

MUNICIPAL-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP: A STUDY ON KAMPAR DISTRICT COUNCIL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Local government is one of the government structures in Malaysia after federal government and state government, this government has a more direct connection to the people which in this case, the tax payers. Local Government Act 1976 empowers local government to implement its obligations as providing services that are related to sanitation, rubbish management, traffic management, roads and street lighting. We conduct research on the local government of Kampar and focus on the effectiveness of the Kampar District Council. The purpose of conducting this research is to determine whether the residents of Kampar are satisfied with the facilities and services that provided by Kampar District Council. We had did some research on what is local government and also identified the facilities and services that are supposing provided by Kampar District Council. Besides, this research also have the purpose of knowing if the Kampar District Council is doing their obligation and also identified what they promise under the time that is being set. Moreover, this research also let us know about the satisfactory level of the local residents in Kampar about the Kampar District Council based on the services and also the facilities provided varies according to occupation level. The research has been differentiated based on the occupation level which is the blue collar, white collar and also the unemployed. As a result, our findings about the satisfactory level were above average and there were some differences in the opinion of different level of job position being held.

Keywords: District council, Kampar, Local government, Obligation, Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

The term of "local government" was still new before the Local Government Commission was established by Local Government Act 1958. Local government was created to make a distinction between national and local administration. Moreover, local government was formed to maintain a closer relationship with local residents and identify the local interest and needs. Constitution introduced the term of local government in March 1965. In September 1965, Local Government Bill was drafted and Local Government Elections were held. Local Government Instrument No.35 of 1965 led to the establishment of 9 Districts Councils Being Units of the Government and the Town Councils Being Units of the Local Governments.

There were many types of local government in Malaysia by mid-1960s, such as rural council (*lembaga luar bandar*), district council (*majlis daerah*), town board (*majlis bandaran*), municipal council (*majlis perbandaran*) and city council (*majlis bandaraya*). Nevertheless, many of these authorities were facing financial and administrative problems during that time. Due to this reason, government had established a temporary provision of the Local Government Act in 1973. Local Government Act was finally implemented in Malaysia after 47

years of announced independent, which is in 1976 and validity of this law still remains until today.

The main objective of Local Government Act 1976 is to help the local government to work more effectively and efficiency. According to Laws of Malaysia Act 171, Local Government Act 1976 is an act to revise and consolidate the laws relating to local government. WHEREAS it is expedient for the purpose only of ensuring uniformity of law and policy to make a law with respect to local government: NOW, THEREFORE, pursuant to the provisions of Clause (4) of Article 76 of the Constitution BE IT ENACTED, by the Seri Paduka Baginda Yang di-Pertuan Agong with the advice and consent of the Dewan Negara and Dewan Rakyat in Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same (Laws of Malaysia Act 171).

Kampar District Council

In Perak, there are totally 9 districts before Perak Sultan Azlan Shah declared Kampar as the state's 10th district on May 21, 2009 (The Star, 2009). Kampar is the fourth largest city in Perak after Ipoh, Taiping dan Teluk Intan. Kampar is located within the area of Lembah Kinta and irrigated by Sungai Keranji dan Sungai Kampar. Thus, Kampar is famous with the exploration of tin ore in the past days. Today, Kampar has become the Daerah Kecil Gopeng's administrative centre and the financial and business centre for the residents. The area of Kampar included Kampar Old Town, Kampar New Town and the surrounding area of ten to twenty square miles.

Local government of Kampar known as Kampar District Council (*Majlis Daerah Kampar*). It cannot consider as municipal council but district council because the criteria to categorise the local government as municipal council are its annual income must be more than RM5 millions and the number of residents must be more than 100 000 people. The annual income for Kampar is less than RM5 millions and the number of Kampar residents is less than 100 000 people. According to the purview of MDKPR, the current population of Kampar is about 98,534. The biggest population of Kampar is Chinese, follow by Malay, India and other races. Thus, local government of Kampar is under the category of district council.

According to the official portal of Kampar District Council, the main income for Kampar District Council is tax assessment. Kampar District Council impose 5.5 to 10% taxes on residential and business, 15% taxes on industrial or special property, 2% taxes on agricultural, and 5% taxes on empty plot in order to support the operating cost related to develop the administration area which included town planning, government services, maintenance of public facilities that are provided to the tax payers, which are also the Kampar residents. Tax assessment is necessary to help the local government of Kampar to provide quality services and improve the facilities that meet the needs to residents.

OBJECTIVES

1. To determine whether the residents of Kampar are satisfied with the facilities and services of local government.
2. To determine whether the local government play their roles accordingly.
3. To determine whether resident's opinion of facilities and services of local government varies according to occupation level.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There were few types of local government in Malaysia before the Local Government Act 1976 was introduced. Rural council was established for the rural area and it had the least control power than other types of local government because it relied on the financial support from the government. Moreover, the members of rural council were usually volunteers and the district officer were the head of the members. On the other hand, town board had more control power. Mayors were usually chosen by the government or through town election (Institut Tadbiran Awam Negara, 1991).

It created many problems when local authorities in the country were too many by mid-1960s. In 1968, there were totally 374 local authorities facing financial and other administrative problems. Thus, a Royal Commission of Enquiry into the Workings of the Local Authorities in west Malaysia was appointed in 1968 (Samah & Jawan, 1997). Local Government Act 1973 was a temporary provision that empowered the federal government to evaluate all the existing laws that regarding to local governments. As a result, three main laws had been passed and this had changed the structure of local governments in Malaysia. They were Street, Drainage and Building Act 1974, Local Government Act 1976 and Town and Country Planning Act 1976 (Ibrahim & Joned, 1987).

Local Government Act 1976 had been created to increase the efficiency of the local government. This act helps the government to increase its effectiveness and allow them to carry out their job. Local Government Act 1976 aids government to implement its function which is important to help the people to give them what they need. It will also increase the satisfactory level of people toward the government because majority of the people will be able to get the service they expected from the government. According to this act, there are only two local authorities in power, which are the Municipal Council (*Majlis Perbandaran*) for the urban area and District Council (*Majlis Daerah*) for the rural area. This act also stated the number of the council members, the selection process and the period of duty for the council members (Samah & Jawan, 1997). According to Local Government Act 1976, the number of members for Municipal Council must be not less than 8 people and not more than 24 people while the number of members for District Council must be not less than 8 people and not more than 12 people. The members of both councils must be chosen by district officer and duty period of the members must be not more than 3 years (Institut Tadbiran Awam Negara, 1991).

Local Government Act 1976 and State Enactment are the laws that empower the local government in Malaysia to implement its functions. Local government has the power to create rules and regulations to be implemented by the Municipal Council and District Council. Moreover, it has the authority to collect taxes and rental from the residents. In addition, local government has the right to collect money for the local authorities to execute their duties more effectively and efficiently. According to Local Government Act 1976, Section 30, the main income of local government is deriving from the taxes such as assessment. Moreover, local government also derives income from rental, license payment and other charges. Federal government allows local government to use the money to restructure the administrative

system and purchase necessary equipments. Besides, state government will also give financial support to the local authorities (Chin et al., 2010). Local government is a public agency that responsible to provide urban services to its taxes payers, which are the citizens as well as the stakeholders, which are the state and federal governments that provide financial assistance to the local government. Local government is expected to provide satisfactory services to its taxes payers and stakeholders. However, the range of services that should provided by local government is too broad that it is almost impossible for the local government to fully all the needs (Kuppusamy, 2008).

Local government cannot simply spend the income that derived from the local residents. It can only spend the money due to few specific reasons. For example, to purchase, repair or maintain an asset, to rent a circumstance for the official purpose, to organize a campaign for the official purpose, to provide information such as maintain the official portal, print brochures, flyers, application form and assessment, to issue a notice or order of a decision such as stop notice, prohibition, notice, statutory notice, decision notice, road traffic order and public notice, and to update status through progress report (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008).

As a democracy country, Malaysia government is giving the chances to the citizens to rule the country. The objective of local government is to give opportunity and autonomy to the citizen to take part in the local management. Local affairs should be handled by the local resident because they have better understanding than others about the area. Thus, they can make the decisions and implement the actions more efficiency and effectively (Institut Tadbiran Awam Negara, 1991). Moreover, another objective of local government is to ensure better care for all the residents in the area that in charged by it. Local government should promote better health and well-being for all and make the community safer. Besides, local government also responsible to build a community that is more cohesive and dynamic. In addition, one of the roles of local government is to maintain a healthy natural environment for today and the future. Lastly, the most important responsibility of local government is to pay the residents the right benefits at the right time (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007).

Local government is the lowest government structure in Malaysia, after federal government and state government. Local government is the closest government structure to the citizen, which also known as "grass root" government. The existence of local government is relevant to contribute to the growth and development of the local region(Phang, 2008). It exercise jurisdiction based on local interest. One of the obligatory functions of local government is providing sanitary and cleaning services, which included garbage collection and disposal, drain cleaning, street sweeping and grass cutting. Moreover, local government is expected to provide conservancy, cleanliness and beautification, and recreation for playing fields, park and open spaces. Besides, local government also need to control the markets, hawkers and obnoxious trades, prepare for the town planning, and control the construction of roads, drains and buildings. In addition, maintenance of cemeteries, abattoirs, public toilets and latrines, and preservation of public heath and public safety are also the statutory functions of the local government (Ahmad et al., 2003). Local government is responsible for the basic jobs such as management of garbage, traffic, sanitation, roads and street lighting, which all related to public goods. A public good is any good or service that subsidized by government and provided freely to the public (Ramli, 1993). In another word, basic need that a person need daily is provided by the government and they are important to make sure that people can have comfort in the place they are living due to a clean environment around them.

State can be divided into many parts, which known as districts. State government has the right to decide the number of district as increase or decrease the number of district. State government usually will increase the number of district due to the urban development of the area and the number of citizen. There were totally 9 districts in Perak (Institut Tadbiran Awam Negara, 2006) before 2009. After 21 May 2009, Kampar had declared as the state's 10th district. Kampar, the new district encompasses 66,980ha which included Gopeng town. In the past, Kampar-Gopeng sub-district was under the Kinta district. Local government of Kampar is known as district council but not municipal council due to several reasons. The criteria to establish a municipal district is the area must be categorized as town. For examples, Selayang Municipal District, Seberang Perai Municipal District and Seremban Municipal District. Nevertheless, Kampar is categorized as rural. Thus, local government for Kampar is known as Kampar District Council (Chin et al., 2010).

Kampar District Council claimed that they will respond and take action to the public complaints within fourteen days after they receive the complaints. Public complaints are important to improve the quality and efficiency of government agencies. Public complaints can help to determine the weaknesses and provide some corrective suggestions to the local government. This will increase the satisfaction of the public toward the local government and will show that they had taken steps to improve the quality of people lifestyle by making sure that they are fulfilling the people need. Complains are the best way to response to people need. This way, the local government is able to find out what the people actually want and response accordingly (Unit Pemodenan Tadbiran Malaysia, 1997).

Local government should identify the factors that affect the standard of the services to the public. It is equally important to understand the internal customer perspectives, such as the employees and the external customer perspectives such as residents, the service receivers in order to provide quality services to public. This step is important as this will show the how much effort the government has put in to improve its service. Response from customer service is important because this is the one of the way the resident will know how effective is the government. Many people do not like to wait as they do not have the patient for it. If the government offices are efficient and fast, it will increase the like of the government and people will be supportive toward the government as they believe that the government is able to provide them with good service (Yusoff et al., 2010).

Besides, local government is encouraged to involve in FM-SERVQUAL, which is a new approach of service quality measurement framework in local authorities of Malaysia. This is because FM-SERVQUAL is a very practical measurement to evaluate the quality of services that provided by local government and helps to improve the quality standard towards the expectation of the tax payers (Yusoff et al., 2008). This way, the local government will be able to tell whether the service provided by them is sufficient and satisfactory enough or not for the local resident. The resident will also have more faith on the local government if the service is satisfying enough for the resident as well.

Furthermore, local government should ensure all of the residents have the same opportunity to access to essential services. When residents do not enjoy the level of services that they deserve, local government has to be responsible for it. For example, many residents do not receive the services although they have paid the taxes to the local government. This is a serious problem of most of the local government. In order to create a more equitable distribution of services and responsibility, local government may undergo some reformation. With the reformation, local government can improve itself and provide the highest quality of service to their constituents (Indiana Commission on Local Government Reform, 2007). However, the process of governmental reform and the building of good governance require time, patience and effort. Therefore, local government should support short-term reform projects which designed to produce quick results as well as recognize the importance of the long-term commitment (Bertucci, 2000).

The 21st century is now a very challenging era for local government. For example, the growing of urbanization, unparalleled growth of cities and towns, rapid growth of population and a list of issues that will usually happen after urbanization such as urban shortage, scarcity of resources, crimes cases, economic inequality and the rising prices of goods and services (Phang, 2008). When the population is expanding, and the towns, cities and rural areas are growing rapidly, the gap between rich and poor are getting bigger. These growths have an obvious impact on safety, security and development of an area. Besides, these effects seem to grow continuously. With rapid globalization and urbanization, the health and welfare of citizens become the major concerns for the local government to execute its duties (Ashcroft, 2001). Local government should cooperate with different organization in order to improve the quality of its services. For example, local government should deal with other statutory bodies, partnerships or grants with the local business and third sector, collaborate with service users and communities of interest and place. (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2008). Furthermore, Local government is encouraged to set up local government ombudsmen just like the Local Government Ombudsmen for England. In England, Local Government Ombudsmen are the members of the Commission for Local Administration in England. The Commission was set up under the Local Government Act 1974 and is funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). The objective of Local Government Ombudsmen is to ensure that the local government executes its roles and improve its effectiveness (The House of Commons, 2005).

Malaysian local government had undergone the periods of political and administrative renovation that were supposed to allow local government to meet the needs and expectations of the local community. Nevertheless, the increasing of community demands over time has resulted a phenomenon called "expectation gap". "Expectation gap" means that local government cannot fulfill the needs and expectations of the local community (Phang, 2008). Local government should reposition itself to meet the increasing demands and growing expectations of the public. The current system of local government is still based on the traditional system of administration which introduced by the British (Osman et al., 2000). Local Government Act 1976 had been introduced by British since 1976 and this act is still using until today (Chin et al., 2010). The traditional administrative method has become irrelevant and highly inadequate to implement in the local government system nowadays. Citizens are becoming more aware of their citizenry rights due to the growth of the information through communications technology and the driving forces of globalization. Local government should be alert and improve itself by assessing its own internal strength and weakness to meet the challenges due to the growing changes (Osman et al., 2000).

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out by giving out questionnaires to the residents in Kampar. The researchers have chosen 300 residents in Kampar which included 150 residents in Kampar Old Town and 150 residents in Kampar New Town and requested them to fill up the questionnaires. In both locations, it was ensured that at least half the sample would consist of employed members of the public such as blue collars and white collars whilst the other half would comprise those unemployed such as students, house makers and retired people. Basically this study is qualitative in nature. An instrument consisting of questionnaire will be formulated to gather data which will be analyzed to answer the research questions as well as fulfill the objectives of the study. Based on the data collected from the questionnaire, the researcher would proceed to come up with the conclusion regarding the satisfaction of the residents in Kampar towards the facilities and services of the local government.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Are the residents of Kampar satisfied with the facilities and services of local government?

From the questionnaire that were used, we have discovered that most of the people of Kampar are not fully satisfied with the services that are provided by the local government. There are 30 percent of the Kampar residents have been complain before to the local government based on our finding through questionnaire. As we can see, in the result that we obtain we manage to get statistic that says that the level of satisfaction is poor on some of the services such as bus station, roads and drain management.

As we can see, the statistic shows that there are sufficient bus stations all over Kampar. We can see that there are only two stations in Kampar and they are most located in Kampar Old Town. Although there are enough bus stations, the condition of the bus station is very poor. Most of the people complained that the bus stations do not have enough facilities such as places to sit and bus dirty. Besides that, the condition of the buses is also bad and makes the passenger feel insecure to take the bus.

The road condition in Kampar is also considered to be very poor. This is said by most of the local resident are currently staying near to Kampar Old Town area. There are also some resident that complained that the road condition is poor with many potholes and uneven road. This result in damage to the car and also cause the traffic to be not that smooth. Not only that, the roads are also said to be dirty as there are buffalo waste found all over the place which makes the place to be smelly and dirty the vehicles.

Besides, we had also collected the resident's recommendations on the places that should be step up more facilities. According to figure 2, most of the residents hope that there are more facilities in Kampar Old Town. Therefore, we can conclude that the facilities that provided by Kampar District Council are insufficient compare to Kampar New Town and Eastlake.

Table 1. Experimental results the resident's satisfaction on the facilities and services that provided by local government.

Satisfaction on the facilities and services	Good	Poor	Total
Bus Stations	141	159	300
Road	136	164	300
Drain Management	138	162	300

Do the local government play their roles accordingly?

It was found that the local government did not play their role in this district. They did not provide all the services that were promised by them at the first place. This was concluded based on our finding through questionnaire. Most of the people do not find that the local government has played their role to fulfill what was promise to them.

Based on the questionnaire, the local resident state that there was no rubbish collection service provided 3 times a week. The percentage that state that was 61 percent that say that there was no such service. The balance of it says that there was. This was because the rest of them were from Eastlake and there was such service but the others were from Kampar Old Town where there was no such service provided. The same goes to drain cleaning service and the percentage of people are the same as grass mowing service.

Do resident's opinion of facilities and services of local government varies according to occupation level?

The third objective of our research was based on the work group. Most of the people who are working find that the service provided was sufficient for then but there was also some who feel differently. The different in percentage was very little. Therefore we can say that the situation is quite neutral.

There was 64 percent of the subject who believe that the road condition in Kampar is poor. They are mostly divers and student who own cars to drive around. They said that the condition is not good which sometime causes minor damage to the car. In long term the damage is getting more serious as they drive on the same road almost every day.

Local resident feel that there are enough bus station provided to them for traveling reason. Most of them are from the unemployed group, which include students who do not have car and they have to travel by bus up and down. However, the condition of the bus station is said to be poor. According to the results that we obtained from our questionnaire, 59 percent of the subject said that the condition of the bus station is poor and most of them are students. This group has the highest number of bus users.

The data also show that people living at Kampar are happy with the number of street lights and traffic lights in Kampar. The data show that 65percent of the people say there are

enough traffic lights in Kampar and only 35 percent do not agree with that statement. As for street lights 54 percent feel there are enough and 46 percent feel there are not enough street lights in Kampar. People of Kampar are satisfied with the number of dustbins being provided around Kampar. The parking space provided was barely sufficient. The statistic shows that 51 percent of the people are satisfied with the number parking spaces provided. The result show that most of the people were from Old Town and most of the people not satisfied were from Westlake and Eastlake.

What are the strengths of this research?

When conducting this research, we have come across some of the strength in it. By conducting this research, we manage to find out the satisfactory level of the local resident on their government. We are able to tell whether the government has been playing their part in Kampar or not. This research also gave awareness to those who do not seem to care about the local government. It allows them to think that the leaders that they choose to represent them were doing their job or not so they can pick more wisely next time. Besides, we have also find out many recommendations from the local residents and a lot of suggestions that proposed by the journals in order to build a effective and responsive local government.

What are the limitations of this research?

There are also some limitations in this research. The number of subject we choose to do the questionnaire was only 300. This is not enough as there are more that thousands of people living in Kampar and 300 people are not enough to tell whether majority of the people are satisfied with the government or not. Another limitation is that questionnaire alone was not enough to get enough data for this research. Questionnaire will only give feedback from the resident but not from the member of politic, who can be use to find out what steps has the local government take to improve the services in Kampar.

What are the recommendations for this research?

For future recommendation, we recommend that we increase the number of subject for questionnaire. This will give us more accurate data to conclude the satisfactory level of Kampar local resident. Besides that, interview should also be conducted to get more data on the local government and the local government plans.

What are the problems of this research?

When conducting this research, there were a few problems encountered by us. Firstly we were not able to get more detailed information on specific location of Kampar such as Eastlake, Newtown and Old town. This was because of time constrain where we only able to do the questionnaire on one specific location. Another is that some of the participant refuses to do the questionnaire. They were not being helpful enough to us. Language was also another barrier for us to when we approach them to conduct the questionnaire.

CONCLUSION

The research let us gain knowledge of the services that provided by local government. This research is meant for finding put if the local resident of Kampar is satisfied about the services provided by the Kampar District Council or not. The questionnaire that was distribute to only the local resident of Kampar is used to find out about the opinion as well as the satisfactory level of the local resident on only the Kampar District Council.

More than half of the resident in the in Kampar no matter is blue collar, white collar or unemployed thinks that the services provided by the Kampar District Council is still acceptable and they are still willing enough to have election in Kampar. As for the results of our findings as well, we do found that the residents in Kampar have their own opinion and was just waiting for the right moment or simply someone to ask them. However, even if the findings of the service is still above average, it's still a slightly above average only and some of the main reason that drag the numbers down were the drain management and also the road condition of it.

We also found out that the services that were supposing provided by the Kampar District Council were not fulfill, and Kampar resident do have one condition that is more unique than other places which is in here, we have the problem of buffalo excrement, and it doesn't seems to cause much of a problem to the resident here, despite the fact that the services provided by the local government is not fulfill according to the local resident's opinion.

Moreover, we did found out that there are also some significant differences between the jobs they are doing which is the differences between white collars, blue collar and also the unemployed, we found out that the unsatisfactory mostly came from the unemployed than others and the white collar seems to be quite satisfied with the overall services. This research is done according to the local resident of Kampar only and as our encountered problem there stated, we did not rule out the possibility of experiment bias also.

This research did allow us to have more information on the local government and also more understanding and knowledge about the overall system of Malaysia was gain. In the one hand, this research did provide us advantages, we didn't just know if the resident is satisfied but also have knowledge about the level of duty that has been fulfilled, we also know that people do notice things even if they claim to not paying much attention. We also notice that no matter satisfied or not satisfied resident, majority of them still want to vote and make a choice on their government even though this is just the opinion from 100 residents.

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