

Youth Organisations' Participation in the Nation Building of Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The third sector (civil society) lies between the state (first sector: politics) and the market (second sector: economy). Research on the importance of the third sector on economic and social development is negligible. The hitherto lack of interest from mainstream economists can be explained in terms of the complexity of the third sector, difficulties of quantifying its impact, and the fact that the impact of changes within the third sector can only be ascertained over a long period of time. To date, studies concerning civil society and philanthropy in Malaysia are rare in comparison with other areas of studies.

However, the third sector has gained attention in recent years in relation to its contribution to national development. The investigation of the Malaysian third sector, especially youth organisations, is timely because of the growing government and public concern for youth in Malaysia. On the one hand, it is important to note that young people are the major category of population in Malaysia; they comprise about 42.4 percent of the total population. On the other hand, it is also interesting to note the difference in the Malaysian definition of 'Youth' and its consequences. Youth in Malaysia is defined as people aged between 15 to 40 years old. Recently, the pressure on making government more transparent under the new political leadership has also made it more feasible to undertake research on this subject. In addition, various other issues such as social, economic and political dependency and those related to political liberalisation or democratisation in this borderless world also increase the significance of this investigation in Malaysia. This research on the political economy of Malaysian youth organisations will hopefully contribute to the process of nation-building, as well as enriching our body of knowledge on youth.

The interaction between youth organisations, political parties and government will be evaluated historically to establish the significance of the political and economic linkages between them and the interrelationships between individuals in these organisations. The investigation will examine these relationships from the emergence of youth organisations in the early 1900s to the present. The study will also focus on the specific contribution of these organisations to the national good but will also address the issue of career development and personal success of individual personalities.

One crucial methodological issue that needs to be addressed in order to handle source material is that the material related for this research is widely scattered and primarily comprises newspaper, official and unofficial reports, and 'grey' information. It is another focus of this paper to discuss the reliability of information and its relevance to national development while seeking ways and means to validate and analyze this valuable yet less easily managed kind of information.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The third sector (civil society) lies between the state (first sector: politics) and the market (second sector: economy). 'Civil society' is a concept strategically located at the cross-section of important strands of intellectual developments in the social sciences (Centre for Civil Society, CCS 2004). Until recently, the term civil society has not commanded much attention due to the dominant view among social scientists, particularly economists (see Lewis, for example), that the world is a two-sector world. Therefore, the 'third sector' or civil society that exists between market and state has not received much attention in the two-sector view of the world. As a result, such third-sector institutions have been neglected if not ignored outright by the social sciences (CCS 2004).

Civil society or 'mujtama' al-madani' (Syed Ahmad Hussein 2002: 75) is relevant to all nations whether in the developing or developed world. The concepts of state and market have been used in an attempt to accommodate the frequently divergent interests of non-governmental organisations and citizen groups into their development agenda, marking an increasing recognition that international and national governments have to be addressed and be more receptive to civil society institutions. However, it is noticeable that the degree of partnership between state, market and civil society varies among countries due to, for example, variations in social cohesion and social participation, political economy, cultural context and historical factors.

There are many definitions of civil society. However, the initial working definition of the Centre for Civil Society (CCS), the London School of Economics (2004) seems to be useful:

Civil society refers to the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and

market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organisations such as registered charities, non-governmental organisations, community groups, women's organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, trades unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy group.

Michael Leaf (2002) stated that Civil Society is the composite of social organisations and institutions that function outside of the direct control of the state. According to the normative perspective of liberalism (cited in Leaf 2002), a vibrant civil society is said to accommodate the diverse interests of the citizenry and gives rise to the self-organisation of certain collective goods and thus reduces social demands on the state. On the other hand, neo-marxian analysts view civil society as the means towards progressive change, as it can provide the mechanism through which pressure is brought to bear upon the state. Thus civil society can be perceived as either an alternative to the state or a venue for the expression of societal needs vis-à-vis the state. Civil society therefore underlies arguments both in favour of reducing the role of the state in civil life and of expanding the state's responsibilities (Leaf 2002: 181).

The lack of attention to civil society in the study of economics is illustrated by Lewis who observes that many PhD students in economics come to think "that work on social institutions are often informal, community-based and thus will not count for distinction in PhD exams" (cited in Lin & Nugent 1995: 2362). However, institutional change is an integratal component of economic development. It is believed that the shortage of empirical research is due to two major shortcomings. The first is attributable to the fact that institutions are complex, difficult to quantify and in many cases changing only very slowly, thereby implying the difficulty of conducting, *ceteris paribus*, predictability

model-building experiments. The second and more important shortcoming, as a result of the first, is the lack of interest among mainstream economists (Lin & Nugent 1995: 2362) as the institutions are related to social interests more than economics.

2.0 COLLECTIVE ACTION

Civil Society and Collective Action

The third sector or civil society in Malaysia is thought popularly to be capable of contributing to the country's stability – politically, socially and economically. However, the roles and linkages of the third sector politically and economically in particular need to be evaluated in terms of effectiveness, influence on and implications towards national development. Some of the organisations are 'successful' while some are 'unsuccessful' in their collective actions and activities. Though the measurement of 'success' itself can be debated as it is very much subjective, the important issue which arises and needs special attention is what determines 'success' or otherwise (see page 33 on success). In this study, success of selected youth organisation will be evaluated based on the achievement of their objectives listed in their establishment, besides the contribution of the organisations to national development. This can be done through tracing their programmes and activities which have produced meaningful changes in the society or which have had policy implications.

Sustainability of a nation is vital to all the citizens collectively. Economic sustainability is one of the key factors to preserve the nation's sustainability while stability (politically) in a country is essential to economic sustainability. According to Lewis, the self-sustaining growth of the economy proceeds at two levels i.e. resources and leadership. He elaborates that a nation is said to be self-

sustaining at the resource level when it is self-sufficient (or almost self-sufficient) in savings, in labour force and in other infrastructure¹; but it is difficult to determine in terms of leadership because the quality of leadership can only be seen in periods of crisis (Lewis 1984: 9). Thus, even though the quality of leadership cannot be fully guaranteed, training for leadership is still essential to equip a leader because it is believed that preparation through training can facilitate a leader in facing challenges.

Rationale of Choosing the Concept of Collective Action for the Study

In research on national integration in Malaysia, it was discovered that respondents suggested that organisations could be a platform to enhance national integration and national unity for peace and stability, to make an impact on national development in Malaysia (Nga 2001; Nga & Peters 2002). It is worth noting that peaceful order is a public good that is crucial for economic development (Olson 2000). Therefore, there are community members who are aware of the possibility of playing their roles more effectively through various organisations and associations in order to encourage good governance in Malaysia². However, the current situation in Malaysia has not convinced these people fully of the possibility of playing their roles effectively, neither has it been made known to them, the ways in which better governance under the ruling government can be enhance³. On the one hand, the ruling government is aware

¹ Development economics is all about how to achieve these benchmarks.

² [I am in debt to Merdeka Center and in particular Ibrahim Supian for his kindness to forward the original report for my references]. In the public opinion survey funded by Asia Foundation, conducted by Merdeka Center from 24 May to 18 June 2006 on 1505 interviews of young Malaysian adults (age 16-32), 59% expressed the need of the people to monitor the government's actions in running the country (slide 44). There is acute realisation that there is a need to have public oversight over the action of government. However, at the same time, there is a significant lack of appreciation of the effectiveness of elections as a way of providing checks and balances on the conduct of the government (Merdeka Center 2006: 15). Thus, there is a need for an 'alternative' monitoring role to 'substitute' for the opposition's.

³ 61% felt personally responsible to make things better for society (Merdeka Center 2006: slide 25). However, only 3% felt they are capable of resolving community issues, one-third felt they can help those close to them but the remainder feel powerless to make change happen on a wider scale (Merdeka Center 2006: slide 26).

of the pressure that an active third sector can exert (Smith 2001: 798). On the other hand, the ruling coalition is trying to control the third sector to avoid precipitate participation that may lead to any potential outburst of political instability (which may, in turn, have serious economic impacts)⁴. Thus, the government is attempting to handle the issue strategically i.e. by framing the participation in a progressive manner in order to convince the community of the government's efforts to promote good governance. This is parallel with Lin & Nugent's (1995: 2333) warning that a government could fail not only if it does the wrong thing but also if it does too little or too much about the right thing.

The peace, well-being and prosperity of a nation are therefore collective, common or public goods and governments usually attempt to secure these. During the 2004 general election in Malaysia, the ruling coalition-the National Front (Barisan Nasional or BN), held on to power with a landslide victory. In response, the government has promised to do its best for what the people have entrusted the government to do in offering national peace and stability because it is the collective demand of the people⁵. However, this issue will need to be investigated more fully in my research in relation to the role and position of youth organisations and the government's relationship with them.

Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Hj Badawi (since taking over leadership from Dr. Mahathir Mohamad) has pledged continuously to empower the people, and to do this to empower him to bring changes and move to transparent government and good governance. He highlighted the importance of empowerment⁶ and gave a commitment to bring the government back to the

⁴ In Malaysia, the economy is divided into two sectors: a tradeable sector largely owned by foreign capital, and a domestic sector composed of enterprises with strong links to a ruling party (Jayasuria & Rosser 2001:250).

⁵ According to the findings reported by Merdeka Center (2006: slide 56), peace (55%) the most important issue for Malaysian young adults. This is followed by justice (24%), prosperity (15%) and freedom (5%).

⁶ Empowerment is a crucial factor in good governance, see John Friedmann (1995).

people. This can be observed during his remarks in concluding his speech at the Cambridge Foundation on 10th February 2004:

“...What I have set out to do is to bring government back to the people. Government serves the people and its policies must empower the people with opportunities, rights and responsibilities. A government that serves the rakyat (people) better empowers people. A broader base for economic growth with renewal in the rural sector empowers people. Eliminating graft and ensuring that the public is not held ransom to discretionary delays empowers people. My invitation for you to work with me empowers you. If opportunity and inclusion through empowerment is what you want, my message is simple: empower this government to empower you. Believe in this leadership that believes in you. Work with me, to work for you.”

His remarks of this kind repeated on many occasions have become very attractive to the people, whether or not these are genuine views or they are really the words of a ‘political entrepreneur’⁷. Although there is no single and perfect theory for research into youth organisations and their relations with government and the nation, the logic of collective action has always been a major reference point for scholars and researchers who have an interest in this area of civil society. Thus, we would argue that the logic of collective action is still relevant and useful for this study for further exploration.

⁷ Lin & Nugent (1995: 2329) Political entrepreneurs are people who, for their own career reasons, find it in their private interest to work to provide collective benefits to relevant groups. For political entrepreneurs, large numbers and geographical dispersion are attractive characteristics (which may counteract Olsonian hypotheses).

Collective Action Theory

Mancur Olson in his Collective Action Theory proposed that the size of an organisation is an important factor in determining the efficiency of an organisation (Olson 2003: 19, 28, 54, 58; first published in 1965) because the capacity to act depends on whether the actions in a group are noticeable⁸ to any other individuals in the group (Olson 2003: 45). He realised that most of the action taken by or on behalf of groups of individuals is taken through organisations, and it would therefore be helpful to consider organisations in a general or theoretical way. He quoted Aristotle (Olson 2003: 6), "Men journey together with a view to particular advantage, and by way of providing some political thing needed for the purposes of life, and similarly the political association seems to have come together originally, and to continue in existence, for the sake of the general advantages it brings."

Olson focused his study on organisations with a significant economic aspect, which Max Weber called the 'associative group'. However, he also argued that the logic of the theory can be extended to cover communal, religious, and philanthropic organisations as well (also in Beyene 2006: 3), but Olson argues that the theory is not particularly useful in studying such groups⁹. His findings suggested that it is not necessarily so that group members will act to achieve their group objective because all individuals in a group would gain, even if they were all rational and self-interested. Indeed, unless the number of individuals in a group is quite small, or unless there is coercion or some special device to make

⁸ 'Noticeability' is defined in terms of the degree of knowledge, and the institutional arrangements, that actually exist in any given group, instead of assuming a 'natural noticeability' unaffected by any group advertising or other arrangements (Olson 2003: 46).

⁹ Logically, the theory can cover all types of lobbies. However, in philanthropic and religious lobbies, the relationship between the purposes and interests of the individual member, and the purposes and interests of the organisation, may be so rich and obscure that this theory cannot provide much insight (Olson 2003: 159-160).

individuals act in their common interest, rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests (Olson 2003).

In other words, even if all of the individuals in a large group are rational and self-interested, and would gain if, as a group, they acted to achieve their common interest or objective, they will still not voluntarily act to achieve that common or group interest (also in Beyene 2006: 5). Organisations so often turn to the small group; creating committees, subcommittees and small leadership groups to ensure the smaller groups play a crucial role. John James (Olson 2003) also found that in a variety of institutions, public and private, national and local, 'action taking' groups and subgroups tended to be much smaller than 'non-action taking' groups and subgroups. Olson's doctoral thesis has also brought to our attention that the situation in small groups is not any less complicated. In small groups there may very well be some voluntary action in support of the common purposes of the individuals in the group, but in most cases this action will cease before it reaches the optimal level for the members of the group as a whole. In the sharing of the costs of efforts to achieve a common goal in small groups, there is however a surprising tendency for the 'exploitation' of the great by the small (Olson 2003) that leads to the popular discussion of such things as cronyism and nepotism. Thus, to conclude his findings in a more simplified way (maybe oversimplified in one way or another), he has suggested certain factors that make collective action possible and has argued for the importance of the linkages between group size and the cohesiveness and effectiveness of the group. Besides the size of the group, (cited in Lin & Nugent 1995: 2328) collective action is said to be more feasible if: the origin of the group is more homogeneous; the group is long-established; the group members are closer in their social and physical proximity; the goals of group members are complementary; there is a greater sensitivity of the group to a threatened loss arising from inaction; and the group members are unequal in the distribution of wealth or power so that there is a hierarchy of decision-making.

Olson (2000) attempted to explain why voluntary collective action must fail in large groups. To understand the provision of a peaceful order and other collective goods, an examination of the logic of collective action, reveals that the difficulties of voluntary collective action increase dramatically as the number who benefit from collective goods increase. There is no case in the historical record that he can find where any substantial population has, through voluntary collective action of any kind, established a peaceful order. By contrast, the anthropological literature suggests that most primitive communities, through voluntary action, do achieve a peaceful order (see indigenous methods in Ostrom 2004: 1), and they more effectively do this because they are usually small in numbers.

Olson (2003), in the appendix of the 21st edition of his book, has drawn attention to three important implications of his arguments on externalities and collective goods. Firstly, he says that the number of problems requiring government action is increasing. Secondly, an increase in the relative importance of collective goods and externalities means that the national income and other measures of the national product, though still extraordinarily useful, are becoming less satisfactory to serve as a measurement of 'welfare' or well-being. Third, an increase in collective goods and externalities can add to the amount of divisiveness and conflict in a society. The role of the 'entrepreneur', as developed by Joseph Schumpeter, also draws his attention to its implication in terms of the bargaining cost that involves quite a duration of time. The entrepreneur or leader, who is generally trusted (or feared), or who can guess who is bluffing in the bargaining, or who can simply save bargaining time, can sometimes work out an arrangement that is better for all concerned than any outcome that could emerge without entrepreneurial leadership or organisation. The incorporation of the entrepreneurship concept in the provision of collective goods into the model

enriches the argument and makes it a better tool for the study of organisational leadership and change.

However, Olson's theory has been criticised by many scholars including David Knoke in 1990 through his work 'Organising for Collective Action: the Political Economies of Associations'. He has made various remarks on the matter (and see Baumgartner 1991; Stinchcombe 1991). Even Olson himself has always suggested that "...a necessary mechanism for change is to increase the understanding of elites, both inside and outside of government. Research, interaction, teaching, training, and publicising ideas about the logic of institutions and collective choice are needed."

Olson's last piece of work has reached for a theory that explains the fundamental functions of government and leads to various improvised steps on the usual outcomes in organisations. However, he still leaves some issues unaddressed, especially in the matters related to the world that is experiencing dramatic political and economic change (Olson 2000). Thus, there is more room to explore and explain the situations in an economy like Malaysia, particularly as Malaysia is a newly industrialising country, ethnically complex and with a relatively strongly centralised and dominant government. Parts of Olson's theory may be more appropriate for Western rather than non-Western contexts. Furthermore, Dr. Samiul Hasan of APPIN/Asia Pacific Philanthropy Information Network (2004) has stated that third sector research in Malaysia is still 'unexplored' and much remains to be done. APPIN¹⁰, under his coordination, has established an overview of philanthropy and its activities in Malaysia and other Asia Pacific nations.

¹⁰ More information, please refer to <http://www.asianphilanthropy.org/appc/appin.html>

Knocke's criticism of Mancur Olson's insight is thoughtful. Knocke is certainly correct in pointing out the dubious value of a model which cannot be tested for lack of measurable variables, or which can be made to work only by reconceptualizing important variables until they become residual categories themselves, guaranteeing that the model will never fail. However, Knocke's own proposed model is not tested either. Knocke's findings are rather a presentation of a series of 27 propositions¹¹,, which he argues explore the various aspects of a more complete view of groups. "While no single one of these predictions is monumentally revealing, their combined quality gives the theory great value in understanding collective action organisations. It is acknowledged that "Not every proposition has appropriate data available for meaningful tests, nor does every analysis bear directly upon the theory" (Baumgartner 1991).

Knocke provides a critique of the Olsonian perspective on the collective goods dilemma, but he does not establish a single theory himself; such was not his intention. Knocke has also tackled membership incentives and proposed that economic rationality plays an important role in membership decisions, but argues that it must be accompanied by attention to normative conformity and affective bonding. Knocke's rationale is that groups have other sources of money (besides convincing individuals to contribute) and many of these (other sources of money) are much more attractive than reliance on large numbers of small contributors. With that, Knocke can take credit for innovative and important improvements to the collective action theory as Salisbury, Walker and others have acknowledged. His findings have made interest group researchers finally realize that there are many more ways to skin the collective action cat (Baumgartner 1991).

Knocke also suggested that if organisations are more democratic, politically decentralized, or have high member influence, they have higher levels of

¹¹ Refer Appendix II.

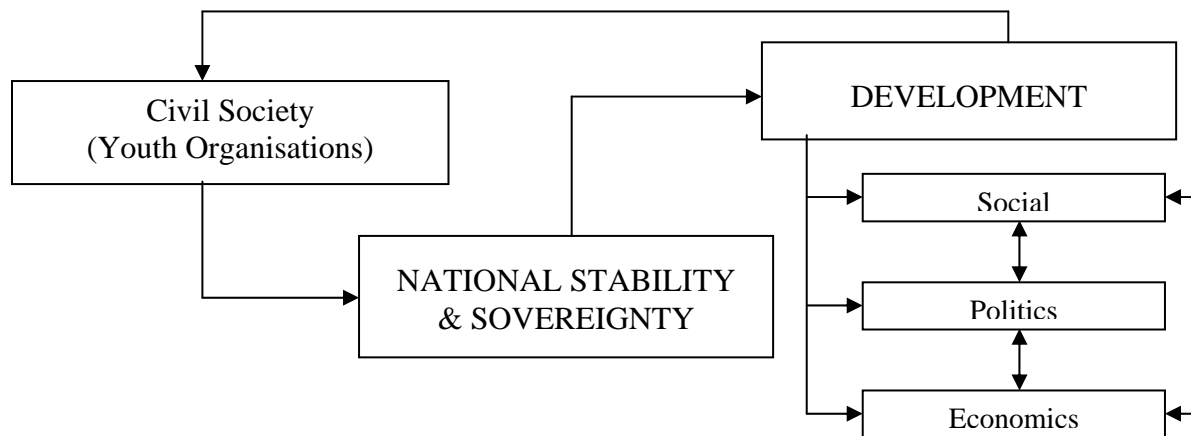
participation of various kinds, while, if many of the members are interested in internal organisational issues, participation of several kinds is decreased. This implies that it is the authoritarian leader in an organisation who influences the organisation that dominates the direction of the organisation. So democracy without issues, 'enthusiastic nonpartisanship', is good for voluntary organisations.

In commenting on Knoke's work, Arthur L. Stinchcombe (1991) suggested that Knoke should reduce the series of 27 propositions to as few mechanisms as possible. He counter proposed that 1. most members are motivated to join and participate in organisations because they want the organisations' goals to be achieved; 2. because the goals of the organisations provide the main incentives, the big organisational predictors of participation and commitment will be mobilizing the activity of the organisation, and the capacity to carry out those goals. Therefore, (a) not knowing how to accomplish organisational goals will depress participation; (b) but effective political representation in a political organisation increases participation; and (c) communication can predict participation, especially when it is specific mobilization in pursuit of organisational goals. The upshot is that voluntary organisations succeed in getting commitment from their members when they achieve their goals, and the members know it. This is just sensible behaviour, it is not in any particular element of the rational action theory in the modern sense outlined by Knoke, but it is pretty sensible behaviour. As it is, voluntary participation in collective action is mainly explained by its manifest function.

3.0 MALAYSIAN YOUTH AND YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

Youth Organisations' Participation in National Development

Putnam claimed that civil associations contribute to the effectiveness and stability of democratic government..., both because of their 'internal' effects on individual members and because of their 'external' effects on the wider polity. Internally, associations instil in their members habits of cooperation, solidarity, and public-spiritedness (cited in Hyeong 2004: 139). In view of the above suggestions, civil society and particularly youth organisations in Malaysia are important stabilization agents for development because they are capable of assuring the national stability that restores the nation's sovereignty and thus enable progress and development to take place, as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Civil Society (Youth Organisations):
A Stabilization Agent For Development**

In Malaysia, youth is defined as anyone who is between 15 – 40 years old and it represents the majority of the total population¹², i.e. more than 11 million youth from a total population of 26.64 million in 2006 (Department of Statistics Malaysia: 28 February 2006). There are numerous youth organisations which

¹² According to the projection of population for 2006, it is reported that there are 42.4% or 11,294,200 people aged 15-40 in Malaysia. The total population estimated is 26,640,200. This information has been received from Wan Rahim Wan Ahmad, Department of Statistics Malaysia on 4 September 2006. But see later for the reasons for this definition of youth. According to census 2000, 33.3% population age below 15 years old. Estimation 2006 for population below 15 years old is 32.4%, 15-64 years old is 63.3% (41-64 years is 20.9%) and 4.3% for age 65 and above (Department of Statistics 2006).

exist throughout the country which amounted to 7,914 registered youth organisations (Utusan Malaysia: 6 April 2004). However, many of these are inactive or have remained dormant for years. Although the definition of youth in Malaysia far exceeds the United Nations definition¹³, many youth leaders in Malaysian youth organisations are even far beyond the Malaysian official age range. There are attempts to institutionalise this definition through the inclusion of this age range in the Youth Organisation Act. However, the debate on this matter has yet to draw a conclusion after years of discussion (Utusan Malaysia Online: 23 October 2003; The Star: 26 June 2006).

Youth is certainly an important and valid element in national development. The government of Malaysia has always talked about partnership with youth in development and encouraging youth participation in the decision-making process i.e. using consultative workshops prior to major changes to offer a platform for the voice of youth to be heard. However, the 'active' participation from the youth groups has been questionable as to whether it has been well represented, genuinely partaken or whether it is merely a form of window dressing¹⁴. In addition, the platform or the consultative session situation has not been fully utilised by youth organisations, neither effectively nor efficiently, with very little achievement. In other words, the reality in youth organisations and their leaders is less impressive (see United Nations 2006: 73). Most of the youth organisations are not 'influential', but often are 'influenced' by figureheads in any negotiation for policy changes because of the dependence on politicians' support, especially for financial sponsorship (MBM 1994: 2).

Due to the strong link between patronage-client relationship in most youth organisations at all levels, therefore, the political system in Malaysia has

¹³ United Nations define youth as those age 15-24 years old (United Nations 2006).

¹⁴ Less than one in ten feel empowered to have their say taken into consideration (Merdeka Center 2006: slide 35). 66% of respondents stated that politics and government seemed so complicated (Merdeka Center 2006: slide 38).

continued to be able to display a mix of authoritarian and democratic characteristics in a mutually supporting way (Crouch 1996, Searle 1999) while the youth organisations have been constantly complacent with their so-called 'achievements' through their 'popular participation'. On the one hand, the ruling government is too stable to be challenged and leads with a high level of confidence with few obstacles. Thus, the ruling government can conveniently respond to the civil society (particularly youth) based on a combination of repression and responsiveness as and when appropriate (Crouch 1996: 31). On the other hand, the government is taking into account the demands from society to secure long term support to win in the elections and sustain its power (Crouch 1996). However, the demands fulfilled are limited to those which coincide with government.

The Development of Youth Organisations

The background of the study will look into the establishment of youth organisations in Malaysia in the period before and after the formation of Malaysia. The major players and stakeholders i.e. the sponsors, the youth leaders, members etc. will be discussed to recognise main contributors to the progress of youth organisations in Malaysia.

Rt. Hon. Datuk Seri Mohd. Ali Rustam in 1998, who is currently the chief minister of Malacca state and also the president of the World Assembly of Youth (WAY), stated that the evolutions in the national political, economical and social changes have influenced the establishment of youth organisations and trends of the movement (Azimi Hamzah et al. 2002: 2).

Development of Youth Organisations Before Malaysian Independence

Before Malaysia gained her independence, youth organisations were first introduced through the British colonial government in the form of uniformed associations. The objectives and principles for the establishment of such organisations during that period of time were mainly focused on socialisation and on character building, discipline and moral values of their members. The organisations appeared in the form of recreation, uniformed associations, and community service and religious organisations; and were organisations transplanted from Britain. One major observation worth mentioning here is that there was more participation of non-Malays compared to Malays in those early days. This is due to the communication or education barrier¹⁵, given that few Malays were educated in English, and lack of confidence in the colonial power by the Malays (Crouch 1996). In the early stages, there was no coordination mechanism in the state, and youth organisations were established at various different levels¹⁶.

The British colonial government supported welfare and charitable work in the colonies as well as education. The charitable allowances were always a large proportion of the colonial expenditure i.e. the charitable allowances were 33820.79 Dollars in 1932 and increased to 36688.48 Dollars in 1933 (Colonial Report, The Straits Settlement in 1933: 71). At the end of 1933, there was the St. Nicholas Home supported by government for blind and physically defective children. Besides, there were 15 orphanages in the Straits Settlements with 4 orphanages in Singapore, 6 in Penang and 5 in Malacca (Colonial Report, The

¹⁵ The medium of communication in colonial-sponsored organisations was English, which was the Malays' disadvantage.

¹⁶ Some organisations were only established at the village or district levels, but some organisations were at the state and/or national levels.

Straits Settlement in 1933: 46). Government also gave subsidies to students in the form of grants and aid that was 10 Dollars (grant) and 5 Dollars (aid) per year for a student (Colonial Report, The Straits Settlement in 1933: 43). Thus, the British colonial government played an important role in establishing and sustaining social welfare measures for the community. A few early dominant organisations were established in the country, including the uniformed bodies that are active even today – St. John’s Ambulance (1908), Scouts (1910), and Girl Guides (1917). Besides that, there were also a few local youth organisations established in such states as Johore, Kelantan and Malacca between the years 1915 to 1917. Volunteer Organisations existed in Johore including ‘Persekutuan Minyak Beku’, ‘Persatuan Ke harapan Belia’¹⁷ and Lubok Club, just to name a few as examples. There were also religious-based organisations such as the Young Women’s Christian Association established in 1914.

There are two important generalisations that can be drawn from the characteristics of the organisations during that time: 1. identifications according to ethnic group¹⁸ and 2. the majority sponsored by the colonial powers with overseas-based headquarters. Although these overseas-sponsored organisations were less attractive to the locals or Malays in particular, they gave a distinct momentum into creating youth organisations continuously since then. By the year 1948, almost all states in the peninsula had student organisations including colleges in Singapore, which indicates a remarkable achievement of the development of youth organisations. Over a period of time, there was an initiative to coordinate all youth by establishing an umbrella organisation.

¹⁷ ‘Persekutuan Minyak Beku’ and ‘Persatuan Ke harapan Belia’ are literally translated as ‘Frozen Oil Federation’ and ‘Youth Hope Association’ respectively. These organisations were local-initiated organisations.

¹⁸ Ethnic identity was strongly linked to religion and economic status (occupation). Thus, the establishment of local (non-imported organisations) NGOs were ethnic identified. For example, there were 19 employers’ trade union and 270 employees union by the end of 1947 with 3 and 98 applications pending respectively (Colonial Report, Malayan Union in 1947: 9, 10). Other organisations included the GPMS (established in 1948) which was a Malay association, then a Hindu Youth Organisation (established 1951), and so on (Azimi et al. 2002: 7).

On 23 July 1948, more than seventy-five representatives of various youth organisations¹⁹ held a meeting in the Victoria Institution to establish the Malayan Youth Council pro tem. The Malayan Youth Council was formed as a result of the joint enterprise of the Department of Social Welfare and the Central Welfare Council (Colonial Report, Federation of Malaya in 1949: 122). Two years later, on 9 September, the first meeting of the Malayan Youth Council (Majlis Belia Malaya, MBM) was formally held to mark the formal establishment of the youth council as a coordinating umbrella organisation. Its first Annual General Meeting was held in Penang after its Constitution was accepted²⁰ and attended by representatives from its affiliated member organisations then i.e. State Youth Council (Kedah, Terengganu, Penang²¹, Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang), Scouts, Girl Guides (Malaya and Singapore), and Young Men's Christian Association (MBM 1998: 6). Mr. F.C. Arulanandum was the first president²². From its formation, the MBM gained the full support of the British Colonial administration for the movement and its programmes. The secretary of MYC had been made a member of the Central Welfare Council, while each State and Settlement Youth Council had their representative in the Welfare Committee (Colonial Report, Federation of Malaya in 1949: 122). In the early stages, the MBM was dominated by English-speaking youth and mainly non-Malay. Training of youth leaders continues and was supported by government through Grants-in Aid. Besides that, two scholarships were available for overseas training specialising in youth work (Colonial Report, Federation of Malaya in 1949: 122).

¹⁹ There were no formal restrictions of age for the participation in youth organisations then (Saifuddin Abdullah 2006).

²⁰ In 1949, the Malayan Youth Council Pro-Tem adopted the Charter of the World Assembly of Youth (WAY) through resolution (Colonial Report, Federation of Malaya 1949: 122)

²¹ The state youth council of Penang & Province Wellesley was established on 17 November 1948. It was the first state to establish a state level youth council (MBM 1998: 5).

²² Refer Appendix I for complete list of all MBM Presidents (MBM 1998: 17; MBM 2006).

In formalising colonial support, Mr. A. K. Allen, a British officer was appointed as Youth Services Advisor on 17 May 1953 (Azimi Hamzah et al. 2002: 3) and the Youth Services Section was formed under the Youth Services Advisor (Colonial Report, Federation of Malaya in 1953: 211). Within its establishment until the end of the year 1953, seven training courses had been organised, five papers²³ (in booklets) were prepared and distributed, lectures and discussion groups had been carried out. On 1 April 1954, a former Rehabilitation Camp for detainees in Morib was transferred from the Defence Department back to the Social Welfare Department to house the National Youth Training Centre (Colonial Report, Federation of Malaya in 1954: 251). The training scheme was supported through the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund to conduct courses and had involved 278 leaders from all parts of the Federation. Besides that, the centre also had been used for vocational training and voluntary youth organisations for specialised training.

However, at the same time in the 1950s, the communities, especially the Malays²⁴, had extremely strong sentiments on patriotism and nationalism as well as being suspicious of the colonial power (Shamsul A.B. 1990). Thus, in the same year of the appointment of Mr. A. K. Allen, the roles of MBM started to be questioned by the local communities. In responding to the queries, MBM 'created' the Malayan Association of Youth Clubs (MAYC)²⁵ on 23 January 1954 (Azimi Hamzah et al. 2002: 3). The MAYC seemed to be a more Malay-dominated

²³ The five titles were Youth Clubs, Boys and Girls in Clubs, Programme Activities, The Leader, and Discipline in the Club.

²⁴ 63% of Malay respondents expressed that they should help their own ethnic group before helping others in society (Merdeka Center 2006: slide 52). However, at the same time, now 31% of Malay respondents hope that equal rights can be given to all cultures and religions (Merdeka Center 2006: slide 57). The findings indicate that ethnic sentiment and special rights are still important among the Malays to date (the ethnic sentiment has been stronger before) although some Malays are now more open and prepared to accept the exercise of equality among all ethnic groups.

²⁵ However, according to the Colonial Report, MAYC was formed to meet the desire of many isolated Youth Clubs that wished to attach to a central organisation for guidance and help (Federation of Malaya in 1953: 211). In my opinion (and refer else where), these youth clubs were isolated due to the different setting of the clubs in terms of the language of communication within the clubs.

youth organisation²⁶. In 1955 and 1956, there were some pre-independence political changes. Therefore, a few executive committee members (EXCO) of the MBM, who were also politicians withdrew from their positions in the MBM due to the political coalition's (Parti Perikatan) policy among them – UMNO, MCA and MIC (Azimi et al. 2002: 3, 4). As it drew closer to independence year, the MBM focused on national programmes rather than the relationship with youth organisations in other countries. And in the year of independence 1957, the Federated Malay Student Union or 'Gabungan Pelajar Melayu Semenanjung' (GPMS) had branches throughout Malaya and it focused on Malay nationalism and emphasized the Malay language and Islam (Azimi Hamzah et al. 2002).

Development of Youth Organisations After Malaysian Independence

During the early independence years in the late 1950s and 1960s, youth organisations focused upon youth development; promoting youth and citizenship; defending the economy, unity, security and leadership. It was credited as an effective socialisation agent (Azimi et al. 2002: 4). For instance, in the 1960s, MBM was proactive and actively involved in fighting for issues concerning national development and thus was known as protagonist for all youth and citizens (MBM 1998: 8) In the 1970s, it was an aggressive and challenging era in the history of youth organisation development. Youth organisations led to extreme differences in idealism with government during that time. There was a large political, educational, economic and social divide between government and youth organisations. In the 1970s, youth organisations were also particularly interested in fighting for the rights of labourers and farmers. This coincided with the Islamic revivalist movement²⁷.

²⁶ In my own interpretation, MAYC was a newly created establishment whose main purpose was to balance the 'power' of MBM (MBM was an English-speaking and dominated national body then).

²⁷ In the mid 70s, the Islamic revivalist movement begun to surface, spearheaded by the moderate Malaysia Muslim Youth Movement (ABIM) led by former student leader Anwar Ibrahim (Syed Ahmad Hussein

At this period of time, many young Malays, who were the target group of NEP programmes in education, commerce, urbanisation and industrialisation, faced social, economic, spatial and psychological dislocations, and thus turned to Islam as the rallying point for dissent alternatives to the NEP's strategies, priorities and practices (cited in Khoo 2001: 138). The aggressiveness of the youth movement during that time was also related to economic problems; for example, Kamarrudin Sharif (1982: 83) reported that unemployment was largely a phenomenon of youth. Although unemployment declined in the late 1970s, it remained high among the young people especially those aged between 15-24 years old and first-time job seekers²⁸. It is important to note that the same age group constituted about 35 percent of the labour force. Statistics in 1976 for Peninsular Malaysia (cited in Kamarrudin 1982: 83) show that the percentage of unemployment for 15-19 years old was 16.1 (urban 17.9 and rural 15.2), while the unemployment ratio for 20-24 years old was 9.3 (urban 9.0 and rural 9.5). Thus, the frustration among young job seekers had contributed to the aggressive stance of youth organisations. As a mean to control of the opposition of youth organisations, the government used the Internal Security Act (ISA)²⁹ to prevent any overheated tension from becoming worse. Hence, this was a 'confrontational period' in youth organisation development³⁰. Nevertheless, that era generated numerous national leaders including the former Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim³¹. Due to the possible threat of youth

2002: 86). This had influenced UMNO's policies in emphasising Islamisation and an expansion of the Islamic sphere. UMNO top leadership had persuaded leaders of youth organizations through invitation with great opportunity i.e. high position in government and UMNO. Thus, Anwar emerged as a rising star in UMNO.

²⁸ They were mainly school leavers. The high unemployment rate in the urban areas was partly due to the migration of rural youth to urban centres to search for jobs (Kamarrudin 1982: 83).

²⁹ The ISA 1960 was based on British Emergency Ordinance, 1948. It allows executive detention under s.8(1) for up to 2 years for breach of national security or public order. It also provides for death penalty under s.57(1) for illegal arms. Judicial review only on technical grounds (Rais Yatim 2003: 150).

³⁰ In my opinion, despite the introduction of the New Economic Policy, the local environment would have been influenced by global trends of student activism in the 60s and 70s ([Student Action for Change 2005](#)).

³¹ Anwar Ibrahim was the Secretary-General (1970-1973) and President (1973-1976) of Malaysian Youth Council. He is now the adviser for the People's Justice Party, Malaysia, an opposition party.

organisations, the government moved to exercise stronger indirect control over the media and amended the Universities and University College Act³² to prevent students from taking part in political activities.

After the confrontational years, youth organisations adopted a 'mature'³³ approach in the 1980s and thereafter. It involved corrective participation in which youth organisations had the opportunity to suggest alternatives and to offer solutions in problem-solving to the policy-makers. In the 1990s, youth organisations were widely used as the major training ground to produce leaders at two levels, both youth leaders and political leaders, by the year 2020. Youth, through the youth organisations, were for the first time given a greater chance to play a role in planning, contributing ideas, strategies and organising programmes, in preparing the youth leaders to be national leaders or statesmen (Azimi et al. 2002: 4-5).

Recognising the high hopes and 'trust'³⁴ that have been put on youth organisations by the government, undoubtedly a certain degree of 'mutation' can be anticipated in the 2000s when youth organisations may become informal 'venues' for access to power and prosperity besides being a formal leadership training ground. Thus, the intention and attraction to join a youth organisation moves from its original voluntary driven basis (United Nations 2006: 74). Youth organisations have become less independent as their functions rely heavily on government patronage. It is therefore observed that youth organisations have been extremely cooperative and 'shadowed' by the government. Hence, it is the mechanisms of control that are a more important consideration rather than independent civil society organisations.

³² The University and University College Act 1975 was enacted soon after the 1974 student riots in Kuala Lumpur led by Anwar Ibrahim. The main features of the Act include prohibiting students from participating in politics; certain activities were subject to the approval of the university authorities (Rais Yatim 2003: 150).

³³ Youth organisations were more compliant with the government after their experiences in the 1970s.

³⁴ Government anticipates the possibilities of controlling and training the leaders of youth organisation.

Platforms for Participation Offered to Youth Organisations

According to Azimi, Turiman and Ezhar (2002: 5), youth organisations can be categorised into four kinds: 1.common/normal youth organisations, 2.uniformed youth organisations, 3.religious-based youth organisations, and 4.youth councils. However, the categorisation of youth organisations should be improved by taking into account the level of active participation (Gardner & Lewis 1996: 111). The government has offered some formal platforms to deal with matters concerning youth. A Ministry of Youth and Sports³⁵, and a Youth Consultative Council³⁶ have been established at both national and state levels. The National Youth Consultative Council is described as the youth 'parliament' with reference to its goals or charter of establishment.

However, the Ministry of Youth and Sports has always been treated as a junior ministry when compared to all other ministries in the cabinet. Besides that, the supposed youth 'parliament' – the National Youth Consultative Council meets very infrequently. It meets once a year³⁷ and the meeting only lasts for one and a half days³⁸. With regard to the State Youth Consultative Councils, arrangements for meetings are subject to the respective state executive committee member of youth (for states in West Malaysia) or Minister of Youth and Sports (for both states in East Malaysia). This implies that the functions of the State Youth Consultative Councils differ from one state to another, depending on the governing ministerial political leader who holds the portfolio. The condition worsens if the ruling state power is in political opposition to the

³⁵ Established in 1964 as the Ministry of Cultural, Youth and Sports.

³⁶ Established in 1971, the Minister of Youth and Sports will be the chairperson and shall have a meeting at least twice a year (United Nations 2002: 7). It is an advisory body to the Minister in policy making and development of youth programmes.

³⁷ Except in 2006, the meeting was held twice in a year.

³⁸ This duration involves a reception session, opening and closing sessions. Thus, a major part of the total time has not been fully utilised.

national ruling power i.e. in Kelantan³⁹, where coordination between the national and state level is lacking.

Challenges to Youth Organisations and Their Leadership

There are further challenges for the development of youth organisations in Malaysia that need special attention. To comment on the National Youth Consultative Council, it is currently chaired by the Minister of Youth & Sports and its members comprise all chairpersons of the State Youth Consultative Councils; all EXCOs of the Malaysian Youth Council; representatives of Youth Organisations; representative of all other ministries; and appointed individuals in Youth-related sectors. Recognising the credibility and quality of the members in the National Youth Consultative Council, changes are needed in order to achieve its goals and objectives effectively and efficiently (see below).

Another major issue is that political parties, leaders and individuals, have very often used youth and/or youth organisations for personal gain. It has been used as a stepping stone to obtain titles that carry social status; gaining government projects, contracts and funding that offer economic value; accessing various positions and appointments that contain political 'value'; and many other opportunities. Therefore, it is common to encounter many excessive statements or actions, (see below, for example).

During the campaign week of the Malaysian general election, on 18 March 2004, many leaders of associations and NGOs, including youth leaders, requested to meet with the Prime Minister (who was already very busy with his campaigning schedule), claiming themselves to be representing their members and openly pledging support to the ruling coalition (Utusan Malaysia Online: 19

³⁹ The state government of Kelantan is PAS, an opposition at the national level.

March 2004). Similarly, although NGOs as Non-Governmental Organisations, are supposedly separate from or independent of government, their leaders' open statements were biased towards one particular political party⁴⁰. This has breached and abused the trust and power given by their members and it is certainly controversial to the fundamental definition of NGOs. Their actions very much contradict their philosophy. Thus, it has contributed to the lack of confidence from the community in youth organisations and their leadership as they have failed to demonstrate a firm neutral stand⁴¹. This untimely open support (and similar kinds of actions, from time to time) has tarnished the image and meaning of NGOs reflected by youth organisations. Besides the negative impression given to the 'neutral' grassroots youth, this attitude of servitude and respect to the political leaders is also a set back to the credibility of youth organisations and has thus reduced their influence on higher authorities. The interesting part of the open support is not a matter of for which contesting party the youth organisations have declared their support, but it is more an assessment of the rationale of the inappropriate timing of the said action.

It is not that we are against the ruling government or the NGOs leaders, but it is merely an analysis to improve the credibility of the genuine leadership in youth organisations (see comments on formal youth councils in United Nations 2006: 73). The timing of such declaration of support to be made three days before polling day makes it very tempting to explore the causes or agenda behind it. The electoral situation at that time already indicated that none of the opposition parties were able to make a sound challenge to the ruling coalition- the National Front, let alone form a government. As Crouch (1996: 5) pointed out the constitutional framework of the Malaysian political system is essentially

⁴⁰ Major youth organisations in Malaysia have linkages with the ruling coalition and/or their leaders.

⁴¹ 73% of Youth respondents stated that openly criticising the government reflects the Love for the country while 22% viewed it as a disloyalty to the country (Merdeka Center 2006: slide 45). Thus, there is a great need to clarify the situation i.e. the comprehensive meaning of patriotism and the importance of nation building.

democratic but it has been accompanied by a wide range of authoritarian controls that greatly limit the scope for effective political opposition and make it very difficult to envisage the defeat of the ruling party at the polls.

Everyone knows that the campaigning period is not suitable for NGO leaders to state their support on behalf of their members as every member has their own choice as to whom they would like to support. Thus, it has not been appropriate and definitely misleading to conveniently generalize and state their support collectively in representing all the members in an organisation. The support would be more appropriate and justifiable if the motion to pledge their cooperation to the ruling government were made when the winner had formed the new government after election.

Another issue concerning one's involvement in an organisation, is that it is usual for one's participation to move from a lower position to a higher position i.e. from common member to committee member, from vice president to president. However, there are cases when one is willing to 'give way' to another person and move to a lower position, which is quite unusual. Thus, it is another trend to observe many ambitious leaders who willingly forego their candidacy in an organisation or sacrifice a higher position to take on a lower position (Utusan Malaysia Online: 15 July 2002) as the trade off for some informal 'return' afterwards. The 'trading' parties involved seem rational because the arrangement is a 'win-win' situation when they fully utilize their positions to achieve maximum benefits or satisfaction (Goodwin 1997: 358). However, if we take a different approach, this kind of action with less transparency undermines the nature of voluntary organisations and the principle of 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number' (Goodwin 1997: 48) because the benefits are not for the majority but only for the few individuals i.e. the leaders involved.

Apart from that, there is also interference of higher level leaders such as political leaders and ministers in the affairs of youth organisations, both invited and uninvited. When an organisation faces problems, for example financial problems, internal conflict, leadership crises etc; youth leaders of the said organisations will seek help from a higher-level influential person (often an individual with economic and/or political strength) to solve the dispute and problem in the organisation. Nonetheless, there are also incidents where powerful individuals voluntarily offer their help and give aid even without being requested to do so (Utusan Malaysia Online: 1 Dec 2003).

In Malaysia, there is a strong sense of morality and community⁴²; and it is quite normal to expect almost everyone to be associated with an organisation or association. School children are compelled to join activities through various clubs, associations and organisations ranging from sports to community service, uniformed bodies, leisure clubs etc. However, it is noticeable that many school leavers and graduates tend to choose not to be associated with any organisation in recent years⁴³. Statistics show that this group of 'isolated' youth is increasing despite continuous efforts to attract them to take part in youth organisations. Quoting from the Youth and Sports Minister's statement that 4.7 million or 48% of the total 9.8 million youth (Utusan Malaysia Online: 4 August 2003) and 8.2 million or 75% of the total 11 million youth (Utusan Malaysia: 5 April 2004), for various reasons do not join or associate with any youth organisations and this phenomenon has attracted the special attention of the Minister concerned (Utusan Malaysia Online: 5 August 2003 & 6 April 2004). The government has great concern over this group of non-participatory youth, as it is a big population

⁴² 71% of youth respondents are concerned about the issues in the local community (Merdeka Center 2006: slide 24). 40% have experience of community service or volunteer activity (Merdeka Center 2006: slide 28).

⁴³ Merdeka Center (2006: slide 29) reported that there are less than 1 in 10 youth involved in organisations in an active manner. In the survey, respondents' age is between 18-32 years old. 88% of the respondents have not been members of any political party, 80% are not a member of any religious groups, 83% are not a member in any social organisations, and 91% are not members of any other kind of organisations (other than political, religious, or social).

besides the belief that many problematic social issues such as anti-social behaviour and drugs are strongly related to these youth who are not affiliated to any organisation.

Omoto and Snyder (2002: 856) explain the importance of the psychological sense of community. In this regard, many youth (not youth leaders), including those professional youth who may be voting for the ruling government are more interested to be seen as neutral or having the freedom from linkages to government. This form of political neutrality is very unlikely to be seen in major youth organisations as they are seen to be pro-government. In this sense, the mass media should also bear some responsibilities in contributing to the increasing numbers of isolated youth⁴⁴. Generally, mass media in Malaysia usually portrays youth in two extremes. On the one hand, youth will be seen as problematic with many social ills; thus youth is a burden to the society. On the other side, many opportunist youth in youth organisations are enjoying various facilities and have been described as puppets of the government for being the government-sponsored leaders. For rebellious youth, they feel that they do not fit in with the leadership and do not want to be associated with ambitious youth leaders who are actively involved in youth organisation for power and prosperity (see adolescent political development in United Nations 2006: 114). Therefore, it is very unlikely to attract or create a sense of belonging and to feel confident to be associated with youth organisations.

In this study, analyses are based on newspaper reports and discussion rooms in the internet which are considered to be less academic. This is due to the lack of interest in academic writing in this area. Recognising the shortage of academic writings, the potential references that can be used for further exploration in this area will be heavily relied on opinions, unpublished reports,

⁴⁴ The survey only found that 40% of respondents perceived the media were free from government influence (Merdeka Center 2006: 14).

suggestions and sharing by participants in workshops of various groups that have been organised by relevant organisations; in addition to the research survey through questionnaires and interviews to the targeted subject which will be another challenges to the researcher to gather and verify the information.

Thus, this study is rich in its originality that is intended to be in accordance to the definitions by Phillips and Pugh (Hart 1998:24) in which it is doing empirical based work that has not been done before; using already known ideas, practices or approaches but with a new interpretation; bringing new evidence; creating a new synthesis; being cross-disciplinary; and has not previously been done before.

4.0 PROVISION OF IMPROVEMENTS

In tackling the challenges mentioned above, the following suggestions can be taken into consideration for potential solutions and further discussions. For example, Youth 'Parliament' should be empowered for more effective policy-making. In enhancing the effectiveness, a more powerful senior person such as the Prime Minister or Deputy Prime Minister should chair the National Youth Consultative Council so that quicker decisions can be made on matters concerning youth. Dialogue can be more readily engaged in and political commitments extracted from patrons.

Another important issue that needs deeper thought is the controversial over-supportive action of NGOs to the government. Although experience shows that local or civic associations may experience difficulties in gaining specific political outcomes, and their effects on democracy depend upon interactions with the larger political and ideological context (Hyeong 2004: 136), leaders of youth organisations should not excuse their personal-interest-driven action in the name

of the benefit for the nation and their organisations. These excuses have been made reasonable to support the government while the leaders of the organisations are gaining benefits through patronage distribution (Crouch 1996). It seems matching the philosophy of maximization (utility)⁴⁵ and creating a win-win situation for the leaders involved, is still questionable because their actions benefit their personal interest more than their organisations, their members, the nation and the community. Their action is a threat to civil society as Hyeong stated (2004: 135).

In recognising the potential of youth organisations as a path or 'stepping stone' and access to gain personal wealth and power, careful consideration is needed to set the limits of tolerance in negotiating matters concerning youth, to search for suitable evaluation of youth leaders' actions and to investigate the checks and balances on youth leaders in organisations which serve to avoid exploitation and abuse.

In contrast to the active leaders and/or active organisations, there are also many dormant organisations. There are three options to deal with these dormant organisations: through 'death' (natural/mechanical); reviving the organisations; or leaving them as they are. Major concerns in treating them will concentrate on the evaluation of organisations and lead to their eligibility for funding i.e. to run a project, to organise programmes for youth development. Rochlin proposes that "an organisation... 'successfully' delivers 'high performance'

⁴⁵ Utility is a quantity that it is useful to regard an individual as maximizing in interpreting and predicting his behaviour. A utility function is a way of describing an individual's preference between various real or hypothetical alternatives (Blaug 1964: 332). All the three founders of utility functions (Menger, Walras and Jevons) had worked with a so-called additive utility function, treating the utility of a commodity as a function only of the quantity of that commodity (Blaug 1964: 302). However, strictly speaking, utility is no quantity at all but simply a choice indicator (Blaug 1964: 332). The issue in the Maximisation Principle is that of equalising marginal values: in dividing a fixed quantity of anything among a number of competing uses, 'efficient' allocation implies that each unit of the dividend is apportioned in such a way that the gain of transferring it to one use will just equal the loss involved in withdrawing it from another (Blaug 1964: 275) to maximise utilities (or satisfaction). In welfare economics, utility is a quantity that an individual 'should' maximise or that the social arrangement 'should' help him to maximise (Blaug 1964: 332).

and 'high reliability' ... if the public being served judges it to have provided both an adequate level of service and an acceptable level of safety and reliability" (Clarke & Short 1993: 390). However, as mentioned earlier, **success** itself is subjective, and difficult accurately to define.

In addition, there are on-going debates about age and the fact that many existing leaders of youth organisations are beyond the maximum age designated as 'youthful' at heart. Careful attention is needed to make alternative arrangements for this group of experienced leaders, probably through assigning them with special tasks. They can, of course, be very active financial supporters besides sharing their knowledge and experience. However, it is uncertain if these leaders are keen to give way to their younger colleagues because this group of dominant leaders have monopolised positions in youth organisations for such a long time even though their age exceeds the range of youth.

It is also timely to tackle the issue of 'isolated' or passive young people. The best approach to attract these youth will surely be specific methods for particular individuals (but it may not be manageable then). In the Malaysian youth population, there are also those who are naturally 'allergic' to organisations⁴⁶. It is important to respect them and their freedom instead –And they may be gainfully engaged in informal groupings etc. However, different 'devices' may be tried either by providing economic opportunities⁴⁷, or encouraging one-off activities in which participants can take part without any extended obligation in the future. Quoting from Oakeshot: 'the right of voluntary association is also a right of voluntary disassociation' (Boyd 2004: 606).

⁴⁶ These youth are not keen to be involved in associations.

⁴⁷ Through employment related activities that may involved employees activities such as outings, blood donation etc.

Therefore, there are many possibilities for changes to improve the current situation for national development, although the process is very challenging and demanding.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Youth organisations are important and contribute to Malaysian nation-building and development because youth organisations have served as a training ground for many national leaders in Malaysian history. However, youth organisations have the great potential to perform more effectively and efficiently to contribute more significantly⁴⁸ (United Nations 2006: 72). Youth organisations should act confidently because confidence is the newfound weapon of collective action (Clark 1991: 103) and empower themselves to play their roles soundly. Youth organisations must realise the fact that they should not depend on government to empower them (Utusan Malaysia Online: 27 May 2006), as it is not possible for one to empower another, that is people can only empower themselves (Gardner & Lewis 1996: 118). As empowerment emphasizes development of collective rather than individual goals, it will henceforth lead to capacity building and setting the agenda for changes (Romano 2005: 8) for Malaysia. However, youth organisations still lack leaders with these qualities to direct change and development in recent years (MBM 1994: 2).

Youth organisations can cooperate with government as part of their social responsibilities to sustain order and stability⁴⁹. Indeed, order and stability are the preconditions for the growth of successful economic and political systems

⁴⁸ World Youth Report 2005 stated that effective youth participation requires fundamental changes in the way societies perceive young people. Strategies for youth participation must move away from ad hoc, activity-based approaches and focus instead on making youth input a central component of social structures, institutions and processes (United Nations 2006: 72-73).

⁴⁹ Many Malaysians believed that political stability could only be guaranteed by a strong BN-governed state even when authoritarian means were resorted to (Loh 2003: 98).

(Romano 2005). Nevertheless, this should not imply that youth organisations have to agree with the government on every issue. In other words, youth organisations should pursue their integrity and dignity to be independent (even if the organisations or the leaders of the organisations are 'sponsored' by political leaders) in functioning as check-and-balance agents especially when opposition parties are relatively weak in Malaysian politics⁵⁰. The current ruling coalition has promised the nation good governance⁵¹. This means, according to UNDP, a governmental system that is to be 'participatory, transparent and accountable' and ensure that 'political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society' (Romano 2005: 11). In Romano (2005: 5) as quoted from Anwar Ibrahim 1995, the then Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, mild criticism of the ruling elite and critical attitude is viewed with fear, suspicion and sometimes contempt.

Thus, changes in these shortcomings are needed to bring forth the meaningful participation of youth leaders to fortify youth organisations as the powerful pressure groups and guardians of transparency, to enable themselves to query government policies and performance for corrective action to be taken for the development of a Malaysian Malaysia⁵². According to Abdul Rahman Embong 2002: 164), Malaysians (especially with the emergence of a middle class) would like to have greater democracy and a stronger civil society⁵³. This is essential for youth organisations and their leaders to champion these new challenges – to check and balance in all major issues, government policies and

⁵⁰ Lim, in realising the shortcomings in the existing opposition, has stated that opposition needs to be strengthened (Lim 2003:167).

⁵¹ There are manifest needs for reformed governance in Malaysia in response to emerging social and political pressures at the beginning of the new century (Barlow & Loh 2003: 186).

⁵² It is important to evaluate whether the role of government in promoting economic growth and the benefits of economic growth, in the context of an imposed political and social stability, compensate for a lack of real democracy and a fair and compelling rule of law? (Merva 2005: 1223).

⁵³ In his research carried out in Bayan Baru (Saravanamuttu 2003: 187, 188), the middle-class respondents were mainly concern about upholding social justice and preserving harmonious ethnic relations. It is also interesting to note that the priority for supporters of opposition political parties is upholding social justice; while supporters of the ruling coalition viewed ethnic relations as their top priority.

implementation⁵⁴, because youth comprises a significant proportion of the Malaysian population.

⁵⁴ To become an effective agent of empowerment, one should act as an advocative medium that helps to build self reliance and participatory democracy (Romano 2005: 7).

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Appendix I: Lists of Presidents, Malaysian Youth Council

Year	Name
1948-1950	Temporary Committee
1950-1955	F.C Arulanandom
1955-1957	Syed Hashim Abdullah
1957-1958	Joseph Siow Loong Hin
1958-1961	YB Sardon Jubir
1961-1965	YB Datuk Sardon Jubir
1965-1966	Syed Kamarulzaman Bahaldin
1966-1973	YM Tunku Abdullah
1973-1976	Anwar Ibrahim
1976-1980	Mohd Azaham Wahab
1980-1982	Rani Ibrahim
1982-1986	YB Mohd Tajol Rosli bin Mohd Ghazali
1986-1988	Hasan Malek
1988-1990	YB Mohd Ali Rustam
1990-1992	Dr. Abg. Yusof Abg. Hj. Abdul Razak
1992-1994	YB Fuad Dato' Hj. Hassan
1994-1996	Suhaimi Ibrahim
1996-1998	YB Dato' Suhaimi Ibrahim
1998-2002	Saifuddin Abdullah
2002-2006	YAB Dato' Seri Dr. Khir Toyo
2006-present	Shamsul Anuar Hj. Nasarah

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MBM (Malaysian Youth Council). 1998. Detik-detik Cemerlang Jubli Emas. Kuala Lumpur: MBM and Ministry of Youth and Sports.

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Appendix II: Knoke's 27 Propositions

Proposition 1 (pg. 53):

The richer the environment, the more discretionary resources there are available to a collective action organisation's constituents and members.

Proposition 2 (pg. 53):

When members and constituents control more discretionary resources, they increase their contributions to the organisation.

Proposition 3 (pg. 54):

Environmental uncertainty and complexity generate unstable flows of information to constituents and members.

Proposition 4 (pg. 54):

Unstable flows of information reduce member and constituent support for and contributions to the organisation.

Proposition 5 (pg. 54):

The more complex and uncertain an organisation's environment, the more bureaucratic its administrative structure.

Proposition 6 (pg. 54):

The greater the similarities between constituents and members, the stronger the constituents' support, the larger their contributions, and the greater the likelihood they will become members.

Proposition 7 (pg. 57):

Organisational incentive systems are constrained to be congruent with organisational goals.

Proposition 8 (pg. 57):

The more heterogeneous an organisation's goals, the more diverse its incentive system.

Proposition 9 (pg. 57):

The greater the environmental complexity and uncertainty, the more diverse an organisation's incentive system.

Proposition 10 (pg. 57):

A more bureaucratic administrative structure operates a more diverse incentive system.

Proposition 11 (pg. 57):

The more resources an organisation controls, the more diverse its incentive system.

Proposition 12 (pg. 58):

Organisations that operate more complex incentive systems attract members with heterogeneous interests in incentives.

Proposition 13 (pg. 58):

The more intensely a person values an incentive offered by collective action organisation, the greater the contribution that person will make to the organisation in order to receive the incentive.

Proposition 14 (pg. 58):

Organisations that operate diverse incentive systems acquire larger contributions and stronger support from their members than those that do not offer diverse incentives.

Proposition 15 (pg. 58):

The stronger the congruence between member incentive interests and organisation incentive offerings, the higher the membership support and resource contributions.

Proposition 16 (pg. 60):

Collective action organisations develop democratic governance structures under conditions of large size, complex incentive systems, nonbureaucratic administrative structures, multiple organisational goals, and greater environmental complexity and uncertainty.

Proposition 17 (pg. 61):

The more intense members' interests in organisational policy issues, the greater their communication interaction.

Proposition 18 (pg. 61):

Organisations with more democratic governance structures generate higher rates of policy communication.

Proposition 19 (pg. 61):

Smaller size, absence of bureaucracy, environmental complexity and uncertainty, and stronger member interests in incentives stimulate a greater rate of communication on policy issues.

Proposition 20 (pg. 61):

Higher levels of policy communication, stronger member interests in policy issues, and more democratic association governance structures produce more member commitment to and participation in organisational affairs.

Proposition 21 (pg. 62):

The more complex an organisation's structures and environments, and the more important its public-policy goals, the greater the political capacity it develops.

Proposition 22 (pg. 64):

Organisations with public-policy goals and greater political capacity are more likely to mobilise their members' policy efforts.

Proposition 23 (pg. 64):

The members of organisations with political goals, high political capacity, and strong mobilisation efforts are more likely to engage in external influence activities.

Proposition 24 (pg. 64):

When members have strong interests in policy issues and high rates of policy communication, they are more likely to engage in external influence activities.

Proposition 25 (pg. 64):

The fewer opponents an organisation faces, the greater its success at influencing public-policy decisions.

Proposition 26 (pg. 64):

Organisations that mobilise resources from their members for political effort have greater success at influencing public-policy decisions.

Proposition 27 (pg. 64):

The more coalitions that an organisation builds with other groups, the greater its success at influencing public-policy decisions.

Source:

Knocke, D. 1990. Organizing for Collective Action: The Political Economies of Associations. New York: Aldine De Gruyter.

