LOCAL AGENDA 21 PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS IN SEBERANG PERAI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, PENANG, MALAYSIA

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Abstract: Local Agenda 21 (LA21) is a program for the community, the local authority and the private sector work together in planning for local areas to meet sustainable development. Through LA21, local communities can participate to identify the local issues of sustainable development and finally develop appropriate action plans to address issues that arise. In Malaysia, the LA21 program was started in 2000 involving four local authorities as a pilot project and its now expand to other Local Authority. However, the implementations of LA21 in Malaysia are still at an unsatisfactory level. This is because of a few factors that limit the involvement of stakeholders such as lack of trust between the parties involved, lack of commitment, lack of knowledge and awareness, lack of finance and staffing aspects to implement the LA21 (Mariana 2008, Hardev 2009). The purpose of this paper is to present the study results done in Penang, Malaysia by making the Seberang Perai Municipal Council as the case study. The study's purpose is to analyse the effects of the LA21 program's implementation executed by the Seberang Perai Municipal Council to the community by analysing several items such as the respondents' perception on the KASA changes that are Knowledge, Attitude, Skills, Aspirations as well as Behavioural improvement.

Keywords: Effectiveness, Local Agenda 21, Local Authority, Malaysia, Sustainable Development

INTRODUCTION

In Malaysia, the participation of the public in sustainable development efforts has existed for a long time and has constantly grown until the LA21 was launched. However it is usually featured informally in the community such as the mutual cooperation programs to clean up the areas, beautifying the river and having awareness campaigns. The public's participation in such activities is usually done voluntarily which are becoming quite normal in community living. In year 2000 the LA21 program was started in accordance with the United Nations' wishes. It involved four Local Authorities as a pioneer project i.e. the Kuantan Municipal Council, the Miri Municipal Council, the Petaling Jaya Municipal Council and also the Kerian District Council. This pioneer project was funded by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) that ended in year 2002. The LA21 Program grew in year 2002 through the second phase by involving 46 Municipal Councils and District Councils (Malaysia 2003; Mariana et al 2008). The collaboration between the Local Authorities, the communities and also the private sectors in the planning and implementation, all sustainable development activities and also the involvement and participation of the communities are important in order to produce sustainable development collectively agreed upon. All these need awareness, support, commitment and active participation from all parties (Gouldson & Roberts 1999). The success of the LA21 implementation will indirectly able to encourage transparency and wider public participation (Georgina & Rosalie 2005). However, the implementations of LA21 in Malaysia are still at an unsatisfactory level. A few factors that limit the involvement of stakeholders are lack of trust between the parties involved, lack of commitment, lack of knowledge as well as awareness, lack of finance and staffing aspects to implement the LA21 (Mariana 2008, Hardev 2009).

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Frequency Distribution

Demography	Frequency	Percentage
a) Sex		
i. Male	74	29.6%
ii. Female	176	70.4%
b) Age		
i. Under 15	25	10 %
ii. 15-30	106	42.4%
iii. 31-45	34	13.6%
iv. 46-56	40	16.0%
v. 57 and above	45	18.0%
c) Race		
i. Malay	101	40.4
ii. Chinese	116	46.4
iii. Indian	30	12.0
iv. Others	3	1.2

Table 2: Distribution of Educational Status of Respondents

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
1. Primary School	16	6.4
2. Secondary School	166	66.4
3. Certificate/Diploma	40	16.0
4. Degree	28	11.2

Table 3: Findings Using Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test

		N	Rank Mean	Rank Total	Z Value	P
Comparison of knowledge before and after the program	Negative Rank	0	0.00	0.00	-12.962	0.000*
	Positive Rank	221	111.00	24531.00		
	Ties 29					
	Total 250					
Comparison of attitude before and after the program	Negative Rank	0	0.00	0.00	-12.465	0.000*
	Positive Rank	201	101.00	20301.00		
	Ties 49					
	Total 250					
Comparison of skill before and after the program	Negative Rank	0	0.00	0.00	-12.536	0.000*
	Positive Rank	191	96.00	18336.00		
	Ties 59					

	Total 250						
Comparison of aspiration before and after the program	Negative Rank	0	0.00	0.00	-11.261	0.000*
	Positive Rank	154	77.50	11935.00		
	Ties 96						
	Total 250						
Comparison of behaviour before and after the program	Negative Rank	0	0.00	0.00	-12.347	0.000*
	Positive Rank	195	98.00	19110.00		
	Ties 55						
	Total 250						

significant at p<0.005

Table 4: Knowledge Level Before and After Program

	Item		Before Program		After Program	
			N	%	N	%
1.	Knowledge Level	Low	33	13.2	3	1.2
		Medium	171	68.4	95	38.0
		High	46	18.4	152	60.8
2.	Attitude Level				4	1.6
		Low	12	4.8	17	6.8
		Medium	82	32.8	229	91.6
		High	156	62.4		
3.	Skill Level	Low	60	24.0	12	4.8
		Medium	100	40.0	35	14.0
		High	90	36.0	203	81.2
4.	Aspiration Level	Low	35	14.0	13	5.2
		Medium	73	29.2	18	7.2
		High	142	56.8	219	87.6
5.	Behaviour Level	Low	10	4.0	4	1.6
		Medium	93	37.2	18	7.2
		High	147	58.8	228	91.2

Table 5: Respondents' Perception Level on LA21 Program

Item	N	%
Low	9	3.6
Medium	44	17.6
High	197	78.8
Total	250	100.0

Table 6: Frequency of the Respondents Perception toward Seberang Perai Municipal Council

Respondents perception toward Seberang Perai Municipal Council	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neither Agree or Disagree		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1. Seberang Perai Municipal Council has succeeded in	2	0.8	18	7.2	58	23.2	99	39.6	73	29.2

executing the LA21 program									
2. Seberang Perai Municipal Council always assists, and is ready in the implementation of the program	2	.8	14	5.6	62	24.8	85	34.0	86	34.4

Table 7: Respondents' Perception Level toward Seberang Perai Municipal Council

Level	N	%
Low	3	1.2
Medium	41	16.4
High	206	82.4

The purpose of this working paper is to present the study results done in Pulau Pinang, Malaysia by making the Seberang Perai Municipal Council as the case study. The study's purpose is to analyse the effects of the LA21 program's implementation executed by the Seberang Perai Municipal Council to the community by analysing several items such as the respondents' perception on the KASA changes that are Knowledge, Attitude, Skills, Aspirations as well as Behavioural Improvement (Radhakrishna and Relado, 2009). The researcher also identifies the respondents' perception towards the effectiveness of the LA21 program implemented by the Seberang Perai Municipal Council.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Seberang Perai Municipal Council is located in Pulau Pinang a state in the north of Peninsula Malaysia. Butterworth is the main Seberang Perai Municipal Council town and the Seberang Perai Municipal Council area is divided into three districts that are the North Seberang Perai District (SPU), the Central Seberang Perai District (SPT) and the South Seberang Perai District (SPS) that cover an area of 73979. Basically this study using set of questionnaires to obtain data. It involves a total of 250 respondents of those who participate in the LA21 program organized by the Seberang Perai Municipal

Council. This study uses the Non-probability sampling method by selecting purposive sampling (Trochim 2006) because the specific sample group has been identified. This method is very useful to achieve the target sample quickly and does not require attention to the proportion in the population sample, but researchers need to obtain an adequate sample.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the respondents' frequency distribution according to sex for this study. A large portion of the respondents consists of female respondents that are 70.4% compared to 29.6% male respondents. The respondents are also of various age groups, most are from the 15-30 years group at 42.4% followed by 57 years and above at 18%, 46-56 years at 16%, 31-45 years at 13.6% and below 15 years at 10%. The three major races of this study are the Malays, the Chinese and the Indians. 46.4% are Chinese, 40.4% Malays, 12% Indians and 1.2% is other race which is Siamese.

The analysis results show different educational backgrounds among the respondents in the study (Table 2). Most of the respondents are made up of those with secondary school education at 66.4% followed by 16% with certificate/diploma levels of

education, 11.2% with degrees and only 6.4% have primary school level education.

The study findings also discovered the existence of significant differences in the outcome of the respondents after their involvement in the LA21 program. The question of whether there are significant differences in the outcome of the participants after their involvement in the LA21 Program is important to evaluate the effectiveness of the LA21 program implemented. A Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test analysis has been carried out to determine if there are differences from the KASA angles (that are knowledge, attitude, skills and aspirations) and behaviour of the participants at the time before and after attending the LA21 program. This is to determine if there is any increase in each of the parameters studied. Table 3 shows the results of analysis carried out. Based on the table, the findings show the value of Z for each parameter is significant as follows: (a) Z value for knowledge is -12.962 significant at $p<0005$ (b) Z value for attitude is -12.465 significant at $p<0005$ (c) Z value for skill is -12.536 significant at $p<0005$ (d) Z value for aspiration is -11.261 significant at $p<0.005$ (e) Z value for behaviour is -12.347 significant at $p<0.005$

The study findings show that there are differences in the level of knowledge about the environment, the attitude level, the skills level, the aspiration level, and the behavioural level after attending the LA21 program conducted. Based on the table, it was found that the min scores for all parameters after attending the program are higher compared to the min values before attending the program. These mean, there are increases for each of these parameters.

The increase in the outcome can also be seen when the KASA and behavioural levels correspondingly increased based on the analysis results conducted. Table 4 shows the increase in knowledge level, attitude level, skills, aspirations and behaviour of the respondents with total good at a greater level compared to before attending the program. The percentage of respondents with good levels for all measurable after attending the program is at 81 percent to 92 percent except the knowledge level at around 60 percent. The percentage of good knowledge level measurement increased from 18.4 percent to 60.8 percent while medium and low levels decreased respectively from 68.4 percent and 13.2 percent to 38 percent for medium level and 1.2 percent for low level.

Table 5 show the findings that the respondents also have good perception on the effectiveness of the LA21 program. The data analysis findings show that most of the respondents opined that the LA21 program conducted have a high level of effectiveness at 78.8 percent, while 7 percent opined at medium

level and 3.6 percent at low level. These explained that respondents that followed the LA21 program have good perception towards the effectiveness of the LA21 program conducted.

From the Table 6, study's findings show that the respondents have good perception towards Seberang Perai Municipal Council in conducting the LA21 program. The data shows that most of the respondents have 'good' level of agreement on issues in question that is 'The Seberang Jaya Municipal Council has successfully conducted the Local Agenda 21 program related to sustainable development' and 'the Seberang Perai Municipal Council is always helping and ready in implementing the program'. The min values for both items are around 4 which indicate 'good' agreement scale level. For the first issue, about 68.8 percent of the respondents agreed and totally agreed that the Seberang Perai Municipal Council has successfully implemented the LA21 program while 68.4 percent of the respondents agreed and totally agreed that the Seberang Perai Municipal Council was always helping in the implementation of the LA21 program.

This supported by the finding of Respondents' Perception Level toward Seberang Perai Municipal Council. Table 7 show that 82.4 percent respondent included in high level of perception toward Seberang Perai Municipal Council instead of 6.4 percent included in medium level and other 1.2 percent in low level.

CONCLUSION

Even though the LA21 implementation at Seberang Perai Municipal Council is still not in total and selective to certain areas only, it gave a good impact to the participants involved. Overall, the program conducted gave useful impact to the knowledge, attitude, skill, aspirations and behaviour of the program's participants. The findings show that there are increases for each of parameters tested. The study findings also explained that the community have good perception towards the Seberang Perai Municipal Council in the context of the LA21 program implementation. Most of the respondents agreed that the Seberang Perai Municipal Council has successfully implemented the LA21 program at Seberang Perai Municipal Council. Therefore, continuous efforts from the local and national government, private sector, NGOs and CBOs are necessary to guarantee the sustainability of the LA21 program implementation in Malaysia.

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