starts with the pre-school kindergarten called Taman Asuhan Kanak-kanak Islam (TASKI). Among the first TASKI established by ABIM are the TASKIs in Kedah which began in 1975, the TASKI al-Huda in Melaka (in 1979), TASKI Teras Jernang Selangor and TASKI Masjid Batu Hampar in Pendang Kedah, (Mahyuddin, 2004). However the actual curriculum for the nationwide TASKI was only tabled in the national muktamar (AGM) in 1982. In 2002, the number of TASKIs nationwide has reached 358, with 20,000 students and 976 teachers. The aim of pre-school education in TASKIs are:

- i. To build the foundation of tawhid (Islamic theology- Allah the one God) among children
- ii. To present the learning experience and stimulus in an Islamic perspective in developing the physical, spiritual, emotional and intellectual potentials
- iii. Nurturing Islamic akhlaq (personality)
- iv. An introduction to life with a tauhidic paradigm
- v. Foundation to everyday communication
- vi. Introducing the Islamic way of life and building childrens' potentials to face future challenges

These children then, becomes feeders to the primary schools established by ABIM called the Sekolah Rendah Islam (SRI) (first established in 1989 at Kajang, Selangor) and further on the secondary schools Sekolah Menengah Islam (SMI) (first established in Perak in 1989). ABIM has also been providing tertiary level education which is recognized by the Lembaga Akreditasi Negara (LAN) named Kolej Darul Hikmah (initially known as Institut Ilmu-ilmu Islam-IPI- started operations in 1989). This shows that the role of ABIM as the education services provider is evident for the past 30 years.

On the other hand, ABIM also promotes learning in informal and non-formal settings among its members and also the public. The approach of learning as proposed by the prophet Muhammad s.a.w. is put into action by ABIM. For example we could refer to the system of collaborative learning practiced by ABIM (Sidek, 2005). This includes weekly group discussions (*usrah*) where intellectual and

religious topics are discussed and presented. ABIM also holds quarterly training sessions (*tamrin*) which is a bigger arena for discussion and debate. This sessions will involve a bigger audience usually at state or regional level. And usually, ABIM will hold seminars and workshops throughout the year especially during its annual grand meeting (AGM) which is usually organized simultaneous with a regional if not international seminar. All this have shown that ABIM is serious in implementing a learning culture among its members and also to the public.

Throughout the 38 years of ABIM's history, it has taken various stand and policy in realizing its role in the Malaysian society and in the Muslim world (Lum, 2001). It has changed its stance several times, from being a "restless youth movement", to "partnership in nation building", to "advocate of Islam", and to "political friendly NGO". This could be seen below.

Table 1.1: Stages of ABIM's Approach and Its Presidents. (<http://www.abim.org>)

Era	President	Policy and direction
Formation and establishment (1971-1982)	1. Professor Dr. Razali Nawawi 2. Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim	➤ Very vocal in propagating the needs of the society, the <i>ummah</i> , especially in Islamic issues and welfare of the people
1982-1990 Problem solving	Dato' Dr Siddiq Fadhil	➤ Offering itself as a problem solving organization for the various needs for the <i>ummah</i> ➤ Establishment of various agencies such as the Koperasi Belia Islam (KBI), Islamic Outreach (IOA) etc
1991-1997 Partnership in Nation-building	Professor Dr. Mohd. Nur Manuty	➤ Aiding the establishment to achieve its goal in educating and developing the <i>ummah</i> ➤ Helped in formulation of various policies especially in

		<p>education, developing the civilization with the theme “generating khayra ummah” or generating the most excellent civilization, religious understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Influx of ex-ABIM into the public office ➤ Intelligensia of ABIM contributed extensively in national learning efforts
1997-2003	Tuan Haji Ahmad Azam	Continuation of previous policies until the adoption of the Youth Development Act

The study uncovers the learning history of ABIM through its 40 years of existence. However the period of 1982 to 1997 has seen an increase of learning efforts and transformative actions being implemented in ABIM. Thus, on one hand, this study would like to uncover the LO practices throughout the 40 years of its existence, the period of 1982-1997 would be an interesting part of ABIM's organizational learning to see on whether double loop learning was evident in ABIM. The trend of learning seems to be on the decline of late due to several constraints such as the introduction of the Registry of Youth Act and the restructuring of ABIM. Beginning from the administration of Tuan Haji Ahmad Azam, ABIM has adopted the categorization policy, categorizing its members into ABIM and Wadah movement. Wadah is specialized for members above 40 years old. As ABIM is still trying to reestablish and refocus itself, learning efforts has become less emphasized.

1.11 Problem statement

In order to survive as an NGO that would be relevant into the 21st century, Muslim NGOs in Malaysia has to embrace the LO concept. All organizations, be it business, services or even non-profit of mission oriented like the Muslim NGOs must start to embark towards being an organization that put learning as its mission and main activity if it were to sustain itself and remain relevant. (Pinelli et al., 1997; Hernandes, 2000; McHargue, 1999, Angone; 1998; Kline, 1998). The organizations, be it profit driven or mission driven will need to bank on the ability to learn among the members of the organization. From that point, it should move towards making sense of the information and knowledge gained and disseminating it throughout the organization (Nonaka, 1994). This will lead to renewed and innovative approach in dealing with problems and challenges which are ever-changing in the fast changing world today. Muslims NGOs must bear in mind that their roles are becoming bigger and more challenging. More are expected of them to contribute to the well-being of the society and the nation (Mohd. Nakhaie, 2008). Muslim NGOs must take center stage in promoting learning and the betterment of the Muslim society in Malaysia.

Looking at the huge task put forward in front of the Muslim NGOs, they has to be ready to carry its role to educate the society and transform itself into learning organizations (Ahmad Azam, 2003). Therefore a study to look into that matter has to be done as it will assist us to gauge whether Muslim NGOs could transform itself to be an organization that has to keep on learning, facilitate learning and make available the tools of learning and dialogue in the organization to keep themselves relevant in the society. (Senge 1990, 1999, 2006, Argyris and Schon 1978, 1996, Sta Maria 2002), etc. Malaysian NGOs especially Muslims NGOs should then embrace the LO practice to make sure that it could survive the new millennium. In order to look into this matter, the fact on whether tacit knowledge and collective learning occurs in Muslims NGOs should be vital to be uncovered. The study would also be able to determine on whether these Muslim NGOs have achieved an LO status by using the 5 elements of LO as proposed by Senge (1990). Realizing the fact on whether Muslim NGOs have embraced LO and the action plan they could adapt to embrace LO would be the key to their survival.

Could LO be inculcated among its members and continually transforms itself as proposed by Pedler, Boydell and Burgoyne (1989)? Will they be able to set its course to be an organization that are skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge and ultimately modify the society to be able to reflect new knowledge and create as well as respond to insights. (Garvin, 1993).

As discussed earlier, it has been found that recently, not only enterprises and business need to embrace organizational learning, non profit bodies and non governmental institution will also has to enhance its learning capabilities to keep itself in the picture. Organizational learning is claimed to be indispensable to cope with change (Garrat, 1987) and is considered to be the “only sustainable competitive advantage” (DeGeus, 1988) (Senge et.al. 2006). In order to stay relevant in the world, the individual, team or rather members in the organization has to truly learn and change because of what it learned. If we truly change and if we are true learners, we will reflect it in our changes and thus we will truly learn again. In other words, learning fuels the changes and changing will fuel the learning (Retna and Ng, 2006). In this way, the organization along with its teams and individuals will constantly change and learn and will stay significant. No matter if it is an organization which is commercial in nature, services and even non-profitable.

On the other hand, Muslim NGOs are also bound by the Islamic values in learning and knowledge acquisition. This adds to the importance of it creating learning organization among Muslim NGOs. Islam is known for its proactive insistence for urging its *ummah* to learn and always learn. The Qu’an has numerous time emphasized on the matter of knowledge acquisition and learning. The first verse reveals to the Prophet itself “Recite (read) by the name of thy God” (surah al-Qalam; verses 1-3) stamped deeply the intentions of Islam to create a knowledgeable *ummah* (society). In another verse “God will raise up to (suitable) ranks (and degrees) those of you who believe and who have been granted knowledge” (Surah al-Mujadalah: 11). This has been strengthen by the prophet Muhammad through his *sunnah* or *al-hadith* (traditions either speech, actions or agreement by the Prophet Muhammas pbuh) which stated that learning and acquiring knowledge is compulsory

among muslims (Al-Ghazali, 2003). In another tradition, the prophet Muhammad directed the muslims to always pursue knowledge from birth until they are sent to their graves (literally)(Imam al-Bukhary, 2006).

Does all this make ABIM a learning organization? The culture of learning has been around in ABIM for the last three decades but does ABIM qualify as a learning organization. It will be very interesting to find out if it does and to determine whether all the learning culture in ABIM has made it able to sustain to be one of the most prominent Muslim NGO in the country. To take things further, if it were a learning organization, would it be able to stay relevant another 30 years to come. And if they are accustomed with the learning organization ways, how far have they implemented their understanding of the concept? Have they succeeded in creating a shared vision which articulates the organization's will, conviction and commitment clearly? Are they continually expanding their personal mastery? In what form are their mental models? Are they in to team learning? Have they achieved systems thinking status? This are the characteristics or a learning organization put forward by Senge (1990). In the event of a full fledged NGO as a learning organization, how would it affect the society as a whole? Would it be able to be an agent of transformation which urges the society to learn endlessly? As business entities throughout the world has benefited from organizational learning, it is the intention of this study to look into the possibilities that the LO and OL practices would offer to a Muslim NGO such as ABIM. NGOs are not profitable entities which operates based on their idealism and exertion with no sight of business profit in its sight. Furthermore, it seeks to identify whether Islamic values, which promotes learning but not only in a business and organizational level, will help a Muslim NGO apply LO and OL and eventually help it to stay relevant in the society.

Although all the three dakwah movements are a strong force to be reckoned in the society and with considerably equal footing, ABIM is the only organization that is formally registered thus paving the way for a formal bureaucratic effect to assist learning efforts. ABIM, an Islamic NGO, is registered with the Registrar of Society (ROS) on 17th August 1972, under the Societies Act-1966. However in 2009, ABIM was reregistered under the Youth Societies Act-2007. Max Weber argued that the

formal setting and bureaucratic structure in the society as well as in the organization will help in the planning, execution and supervision of the given initiative. It will also help in the achievement of the organizational objectives and avoid the organization from straying from its course. He argued that the post World War II industrialization has created a new orientation in life (Zeitlin, 1968; Lutzker, 1982). This is quite opposite to the old or traditional way thinking from the pre-industrialization era. Such a traditional orientation stands in the way of industrialization, which requires the willingness—even eagerness—to change. If a society is to industrialize, then, a deep-seated shift must occur in people's thinking—from wanting to hold onto things as they are to seeking the most efficient way to accomplish matters. With the “bottom line” (results) replacing the status quo, rule-of-thumb methods give way to explicit rules and procedures for measuring results. This change, called rationality, requires an entirely different way of looking at life.

This new orientation transformed the way in which society is organized. As a result, formal organizations, secondary groups designed to achieve explicit objectives, have become a central feature of contemporary society. The formal setting or rationality brings about the structure of bureaucracy which is characterized by five main elements i.e. i) a hierarchy with assignments flowing downward and accountability flowing upward, ii) a division of labour, iii) written rules, iv) written communications and records, and v) impersonality. According to Weber, these five characteristics not only help bureaucracies reach their goals but also allow them to grow and endure.

In the case of ABIM, being a formally registered organization with its formal structure and systems has facilitated it in its quest for learning and organizational renewal. Among others, the formality that it has has made learning effort trickle down from the central committee to members at the state and district levels. Feedback from members has also helped the organization to re-adjust its direction. Members share responsibilities and have a very high sense of togetherness and collectivity (*amal jamaie*). Although other dakwah movements such as the Jamaat Tabligh with a very large following, or the Darul Arqam which was equally very successful with its branches and Islamic villages spreading all over Malaysia, their membership is informal and structure is quite loose as compared to ABIM. Perhaps

the rationality theory and formal setting has helped ABIM to learn, re-adjust and reinvent itself to stay relevant up to this day and to implement the LO practice. This would be an interesting finding especially in the discussion of Muslim NGO in Malaysia which has not been studied from the LO perspective.

1.10 Objectives of study

The study will employ several objectives i.e.

- i. To uncover the major learning efforts and change introduced during 1982-1997 period and how informants feel, opined and critique the events (as a double loop learning)
- ii. To investigate on whether the five elements of a Learning Organization as proposed by Senge (1990) has helped ABIM in its learning efforts
- iii. To observe the ability of ABIM to undergo a double-loop learning by looking back at its historical learning efforts
- iv. To identify whether the organizational culture of ABIM specifically the “knowledge culture” in ABIM and Islamic values play significant role in the learning efforts

1.11 Research Questions

- i. What are the major learning efforts undergone by ABIM during the 1982 to 1997 period and how do member feel about them (in view of a learning history)?
- ii. Did the five elements of an Learning Organization as proposed by Senge (1990) helped in its learning efforts?
- iii. Has ABIM been able to undergo double-loop learning?
- iv. Did the “knowledge culture” and Islamic values play a significant role in the learning efforts?

1.12 Relevancy and importance of study

As learning is so critical to the sustainability of a business and profitable organization in present time, it is imperative that we study the possibility on whether this is also true in a non-profit and non-governmental organization especially in a developing nation setting such as Malaysia. So far, the return on investment (ROI) made business and service of organizational learning in organizations such as Boeing, British Airways, GE, Toshiba, Siemens etc has been inspirational. (Von Krogh, Ichijo, Nonaka, 2000). However, it would be very interesting to see whether the same conditions apply to a Non Government Organization (NGO). Therefore the relevancy of this study to scholars in the field of management, human development and adult learning could be seen. LO could be seen in a different perspective, that is in the perspective of a Muslim NGO, where resources are scarce, be it financial, instrumental or moral. NGOs are all but mission driven and not market driven. How would this change the understanding of LO execution in organizations.

To practitioners of LO, a new horizon could be ventured as the different characteristics in an NGO would show us how collective and experiential learning among members of the NGO will help the organization to learn as well as provide the staff to contribute to the existence and sustainability of the organization. Internal motivation should come from other sources than monetary or business gains. The Islamic culture and approach towards learning at the individual, group and organizational levels will be put to attest and would determine on whether the LO concept is acceptable in the Muslim NGOs. Differences of philosophical and metrological as well as practical approaches would bring new understanding and new light to the matter at hand.

Enthusiasts and proponent of Islam and Islamic studies should also see this study as a opening for them to link the cultural and understanding of obligatory and supplementary knowledge acquisition and LO. Islam has been emphasizing learning be it individually or collectively since the first revelation to Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) fourteen centuries ago. (Al- Ghazali, 2003, Haron Din, 2007, Ismail al-Faruqi,

1997, Hairudin, 1993). Findings from the study would approve or disprove that the culture of learning in Islam facilitates the formation of a learning society and learning organizations. However, the learning concepts, philosophy (epistemological and axiological) , direction and motivation might prove to be quite different from the conventional understanding at present. This would also be interesting since we could compare the bases of LO as seen in Islam as compared to other religion such as Christianity as reported by Angone (1998).

1.13 Scope of study

Discussion, investigations and analysis will very much linger on the concept of LO in the Islamic perspective. To be specific, the study will be looking at the history learning of ABIM in the period stipulated from the perspective of several key members of the organization. This will include those who were directly involved in planning and implementation of the learning efforts especially in the period of 1982-1997 (to study the possibility of double-loop learning. Respondent selection or rather sampling will be done via the snowballing technique. Therefore, this will be a study exclusively on learning efforts and learning history of ABIM

On one hand, the LO concept will be viewed with the understanding of learning and knowledge acquisition in Islam. On the other hand, we would also like to understand how the element of LO helps NGO, especially Muslim NGOs in Malaysia. Focus will be given on understanding the phenomenon of LO using the elements the single-loop and double-loop learning theory as proposed by Argyris and Schon (1978) and the Five Elements of LO as proposed by Senge (1990) to guide the understanding on LO on non profitable and non governmental setting (NGO).

1.14 Limitations of study

As the study will be conducted in the limited space and time as well as focused on Muslim NGOs alone, shortcomings could not be avoided. The initial intention of the research is to embark on a qualitative journey by methods and means of in-depth interviews and participatory observations at various Muslim NGOs in the country. Adapting the learning history approach (Roth and Kliener, 1995) would suit the Muslim NGOs especially ABIM in particular as it will give us a vivid understanding of the gradual changes and policy designing of the organization and how it impacted learning. This is especially suitable regarding ABIM as it is an established and nation-wide organization with rich heritage of history and struggle in the Malaysian story. This will give us the knowledge and information to understand the situation and phenomena (Bogdon and Taylor, 1998). Therefore the results could be limited to the application in similar settings with similar variables whether locally or abroad. As the research is more focused in understanding the situation and not making generalization, it would be limited to finding out the fundamentals of the problem or situation at hand rather than explaining patterns and behaviour of samples and population as shown by several qualitative studies such as Glaser and Straus (1967) or Taylor and Bogdon (1998).

1.15 Summing-up

In this chapter the researcher has explained on the direction of the study and the purposes on why he has embarked on this research. AS ABIM is an NGO and is not a profit based organization, it would be interesting to find out what are the recipes of survival that it should need to remain relevant in the Malaysian scene. It is also important to uncover on whether the learning efforts that was deeply rooted in ABIM's mission and vision as well as the Islamic ideology embraced by ABIM has helped it to continually learn.

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