UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

LEARNING BELIEFS OF SEVEN ADULT MALAY MUSLIM LEARNERS IN NON-FORMAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

ROHAYA BT ABDUL WAHAB

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ROHAYA BT ABDUL WAHAB

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
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By

ROHAYA BT ABDUL WAHAB

Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia
in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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ROHAYA BT ABDUL WAHAB

July 2013

Chair: **Prof. Azimi Haji Hamzah, PhD**

Faculty: **Educational Studies**

This research aimed to identify and understand the learning beliefs among adult Malay Muslim learners participating in non-formal Islamic learning environments. In addition, it explored how far these learning beliefs are transformative in nature and in what ways these learning beliefs of adult Muslim learners fit Islamic views and perspectives of learning and education. This study focused on learning as interpreted and understood from the perspective of the learners themselves, from the general as well as holistic perspective based on their learning experiences and learning processes. Utilizing the phenomenological qualitative research method, the sample for this study were seven adult learners who are in the middle adulthood and above, in the 40 year old and above age group. They participated voluntarily and regularly in at least two non-formal religious learning programs. Data were mainly collected using in-depth interviews, informal conversations and email interviews, and were analysed by thematic analysis. The findings of this study show that the meanings attached to the informants' learning beliefs were common among them and that these beliefs were hierarchical in nature, ranging from simple to complex. At the simplest level, learning was considered as merely to be acquiring and gaining knowledge;

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whilst at a more complex level, learning became internalized and practised by the informants; and at the highest end, learning was conceived as internalizing and changing not just one's physical perspective but also one's worldview in relation to God. This study moreover revealed that learning beliefs (in these non-formal learning programs) were more transformative in nature, involving changes in applying practical knowledge, heightened religious consciousness, enhancing personal development, and seeking spiritual pleasure. In addition, the acknowledged motivation for holding learning beliefs from the Islamic perspective was based on three inter-related reasons –temporal, temporal as well as moral, and Hereafter and Godly reasons; with the last reason being the most dominant. Therefore, these beliefs among adult Malay Muslim Learners were shown to be spiritualistic in nature and consequently, all the themes were tied strongly to eternal and Godly reasons. The main conclusions are all these different themes converged into a singular spiritual essence at the summit, and thus learning in non formal situations is deeply connected to the essences and perspectives of spirituality; the key to understanding adult learning is to understand the adult learners themselves; adults participate and seek educational activities that relate to personal growth and development; and it is particularly important to look at cultural and religious contexts of the learners and the learning environment to understand better how their beliefs and experiences shape the learners' beliefs on learning. Implications of the study are that educators need to consider the significance and relevance of culture, religion, and spiritual essences in adult learning, to promote critical thinking in non-formal learning among adults, and to consider the nature of learning as lifelong, transformative and experiential. These are the challenges to the practice of adult education.

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Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
Sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

KEPERCAYAAN-KEPERCAYAAN PEMBELAJARAN TUJUH PELAJAR DEWASA MELAYU MUSLIM DI DALAM PERSEKITARAN PEMBELAJARAN TIDAK FORMAL

Oleh

ROHAYA BT ABDUL WAHAB

Julai 2013

Pengerusi: Prof. Azimi Haji Hamzah, PhD

Fakulti: Pengajian Pendidikan

Penyelidikan ini bertujuan untuk mengenal pasti dan menyingkap pengertian tentang sifat kepercayaan-kepercayaaan pembelajaran atau 'nature of learning beliefs' di kalangan pelajar Muslim dewasa di dalam persekitaran pembelajaran Islam tidak formal. Ia juga meneroka sejauh mana kepercayaan tersebut bercorak transformatif dan bagaimana kepercayaan tersebut menepati pandangan Islam terhadap pembelajaran dan pendidikan. Kajian ini memberi fokus terhadap pembelajaran sepertimana yang ditafsir dan difahami oleh pelajar-pelajar tersebut dari sudut umum juga holistik melalui pengalaman dan proses pembelajaran mereka. Dengan menggunakan kaedah penyelidikan kualitatif fenomenologi, sampel kajian ini terdiri daripada tujuh orang pelajar dewasa di peringkat pertengahan umur yang berusia 40 keatas. Mereka mengikuti sekurang-kurangnya dua program pembelajaran agama secara sukarela dan berterusan. Data dikumpul melalui temubual secara mendalam, temubual tidak formal dan temubual secara e-mail, dan dianalisis secara analisis tematik. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa makna-makna kepercayaan pembelajaran mereka adalah sama dan bersifat hiraki, dalam julat mudah kepada

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lebih kompleks di sepanjang satu kontinum. Di tahap mudah, ia melibatkan pandangan bahawa pembelajaran hanyalah sebagai memperoleh ilmu manakala di peringkat yang lebih kompleks, pembelajaran melibatkan penghayatan dan mempraktikkan ilmu, dan di peringkat paling tinggi, pembelajaran dianggap sebagai penghayatan yang bukan sahaja menghasilkan perubahan perspektif luaran bahkan '*tasawur'* seseorang terhadap hubungan dengan Tuhannya. Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa kepercayaan pembelajaran di dalam persekitaran program pembelajaran tidak formal lebih bercorak transformatif, dan melibatkan perubahan dalam perlaksanaan ilmu praktikal, peningkatan kesedaran agama, peningkatan kemajuan kendiri dan peningkatan kepuasan kerohanian. Selain itu, dari perspektif Islam, sifat kepercayaan pembelajaran mereka dikaitkan dengan tiga sebab yang saling-berkaitan – sebab temporal, temporal dan moral, serta kehidupan akhirat dan keredhaan Tuhan; di mana sebab terakhir adalah paling berpengaruh dalam kepercayaan mereka. Oleh itu, kepercayaan ini di kalangan pelajar Melayu Muslim dewasa telah memperlihatkan sifat-sifat kerohanian di mana, semua tema-temanya berkait-rapat dengan aspek ketuhanan dan kehidupan abadi. Kesimpulan-kesimpulan utama kajian ini adalah kesemua tema yang berbeza ini saling tertumpu kepada satu intipati di mana kemuncaknya adalah kerohanian *mufrad*, di mana pembelajaran dalam suasana tidak formal juga amat berkait-rapat dengan intipati dan perspektif kerohanian; kunci memahami pembelajaran dewasa pula terletak pada memahami diri sendiri; orang dewasa dilihat terlibat dan ingin mencari aktiviti pendidikan yang berkait dengan penumbuhan dan pembangunan individu; dan perlunya kajian melihat pengaruh konteks berbeza, budaya dan agama pelajar serta persekitaran pembelajaran untuk memahami dengan lebih baik bagaimana pemikiran dan pengalaman mereka membentuk kepercayaan pembelajaran. Implikasi kajian ini meliputi kepentingan

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dan kaitan intipati budaya, agama dan kerohanian dalam pembelajaran dewasa, meningkatkan pemikiran kritikal di dalam pembelajaran tidak formal kalangan pelajar dewasa, serta menimbangkan pembelajaran sebagai bersifat sepanjang hayat, transformatif dan berpengalaman. Ini merupakan cabaran dalam amalan pendidikan dewasa.

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APPROVAL SHEET

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 5th July 2013 to conduct the final examination of Rohaya bt Abdul Wahab on her thesis entitled "Meanings attached to the Nature of Learning Beliefs among Adult Malay Muslim Learners in Non-Formal Learning Environment" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106]15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the degree Doctor of Philosophy.

Members of the Thesis Examination Committee were as follows:

Maimunah bt Ismail, PhD
Professor
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Turiman bin Suandi, PhD
Professor
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Internal Examiner)

Khairuddin bin Idris, PhD
Associate Professor
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Internal Examiner)

Alan Godlas, PhD
Professor
Department of Religion
University of Georgia
USA
(External Examiner)

_____

(NORITAH OMAR, PhD)
Associate Professor and Deputy Dean
School of Graduate Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia

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APPROVAL

This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

Azimi Hamzah, PhD
Professor
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Chairman)

Bahaman Abu Samah, PhD
Associate Professor
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

Shamsuddin Ahmad, PhD
Faculty of Educational Studies
Universiti Putra Malaysia
(Member)

BUJANG BIN KIM HUAT, PhD
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Signature:		**Signature:**	
Name of Chairman of Supervisory Committee:	Azimi Hamzah	**Name of Member of Supervisory Committee:**	Bahaman Abu Samah
Signature:			
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