

## Work factors and teacher satisfaction: The mediating effect of cynicism toward educational change

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This study investigated teachers' cynicism toward a major education transformation blueprint and their job satisfaction with a sample of 628 practising teachers. Participants were practising teachers in primary (n = 326) and secondary (n = 302) schools located in a school district in Malaysia. A self-reporting questionnaire was used, where the *Job Descriptive Index*, *Job In General*, and *Cynicism About Organisational Change* scales were adopted and adapted. Overall, teachers reported being moderately cynical toward education transformation efforts. The study found that cynicism toward educational change partially but significantly mediated the effects of work factors (the work itself, advancement, pay, supervision, colleagues) on job satisfaction. Findings also suggested negative consequences of cynical outlook on teachers' job satisfaction, as shown by the inverse relationship found between these variables. This study contributes to the literature on cynicism toward change in an education context, and its significant effect on teacher job satisfaction.

### Introduction

Teaching has become a profession which requires constant change and adaptability, and this has profoundly affected the work of teachers over the years (Day, Flores & Viana, 2007). Observers in educational change have noted the global pattern of reform overload and teachers' work intensification (Fullan, 2007), and this pattern is similarly observed in Southeast Asian educational systems like Malaysia, where excessive changes have sapped the energy and motivation of those responsible for implementing the reforms (Hallinger, 2010). Amidst the environment of policy changes, teachers are subject to work intensification and bureaucratisation, increased public scrutiny and greater accountability, all of which have led to a decrease in their motivation, job satisfaction and sense of professionalism (Day et al., 2007).

In Malaysia, the *Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025* (MEB 2013-2025) is the latest major education reform package offered by the government and is described as the biggest manifestation of government transformation in getting the best returns in human capital to drive all national development aspirations (Malaysia National News Agency, 2013). Changes in the blueprint are envisioned to involve areas such as curriculum change, emphasis of ICT use in learning, increase in parental and community engagement, as well as new processes and structure in the Education Ministry. The blueprint outlines comprehensive transformation programs with 11 improvements aimed at enhancing five outcomes of education: access, quality, equity, unity, and efficiency (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2013). One of the improvements is specifically to "transform teaching into the profession of choice" (MOE, 2013, p. E-14), in order to attract top academic achievers so

as to propel the Malaysian education system to be among the top third of countries in terms of international student assessments (MOE, 2013). This logic is apparent as teachers are one of the most significant school-based determinants of student outcomes, and are central to the processes which stimulate school improvement (Hofman, Dijkstra & Adriaan-Hofman, 2009; MOE, 2013). As the country approaches its vision to achieve the status of a developed nation by 2020, this blueprint may well be the final thrust to realise this vision.

However, it must be noted that some of reforms introduced prior to 2013 have not been clearly successful, with implemented policies being retracted or failed reforms being laid to oblivion over time (Hallinger, 2010; Malakolunthu, 2010). For instance, a recent retraction in policy occurred with a change in language used for teaching science and mathematics, where the medium of instruction was switched from Malay to English, and then back to using Malay due to deterioration in student performance for both subjects (Rokiah et al., 2012). Further to this, there is no clear success shown from policies such as those involving ICT usage. Malaysia, one of the pioneer countries in Asia to initiate ICT in education, is facing challenges in integrating ICT to realise its policy goal of moving forward to a knowledge driven economy (UNESCO, 2013). Despite the government's investment of about RM 6 billion over the past decade, ICT usage in schools is still short of expectations with reports that computer use has not gone beyond word-processing as an instructional tool (MOE, 2013). Past change initiatives which did not achieve their purported objectives or were not clearly successful can leave teachers extremely wary about accepting further attempts at change, predisposing them to be cynical toward future change attempts (Bordia, Restubog, Jimmieson & Irmer, 2011; Wanous, Reichers & Austin, 2000). Hence, this study examines the effect of such experiences of change on teacher satisfaction.

## **Literature review**

### **Cynicism toward change**

Dean, Brandes and Dharwadkar (1998) gave an early conceptualisation of organisational cynicism as an attitude that comprises beliefs, affect and behavioural tendencies. According to these authors, employees become cynical about their organisation because they hold certain beliefs about their organisation's lack of integrity, and this is manifested through the display of certain behavioural tendencies such as criticising the organisation or making pessimistic predictions about the organisation's course of actions. These authors also considered the concept as a state directed at the organisation, that may change over time as employees experience change. They proposed that organisational cynicism can be understood as outcomes that involve leadership, power distribution, organisational change, or procedural justice (Dean et al., 1998). Reichers, Wanous and Austin (1997) suggested employees do not simply decide to be cynical, as their cynicism is developed through experience, and persists due to a mixed record of successful and unsuccessful change, and influence by other people who have similar cynical views. Such contexts of change have led scholars to conceptualise cynicism about organisational

change (CAOC) to be a learned response, rather than caused by personality disposition (Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003; Wanous et al., 2000).

Studies on organisational cynicism have often relied on attribution theory (James, 2005), which postulates that people are inclined to impute two types of factors when observing an outcome: external factors and (or) internal factors (Wanous et al., 2000). External factors are situational aspects beyond the control of a person which may affect change, such as unexpected departmental budgetary cut, while internal factors are within-person factors, such as individual intelligence or capability that determine change success. Central to the theory is the concept of self-serving bias, which postulates the tendency for people to attribute positive outcomes to the self (internal factor), while imputing negative outcomes to external factors (Miller & Ross, 1975). The element of blame in attributing failure is common in studies which have conceptualised cynicism about organisational change as a loss of faith in the leaders of change, and a response to a history of change attempts which are not successful (Reichers et al., 1997; Bommer, Rich & Rubin, 2005; Watt & Piotrowski, 2008). This cynicism can bring about a vicious cycle when repeated failures with change attempts reinforce cynicism of employees and other members who hold a similar belief (Brown & Cregan, 2008; Choi, 2011).

Studies that investigated cynicism in the context of organisational change have found it to be positively linked to colleagues' cynicism and resistance to change, while negatively linked to perceived quality of information, trust in the administration, management integrity and ability, transformational leadership, group cohesion, and justice perceptions (Bommer et al., 2005; Qian & Daniels, 2008; Stanley, Meyer & Topolnysky, 2005; Wu, Neubert & Yi, 2007). In the school setting, an earlier Australian study by Churchill, Williamson and Grady (1997) highlighted the effect of cynicism toward educational change on teachers' work lives. The main source for this cynicism is caused by teachers' belief that change is advocated with the main objective of advancing the self-interests of its proponents, because nothing changed much in the classroom. Teachers' cynicism is exacerbated through their perceptions that changes are only transitory and will soon be replaced by other initiatives. An empirical investigation of antecedents and consequences of cynicism in the school system by James (2005) identified organisational cynicism to be influenced by organisational politics, organisational justice, psychological contract violations, and perceived organisational support. Recently, organisational cynicism is identified to negatively effect school culture, academic achievement, and school leaders' altruistic behaviors (Karadağ, Kiliçoğlu & Yilmaz, 2014; Konakli, Özyılmaz & Çörtük, 2013). However, there is limited work directed at cynicism toward educational change and this study aims to inquire within this gap by linking it to teacher satisfaction.

In the Malaysian context, change experiences may predispose teachers to be cynical toward the MEB 2013-2025. A majority of studies done on cynicism have focused on organisations in Western countries (Mohd Noor, Mohd Walid, Ahmad & Darus, 2013), and it is currently an opportune time to examine teachers' cynicism toward educational changes brought about by the MEB 2013-2025. Hallinger (2010) noted that there are distinct reactions to announcements of educational change between Southeast Asian countries and Western countries. In Southeast Asia, change is usually received politely by

stakeholders, who have a tendency to accept the decisions of those in authority. The inclination toward unquestioned acceptance may appear to create a seemingly smooth transition toward change implementation, however, it may not translate to teachers being agreeable to the changes, and change proponents may have the belief that teachers are in agreement with the proposed changes. Cultural norms of high power distance tend to prioritise group harmony to avoid public dissent, and any suppressed dissent may result in a longer process of change adaptation (Hallinger, 2010). Malaysia may not be exempt from this situation, as it is a collectivist country with a high power distance tendency (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Though no outright resistance is observed from teachers toward the MEB 2013-2025, dissent may take a more passive form. Qian and Daniels (2008) suggested that cynicism is a passive barrier toward change, and widespread cynicism can become a precursor to more aggressive expression of discontent such as resistance to change.

### **Cynicism toward change and job satisfaction**

Research has shown potential relationships between cynicism and job satisfaction (Arabaci, 2010; Chiaburu, Peng, Oh, Banks & Lomeli, 2013). This is explained with cynicism being job task related, and employees who fail to see improvement in their job task from proposed changes direct their resentment toward the job itself by becoming dissatisfied (Abraham, 2000). The inclusion of cynicism in investigating job satisfaction is supported by empirical studies with negative correlations between cynicism and job satisfaction (Arabaci, 2010, Reichers et al., 1997), while meta-analysis has noted an effect size of .58 true score correlation (Chiaburu et al., 2013). Other researchers have suggested that organisational cynicism has resulted in a decrease of job satisfaction level over the last decade (Nafei, 2013), and noted its mediating potential on job satisfaction (Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003).

The global trend of educational reform overload and teachers' work intensification has affected their job satisfaction as changes alter context and environment in which they operate (Fullan, 2007; Verger & Altinyelken, 2013). As reform implementation depends on teachers' satisfaction level, attention needs to be given to this area with any introduction of educational change (Simona, Doina, Norel & Vlad, 2013). Although teachers' job satisfaction is a widely investigated construct, it deserves an update whenever new changes are introduced, lest these changes may result in "self-deceiving public exercise of education reform and a waste of energy and resources" (Nurul-Awanis et al., 2011, p. 110). Research has identified various variables associated with job satisfaction such as collegiality, support from school leadership, student behaviour and relations with stakeholders (Johnson, Kraft & Papay, 2012; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). However, no theory has been developed to provide guidance for selecting facets that are most important in different situations or for different people (Brief, 1998; Fritzsche & Parrish, 2005). The literature suggests the work itself, advancement, pay, supervision, and colleagues to be typical and basic determinants influencing job satisfaction (Balzer et al., 2000; Judge & Klinger, 2007; Luthans, 2011). Based on the emerging prevalence of cynicism in organisations (Nafei, 2013) and its potential effect on job satisfaction (Abraham, 2000; Arabaci, 2010; Polat & Gungor, 2014), the current study advances this

framework to explore the mediating role of cynicism toward change between these work factors (the work itself, advancement, pay, supervision and colleagues) and job satisfaction.

One of the most influential theories that propelled research on job satisfaction is the *motivator-hygiene theory* by Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman (1959), and most research on teacher job satisfaction is rooted in it (Bogler, 2001). Herzberg et al. (1959) postulated that job satisfaction is affected by *motivator* factors which are intrinsic to the job and *hygiene* factors which are extrinsic to the job. These two factors do not exist on either end of the same scale, but are independent in bringing about job satisfaction with motivators causing satisfaction and hygiene factors causing dissatisfaction. In this study, the motivator factors include the work itself and advancement which are intrinsic to the job, while hygiene factors consist of pay, supervision and colleagues that are extrinsic to the job (Herzberg et al., 1959). Cynicism toward change is investigated as a hygiene factor, as it is related to the context of educational change which is extrinsic to teachers' job content (Dinham & Scott, 2004).

## **Aims of the study**

This study aimed to investigate the prevalence of cynicism toward educational change among teachers, and the relationship of the construct to teachers' job satisfaction. The research questions which underpinned this study were:

- RQ1: What is the prevalence of cynicism toward educational change among teachers?
- RQ2: Is there a relationship between teachers' cynicism toward educational change and their job satisfaction?
- RQ3: Is there any mediation effect of cynicism toward educational change between teachers' work factors and their job satisfaction?

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The participants consisted of 628 practising teachers from 26 schools selected through cluster sampling from a school district in Malaysia. There were 483 (76.9%) females and 145 (23.1%) males. In terms of highest qualifications attained, 37 (5.9%) possessed a postgraduate qualification, 383 (61.0%) a bachelor degree, and 208 (33.1%) a diploma. The sample had a mean age of 39 years ( $SD = 1.03$ ) with an average workload of 36 hours ( $SD = 1.54$ ), and a mean teaching experience of 14 years ( $SD = 1.77$ ). The demographic information for the participants is presented in Table 1.

### **Procedure**

This study was carried out using a cross sectional questionnaire design. Approvals to collect data were granted by the ethics committee of the researchers' university, and the relevant authorities of the Ministry of Education. Questionnaires were hand delivered to

Table 1: Demographic information

Demographic variable		N	%
School level	Primary	326	51.9
	Secondary	302	48.1
Gender	Female	483	76.9
	Male	145	23.1
Qualifications	Postgraduate	37	5.9
	Bachelor	383	61.0
	Diploma	208	33.1
Demographic variable		Mean	Std dev
Age		39	1.03
Teaching experience (in years)		14	1.77
Weekly workload (inclusive of academic and non-academic work in hours)		36	1.54

the schools upon consent by the school principals. A teacher or school clerk was tasked by the principals to distribute and collect the questionnaires. These people became the contact person whom the first author communicated with if further clarifications were required. The questionnaire contained an information sheet notifying participants about the research, the freedom they have to withdraw from the study at any juncture, and the confidentiality maintained on their identity.

There were 1565 primary school teachers and 1131 secondary school teachers in the district investigated in the study. Sample sizes were derived using Yamane's (1967) formula with a degree of variability of 0.5 and a confidence level of 95%. The sample sizes required for primary and secondary school teachers were 319 and 296 respectively. Bartlett, Kotrlik and Higgins (2001) suggested oversampling to achieve the targeted sample size, especially for educational and social research studies. To obtain the combined sample of 615, a total of 1104 questionnaires were distributed in anticipation of the response rate of 54% (Chee, 2008) to 69% (Mohd Noor et al., 2013) observed from local studies. A total of 664 questionnaires were returned yielding a response rate of about 60%, and the final usable questionnaires numbered 628.

## Measures

The questionnaire used in this study consisted of three sections: (1) participants' demographic profile, (2) *Job in general* (JIG) to measure job satisfaction (Brodke et al., 2009), (3) *Job descriptive index* (JDI) to measure satisfaction of the work itself, advancement, pay, supervision and colleagues (Brodke et al., 2009), and (4) *Cynicism about organisational change* (CAOC) to measure cynicism toward change (Wanous et al., 2000). Permissions to use the scales were obtained from the respective authors.

The JIG (Brodke et al., 2009) measured the dependant variable of the study with a global measurement of job satisfaction (18 items). The original response format was used with a

three point Likert scale (yes = 3, not sure = 1, no = 0) to indicate the extent respondents agreed with the item in the scale. JDI had the same response format as JIG, and consisted of five sub-scales that measure the work itself (18 items), advancement (9 items), pay (9 items), supervision (18 items), and colleagues (18 items). A composite mean score of the work factors was obtained by combining the sub-scales in JDI. CAOC (Wanous et al., 2000) measured cynicism toward change with the items directed at MEB 2013-2025. The original response and scoring format were adopted using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The mean scores used to determine cynicism levels were as follow: low (1.00 – 2.50), moderate (2.51 – 3.49), and high (3.50 – 5.00). All scales demonstrated acceptable internal consistency. Table 2 showed the results for Cronbach's coefficient alpha and details of the scales.

Table 2: Internal consistency of scales used in the study

Variables	Scale	Items	Cronbach's alpha
Job satisfaction	JIG	18	.89
The work itself	JDI	72	.86 to .93
Advancement			
Pay			
Supervision			
Colleagues			
Cynicism toward change	CAOC	8	.92

## Results

Data were assessed for normality with skewness and kurtosis checks, and were considered almost normally distributed as the values fell within the criteria of within +1 and -1 for skewness and kurtosis (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2014). Distribution of responses for the variables measured was considered normally distributed with skewness and kurtosis values that ranged from -.97 to .04, and -.76 to .85 respectively. In addition, multicollinearity will be a deterrent to regression analysis if tolerance values were less than .10 or VIF values were above 10 (Pallant, 2010). With 'collinearity diagnostics' provided by SPSS, no presence of multicollinearity was detected as the lowest tolerance among the variables was .63 and the highest VIF was only 1.59.

### Descriptive and correlational analysis

RQ1: What is the prevalence of cynicism toward educational change among teachers?

The means, standard deviation, and inter-correlations for the variables are reported in Table 3. Teachers reported to be moderately cynical toward educational change with a mean of 3.23 as shown in the table, reflecting their moderate pessimism about the likely success of MEB 2013-2025.

RQ2: Is there a relationship between teachers' cynicism toward educational change and their job satisfaction?

In answering RQ2, Pearson product moment correlation (as shown in Table 3) indicated a significant inverse correlation between cynicism toward change and job satisfaction ( $r = -.35, p < .001$ ). This suggested that teachers who report higher cynicism toward MEB 2013-2025 do tend to report lower job satisfaction.

Table 3: Means, standard deviations, and correlations of variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Job satisfaction	2.47	.60	-	.61**	.41**	.34**	.50**	.43**	-.35**
2. The work itself	2.27	.68		-	.41**	.30**	.47**	.23**	-.31**
3. Advancement	1.58	.94			-	.30**	.43**	.25**	-.28**
4. Pay	2.01	.84				-	.34**	.24**	-.27**
5. Supervision	2.37	.72					-	.38**	-.34**
6. Colleagues	2.55	.53						-	-.23**
7. Cynicism toward change	3.23	.85							-

Note. \*\*  $p < .001$ ,  $N = 628$  for all analyses.

**Mediation analysis**

RQ3: Is there any mediation effect of cynicism toward educational change between teachers' work factors and their job satisfaction?

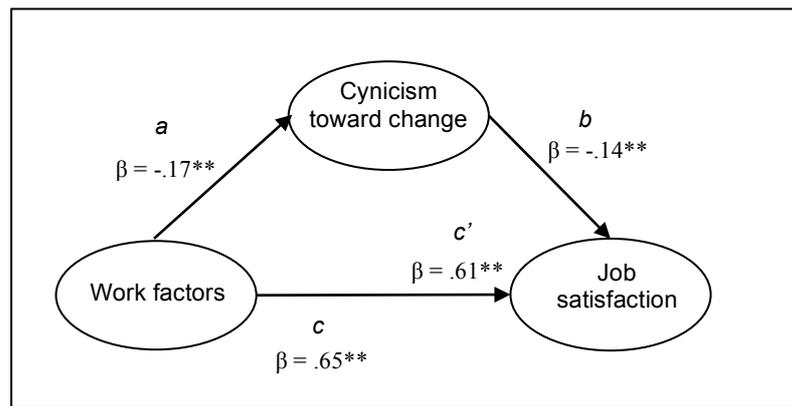
Mediation analysis was carried out with regression analyses as shown in Table 4. The first step established a significant relationship between satisfaction with work factors and job satisfaction ( $\beta = .65, p < .001$ ) and in the second step, a significant relationship was also established between satisfaction with work factors and the mediator, cynicism toward change ( $\beta = -.17, p < .001$ ). In the third step, cynicism toward change and job satisfaction was also found to be significantly related ( $\beta = -.14, p < .001$ ), satisfying the condition necessary for mediation. In the final step, satisfaction with work factors was found to be significantly related to job satisfaction with the mediator being controlled for ( $\beta = .61, p < .001$ ). Hence, this showed that cynicism toward change partially mediated the relationship between satisfaction for work factors and job satisfaction. The partial mediation was supported by bootstrap method with 2000 samples for testing indirect effects which indicated significant indirect effect of satisfaction for work factors on job satisfaction through cynicism toward change ( $\beta = .02, p < .001$ ; CI: -.157, -.053).

Analysis showed that higher levels of satisfaction for work factors were linked to lower levels of cynicism toward change, which, in turn, were associated with lower levels of job satisfaction. Figure 1 shows the model of these relationships with  $a, b, c,$  and  $c'$  depicting the analysis steps taken in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of mediation regression analysis for variables predicting job satisfaction

	Variables	B	SE(B)	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>
Step 1:	Effect of work factors on job satisfaction ( <i>c</i> )	.76	.04	.65**	.43
Step 2:	Effect of work factors on cynicism toward change ( <i>a</i> )	-.57	.13	-.17**	.03
Step 3:	Effect of cynicism toward change on job satisfaction ( <i>b</i> )	-.22	.01	-.14**	.03
Step 4:	Effect of work factors on job satisfaction (while controlling cynicism toward change) ( <i>c'</i> )	.75	.04	.61**	.44

\*\*  $p < .001$ , N = 628



\*\*  $p < .001$

Figure 1: Role of cynicism toward change in the link of work factors and job satisfaction

## Discussion

Researchers have suggested that cynicism is a norm in many organisations (Brown & Cregan, 2008; Nafei, 2013), and findings from this study confirmed its prevalence in Malaysian schools. All eight items in the CAOC scored moderate or high in cynicism. Cynicism can imply messages about defects in an organisation's system (Bommer et al., 2005). For instance, one of the items which scored the highest in cynicism revealed teachers to be pessimistic toward the effectiveness of programs conducted in schools. This is an important finding because teachers are often involved in executing these programs. It is important that the efficacy of these programs be monitored, because the total annual programs (academic or non-academic) can exceed 100 in some education districts, and may lead to a lack of focus in schools, burdening teachers and constraining financial resources (MOE, 2013). It may be better to concentrate on fewer programs that have higher possibility of achieving the impacts they purport to produce.

Findings of the present study also supported Herzberg's (1959) theory that both motivator and hygiene factors are important in influencing job satisfaction. The motivator factors in the study (the work itself and advancement) and the hygiene factors (pay, supervision, colleagues and cynicism toward change) are significantly correlated to job satisfaction. Results also revealed the importance of reducing cynicism toward change to enhance teachers' job satisfaction. Cynicism toward educational change partially, but significantly mediated the relationship between satisfaction for work factors on job satisfaction. This finding shows the importance of satisfying the work factors investigated (the work itself, advancement, pay, supervision, colleagues) as teachers appear to be cynical and pessimistic toward educational change if they are not satisfied with them. It is apparent that any major reformation will entail policies which affect these factors which are typical in determining satisfaction. Policy implications of the findings suggest that improvement in these basic factors need to be considered before changes can take place. Factors such as advancement and pay are within the purview of the Ministry of Education and proponents of change may need to improve on them first to counter cynicism.

Cynicism is contributed by attribution of unlikely success of change to the incompetence of people responsible for change, usually the management (Kath, 2005). Notwithstanding that teachers imputed likely failure of change to the management in this study, they also reported to be satisfied with their supervisors at the same time (Yim, 2015). This somewhat contradictory situation indicates that school leaders are not the people whom the cynicism is targeted at, as they are not largely responsible for deciding educational changes. Decision making on education reform in Malaysia is a highly centralised affair (UNESCO, 2013), with relatively little participation from principals and teachers (Hallinger, 2010). The country has one of the most centralised education systems in the world (The World Bank, 2013), and teachers are aware their school leaders have no jurisdiction on educational policies as principals are only responsible for implementing the policies (Malakolunthu, 2010). The Ministry of Education acknowledges this shortcoming, as the MEB 2013-2025 promises to ease control and allow autonomy for schools in operational decision making, curriculum implementation and budget spending. These decision rights will be given to schools that achieve minimum performance criteria (MOE, 2013).

Findings also confirmed the inverse relationship between cynicism toward change and job satisfaction (Abraham, 2000; Arabaci, 2010; Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003). Job satisfaction may be alleviated when change cynicism is addressed. As cynicism toward changes come about through work experiences (Abraham, 2000; Wanous et al., 2000), employees who fail to see improvement in their jobs from proposed changes may direct their resentment toward the job itself and become dissatisfied. Hence, teachers' job satisfaction can improve if the changes proposed in the MEB 2013-2025 bring about improvements it purports to produce. Besides, cynicism toward change partially and significantly mediates the relationship between work factors and teachers' job satisfaction. To the best of our knowledge, this is new information which adds to the knowledge base of existing literature in the Malaysian context.

Practical implications of this study suggest that the management have to reveal or chart the change progress to teachers by constantly updating them on the change outcomes. According to attribution theory, there are two types of attributions responsible for causing cynicism: external attribution which is related to situational context and (or) internal attribution caused by within-person factors. Empirical evidence has found external attribution to have a larger influence on job satisfaction (Polat & Gungor, 2014), and situational factors that involve change can be given precedence when managing change. Instead of announcing comprehensive change results at the end, small successes may be revealed continually to imply positive directions of change. In addition, attribution theory also noted that self-serving bias, a tendency for people to blame external factors or others for negative outcomes can contribute to cynicism. This implies that if teachers are to be involved extensively in the change process, there are no 'other people' to blame in the event of a negative outcome, because they have to take ownership of the outcome concerned. With their involvement, teachers will be able to see things from the management perspective, understand the rationale for decisions made, and actions taken (Wanous et al., 2000).

### **Limitations**

Part of the limitations of the study lies in the cross sectional design that only provides a snapshot of the current condition and prohibits causal inferences. Data collected using self-reporting surveys will inherently contribute some degree of subjectivity because participants were assumed to answer the survey items honestly. As cynicism is a learned response, future research investigating the long-term effects of change experience on teachers' cynicism and job satisfaction is needed. However, as the results are obtained at the inception stage of an educational transformation endeavour, findings can serve as a platform for the longitudinal measurement of its impact on teachers' cynicism and job satisfaction. With regards to the generalisability of the results, it must be noted that only one district was investigated, and findings cannot be generalised to other districts. In addition, this research was conducted using quantitative methods, and structured interviews could be used in the future to make the study more robust.

### **Conclusion**

This study contributes to the knowledge base of the existing literature about teachers' job satisfaction during educational change in the Southeast Asian context. Teachers' cynicism toward change was hypothesised to be a mediator between satisfaction with work factors (the work itself, advancement, pay, supervision, colleagues) and job satisfaction. Apart from the significance of cynicism toward change as a mediator, it was also found to be significantly linked to teachers' satisfaction and the work factors investigated. Given that cynicism toward change is conceptualised as a response shaped by organisational changes, this study suggests that it can be managed with improvements to the work factors investigated. While it may be a long term endeavour to improve teachers' work itself and their relationships with superiors and colleagues, teachers' career advancement and pay could be objectively managed with policy revisions. These revisions may be tied to the blueprint as part of the reform exercise to reduce cynicism toward change. Future studies

may delve into investigating tangible factors, such as working conditions, so as to derive practical implications to manage cynicism toward change. As change is an inevitable context of the teaching profession, continuous examination on cynicism toward educational change could benefit the evolving sphere of teachers' satisfaction.

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