

# **THE DYNAMICS OF STUDY CIRCLES: Some Reflections on ABIM's Collaborative Learning System.**

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## THE DYNAMICS OF STUDY CIRCLES: Some Reflections on ABIM's Collaborative Learning System

### Introduction

There has been very little non-descriptive research about learning in study circles in the recent past. Perhaps, apparently no studies on the history of study circle movements in different cultural settings, leadership in the study circles, participation processes, or impact on the educational and social policies of any particular countries.

The widespread flourishing of the study circles on people and popular organizations in the Nordic countries has made them so integrated into the fabric of Nordic society that they are taken for granted, as a kind of non-formal education. Study circles have become very popular in Tanzania, Malaysia, and many parts of the Muslim world. In the United States, according to Houle (1976), the *group dynamics* movement was very important in the 1950s and 1960s. The method took hold with adult education groups for several decades and became a dominant form of adult education in this country. The method may be called *group dynamics*, *T-Groups*, *workshops*, *work groups*, *encounter groups*, *discussion groups*, *sensitivity training*, *group therapy*, *task forces*, *buzz groups*, and more recently, *focus groups* which attempt to crystallize a single issue.

According to Oliver (1987), the term study circle was introduced in the United States in April 1985 by the National Issues Forum (NIF) and the Domestic Policy Association (DPA). In mid-1985, the International Union (IU) of Bricklayers and Allied Craftsmen (BAC) entered the fold, and in the summer of 1986, BAC conducted 27 experimental pilot study circles all over the country and Canada.

This review highlights some aspects of study circle movements in different cultural settings as an attempt to analyze the historical and societal development that brought about their emergence, and the

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### **Abstract**

The dearth of literature on study circle learning system available in our midst has brought our attention to this publication on the Dynamics of Study Circles: Some Reflections on ABIM's Collaborative Learning System in our monograph series, Professor Sidek Baba, the author of this work speaks his mind in his analysis to assess the effectiveness of study circles at least for two main reasons. Firstly, he himself is one of the engineers who designed the curriculum of these study circles of ABIM and secondly he himself is an ardent practitioner of the system. The author provides us with a vivid notion of what constitutes a study circle. In his illustration he provides us with rich experiences of study circles in Sweden, Denmark and the United States and compares them with other cultures such as Brazil and Tanzania, as a preamble to look into ABIM's experience in this subject. What is revealing, according to the author, ABIM had benefited and continue to benefit in enhancing not only her members, but also sympathizers and members of the public at large to gain good comprehension of Islamic knowledge and worldviews through this study circle concept of education.

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Sidek Baba Ph.D is presently a Professor in the Centre of Education and Human Development (CENTED), International Islamic University Malaysia. From 1994-2002, he was the Deputy Rector dealing with Student Affairs and Development. He had held several posts such as Acting Dean of the Kulliyyah of Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, and the Dean for Matriculation Centre in the same university. He has wide experience in teaching and lecturing in schools, teachers' colleges and Educational Management Institutes. He earned his Ph.D. in Northern Illinois University, USA in the field of Educational Policy Studies. He has authored several academic papers published in reputed journals.

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