RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING CHARACTERISTICS AND TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARD TEACHING: A STUDY ON SELECTED SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN FEDERAL TERRITORY KUALA LUMPUR

BY

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A RESEARCH PROJECT PAPER
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF MANAGEMENT

MANAGEMENT CENTER
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
MALAYSIA

NOVEMBER 2000

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ABSTRACT

This study has three main objectives. They are (1) to measure the extent of the organizational learning characteristics that exist in selected schools, (2) to examine the relationship between the organizational learning characteristics of the schools and their teachers' attitude toward teaching, and (3) to determine whether the relationship is affected by teachers' demographic factors. Five secondary schools in Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur were selected for the study. The conclusions of the study are as follows:

(1) There exists a certain degree of organizational learning in schools.
(2) Organizational learning capabilities differ from one school to another and are affected by many factors.
(3) There exists a significant correlation between organizational learning and the teachers' attitude towards teaching.
(4) The teachers' characteristics such as gender, teaching tenure, race, and length of service in current school have no effect on the relationship described in (3) above.

This study suggests that schools with greater organizational learning characteristics result in better teachers' attitude toward teaching. The organizational learning, especially the second loop learning (Arygris, 1992) or generative learning (McGill, Slocum, and Lei, 1992) can transform teachers' working environment into a place suitable for their professional development, hence have better teaching attitudes. This can influence their commitments and job satisfactions. They would be at better position to make changes and innovation in their teaching. Since organizational learning improves teachers' attitude, therefore, this study strongly recommends that schools become learning organizations.

APPROVAL PAGE

TITLE OF THE PROJECT PAPER:

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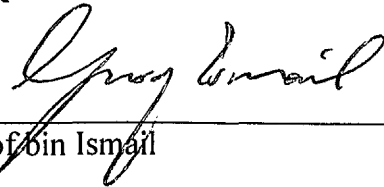
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project paper is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated other sources are acknowledged by reference note and a reference is appended.

Signature: ....

Name: **MUHD KHAIRILTITOV BIN ZAINUDDIN**

November, 2000.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the Name of Allah, the Most Benevolent, the Most Merciful

Praise be to God, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds. To Him I express my perpetual *Alhamdulillah* for giving me the opportunity, guidance, strength and patience to complete my study.

I wish to express my deepest appreciation to my supervisor, Hon. Mr. Yusof bin Ismail, whose help, advice and guidance had made the writing of this paper possible. Also to all the lecturers whose classes I had attended, giving me the valuable knowledge and memorable experiences.

I would also like to thank the Ministry of Education Malaysia and the *Institut Aminuddin Baki* for providing the invaluable opportunity and scholarship to me to pursue the master's degree.

Finally, I would like to express my love and thanks to my wife, my parents and family for their endless support and encouragement.

Muhd Khairiltitov bin Zainuddin
November, 2000

Dedicated

To my father and teacher,

Tuan Haji Zainuddin bin Haji Lapoh

My mother,

Hajah Rahmah bt Shamsudin

My wife,

Hashimah bt Abdul Razak

And

All members of the family.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Rapid technological advances of today's world demand that schools undergo transformations and reforms to include technology such as the computers, networking, and other information technologies in teaching and learning environment. The reform movements also include school effectiveness and quality education toward the world class standard. It is unavoidable for all members of the school community to require re-education and re-orientation to face these challenges of the new millennium. From the experience of the past curriculum reform in Malaysia, there are signs that many of the teachers strongly resist the change effort. We can infer these from the current teaching practices of many teachers which are still not very much different from the teachers who taught them fifteen or twenty years ago. What changes were only the content of the curriculum not how it is taught. Abu Bakar Nordin (1994), commenting on the curriculum reforms in the country wrote:

> *"Masalah kurikulum yang masih lagi rigid sama ada dari segi kandungannya mahupun dari segi pendekatan. Walaupun pembaharuan kepada kepada kurikulum dilakukan dengan pengenalan kepada Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Rendah, dan Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah namun struktur kepada kandungan dan pengolahannya tidak banyak*

berubah. Begitu juga daya pendekatan yang digunakan. Set minda yang yang lama masih mengongkongi pengendalian system yang dikatakan baru (p. 266)."

1.2 Schools as Learning Organizations

Learning organizations or communities are seen to be the best model for schools reform (Cousin, 1996, Fullan, 1993, Jalongo, 1991, Louis, Kruse and Raywid, 1996, and O Neil, 1995). The conventional 'managed change' paradigm as a foundation for contemporary school reform agenda has fallen into disfavor in face of consistently contradictory results (Cousin, 1996, Louis, 1994, and Lundberg, 1998). Many researchers in the field of school improvement demonstrate considerable support for teachers' learning to meet the needs of the students. Educational change depends on what teachers think and do (Fullan, 1991). Inos and Quigley (1995) in their study concluded that the change in the beliefs and practices of the teachers to be the most powerful influence on the transformation of students' learning. Fullan (1993), in describing the emerging conception of future school, portrayed school as 'learning organization' – encompassing a thriving community of learners. These learners include teachers, school administrators and all the supporting staff. For this 'self-renewing' organizational entity, innovation and change is not generated and passed down through hierarchy but as a result of learning activities of its members (Cousin, 1996).

To be a learning organization the schools have to change its culture (O Neal, 1995, Leithwood, Leonard and Sharratt, 1998, and Louis, Kruse and Raywid, 1996), the working environment (Frase and Conley 1994, and White and Hardbeck, 1996) and the leadership role (Leithwood, Leonard, and Sharratt,1998).

Senge (1990) defined learning organizations as "organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new expensive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (p. 3). Another definition identifies a learning organization as an organization skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insight (Garvin, 1994). The concept of learning organization has influenced school reform movements as it suggests that school should be a community of learners, "a place where all participants – teacher, principals, parents, and students – engage in learning and teaching" (Barth, 1990, p. 43).

1.3 Teachers' Attitude toward Teaching

The attitude of teachers toward teaching reflects their commitment to the teaching profession. The degree of teachers' commitment is one of the most important aspects of the performance and quality of school staff. Commitment is defined here as the degree of positive, affective attitude toward the school and their teaching profession. It is associated with the degree of internal motivation, enthusiasm and job satisfaction

teachers derive from teaching and the degree of efficacy and effectiveness they achieve in their jobs. Increasing the commitment will affect their performance that leads to improvement in student learning (Miskel and Ogawa, 1988, Reyes, 1990, and Rowan, 1990).

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Many have emphasized the importance of teachers being central to educational reform (Carnagie Forum, 1986). However, teachers in traditional schools contexts tend to keep to themselves (Putnam & Burke, 1992). According to Putnam & Burke (1992) such schools organization do not support teacher collaboration and reflection. Some teachers may even interpret request for help from their fellow teachers as signs of professional inadequacy. They will tend to isolate themselves in their profession.

The experience of teachers who begin their teaching career with high sense of purpose but within a few years converted to become frustrated idealists has prompted the idea to transform schools into learning organization (Noor Filzah, 1998). The earlier study conducted on the perception of the Malaysian teachers on the characteristics of learning organization (Noor Filzah, 1998) concluded that there is no significant data to support the existence of learning organization characteristics among the Malaysian schools. Does this show that our schools do not encourage learning among teachers? Will this affect the teachers' commitment and attitude toward teaching?

The teachers form a very important interface between the schools and its communities. The teachers' conception of the schools and their attitude toward

teaching profession can provide significant information about the school systems. This can be reflected in their attitude toward teaching, the school environment and culture, and the change efforts. It is still unclear how the characteristics of learning organization relate with the teachers' attitudes with respect to the Malaysian school system. How the teacher's characteristics and schools affect the relationship is also unclear.

1.5 Research Objectives

This study has three main objectives. First, this study intends to measure the extent of the organizational learning characteristics that exists in selected schools in Federal Territory Kuala Lumpur. Second, the study would also like to examine the relationship between the school organizational learning characteristics and the teachers' attitude toward teaching. Finally, the third objective, this study would like to determine whether the relationship is affected by teachers' demographic factors. Based on the three objectives, three research questions were formulated. They were:

1. To what extent do organizational learning characteristics exist in the selected school?

2. How would teachers' demographic factors affect their perception of the level of organizational learning in their school?

3. How do the schools organizational learning characteristics relate to the teachers' attitude toward teaching?

Questions 1 and 2 refer to the research questions posed by Noor Filzah (1998). It is part of the research objective to replicate Noor Filzah's study on the teachers'

perception of schools as learning organizations. However, this study will further explore the relationship between teachers' attitude toward teaching and learning organization (Question 3).

1.6 Rationale and Significance of the Study

Teachers' attitude toward their profession does greatly influence their performance and the schools effectiveness in achieving their objectives. It is also directly related to the teachers' professional, psychological and career development. In order for the teachers to continue to develop, they need to be part of the professional learning communities. There are several factors that contribute to the enhancement of or prevention to the development of the teachers. Understanding how these factors affect the teachers' attitude can help school administrators design better and effective school-based teacher development programs.

This research is important as it provides further understanding of the processes that facilitate or inhibit organizational learning and teacher development in the Malaysian schools. The findings of this research would be of great value to the policy makers and school leaders in designing effective development programs for teachers.

Furthermore, there appears to be no study in this country relating school organizational learning to the teachers' attitude toward teaching and teaching environment. This study is important, as it will provide the schools' administrators some guidance to transform their school into learning organization or learning community.

6

1.7 Hypothesis Statements

Based on the research questions above 14 hypotheses were constructed. Table 1.1 (a) to Table 1.1 (c) listed the statements of the hypotheses, the research variables and the related research study done previously for Research Questions 1 to 3 respectively.

Table 1.1 (a) : Hypothesis Statements, Research Variables, and Related Studies for Research Question 1

Research Question 1:			
To what extent do organizational learning characteristics exist in the respective schools?			
No.	**Hypothesis Statement**	**Independent Variables**	**Previous Study**
H_1	There is a significant evidence that teacher perceived at least one dimension of the learning organization characteristics to exist in their school.	SOLC	Noor Filzah (1998)
H_2	There is a significant evidence that teachers perceived SOLC to exist in their school.	SOLC	Noor Filzah (1998)
H_3	There is a significant difference in SOLC between the five schools.	The selected schools	n.a.

Table 1.1 (b) : Hypothesis Statements, Research Variables, and Related Studies for Research Question 2

Research Question 2:
How would teachers' demographic factors affect their perception of the level of organizational learning in their school?

No.	Hypothesis Statement	Independent Variables	Previous Study
H_4	There is a significant difference in the level of perceptions of SOLC between male and female teachers.	Gender	Dinham & Scott, (1997) Noor Filzah, (1998)
H_5	There is a significant difference in the level of perceptions of SOLC between Malay and non-Malay teachers.	Race	n.a
H_6	There is significant difference in the level of perceptions of SOLC between teachers of different length of teaching experiences.	Service tenure	Dinham & Scott , (1997) Noor Filzah, (1998)
H_7	There is a significant difference in the level of perceptions of SOLC between teachers of different length of service in the current school.	Length of service in current school	Dinham & Scott , (1997) Noor Filzah, (1998)
H_8	There is a significant evidence that teacher holding positions in schools perceived a higher degree of SOLC in schools than teachers without position.	Position in school	Seymour & Arnott (1994) Noor Filzah, (1998
H_9	There is a significant difference in the level of perceptions of SOLC between teachers teaching morning session with teachers teaching the afternoon session.	Teaching Session	n.a.

8

| H$_{10}$ | There is a significant difference in the level of perceptions of SOLC between teachers with degree qualification (graduate) with teachers without degree qualification (non-graduate). | Teachers' qualification | n.a. |

Table 1.1 (c):   Hypothesis Statements, Research Variables, and Related Studies for Research Question 3

RQ3: How do the schools' organizational learning characteristics relate to the teachers' attitude toward teaching?			
No.	**Hypothesis Statement**	**Independent Variables**	**Previous Study**
H$_{11}$	There is no difference in TATT score between the five schools.	The selected schools	n.a.
H$_{12}$	There is a significant correlation between schools' organizational learning characteristics (SOLC) and (overall) teachers' attitude toward teaching (TATT).	SOLC and TATT	n.a.
H$_{13}$	There is a significant evidence that school with higher level of SOLC is associated with higher degree of TATT.	SOLC	n.a.
H$_{14}$	Teachers' demographic characteristics significantly affect the SOLC-TATT relationship.	Teachers' characteristics	n.a.

1.8 Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined accordingly:

Organizational learning:

The process by which the organization's knowledge and value base changes, leading to improved problem-solving ability and capacity for action (Probst and Büchel, 1997, p. 15).

Learning organization:

An organization skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behavior to reflect new knowledge and insight (Garvin, 1994).

Organizational Learning Survey (OLS):

The twenty-one items questionnaire used in this study to measure the degree of organizational learning characteristics of the school as perceived by its teachers.

School Organizational Learning Characteristics (SOLC):

The characteristics of school that support learning among its teachers and administrators that are measured by the Organizational Learning Survey (OLS) of this study.

Teachers' Attitude Toward Teaching (TATT):

Teachers' complexes of beliefs and feelings about specific idea, conception and situation related to their teaching profession, the schools, and toward other teachers. Three dimensions were considered. They were: (1) attitude toward new knowledge, innovations and technology in education, (2) working environment, and (3) satisfaction and commitment.

Teachers' Attitude Toward Teaching Scale (TATTS):

The 19 items questionnaire used in this study to measure the teachers' attitude toward teaching.

School administrators:

The school principal, Senior Assistants and the Afternoon Session Supervisor.

1.9 Organization of the Project Paper

This report is organized into five chapters. The first chapter, Chapter One, discusses the background of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions and hypotheses, the limitations of the study, and definition of several important terms.

Chapter Two reviews the literature related to the study. It discusses the conceptual meaning of a learning organization and organizational learning, the related research works in education and the research framework.

Chapter Three outlines the research methodology. It describes the population and samples of the study, the development and psychometric properties of the instrument, the data collection techniques, and data analysis procedures.

Chapter Four describes the results of analysis of data. This includes the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the schools, the test of the hypotheses, and discussion of the findings based on the research questions.

Chapter Five provides the discussion and the conclusion as well as implications of the study. In this chapter, major findings are discussed and followed by recommendations and future research directions.

1.10 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study does not intend to generalize its findings to larger population of teaching communities. It involved only five selected schools within the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. The selection was not made at random. The findings were limited to the population of the five selected schools.