

**SEMINAR ON
ISLAM AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING:
A PERTINENT CULTURE FOR
MANAGING ORGANISATIONS**

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KNOWLEDGE-BASED ORGANISATION:
THE WAY TOWARDS THE FUTURE MILLENNIUM

by

Datuk Dr. Syed Othman Alhabshi
Deputy Director-General
Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia
(IKIM)

INTRODUCTION

Organisations constitute groups of people endowed with diverse capabilities and interest, working towards achieving a common vision through a set of goals. The common vision is very pertinent for successful organisations. It dictates not only the strategies in the form of clear goals but also defines the most effective process which takes account of the structures, systems, strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities that the organisation has.

Organisations are essential to achieve definite visions set by their founders. They become the vehicles that undertake the required tasks which are being meticulously planned and subsequently implemented in a systematic and orderly fashion. Without an organisation, the founders may not be able to achieve the vision they set out to accomplish. The appropriate size of the organisations depends upon the degree of complexity and difficulty in achieving the vision. When the organisation is too large for its vision, it becomes too cumbersome, costly and ineffective. On the other hand, when it is too small it will be too weak and hence incapable of completely

¹Paper presented at a Seminar on Islam and Continuous Learning: A Pertinent Culture For Managing Organisations", organised by IKIM, on 26 March, 1996, Kuala Lumpur.

elaboration of the vision, mission and goals, their nature and interrelationships in the third section. The fourth section will outline the anticipated challenges and trends of the next millennium. Finally, the fifth section will expound the importance of knowledge in managing organisations of the future.

KNOWLEDGE: *Concept, Nature, Purpose and Scope*

Knowledge is certainty that emanates from ultimate or absolute truth which must be permanent in man and perceived by the spiritual heart (*al-qalb*). This concept of knowledge is derived from the word "yaqin"² that clearly has the connotation of truth and simultaneously nurtures peace, security and tranquility of the heart. Knowledge therefore cannot be simply an intelligent guess or conjecture that can have some elements of doubt which will change over time and space. The moment doubt exists, it is no longer the ultimate truth, it is no longer permanent, it is no longer comforting to the heart and hence it cannot be knowledge.

Islam maintains that all knowledge comes from God. However, it is men whose psychology and constitution may cause them to receive and understand knowledge with varying degrees of certainty. There is the probability or certainty resulting from the application of man's power of judgement and his appraisal of evidence. This is *'ilmu-ul-yaqin*, certainty by reasoning or inference which is mentioned in *Surah Takathur* (102), verse 5. Then there is the certainty of seeing something with our own eyes which is mentioned in the same *Surah Takathur* (102), verse 7. This is *'ilmu-ul-yaqin*. Finally there is the absolute Truth, with no possibility of error of judgement or error of the eye which is referred to as *haqq-ul-yaqin*.

²As in verse 51 of *Surah Haqqa* (69) which means "But verily it is Truth of assured certainty".

From the above disposition, we can discern that knowledge can be classified into two kinds to suit the dual nature of man consisting of both soul and body. The first kind of knowledge is revealed by God to man; and this refers to the Holy Qur'an. Being the final Revelation to mankind, it is knowledge *par excellence* which is sufficient for man's guidance and salvation. There is no other knowledge except based on it and pointing to it that can guide and save man.

"The Holy Prophet, who may God Bless and give Peace! - who received the Revelation and brought to man the Holy Qur'an as it was revealed to him, who thus brought to man the knowledge, whose own life is the most excellent and perfect interpretation of the Holy Qur'an so that his life becomes for man the focus of emulation and true guiding spirit - is knowledge of that first knowledge on account of his nature and mission ordained by God. Hence his *sunnah*, which is his manner of interpreting God's Law (*shari'ah*) in daily life and practice, is also part of that knowledge. The *shari'ah* is God's Law embodied in the Holy Qur'an and manifested in word (*qawl*), model action (*fi'il*), and silent confirmation (*taqrir*) in the *sunnah* which includes spiritual knowledge and wisdom. So then, the Holy Qur'an, the *sunnah*, the *shari'ah*, *'ilm al-ladunniyy* and *hikmah* are the essential elements of the first kind of knowledge."²

²Syed Muhammad Al-Naqib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism*, Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), Kuala Lumpur, 1978.