ATTITUDE OF EXECUTIVES TOWARDS IN-SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAMS: A CASE STUDY OF STATUTORY CORPORATIONS IN SARAWAK

By

JADDIL @ ZAIDEL BIN IBRAHIM
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A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Science
Faculty of Cognitive Science and Human Development
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I hereby declare that this research is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by giving explicit references and a bibliography is appended.
DEDICATIONS

To my dearest parents who inspire me on a quest for knowledge.

To my loving wife,
Noor Fiza Abdullah,

And

To my loving children,
Nor Emel Farnida, Noor Arinna, Nur Aimi, Yildiz and Nur Emira

for their unfailing support, encouragement and understanding, which bridge my thought and accomplishment, the glue that binds my inspiration to achievement.

My love for you all is forever.
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May God Bless and Reward your kindness and our efforts.
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<tr>
<td>HRD</td>
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<td>8MP</td>
<td>Eight Malaysia Plan</td>
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<td>7MP</td>
<td>Seventh Malaysia Plan</td>
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<td>TFP</td>
<td>Total Factor Productivity</td>
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<td>IT</td>
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<td>INTAN</td>
<td>Institut Tadbiran Awan Negara</td>
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<td>IAB</td>
<td>Institut Aminudin Baki</td>
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<td>IDFR</td>
<td>Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations</td>
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<td>IKRAM</td>
<td>Institut Kerja Raya Malaysia</td>
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<td>ILKAP</td>
<td>Institut Latihan Kehakiman dan Perundangan</td>
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<td>ILIM</td>
<td>Institut Latihan Islam Malaysia</td>
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<td>CMM</td>
<td>Centre for Modern Management</td>
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<td>STIDC</td>
<td>Sarawak Timber Development Corporation (PUSAKA)</td>
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<td>SESCO</td>
<td>Sarawak Electric Supply Corporation</td>
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<td>SEDC</td>
<td>Sarawak Economic Development Corporation</td>
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<td>SALCRA</td>
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<td>KSA</td>
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<td>ANOVA</td>
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<td>SPSS</td>
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<td>Sig</td>
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<td>SPM</td>
<td>Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia</td>
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<td>MCE</td>
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<td>SC</td>
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<td>STPM</td>
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LIST OF SYMBOLS

N -  Size of the Population
n -  Size of the Sample
P -  Probability
r -  Pearson Correlation Coefficient
R -  Multiple regression Coefficient
R² -  Coefficient of Determination
df -  Degree of freedom
F -  Variation among the samples over variation within the samples
α -  Alpha
The major aim of this study is to determine the general attitude of executives from selected statutory corporations in Sarawak towards in-service training programs. Another important aspect of the study is to identify factors affecting their attitudes. A survey methodology was employed to collect data. The population size of the study was all the 135 executives who had attended in-service training programs from 5 selected statutory corporations in Kuching. A simple random sampling was used to obtain a sample of 85 respondents. The outcomes of the study show that all of the executives possessed positive attitude towards in-service training programs and none of them showed a negative attitude. The correlation between attitude and the related factors such as needs, intrinsic motivation, competency, availability, top management support and peer influence were found to be positive and significant. Multiple regression analysis showed that intrinsic motivation and competency factors contributed the most in affecting the general attitudes of executives toward in-service training programs. Hence, any plan to train or retrain staff should take these two factors into consideration, in order to avoid any resistance from the executives.

ABSTRACT

The major aim of this study is to determine the general attitude of executives from selected statutory corporations in Sarawak towards in-service training programs. Another important aspect of the study is to identify factors affecting their attitudes. A survey methodology was employed to collect data. The population size of the study was all the 135 executives who had attended in-service training programs from 5 selected statutory corporations in Kuching. A simple random sampling was used to obtain a sample of 85 respondents. The outcomes of the study show that all of the executives possessed positive attitude towards in-service training programs and none of them showed a negative attitude. The correlation between attitude and the related factors such as needs, intrinsic motivation, competency, availability, top management support and peer influence were found to be positive and significant. Multiple regression analysis showed that intrinsic motivation and competency factors contributed the most in affecting the general attitudes of executives toward in-service training programs. Hence, any plan to train or retrain staff should take these two factors into consideration, in order to avoid any resistance from the executives.
Objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan sikap umum golongan eksekutif di agensi-agensi kerajaan negeri Sarawak yang terpilih terhadap program latihan dalam perkhidmatan. Satu lagi aspek penting dalam kajian ini ialah untuk mengenalpasti faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi sikap eksekutif. Rekabentuk kajian survei telah diguna untuk pengumpulan data. Saiz populasi dalam kajian ini ialah kesemua 135 orang eksekutif yang telah menghadiri program latihan dalam perkhidmatan daripada 5 agensi kerajaan yang terpilih. Bilangan sampel yang diambil ialah 85 orang yang dipilih secara persampelan rambang. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa kesemua eksekutif mempunyai sikap yang positif terhadap program latihan dalam perkhidmatan dan tidak terdapat eksekutif yang menunjukkan sikap yang negatif terhadap latihan ini. Sifat Korelasi antara sikap eksekutif dan faktor-faktor seperti keperluan, motivasi intrinsic, kompetensi, availabiliti, sokongan pengurusan atasan dan pengaruh rakan sejawat didapati positif dan signifikan. Analisis Regresi Berganda menunjukkan bahawa faktor motivasi intrinsic dan kompetensi memberi sumbangan yang paling berbeza dalam pembentukan sikap umum eksekutif terhadap program latihan dalam perkhidmatan. Oleh itu, segala perancangan untuk latihan atau latihan semula kakitangan perlu mengambilkira dua faktor ini supaya organisasi tidak menghadapi tentangan daripada kalangan eksekutif.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

In many public sector organizations, employees attended training or in-service training for various reasons. Among some of the common reasons are to increase competencies in certain subject matter; to fill up the quota allocated; for exposure to a new field; a punishment for certain misconduct; an opportunity to get out of the offices; an opportunity to see new places; or directed by higher authorities. Generally, whatever reasons, there seemed to exist that there is no specific and transparent policy on training or in-service training programs.

Training has been recognized as an important means of improving productivity in organizations. Training is vital for enhancing employee skills, introducing new methods and techniques and in eliminating inefficient ways of doing things. Many organizations have a predetermined plan for training their supervisors and managers, based on how the management of these organizations want training and their staff to be managed. In order to ensure a greater accuracy in the process of training needs analysis and the effectiveness of training, it is a good practice for the management (HRD manager) to discuss with their executives, aspect of their work which could be improved through training. Knowles (1985) refers to this role of the human resource development specialist when he says that one of her major responsibilities is to serve as consultant to line managers and to create a closer and more functional relationship.

In a sense, one can draw a parallel between this and Herzberg’s (1996) idea of hygiene factors and motivators, in explaining employee motivation. According to this theory, when the employee finds her work intrinsically interesting and challenging, she is less sensitive to the hygiene factors, that is, factors that are extrinsic to the job, for example physical conditions of work, wages and company regulations. On the other hand, even super hygiene factors are unlikely to really motivate employees if there is no intrinsic satisfaction to be derived from the job. In the same way, when trainees find their training programs intrinsically satisfying, they are likely to place much less importance on the ‘hygiene’ factors in training.

As such, the government has long recognized the benefits of providing education and training for their officials. Such activities are seen as a vital element of the effectiveness of government organizations in maintaining and improving their services to the public, as well as their own organizational and administrative capabilities. Employers who invest in employees’ training also make the greatest efforts to provide employment security in order to protect their investment. In addition, the promotion of organization
training is being ever more closely linked to increase competitiveness and success. It can be strongly suggested that better educated employees have higher work expectations and are more likely to seek training and development opportunities actively (Costine & Garavan, 1995).

The responsibility on individuals to consider their own learning needs can also be allied to an individuals’ willingness to articulate their own learning needs, and to contribute to decisions about how they may be met, is an important dimension of this responsibility. The pursuit of such learning can lead to skills and knowledge which increase opportunities for job transferability, job promotion, job enhancement and greater job interest. A large number of organizations, be it government or private organizations, need the time and the facilities for retraining of their staff. This retraining must be geared to enable their staff to keep abreast with changing work requirements and to make changes of occupation easier.

Kevin Daffy (1993) states that training requirements fall into two broad categories – the need to keep upgrading existing skills and the need to meet the challenges of a total change in work practices brought on by changes in technology. In addition, Attley (1994) has stated his belief that the success of the Irish economy depends in large measure on high levels of skills and knowledge.

The signals eliminating from these examples strongly suggest that training and development is becoming an issue of greater priority for any organizations. In this rein, the notion that training and development offers substantial scope for consensus seems entirely logical. Its relevance has undoubtedly increase with the passage of time, particularly so in the current era, and the potential significance of fresh impetus on this issue has far-reaching effects.

An important starting point for diversify training involves heightening awareness of the different challenges faced by different people within the organization. People who are “different” from each other in terms of their gender, physical ability, socio-economic background and so on, are more likely to have at least some stereotypes about each other, and it is these stereotypical attitudes and views that many awareness-based diversify training programs aim to address (Moore, 1999). Organizational training interventions that do successfully tackle negative attitudes towards diversity, may also run the risk of becoming naïve and simplistic (Moore, 1999). As such organizations need to develop training and development programs that encourage participants to consider participating in any in-service training programs.

Tate (1997) stressed that it seemed smart to believe that the route to corporate competence would flow automatically from individual competence. According to Tate (1997) the “learning climate” already exists in most organizations. People at work more often learn their job, or learn to improve, in spite of – rather than because of – the way they are managed (Smith & Vaughan, 1997). This is necessary because each person is working strategically through their own statement of intent. The action plan thus becomes an instrument of the “art and practice of the learning organization” as defined by Senge (1993) in the Fifth Discipline.
But Coates (1997) mentions in his articles, "The Learning River - six years of learning and cruising," that what he observes is that people at work have many experiences, few of which are planned with the explicit purpose of learning something important and new, and also he sees that very few of them are learned from. Because of learning problems, organizations have difficulty learning to do new things and therefore often find it difficult to learn to change and adapt (Senge, 1993). All training courses have a purpose, whether or not this is formalized in stated aims and objectives (Williams, 1999). The purpose is reflected in the content of the course, and by examining the content it is possible to understand the purpose, at least to some extent. Often, these factors are not examined or questioned, and yet they are crucial to the success of the course.

In any given situation, the existing knowledge, beliefs and experience will very much affect the attitude of an individual toward training. In a training program this will include our beliefs about ourselves, our abilities, and about other people, including trainers and colleagues, our previous experience of attending training courses, and our present knowledge of the content of the course (Williams, 1999). These factors will all affect our motivation, and therefore what we get out of a training course. In an individual, it is possible to see, for example, a connection between thinking, feeling and behavior. Modern learning theory has shown that we learn best when we are happy, relaxed, and confident (Williams, 1999).

Training can be a useful tool in helping to resolve significant organizational or management problems (Bedingham, 1997). The majority of companies (90%) conducted a wide variety of training, both on and off the job, formal and informal depending on the issue to be addressed (Vinten, 2000). Vinten (1990) also found that a minority of 15%, usually working in a very specialized areas, conducted on-the-job training. Training is variously used to ensure that the skills base in the organizations meet the skills needed to achieve their goals, to achieve organizational aims, to meet identified skills shortages, and to maintain quality. It was reported that training was crucial as their staff were their product, while others reported that it is essential to train continually and thus improve. The principal trend was that training was seen as part of the organizational strategy, and a significant number suggests that it was impossible to avoid incorporating training into the organization's strategic aims (Vinten, 2000).

It is frequently asserted that there is a link between the nature of training provision within an organization and its success or failure. Training is part of the employment package. Employees may be requested to undertake training as part of their obligations to their employer, and the employer may provide training as a benefit for the employee.

Improvised training programs have consequences both for the organization and the employees and also for the community at large (Ironside & Seifert, 1996). Training has become a major part of the argument that the individual worker can, through their own efforts at self-improvement, and contingent employment into better paid and move permanent work by acquiring skills that are more marketable (Constantine & Neumark, 1996; Veum, 1995). This line of argument suggests that everyone can benefit from training – employees have works that are both more rewarding and more secure, employers benefit from increased levels of productivity, and service users receive a
higher standard of service. This win-win scenario suggests that training can be regarded as a classical issue for integrative bargaining (Walton & Kersie, 1965). While training provision can be a source of satisfaction and enhancement in the lives of employees, it can also be a source of dissatisfaction, demoralization, grievance and conflict (Ironside & Seifert, 1999).

Organizations in the 1990s are facing a reality quite different from that experienced by them 20 years earlier. The new reality is earmarked by heightened competition, a more demanding consumer, a more diverse, and a more international marketplace. These pressures have also been associated with organization downsizing or right-sizing, an increase in mergers and acquisitions activity, greater emphasis on performance and productivity and greater emphasis on quality of services and products. These forces have implications for the attitudes, skills, behaviors and competences necessary for surviving and thriving in the new reality. The current boom under way in the training profession demonstrates how quickly attitudes have changed.

Training and development has played a central role in the process and is frequently regarded as the engine, or catalyst, of change. Where training is based in the present and future organizational ideals, training itself can be viewed as little more than a marketing or public relations propaganda exercise. Training and learning in western societies have developed around the framework of classroom instruction supplemented or complemented by on-the-job training (Cornford & Athanasou, 1995). The most effective learning is that which is not context free but occurs within a specific, natural workplace where there are clearly visible models of application involving theory, skills and attitudes.

For effective learning to take place, Cornford and Athanasou (1995) suggested that the following conditions be met:

- there are satisfactory trainer-trainee relationship;
- trainees are exposed to levels of difficulty commensurate with their understanding;
- opportunities are provided for practice to ensure that information is retained;
- opportunities are provided for practice beyond a mere demonstration of competence or mastery level;
- motivational comments and feedback are regularly supplied by trainers; and
- trainers are exposed to exceptional cases/situations with examples of incorrect skill application and errors in process application available as negative examples.

The role of the trainer in effective-on-the-job training in the workplace is to structure the learning experiences and activities that are encountered by the trainee so that optimal understanding and acquisition of information takes place. Cornford and Athanasou (1995) suggested that the trainer:
can maintain good, sympathetic interpersonal relationships with trainees;

can communicate clearly and provide constructive feedback;

demonstrates mastery of a range of teaching skills;

reveals mastery of the theory and skills being taught;

can motivate trainees;

has a keen understanding of the nature of individual differences and is capable of translating this into different teaching techniques and levels of explanation for individual trainees; and

is aware of the limitations and possibilities of the learner at different stages of the skill learning process.

A goal of training may need to be the development of substantial, lengthy and well-supervised practice programs in order to ensure that trainees move substantially towards the establishment of autonomous levels of performance (Comford & Athanasou, 1995). Indisputably the above statement is a clear manifestation of the tremendous importance of training and in the field of human resource development. The training is expensive and human resource managers who wish to make the best use of their training funds should ensure that training is only conducted after a thorough training needs analysis and as well as analysis on attitude was made. Training and development plays strategic role in the successful operation of an organization and in the career of its employees. Each individual's employment security hinges on being prepared to meet new skill requirements as job opportunity change, and training and development were critical to such preparation.

Training strategies adapted by most organization are also hardly given much attention. These results in the common phenomenon that training must takes place in a classroom. The effectiveness of such training is highly questionable bearing in mind that employees are adult. Such method of thinking also makes it difficult to determine whether learning has taken place and whether what has been learned could be applied in the workplace. According to Reid (1991), to determine the most appropriate way of achieving training or learning outcome, the following three aspects need to be examined: (i) approaches to training and development to meet different situations; (ii) selection of appropriate training strategy; and (iii) the learning strategy itself.

In view that such situation is prevailing in many organizations, it is thus the main aim of the researcher to study the attitudes of executives towards in-service training programs in the state government agencies in Sarawak.

1.1 Background of the Study

Human resource development is one of the key factors in determining the success of Vision 2020. The enactment of the Human Resource Development Act 1992 is one of
the positive steps taken by the government in its effort to intensify the development of human resources both in the public and private sectors. Human beings play the most critical role in nation building and economic development. Even with the speed and efficiency that one finds in modern technology through computers and robots, one cannot deny the fact that human beings ultimately hold the key to their final destiny. Human resource development has emerged as the crucial driving force towards realizing the goals of Vision 2020. As far as training is concerned, it is not only needed to acquire skills and knowledge but also to instil with correct work attitudes and ethics.

In order to ensure success in the implementation of human resource development programs, the government has implemented various programs under the Seventh Malaysia Plan (7MP), such as manpower development policy, enhancing total factor productivity (TFP), total quality management, science and information technology (IT), introduction of Private Higher Educational Institutions Act, 1996, Human Resources Development Act 1992, Employer’s Associations Training Scheme to mention a few. To further support manpower policy the government, under the 7MP allocated RM100 million as well as provide other facilities. This is a positive indication that the government has given education and training a high priority in order to generate a sufficient pool of labor that is knowledgeable, highly-skilled and computer literate and strongly-motivated.

Under both the Sixth and Seventh Malaysia Plan, the government has adopted two approaches in education and training, namely education program and training program. Government’s Public Institutions of Higher Learning is the main provider of tertiary education. Currently, there are twelve Public Universities, six Polytechnics (four new polytechnics are in various stages of implementation and two Government Aided Colleges) offering courses at various levels leading to certificate, diploma, degree and post-graduate degree qualifications. The full time students population at the tertiary level are shown in Table 1.


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<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Certificate</td>
<td>17,080</td>
<td>21,290</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>46,930</td>
<td>61,900</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>89,600</td>
<td>167,900</td>
<td>87.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Seventh Malaysia Plan

Under the training program, it is divided into (i) Skill Training Program for Private Sector Employees and (ii) Training for Public Sector Employees. The skill training program for private sector employees is directed at generating adequate supply of skill workers, particularly to meet the immediate needs of the expanding industrial sector for skilled workers. Meanwhile the training of public sector employees is directed at public sector personnel’s in-service training and to upgrade their managerial capability, improving efficiency and increasing productivity of the employees in the public service.
Public Training Institutions continue to be the main source of supply of skilled labor to meet the expanding market demand. For the training of public sector personnel, the Government has set up the specific training institutions to the respective categories of public personnel. These include:

- National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN), which focuses on the upgrading of managerial capability, improving efficiency and increasing productivity of employees in public service.
- Institute Aminudin Baki (IAB), a specialized training institute, which conducts in-service training for education personnel.
- Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations (IDFR), which provides courses to upgrade professionalism and improve diplomatic skills among the diplomatic and foreign relations practitioners.
- Institut Kerja Raya Malaysia (IKRAM) which conducts training for engineering professionals and technicians.
- Institut Latihan Kehakiman dan Perundangan (ILKAP) which provides training for public sector personnel in the judicial and legal services.
- Institut Latihan Islam Malaysia (ILIM) will be established during the Seventh Malaysia Plan period to provide training for public sector personnel involved in the administration and management of Islamic affairs.
- Centre for Modern Management (CMM) which conducts various training to upgrade professionalism and managerial skills, IT, improving efficiency and increasing productivity of employee in the state civil service in Sarawak.

Apart from the above training institutions, many more training institutes have also emerged over the last decade in almost every state, in Malaysia. The setting up of HRD Fund under the HRD Act, 1992 is a clear manifestation of the government’s support for HRD activities especially among private organizations.

State government agencies have long recognized the benefits of providing training for their officials regardless of levels. Such activities are seen as a vital element of the effectiveness of an organization in maintaining and improving their services to their customers as well as their own organizational and administrative capabilities. As such, training in an organization consists a program of learning which is targeted at changing attitude, improving the knowledge, skills and job performance of their staff. The success of any in-service training programs depend on many factors, such as, skill of trainers in the field of training, the design of the training program, the efficiency of the managers to utilize the resources and as well as the attitudes of the trainees or participants.

This study will specifically examine the attitudes of executives toward training programs and how these have changed over time. It embraces factors that may influence the attitudes of the executives towards in-service training and also the nature and orientation
of such change, major change influences, and the possible implications arising from the changes.

It should be pointed out, however, some diversity in the training program is apparent between different categories of officers. As such, some of the training and development programs have of little concern to some executives. According to Costine and Garavan (1955), there are several reasons to explain this lack of attention and interest among the staff:

- the categories of work were dictated by management, and, with Taylorist lines being followed in the breakdown and nature of work, elaborate or lengthy training was not deemed a necessity;

- such training as did take place was seen as an informal activity which was focused on a narrow range of job specific skills; and

- rewards were linked to skill ranges and workers on the bottom of the reward structure tended to perceive themselves as “naturally” unskilled.

The Sarawak State Civil Service is currently undergoing fundamental transformations and is being updated and equipped for service to the nation and state in an increasingly competitive, quality-centred and borderless world. As emphasized by the then Deputy State Secretary for Human Resource, Datuk Haji Abdul Aziz Hj. Hussain;

“We are making significant strides in training the civil service ........ we want to work cohesively towards Vision 2020. But first of all, the competency gap must be bridged for the transformation process to succeed. We are lucky. The political masters recognize and understand the need for the civil service to be independent in order for the transformation process to proceed smoothly and rapidly”. (Rakan Sarawak Bulletin, February 1999)

At the Public Service Conference held in Kuching on 21st and 22nd September 1999, the Chief Minister, YAB Datuk Patinggi (Dr) Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud in his keynotes address to the audience also stressed that;

“The transformation in the Public Service has got to put greater emphasis on the content of quality changes, attitudes of civil servants, greater and deeper understanding of social milieu in which we are operating and in terms of administrative and management tools we are employing to achieve Wawasan 2020.” (Rakan Sarawak Bulletin, September 1999)

Like any organizations, the statutory corporations have set their own vision to be the leading state government agencies in assisting the government implementing the policies and development in the state of Sarawak. To realize these visions and answer the call made by the honorable Chief Minister of Sarawak, the state government has also prioritized and emphasized training and human development as part and parcel of the state development. Believing that the achievement of the organizations goals depend very much on its human capital, the corporation's top management has always been
supportive towards training programs which include providing in-service training as a means to enhance work performance of their employees. This can be seen from the allocation of resources, both monetary and other training facilities.

The state corporations in Sarawak were established to assist the government to implement and expedite the development programs for the benefit of its citizen. As government agencies, which are under purview of the Chief Minister Office, these corporations have been commissioned with the responsibility of implementing and stimulating the development of the state of Sarawak. As mentioned earlier, part and parcel of the agenda of these corporations are to provide relevant trainings to their staff.

The state government has invested substantial amount of money in implementing its training activities in an effort to improve employee's knowledge, skills and attitude to enhance their work performance. In any organizations, providing and sending staff for training is indeed an expensive investment. Therefore, if training is an investment, then it is utmost important that the aspect of staff attitude toward any kind of training programs should be studied and emphasized, which is a critical aspect of selection of staff for any training. A research on attitude of staff towards in-service training program has never been carried out in the state corporations. There has also been much comment from the staff that training provided is sometime not relevant to their needs. The attitude problems, even though not serious in the statutory corporations, can lead to high dissatisfaction and demoralization among the staff.

Based on the background of this study, it is therefore appropriate that research on the attitude of the staff in the statutory corporations towards in-service training programs in the state of Sarawak be carried out.

1.2 Problem Statement

The State Civil Service needs to adjust to the new mode of public sector management and new management techniques challenged by the process of change. A transformation process is taking place in our Public Service whereby members of the Service are engaged by the process of change. From the point of view of its effectiveness and the coming change, the statutory corporations need to pool their resources together so that the state government can bring along its staff to experience the transformation together with the rest of the Civil Service in Malaysia.

These statutory corporations have the responsibility not only to realize the policies of the government of the day but also to upgrade the staff participation in the country's development process. This is a unique phenomenon for a developing nation like Malaysia. Therefore, the State Public Service not only accept change as part of their lives, but need to know how best to interpret government policies and forward ideas and criticisms on how the country can be governed. In recent years, the human resource development effort of the Civil Service has been aimed at changing attitudes and encouraging a paradigm shift in the Civil Service. To achieve the paradigm shift, the government has implemented formal and generic training programs in areas, such as, team development, process-orientation and attitudinal change. These efforts are aimed