

# Attitudes toward Change: A Comparison Between Senior Assistants and Teachers in Malaysian Secondary Schools

Omar Abdull Kareem & Tai Mei Kin

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i1/3806>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i1/3806

*Received: 05 Jan 2018, Revised: 24 Jan 2018, Accepted: 28 Jan 2018*

Published Online: 02 Feb 2018

**In-Text Citation:** (Kareem & Kin, 2018)

**To Cite this Article:** Kareem, O. A., & Kin, T. M. (2018). Attitudes toward Change: A Comparison Between Senior Assistants and Teachers in Malaysian Secondary Schools. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 8(1), 245–259.

**Copyright:** © 2018 The Author(s)

Published by Human Resource Management Academic Research Society ([www.hrmars.com](http://www.hrmars.com))

This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this license may be seen at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>

**Vol. 8, No.1, January 2018, Pg. 245 - 259**

<http://hrmars.com/index.php/pages/detail/IJARBSS>

JOURNAL HOMEPAGE

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at  
<http://hrmars.com/index.php/pages/detail/publication-ethics>

## **Attitudes toward Change: A Comparison Between Senior Assistants and Teachers in Malaysian Secondary Schools**

Omar Abdull Kareem & Tai Mei Kin

Department of Management and Leadership, Faculty of Management and Economics, Sultan Idris Education University, 35900 Tanjong Malim, Perak Darul Ridzuan, Malaysia.

Email: taimeikin@fpe.upsi.edu.my

### **Abstract**

The central aim of the study was to examine the patterns of attitudes toward change (ATC) of senior assistants and teachers in Malaysian secondary schools. A total of 1,014 respondents were involved in the final analysis. The findings revealed that a) the senior assistants scored significantly higher than the teachers in all the three domains of ATC; b) the senior assistants and the teachers hold cognitively-based ATC; c) as a whole, senior assistants scored at the quadrant of Embracing whereas the teachers scored at the quadrant of Acceptance; d) in terms of quadrants, the senior assistants scored at the quadrant of Embracing for Cognitive, Affective and Behavioural whereas the teachers scored at the quadrant of Embracing for Cognitive and Affective but at the quadrant of Acceptance for Behavioural. In summary, there is a need for relevant parties to uncover the real situation to improve teacher attitudes toward change. Improvement of quality of teachers' attitudes is an obligatory condition for high quality school education as teachers are the change implementers who are closest to the student. Indeed, the central pivot of any school change is the acceptance or the heart of the teachers to work through the change process.

**Keywords:** Attitudes Toward Change, Cognitive Responses to Change, Affective Responses to Change, Behavioural Responses to Change, School Change

### **Introduction**

To ensure the education system stays vibrantly attractive and competitive, school reform has become a top priority in many countries throughout the world. However although schools continually embark on programmes aiming at school improvement, most education reforms have not been completely successful (Balogun & Hope-Hailey, 2004; Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). Substantial studies in change management have found that the critical factor that influences the success or failure of any change is precisely individuals' resistance to the change,

which is closely related to positive or negative attitudes to change (Aslan, Beycioglu & Konan, 2008; Bouckenooghe, 2009; Kotter, 1999).

Indeed, individuals' attitude is a good predictor of change readiness in any organization (Hayes, 2010; Kotter, 1999; Lewin, 1958; Nilakant & Ramanarayan, 2006). It is considered as one major determinant of the person's intention to perform the behaviour to support or against the change. Positive attitudes toward change may result in positive behavioural intention and subsequent behaviours such as actively involves in change (Oreg, 2003) or highly committed to change (Spreitzer & Mishra, 2002). Positive attitudes to change were found to be important in achieving organizational goals and in succeeding in change programs (Bareil, Savoie, & Meunier, 2007; Bernerth, 2004; Eby, Adams, Russel, & Gaby, 2000). In schools, positive attitudes constituted an important indicator in adopting innovations (Thomas, 2003).

Conversely, negative attitude toward change will be a disabling factor when trying to successfully implement change (Vakola & Nikolaou, 2006). Negative attitude toward change generate negative behavioural intention and concerned behaviours, for example, absenteeism (Martin, Jones & Callan, 2006), withdrawal (Kiefer, 2005), intentions to quit (Cunningham, 2006) or sabotage the intended initiatives (Armenakis & Bedian, 1999). Clearly, this resistance expressed in various ways and to different extents: from simple hesitation to hostility and attempts to resist the change effort (Jones, Watson, Hobman, Bordia, Gallois, & Callan, 2008; Smith, 2005; Zimmerman, 2006).

In order to develop a dynamic and coherent education system, the Malaysian education system is entering an intensive period of change with the launching of Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025. To realize the above change goals, eleven strategic and operation shifts were suggested for the enhancement of the system (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013). Given that attitude is one major determinant whether an individual embrace or resist change (Bentea & Anghelachea, 2012) that bring great impact to the organization and senior assistants and teachers are two important school-based factors which determines the change outcomes in the schools, it is important to examine their attitudes toward change in the midst of the implementation of the Blueprint.

### **Literature Review**

According to Fishbein and Ajzen (2010), attitude is viewed as a learned predisposition to respond to an object in a consistently favourable or unfavourable way. We formed favour behaviours we believe have largely desirable consequences and we learnt to unfavourable attitudes toward behaviours we associate with mostly undesirable consequence. Generally, attitude is conceived as a tri-dimensional concept which encompasses of cognitive, affective and behavioural components (Farley & Stasson, 2003; Dunham, Grube, Gardner, Cummings, & Pierce, 1989; Oreg, 2006; Piderit, 2000). While on the one hand cognition, affect and behavioural are distinct components of attitude (Brekler, 1984) and serve a range of purpose, any particular attitude can also be based on a one-component more than another (Underwood, 2002). An attitude that is formed primarily through facts instead of emotions or observations of our behaviour is cognitively-based; an attitude where the affective component is more salient is affectively-based; an attitude which stems from one's observation of one's own behaviour or the behavioural component is more dominant is behaviourally-based (Lavine, Thomsen, Zanna & Borginda, 1998; Millar & Millar, 1990).

'Attitude toward organizational change' was defined by Vakola and Nikolaou (2006) as certain regularities of an individual's feelings, thoughts and predispositions towards change initiated by the organization. In change management literature, the vast majority of empirical studies about predicting attitude toward change have been focused on two themes i.e. contextual variables and individual factors. Contextual variables such as trust in management (Gomez & Rosen, 2001; Simons, 1999), social influence (Gibbons, 2004), information (Miller, Johnson, & Grau, 1994; Wanberg & Banas, 2000), uncertainty (Hallgrímsson, 2008), and organizational culture (Avidov-Ungar & Eshet-Alkabay, 2011; Cunningham, Woodward, Shannon, MacIntosh, Lendrum, Rosenbloom & Brown, 2002; Lorenzo, 1998; Md Zabid Abdul Rashid, Murali Sambasivan, Azmawani Abdul Rahman, 2004; Oreg, Vakola & Armenakis, 2007, August; Pool, 2000; Ruth & Maaja, 2003), were found reliably related in influencing organizational members' reactions to change.

Individual factors such as self-esteem (Wanberg & Banas, 2000), risk tolerance (Judge, Thoresen, Pucik, & Welbourne, 1999), need for achievement (Miller et al., 1994), emotional intelligence (Vakola, Tsaousis, & Nikolaou, 2004), defence mechanisms (Bovey & Hede, 2001) and locus of control (Chen & Wang, 2007; Lau & Woodman, 1995) were, among others affecting individuals' attitudes toward change. Besides, Oreg (2003) in his development of the Resistance to Change Scale to measure individual's dispositional inclination to resist change, identified the level of reluctance to lose control, reluctance to give up old habits and lack of psychological resilience as among the important factors that affect individual evaluation judgement toward any change initiative.

The first scholarly article on attitudes toward change published in the late 1940s (Coch & French, 1948). From then onward researchers use a variety ways for conceptualizing people's reactions toward change (Oreg et al., 2007). Positive terms such as readiness for change, commitment to change, openness to change, acceptance of change; negative terms such as resistance to change, cynicism about organizational change, and attitude toward change which are encapsulating both the negative and positive view, are used interchangeably (Bouckennooghe, 2009).

In this study, attitude toward change (ATC) is the internal state that influences the senior assistant's or teacher's choices of his/her personal action, or a response tendency towards the school change. It refers to his/her overall positive or negative evaluative judgment of a change initiative implemented by his/her school (Dunham et al., 1989; Oreg, 2006; Piderit, 2000). As change recipients, senior assistants and teachers in school make sense of change and develop certain attitudes toward change through a process of their own reflection, as well as a collective sense-making that comes from a series of interactions with colleagues and the change agent – the school principal. It is perceived as a tri-dimensional concept that consists of cognitive, affective and behavioural responses to change (Dunham et al., 1989; Oreg, 2006; Piderit, 2000; Tai, 2013).

*Cognitive* reaction to change refers to the senior assistants' or teachers' beliefs about the need for change, the significance of the change, the favourability of outcomes i.e. the extent to which the change will be personally and organizationally beneficial and the knowledge required to handle change (Dunham et al., 1989; Oreg, 2006; Piderit, 2000; Tai, 2013). *Affective* reaction to change refers to the senior assistants' or teachers' feelings about the change. It is senior assistants' or teachers' tendency to enjoy changes in schools. The responses to change along this

emotional dimension might range from positive emotions e.g. excitement, enthusiasm and happiness to strong negative emotions such as anger, resentment, frustration, anxiety or fear (Dunham et al., 1989; Oreg, 2006; Piderit, 2000). Next, the *behavioural* reaction to change measures the extent to which senior assistants or teachers would take action to support or initiate change. It is the action taken that is either for or against change. It can range from strong positive intentions to support change by being actively involved in the change, for example, to negative intentions to resist it such as quitting intentions due to the change (Dunham et al., 1989; Oreg, 2006; Piderit, 2000).

rising from the foregoing review, the objective of the present study was to examine the patterns of ATC between the senior assistants and teachers in Malaysian secondary schools. The current study would contribute to the field of school change management especially in providing insights of mitigating the gaps between micro and systems change in school reforms.

## Methodology

### Sample

To perform the test adequately, West Malaysia was divided into four research zones namely the Eastern Zone (Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang), the Southern Zone (Negeri Sembilan, Melaka and Johor), the Western Zone (Perak, Selangor, Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya), and the Northern Zone (Perlis, Kedah and Penang). Kelantan, Negeri Sembilan, Selangor and Penang were randomly chosen from each of the above four zones respectively for the survey. Sarawak was selected from the two East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak. There were altogether five states in Malaysia involved in the survey (Table 1).

Table 1: Total number of schools, senior assistants and teachers engaged in the survey and the usable data

States	No. of School	No. of Senior Assistants	Usable Data	No. of School	No. of Teachers	Usable Data
Kelantan	20	100	65	20	200	131
Negeri Sembilan	20	100	69	20	200	141
Selangor	20	100	75	20	200	166
Penang	20	100	80	20	200	167
Sarawak	20	100	72	20	200	148
Total	100	500	361	100	1,000	753

As shown in Table 1, for every state, twenty secondary schools were chosen for the test respectively or a total of 100 schools (20 x 5) were involved in the survey. For comparison purposes, data were collected from senior assistants and teachers. In Malaysia, the number of senior assistants in secondary schools varies based on the different functions of the schools. Basically, each secondary school had three senior assistants with responsibilities in the areas of academic, co-curriculum and students' affairs. For schools with two sessions, the afternoon session falls under the purview of another senior assistants. Schools with special education programmes are entitled to have one more senior assistants. In view of the above scenario, five

questionnaires were sent out by post to each school or a total number of 500 sets of questionnaires (100 x 5) were posted to the concerned schools. On the other hand, 10 teachers were selected as respondents from each school at random. Simply put, there were 1,000 teachers (100 x 10) chosen for the survey (Table 1).

Out of 500 sets of questionnaires sent out via post for senior assistants, 370 sets were returned. The response rate was 74.00%. Nine sets of the questionnaires were excluded from further analysis as they had at least 25% technical errors. A total of 361 sets of questionnaires were accepted for the final analysis (Table 1). Meanwhile, out of 1,000 sets of questionnaires sent out for teachers, 764 sets were returned, with a response of 76.40%. Only 753 sets were included for the final analysis as there were 11 set of questionnaires with illegible responses (Table 1).

### Survey Instrument

Attitudes toward change were measured by using *Attitudes toward Change Scale* (ATCS) (Tai, 2013). ATCS was constructed by adapting the Attitudes toward Change Scale developed by Dunham et al (1989) and was tested in the Malaysian education context. It consists of three main dimensions namely: (a) *Cognitive*; (b) *Affective*; and (c) *Behavioural* responses to change. Each dimension comprises three items with factor loadings ranging from .64 to .83. The composite reliability index for each dimension of ATCS is .67, .65, and .62, respectively. ATCS hold discriminant validity since Average Variance Extracted of the factors is greater than .5 (Kline, 2005). The instrument was a six-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

To make the score of the above instrument to be meaningful, as illustrated in Figure 1, ATCS (Tai, 2013) was presented in four quadrants: *Embracing*, *Acceptance*, *Indifference*, and *Resistance*. These were constructed based on two main continuums of ATC i.e. positive-negative (vertical) and active-passive (horizontal) with two main indicators for each of the components of ATC, *Cognitive*, *Affective* and *Behavioural*. This is based on the fact that if a stimulus evokes primarily favourable responses, a positive and active attitude is fostered. However, if a stimulus evokes primarily unfavourable responses, a negative and passive attitude is nurtured (Underwood, 2002). In other words, ATC may vary by the degree of positive-negative and active-passive of the teachers toward an attitude object.

The *Embracing* dimension at the upper right quadrant consists of positive and active attitudes toward change whereas the *Acceptance* dimension at the upper left quadrant encompasses positive and passive attitudes toward change. The *Indifference* dimension at the lower right quadrant consists of negative and active attitudes toward change. The *Resistance* dimension at the lower left quadrant encompasses negative and passive attitudes toward change.

To explain the above four dimensions, three main components of ATC, *Cognitive*, *Affective* and *Behavioral*, with two main indicators for each, are the basic measures for each quadrant. As ATCS (Tai, 2013) in the present study is a six-point Likert-type scale, with the scores range from 1 to 6, those respondents who score between 1.00 and 2.24 will fall at the quadrant of *Resistance*, 2.25 and 3.49 at the quadrant of *Indifference*, 3.50 and 4.74 at the quadrant of *Acceptance*, and 4.75 and 6.00 at the quadrant of *Embracing*. This measurement was used to capture the respondent's position on the above two defined ATC continuum so as to explain ATC explicitly.

Figure 1. Indicators for four types of ATC

Positive

<p><b>ACCEPTANCE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Believes that a change is necessary (C)</li> <li>● Believes that the change implemented is appropriate for the organization (C)</li> <li>● Feels ease with the change (A)</li> <li>● Concerned and valued the change (A)</li> <li>● Does only what is required in the change (B)</li> <li>● Not mattering whether others are interested in the change (B)</li> </ul>	<p><b>EMBRACING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Believes that only change will increase organizational effectiveness (C)</li> <li>● Believes that only the way the change is implemented will bring benefits to the organization (C)</li> <li>● Enthusiastic and excited about the change (A)</li> <li>● Passionate and proud about the change (A)</li> <li>● Engaged and take responsibility in the change (B)</li> <li>● Inspired others to engage in the change (B)</li> </ul>
<p><b>RESISTANCE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Believes that a change is unnecessary at all (C)</li> <li>● Believes that the change implemented is not appropriate for the organization (C)</li> <li>● Feels irritated and in a state of denial about the change (A)</li> <li>● Shows anger and hostility toward the attributes of the change (A)</li> <li>● Refuse to participate in any form of</li> </ul>	<p><b>INDIFFERENCE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Believes that whether change or not change the situation in the organization will be the same (C)</li> <li>● Believes that no matter how the change is implemented, it does not affect the situation in the organization (C)</li> <li>● No marked feeling about the change (A)</li> <li>● Keep aloof from the change (A)</li> <li>● Keen in showing that oneself is neutral</li> </ul>

Negative	change activity (B) ● Recruiting others for common support to oppose or sabotage the plan for change (B)	in the change (B) ● Encourages others to be neutral in the change (B)
	Passive	Active

Note. C=Cognitive; A=Affective; B=Behavioural

### Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted in this study. Data was analysed to obtain scores, means, standard deviations and percentages. Apart from this, based on a significance level of 0.5, t-test was employed to test the significance of the differences between variables.

### Findings

#### Demographic Characteristics

Of the sample, 36.60% (N=408) was male and 63.40% (N=706) was female. Majority of the respondent was aged between 41 to 50 years (N=481, 43.20%), followed by the age group of 51 to 60 years (N=360, 32.30%), 31 to 40 years (N=216, 19.40%). The 21 to 30 years (N=57, 5.10%) was the smallest group. Regarding academic qualification, most of the respondents were with Bachelor's degree (N=958, 86.00%), 13% (N=145) with Master's degree and 1.00% (N=11) with certificate or diploma. In terms of school seniority, 37.30% (N=415) was attached to the present school more than 20 years, 17.50% (N=195) 16 to 20 years, 16.50% (N=184) 1 to 5 years, 14.90% (N=166) 6 to 10 years, and 13.80% (N=154) 11 to 15 years.

#### The level of attitudes toward change of senior assistants and teachers

As shown in Table 2, the mean score of ATC for senior assistants was 5.00 (SD=.57) whereas for teachers was 4.72 (SD=.61). A difference of .28 was found between the mean scores of ATC of senior assistants and teachers. The difference was statistically significant and it was supported by the result of t-test,  $t(1112) = 7.07, p < .05$  as depicted in Table 3.

Table 2. Attitudes toward change of senior assistants and teachers across domains

Dimension	Respondents	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
COG	Senior Assistants	361	5.11	.61
	Teachers	753	4.83	.71
AFF	Senior Assistants	361	5.03	.68
	Teachers	753	4.79	.69
BHV	Senior Assistants	361	4.85	.69
	Teachers	753	4.55	.68
ATC	Senior Assistants	361	5.00	.57
	Teachers	753	4.72	.61

Note. COG=Cognitive; AFF=Affective; BHV=Behavioural; ATC=Attitudes toward change



Table 3. *Independent Sample t-Test for Differences among domains of ATC between Senior Assistants and Teachers*

Domain	Variance	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
COG	Equal variances assumed	9.362	.002	6.50	1112	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			6.88	822.071	.000
AFF	Equal variances assumed	1.521	.218	3.47	1112	.001
	Equal variances not assumed			3.47	711.923	.001
BHV	Equal variances assumed	.224	.636	6.78	1112	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			6.75	703.541	.000
ATC	Equal variances assumed	2.658	.103	7.07	1112	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			7.26	759.303	.000

Note.

COG=Cognitive; AFF=Affective; BHV=Behavioural; ATC=Attitudes toward change

#### Attitudes toward change of senior assistants and teachers across domains

As shown in Table 2, while examining closely based on domains, the senior assistants achieved higher ATC than the teachers in the domain of *Cognitive* ( $M=5.11$ ,  $SD=.61$  [senior assistants];  $M=4.83$ ,  $SD=.71$  [teachers]), *Affective* ( $M=5.03$ ,  $SD=.68$  [senior assistants];  $M=4.79$ ,  $SD=.69$  [teachers]) as well as *Behavioural* ( $M=4.85$ ,  $SD=.69$  [senior assistants];  $M=4.55$ ,  $SD=.68$  [teachers]). The differences were significant and the results of the *t*-tests supported it (Table 3),  $t(1112) = 6.50$ ,  $p < .05$  (*Cognitive*),  $t(1112) = 3.47$ ,  $p < .05$  (*Affective*), and  $t(1112) = 6.78$ ,  $p < .05$  (*Behavioural*), respectively.

For senior assistants, as shown in Table 2, they achieved the highest mean of 5.11 ( $SD=.61$ ) in *Cognitive*, followed by *Affective* ( $M=5.03$ ,  $SD=.68$ ) and achieved the lowest mean in *Behavioural* ( $M=4.85$ ,  $SD=.69$ ). Similarly, the teachers achieved the highest mean in *Cognitive* with a mean of 4.83 ( $SD=.71$ ), followed by *Affective* ( $M=4.79$ ,  $SD=.69$ ) and *Behavioural* ( $M=4.55$ ,  $SD=.68$ ). In other words, both senior assistants and teachers hold cognitively-based attitudes toward school change.

#### Attitudes toward change of senior assistants and teachers based on quadrants

Next, as a whole, with a mean score of 5.00 ( $SD=.57$ ), senior assistants scored at the quadrant of *Embracing* (4.75 - 6.00) whereas the teachers with a mean score of 4.72 ( $SD=.61$ ), scored at the quadrant of *Acceptance* (3.50 - 4.74) (Table 2). While examining closely based on domains, senior assistants scored at the quadrant of *Embracing* (4.75 - 6.00) for *Cognitive* ( $M=5.11$ ,  $SD=.61$ ), *Affective* ( $M=5.03$ ,  $SD=.68$ ) and *Behavioural* ( $M=4.85$ ,  $SD=.69$ ). Meanwhile, teachers scored at

the quadrant of *Embracing* (4.75 - 6.00) for *Cognitive* ( $M=4.83$ ,  $SD=.71$ ) and *Affective* ( $M=4.79$ ,  $SD=.69$ ) but at the quadrant of *Acceptance* (3.50 - 4.74) for *Behavioural* ( $M=4.55$ ,  $SD=.68$ ).

In summary, the findings revealed that a) the senior assistants scored significantly higher than the teachers in all the three domains of ATC i.e. *Cognitive, Affective and Behavioural*; b) the senior assistants as well as the teachers hold cognitively-based attitudes toward school change; c) as a whole, senior assistants scored at the quadrant of *Embracing* whereas the teachers scored at the quadrant of *Acceptance*; d) in terms of quadrants, the senior assistants scored at the quadrant of *Embracing* for *Cognitive, Affective and Behavioural* whereas the teachers scored at the quadrant of *Embracing* for *Cognitive and Affective* but at the quadrant of *Acceptance* for *Behavioural*.

## Discussion

The study has unveiled some important findings about ATC between senior assistants and teachers in Malaysian secondary schools. First, senior assistants of secondary schools scored significantly higher than teachers in all the three domains of ATC i.e. *Cognitive, Affective and Behavioural*. To a large extent, the findings met the expectations of the public toward senior assistants as they are important partners of school principals to secure school change. In fact, they are the middle-level leaders who interact intensively with teachers and remain responsive to complex organizational demands and balance the need for change in the school. Thus, they greatly influence teachers in daily routines to work together to realize the change goals. Therefore, despite school principal, senior assistants as leaders in the school are expected by stakeholders to have favourable attitudes toward school change.

Second, the senior assistants as well as the teachers scored the highest in the domain of *Cognitive*, followed by *Affective* and *Behavioural*. This indicated that the senior assistants and teachers hold cognitively-based attitudes toward school change. The finding revealed that basically cognitive factors play a substantial role in attitude formation of senior assistants and teachers in the schools. Early in the change process, when they were first exposed to the information on school change, they formed beliefs about the change. Issues such as whether the change is needed, whether they are capable of implementing the change in such a way that important objectives are met, and how the school management supports this particular change will be the main concern (Tai & Omar, 2016). Obviously, their attitudes are formed primarily based on their reasoning processes and concomitant changes to their beliefs.

In fact, senior assistants and teachers in school not only make sense of change and develop attitudes toward change through a process of their own reflection, but also through collective sense-making that comes from a series of interactions with colleagues and most importantly change agent – the school principal as he or she is the one, the school leader, who determines the organization's strategies, plans and day-to-day management practices to realize the change goals. Over time, these strategies, plans and management practices decided and implemented by school principal influences senior assistants and teachers attitudes toward change. This impact would be even stronger in schools if school principals are competent and know how to map the organization's systems' dynamics that are relevant to the change, and where the leverage points are for producing that change.

Another important reason contributed to the above situation was that basically as civil servants, senior assistants or teachers also understand that they have to implement change

initiated through top-down approach, regardless the change is valuable to them, or either they enjoy the rewards or benefits realized from adopting change. Clearly, even the outcomes of the change are not desirable or the change is not worthwhile for them, cognitively, they have to accept and implement the change. To a large degree, the crux of the matter lies in the fact that Malaysia is implementing centralized education system whereby the prevalence of the top-down approach and the bureaucratic organizational structure have not given senior assistants or teachers greater autonomy and decision-making power in schools.

Third, the finding also revealed that as a whole, senior assistants scored at the quadrant of *Embracing* whereas the teachers scored at the quadrant of *Acceptance*. Indeed, the senior assistants scored at the quadrant of *Embracing* for all the three domains of ATC i.e. *Cognitive*, *Affective* and *Behavioural*. Senior assistants at the quadrant of *Embracing* are those who strongly believe that change will increase school effectiveness and bring benefits to the schools. They are enthusiastic, passionate and proud about the proposed change. Additionally, they are not only engaged and take responsibility in the change, but also inspired and pull others especially teachers in to engage in the change (Figure 1). Through this active interaction with teachers, they create a culture that is hospitable to learning, providing an impetus for improving teacher competency and student achievement in the change process. In short, they display palpable energy, excitement and hope for school reforms. Ideally, when the magnitude of positive and activeness of senior assistants' ATC are largely at the quadrant of *Embracing*, the probability to turn the change goal of any school reform into reality would be relatively high.

However, the finding revealed that the change implementers in school, the teachers, were found scored at the quadrant of *Acceptance* of ATC. Teachers at the quadrant of *Acceptance* of ATC are those who believe that a change is necessary and the implemented change is appropriate for their schools. In terms of affective, they feel ease with the change, are concerned with and valued the change. Nevertheless, behaviourally, they only do what is required in the change with no particular regard for whether others are interested in the change (Figure 1). The above explanations were matched with another finding that in terms of domains, the teachers scored at the quadrant of *Embracing* for *Cognitive* and *Affective* but at the quadrant of *Acceptance* for *Behavioural*.

Indeed, substantial studies in the literature of change management argued that organizational change can only be implemented successfully if the organization members have strong positive intentions to support change and work together toward the change goal (Hayes, 2010; Kotter, 1999; Nilakant & Ramanarayan, 2006). Since the envisaged reform in the Malaysian education system is of great complexity in breadth and depth, the magnitude of positive and activeness of teachers' ATC at the quadrant of *Acceptance* would certainly be insufficient to carry the weight of the kinds of reforms in the country as set out in the Blueprint. The finding seems to suggest that special attention should be given and attempts should be made to identify the root cause of the situation. This can be done through first devising a framework and an overall strategy, followed by a directional implementation plan to improve teacher attitudes toward change. The Ministry of Education has plans to allocate a huge budget to implement the envisaged reform set out in the Blueprint. But, budget needs to be allocated to communicating the reform, setting up structures or platforms for teachers' involvement in decision making, prioritizing teachers' professional development, and the willpower to follow up and follow

through the changes from top down in a sustainable way. Unless all these are in place, school reform will only be adopted superficially or might even fail.

### Limitations of the Study

Two important limitations of the present study need to be highlighted. First, as the responses of the study were collected based on self-reported data and this measure is likely to be affected by egocentric biases (Harris & Schaubrocek, 1988), to gain a comprehensive view, it would be worth to involve another party, for example, the change agents themselves i.e. the school principals in future studies so as to increase the ability to interpret the findings. Secondly, as ATC is dynamic, complex, and a context-specific phenomenon, to grasp a more accurate evaluation of it, instead of just employing a survey study, longitudinal study combining surveys, interviews and observations should be considered to help clarify the issue and to better understand how senior assistants and teachers perceive, react and adapt to school change.

### Conclusion

On the whole, the study provides a preliminary insight into the emergence of more complete patterns of ATC in Malaysian secondary school, offering local practitioners and relevant parties another dimension of understanding, enhancing and preparing the senior assistants' and teachers' capacity for change. The findings of the current study seem to imply that there is a need for improvement of teacher attitudes toward change. Improvement of quality of teachers' attitudes is an obligatory condition for high quality school education as teachers are the change implementers who are closest to the student. Indeed, the central pivot of any school change is the acceptance or the heart of the teachers to work through the change process. This present study thus provides a timely finding for relevant parties to craft relevant preparation programmes for teachers to enhance their ATC to best engage in school change especially how to consciously temper their predisposition against change and to take initiatives to gain their support for the change. In short, the study has expanded the existing body of knowledge on ATC, specifically in Malaysian context, and will spur further research that examines the ATC of senior assistants as well as teachers in the process of realization change goals in school reforms.

### References

- Armenakis, A. A., & Bedian, A. (1999). Organizational change: A review of theory and research in the 1990s. *Journal of Management*, 25(3), 293-301.
- Aslan, M., Beycioglu, K., & Konan, N. (2008). Principals' openness to change in Malatya, Turkey. *International Electronic Journal for Leadership in Learning*, 12(8), 1-13.
- Avidov-Ungar, O., & Eshet-Alkarakay, Y. (2011). Teachers in world of change: Teachers' knowledge and attitudes toward the implementation of innovative technologies in schools. *Interdisciplinary Journal of E-Learning and Learning Objects*, 7, 291-303.
- Balogun, J., & Hope-Hailey, V. (2004). *Exploring strategic change* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Prentice Hall.
- Bareil, C., Savoie, A., & Meunier, S. (2007). Patterns of discomfort with organizational change. *Journal of Change Management*, 7(1), 13-24.
- Bentea, C. C., & Anghelachea, V. (2012). Teachers' motivation and satisfaction for professional activity. *Procedia-Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 33, 563 – 567.

- Bernerth, J. B. (2004). Organizational change readiness - the five messages: Expanding our understanding of the change message. *Human Resource Development Review*, 3(1), 36-52.
- Bouckenoghe, D. (2009). Change recipients' attitudes toward change: A review study. *Vlerick Leuven Gent Working Paper Series*, 14, 201-217.
- Bovey, W., & Hede, A. (2001). Resistance to organizational change: The role of cognitive and affective processes. *Leadership and Organizational Development Journal*, 22(1), 372-382.
- Breckler, S. J. (1984). Empirical validation of affect, behaviour, and cognition as distinct components of attitude. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 47, 1191-1205.
- Chen, J., & Wang, L. (2007). Locus of control and the three components of commitment to change. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 42(3), 503-512.
- Coch, L., & French, J.R.P. (1948). Overcoming resistance to change. *Human Relations*, 1(1), 512-532.
- Cunningham, C. (2006). The relationships among commitment to change, coping with change, and turnover intentions. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 15(1), 29-45.
- Cunningham, C., Woodward, C., Shannon, H., MacIntosh, J., Lendrum, B., Rosenbloom, D. & Brown, J. (2002). Readiness for organizational change: A longitudinal study of workplace, psychological and behavioural correlates. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 75(1), 377-392.
- Dunham, R. B., Grube, J. A., Gardner, D. G., Cummings, L. L., & Pierce, J. L. (1989). *The development of an attitude toward change instrument*. Unpublished discussion paper 124, Strategic Management Research Center, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.
- Eby, L. T., Adams, D. M., Russel, J. E. A., & Gaby, S. H. (2000). Perception of organizational readiness: Factor related to employees' reactions to the implementation of team based selling. *Human Relation*, 53(March), 419-442.
- Farley, S. D., & Stasson, M. F. (2003). Relative influences of affect and cognition on behaviour: Are feelings or beliefs more related to blood donation intentions? *Experimental Psychology*, 50(1), 55-62.
- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (2010). *Predicting and changing behaviour: The reasoned action Approach*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Gibbons, D. E. (2004). Network structure and innovation ambiguity effects on diffusion in dynamic organizational fields. *Academy of Management Journal*, 47(6), 938-951.
- Gomez, C., & Rosen, B. (2001). The leader: Member exchange as a link between managerial trust and employee empowerment. *Group and Organization Management*, 26(1), 53-69.
- Hallgrimsson, T. (2008). *Organizational change and change readiness: Employees' attitudes during times of proposed merger* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Tromso, Tromso.
- Harris, M. M., & Schaubroeck, J. (1988). A meta-analysis of self supervisor, self peer, and peer supervisor ratings. *Personnel Psychology*, 41, 43-62.

- Hayes, J. (2010). *The theory and practice of change management* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jones, L., Watson, B., Hobman, E., Bordia, P., Gallois, C., & Callan, V.J. (2008). Employee perceptions of organizational change: Impact of hierarchical level. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 29(4), 294-316.
- Judge, T. A., Thoresen, C. J., Pucik, V., & Welbourne, T. M. (1999). Managerial coping with organizational change: A dispositional perspective. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 84(1), 107-122.
- Kiefer, T. (2005). Feeling bad: Antecedents and consequences of negative emotions in ongoing change. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 26(8), 875-897.
- Kline, R. B. (2005). *Principles and practice of Structural Equation Modeling* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York, NY: Guilford.
- Kotter, J. P. (1999). *Leading change*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Lau, C., & Woodman, R. C. (1995). Understanding organizational change: A schematic perspective. *Academy of Management Journal*, 38(2), 537-554.
- Lavine, H., Thomson, C. J., Zanna, M. P., & Borginda, E. (1998). On the primacy of affect in the determination of attitudes and behaviour: The moderating role of affective-cognitive ambivalence. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 34, 398-421.
- Lewin, K. (1958). Group decisions and social change. In G.E. Swanson, T.M. Newcomb & E.L. Hartley (Eds.), *Readings in Social Psychology* (pp. 62-73). New York, NY: Holt, Rhinehart & Winston.
- Lorenzo, A. L. (1998). A framework for fundamental change: Context, criteria, and culture. *Journal of Research & Practice*, 22(4), 335-348.
- Martin, A. J., Jones, E. S., & Callan, V. J. (2006). Status differences in employee adjustment during organizational change. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 21(2), 145-162.
- Rashid, M. Z. A., Sambasivan, M., & Rahman, A. A. (2004). The influence of organizational culture on attitude toward organizational change. *Leadership and Organizational Development Journal*, 23(2), 161-179.
- Millar, M. G., & Millar, K. U. (1990). Attitude change as a function of attitude type and argument type. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59, 217-228.
- Miller, V.D., Johnson, J. R., & Grau, J. (1994). Antecedents to willingness to participate in a planned organizational change. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 22(1), 59-80.
- Ministry of Education Malaysia. (2013). *Preliminary report - Executive summary: Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025*. Putrajaya: Ministry of Education Malaysia.
- Nilakant, V., & Ramanarayan, S. (2006). *Change management: Altering mindset in a global context*. New Delhi: Response Books.
- Oreg, S. (2003). Resistance to change: Developing an individual differences measure. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(4), 680-693.
- Oreg, S. (2006). Personality, context, and resistance to organizational change. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 15(1), 73-101.
- Oreg, S., Vakola, M., & Armenakis, A.A. (2007, August). *Organizational member's reactions to organizational change: A review of empirical findings*. Paper

- presented at the annual meeting of Academy of Management, Philadelphia, PA.
- Piderit, S. K. (2000). Rethinking resistance and recognizing ambivalence: A multidimensional view of attitudes toward an organizational change. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(4), 783-794.
- Pool, S. W. (2000). Organizational culture and its relationship between job tension in measuring outcomes among business executive. *Journal of Management Development*, 19(1), 32-49.
- Ruth, A., & Maaja, V. (2003). The impact of organizational culture on attitudes toward change. *International Journal of Strategic Change Management*, 1(1/2), 155-170.
- Simons, T. L. (1999). Behavioral integrity as a critical ingredient for transformational leadership. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 12(2), 89-104.
- Smith, E. R., & Conrey, F. R. (2007). Agent-based Modeling: A New Approach for Theory Building in Social Psychology. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 11, 1-18.
- Spreitzer, G. M., & Mishra, A. K. (2002). To stay or to go: Voluntary survivor turnover following an organizational downsizing. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*, 23(6), 707-729.
- Tai, M.K. (2013). *Modeling of principals' change leadership competencies and its relationship with teachers' change beliefs and teachers' attitudes toward change*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Sultan Idris Education University, Tanjong Malim, Perak, Malaysia.
- Tai, M. K., & Omar, A. K. (2016). Teacher attitudes toward Change: A comparison between high- and mediocre- performing secondary schools in Malaysia. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, 41(1), 105-128.
- Thomas, B. (2003). Innovation support networks and SMEs in industrial South Wales. *International Journal of Applied Management Studies*, 1(2), 15-27.
- Underwood, C. (2002). Belief and attitude change in the context of human development, in Sustainable Human Development, from *Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems (EOLSS)*, Developed under the Auspices of the UNESCO, Eolss Publishers, Oxford, UK, <http://www.eolss.net>.
- Vakola, M., & Nikolaou, I. (2006). Attitudes toward organizational change: What is the role of employees, stress and commitment? *Employee Relations*, 27(2), 160-174.
- Vakola, M., Tsaousis, I., & Nikolaou, I. (2004). The role of emotional intelligence and personality variables on attitudes toward organizational change. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 19(2), 88-110.
- Wanberg, C. R., & Banas, J. T. (2000). Predictors and outcomes of openness to changes in a reorganizing workplace. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85(1), 132-142.
- Zimmerman, J. (2006). Why some teachers resist change and what principals can do about it. *NASSP Bulletin*, 90(3), 238-249.