

Dr Chua Lee Chuan  
Institute Perguruan Batu Lintang

### ABSTRACT

*Although the study of professional support and professional commitment are prevalent in the education literature, not many studies examined both these issues among technical school educators. Acknowledging this limitation, this study was undertaken to examine the extent to which professional commitment can be influenced by professional support among this group of teachers. Data for this exploratory study were collected using self-administered questionnaires, from 120 randomly selected technical school teachers. Correlational analysis revealed that there was a significant relationship between professional support and professional commitment among the teachers understudied. Multiple regression analysis showed that the variance in explaining professional commitment was contributed by professional support, comprising, both principal support and collegial support. Based on the statistical results, implications of the findings were discussed in the context of understanding the relationship between professional support and professional commitment. Suggestions on how to increase professional commitment and professional support as well as avenues for future research were also provided.*

### INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the field of technical education has been subjected to considerable change and expansion as the result of challenges created by globalization and advancement of ICT. To keep up with these changes, teachers in these schools faced the need for more professional support from both the principal and their fellow colleagues. Such support is needed to help them, among others, in conducting a delivery system which includes the utilization of ICT to meet the changing needs of industries and technological advancement. This is to ensure that manpower supply from such schools is in line with technological change and changing market demand for a workforce who is technologically competent in order to achieve a competitive advantage.

Partly because of that, the roles of technical school teachers have undergone major transformation. It is unlike in the past whereby, traditionally, they were the professional practitioners in their respective fields, providing qualifications and skills to groups of low achiever students within an enclosed classroom so that they could enter employment after leaving school. Today, the traditionally recognised roles and responsibilities of these teachers are being redefined. The role of technical teachers has been broadened to focus more on not only imparting basic work skills but skills and competencies that would enable them to adapt to inevitable changes taking place in the workplace. For such a

to create a more conducive teaching and learning traditional classroom and textbook approach. They need to provide students industrial exposure and hands-on knowledge to meet the changing needs of industries and to face the challenges of the competitive world. As a result of the expansion of roles and responsibilities of technical school teachers, there is a greater need for professional support from both the principal and fellow colleagues.

The need for greater principal support and collegial support is even greater as their support helped in influencing a variety of teachers' work attitudes, such as work satisfaction, attrition, stress, motivation, burnout, participation, performance, role conflict, role ambiguity, commitment (Singh & Billingsley, 1996; Shin & Reyes, 1995; Littrell, et al., 1994; McManus & Kauffman, 1991; Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Richards & O'Brien, 2002; Woods & Weasmer, 2002; Chan, 1998; Thomson & Wendt, 1995; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Fong, 1993; Leiter, 1991; Singh & Billingsley, 1998; Abdul Manaf, 1998). Although past studies have found the association of professional support with a variety of work attitudes, the primary focus of this study is to look at the association between professional support and commitment to the teaching profession.

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The importance of professional support for technical school teachers cannot be ignored in view of the widening roles and responsibilities arising from the changing needs of industries to face the challenges of a competitive world. Arising from the manpower demand of these industries, support from both principals and colleagues are needed to assist them in producing a pool of well-educated, trainable and skilled workforce.

Commitment of these teachers is not of lesser significance. The technical school system also needs to be run by a pool of not only highly skilled but also highly committed teaching workforce. This is because, they not only determine the effectiveness of technical and vocational training but also work towards the educational mission of achieving high quality world-class technical education. Hence, maintaining a well-established and highly committed teaching force in technical schools, with teachers displaying willingness to exert efforts and time on behalf of the profession and at the same time working closely with the system to achieve its educational goal, should be of utmost importance.

Past studies have indicated that these two variables are positively correlated with each other (Richard & O'Brien, 2002; Woods & Weasmer, 2002; Pounder, 1999; Karmar & Carlson, 1999; Darchan Singh, 1998; Singh & Billingsley, 1996; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Littrell, et al., 1994; Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Singh & Billingsley, 1998; Abdul Manaf, 1998; Gersten & Brengelman, 1996; Hart, 1994; Firestone & Penell, 1993; McLaughlin, 1993). Past studies have confirmed that teachers who failed to receive support, either from the principal or peers, at the workplace were found to be less committed to teaching.

In view of the importance and association of professional support and professional commitment, this study aims to investigate further into the relationship between the two

Literature search found that studies pertaining to these two variables. Previous researchers, most of these studies were conducted in the west. Very few studies address this relationship among teachers in Malaysia, a non-western context. Even more limited or possibly none of the published studies look into this issue among technical school teachers. Due to this limitation, there is a need to conduct more studies to help fill the literature gap in this discipline.

### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The present study aims to enlighten researchers and practitioners on the relationship between professional commitment, the dependent variable of the study and professional support (principal and collegial support), the independent variable. Due to the constraint of time and resources, this study was confined to the study of technical school teachers in the region of Sarawak.

Specifically, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

- Is there a significant relationship between professional commitment and professional support
- Is there a significant relationship between professional commitment and principal support?
- Is there a significant relationship between professional commitment and collegial support?
- What is the contribution of each of the significant predictor variables towards the variance of professional commitment?

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section aimed to review relevant literature pertaining to professional commitment, the dependent variable of this study. The first part discussed the theoretical background of commitment, the conceptualisation of commitment in general, what it is and how it develops. Subsequently, more specific literature review on past empirical studies related to the relationship between professional commitment and professional support was reviewed and discussed.

#### **Theoretical Background**

The theoretical background of this study was taken from Meyer and Allen's multi-dimensional model of commitment (1997). Based on the model, commitment is a multi-dimensional construct comprising of three separate components: affective, continuance and normative. Affective commitment referred to the employees' emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in the profession. Employees with a strong affective commitment continue employments with the profession because they want to do so. Continuance commitment refers to an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the profession. It develops as a result of any action or event that increases the cost of leaving the profession, provided the employee recognises that these costs have been incurred. According to Meyer and Allen (1997), employees whose primary link to the profession is based on continuance commitment remain because they have to. Normative commitment reflects a sense of obligation to continue employment. Employees with a high level of normative commitment feel that they ought to remain with the profession by

right and moral thing to do (Meyer & Allen, 1991;

### **Professional Commitment**

According to Thornhill, et al. (1990), the concept of commitment is a highly complex element. It has attracted a great deal of attention from researchers trying to conceptualise, explore and evaluate this complex concept. A thorough literature review indicated that previous research examining commitment has focused primarily on one aspect of commitment. The most often used definition of commitment comes from Porter, et al. (1974) where it was defined as the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organisation.

However, researchers who have adapted Porter, et al.'s (1974) definition of commitment, have received many criticisms. This is because commitment was viewed as a uni-dimensional construct, measuring the emotional or affective attachment of an individual to the organisation. This definition has been criticised as being too simplistic (Benkhoff, 1997). In a more comprehensive review of literature on commitment in the workplace, researchers have identified more than one factor in measuring commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Balfour & Wechsler, 1996), thereby, casting doubt on the uni-dimensionality of Porter, et al.'s (1974) definition of the concept. Instead of looking at commitment as one single factor it developed to include three other components: (1) affective; (2) continuance; and (3) normative (Meyer & Allen, 1997). According to Meyer & Allen (1997), the uni-dimensional construct of commitment failed to consider that an employee might be committed for other reasons beside the affective attachment. For instance, an employee might be committed due to continuance commitment where the cost of leaving was perceived to be high or normative commitment, whereby, the employee might be committed due to moral obligation.

Recognizing the multiple components of commitment, this study was undertaken to explore Meyer and Allen's three-component commitment model to differentiate the components which teachers were committed. This is because different component of commitment is believed to have different implications to the education system. Theoretically, all three components of commitment are related to teacher's likelihood to remain in the teaching profession. However, the nature of the teacher's likelihood to remain in the profession might be quite different depending on which component of commitment is predominant. Although there are many foci of commitment, this study has been narrowed to focus on professional commitment, which is defined as the relative strength of a teacher's affective, continuance and normative commitment towards the teaching profession.

### **Professional Commitment and Professional Support**

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between professional commitment (both principal and collegial support) and commitment of teachers to the teaching profession. Literature review suggested that teachers who obtained professional support are more committed to the profession and vice-versa. The next section aims to

Components of professional support (principal and personal commitment is linked to them.

### Professional Commitment and Principal Support

In this study, the framework used by Littrell, et al. (1994) was used to guide the definition of principal support. It was defined as the degree to which the principal provides or extends emotional, appraisal, informational and instrumental support to the teachers of the school. Based on literature review, numerous studies have linked commitment to the leader of an institution or organisation. Past studies, either educational or non-educational, reported that commitment was associated with leader consideration, leader-member exchange, administrative support, principal buffering principal/leadership support (Richards & O'Brien, 2002; Karmar & Carlson, 1999; Darchan Singh, 1998; Singh & Billingsley, 1998; Singh & Billingsley, 1996; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Littrell, et al., 1994; Billingsley & Cross, 1992). Among the educational studies conducted, it was reported that the degree of commitment exhibited by the teachers was very much influenced by the principal. These studies indicated that teachers who experienced higher level of principal support were more likely to be committed than those receiving less support. However, literature review indicated conflicting results between organisational commitment and professional commitment. For instance, in Billingsley and Cross's study (1992), leadership support was found to be significantly related to organisational commitment but not related to professional commitment. Teachers who received leadership support were found to be more committed to the school division but leadership support did not influence commitment to the profession.

On the contrary, the study conducted by Singh and Billingsley (1998) reviewed that principal support did contribute to teachers' commitment to the teaching profession. In fact, their studies found that principal support influenced teachers' commitment directly and indirectly through peer support. Their findings indicate the importance of principal support in enhancing teachers' commitment and also the effect principals could have on teachers' collegial relationship. Teachers who received higher level of principal support were found to be more professionally committed than those teachers who felt that the principals were not supportive of them.

## Collegial Support

Collegial support referred to the extent to which teachers could rely on each other to get work done and to solve work-related problems. The idea that teachers who were involved in collaborative activities and received collegial support were also the most committed is fully grounded in the education literature (Richard & O'Brien, 2002; Woods & Weasmer, 2002; Pounder, 1999; Singh & Billingsley, 1998; Abdul Manaf, 1998; Gersten & Brengelman, 1996; Hart, 1994; Firestone & Penell, 1993; McLaughlin, 1993). These findings reviewed that when teachers faced work settings where there was a highly supportive collegial environment, they demonstrated higher level of commitment to teaching. In some studies such as the one conducted by Singh & Billingsley (1998), among the many variables studied, collegial or peer support exerted the largest direct effect on professional commitment of teachers ( $\beta = .30$ ).

In addition to education research, the more general research on employees' commitment has clearly shown that workplace condition such as co-worker support is also related to commitment (Kim 1999; Nijhof, et al., 1998; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Spector, 1997). These studies concluded that interaction and collaboration with co-workers helped to enhance and strengthen commitment of workers.

Although collegiality has been heavily studied, past findings pertaining to whether its relationship with commitment is significant or otherwise, are still non-conclusive. There are evidences of contradictions among studies conducted on the association between these two variables. For instance, Nijhof, et al. (1998) studied collegiality among human resource managers in the organisations of The Netherlands and found collegiality significantly correlated with professional commitment ( $r = .64$ ). Similarly, Singh and Billingsley (1998) also reported the same result with a reported beta value of .30. However, the study on automobile workers in Korea, conducted by Kim (1999) and on health education teachers by Richards and O'Brien (2002) failed to establish any significant association between collegial support and commitment. It was reported that collegial support was not a significant determinant of commitment. Based on these contradictions, replication of this association is needed to confirm the findings and also to find out if this relationship is present among technical school teachers.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive correlational design, intended to investigate the relationship between professional support (principal and collegial support) and professional commitment. This design employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey research methodology, where data were collected by asking a group of respondents to answer a set of predetermined questions at a single point in time.

The research was carried out on all the trained technical school teachers teaching in technical schools located in the entire state of Sarawak. A sample size of 120 was randomly selected to represent the target population.

Research instrument to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of three main sections. The first section measured the demographic information of the respondents. The second section consisted of a list of items to measure professional support. A total of 50 items were used to measure professional support. The statements were adapted from Singh and Billingsley (1998) and Littrell, et al. (1994). The third section of the instrument measured professional commitment, derived from Meyer, Allen and Smith's (1993) commitment scale. The responses of the statements used to measure both professional support and professional commitment were based on a likert-type scale of one to seven with one representing "absolutely disagree" and seven representing "completely agree". Higher scores indicated higher level of professional support and professional commitment.

Before the research instrument was administered, it went through a thorough process of pre-testing it for validity, reliability and suitability for use in the Malaysian educational settings. A panel of judges comprising of researchers, educators and education administrators helped to verify the validity of the instrument. Then the instrument was pilot tested with a group of 30 randomly selected teachers to determine the internal reliability of the items used to measure the two variables. The cronbach's alpha coefficients of reliability derived from the pilot test were .98 and .81 for professional support and professional commitment respectively.

When the research instrument was finally administered, a total of 110 usable questionnaires were returned. The data was then analysed using SPSS for windows programme. A combination of statistical analyses such as, descriptive statistics, correlation and multiple regression were used to analyse the data. Among the descriptive statistics used were frequency distribution, measures of central tendency and measures of variability. Correlation analysis was used to determine the relationship between the professional support, the independent variable and professional commitment, the dependent variables. Since, this study also aimed to investigate the contribution of each of the components of professional support towards the variance of the professional commitment, multiple regression analysis was employed.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Demographic Profile of Respondents

Respondents in the study were all full-time technical school teachers who were randomly selected from all the technical schools in Sarawak. Out of the 110 respondents in the survey, a demographic assessment of the sample revealed that there were more male (56.4%) than female teachers (43.6%) with an average age of 32 years (SD = 6.39). In terms of marital status, 58.2% of the sample were married, 41.8% were single. As far as education was concerned, 65.5% of the respondents earned a bachelor's degree or higher while 34.5% were non-graduates who held a college teaching certificate. The respondents have been working in their current school for an average of 5.1 years (SD=4.43), and had an average of 7.3 years (SD = 6.66) of teaching experience.

### Professional Support

Table 1 matrix between professional commitment and professional support. The table revealed that professional commitment was positively and significantly correlated with professional support, with a correlation coefficient of .58. Pertaining to the strength of a relationship suggested by Elifon, et al. (1998) the relationship between these two variables was a moderate or substantial one. Professional commitment was also positively and significantly correlated with the three components of professional commitment at a significant level of .05. The magnitude of correlation were .38, .26, .55 for affective, continuance and normative respectively. The data implied that professional support has a significant and positive impact on professional commitment of technical school teachers in Sarawak. Hence, it can be concluded that teachers who received high principal support and collegial support tend to be more commitment to the teaching profession.

Table 1: Correlation Coefficient between Professional Commitment and Professional Support

Support	Professional Commitment			
	Affective	Continuance	Normative	Overall
Professional Support	.38*	.26*	.55*	.58*

### Professional Commitment and Principal Support

Table 2 showed the correlation matrix between professional commitment and principal support. The table revealed that professional commitment was positively and significantly correlated with principal support. The magnitude of correlation between these two variables was .56 and according to Elifon, et al. (1998) the relationship was also moderate. Not surprisingly, professional commitment was also moderately and positively correlated with all the four support dimensions of principal support. The magnitude of correlation ranged from .47 to .58 in the order of instrumental support ( $r = .47$ ), informational support ( $r = .53$ ), appraisal support ( $r = .56$ ) and the strongest correlation was emotional support ( $r = .58$ ).

Upon close-examination into the relationships between the components of professional commitment and principal support, an almost identical pattern existed for affective and normative commitment, where they were also found to be positively and significantly correlated, with the total scores of principal support as well as its four support dimensions. In terms of the degree of relationship between these two components of professional commitment, the results showed that normative commitment was slightly more correlated with principal support ( $r = .53$ ) than affective commitment ( $r = .41$ ).

With respect to continuance commitment, although the relationship with principal support was weak ( $r = .20$ ) but it was statistically significant. However, two out of the four support dimensions were not significantly correlated, which were informational and instrumental support. These insignificant relationships could be seen from the weak relationship of these two dimensions with continuance commitment. The magnitudes of correlation for informational support and instrumental support were only .18 and .15

son behind the weak and insignificant relationships  
col support with continuance commitment.

Nevertheless, based on this finding, it is still logical to infer that principal support was a significant factor influencing the professional commitment of technical school teachers in the region understudied. Teachers seemed to demonstrate higher affective, continuance and normative commitment to the teaching profession when provided with principal support, although not all the dimensions were of significant importance.

Previous research conducted within this perspective, linking commitment to a supportive principal or leader of an organization, also showed evidence of a positive correlation between these two variables (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Richards & O'Brien, 2002; Karmar & Carlson, 1999; Darchan Singh, 1998; Singh & Billingsley, 1998; Singh & Billingsley, 1996; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Littrell, et al., 1994). Minor differences that might occur between the findings of the present study with previous studies, either in similar or related fields, might be partly attributable to the types of professionals who participated in their studies. Nevertheless, the relationship between principal support and professional commitment of technical school teachers in Sarawak has been empirically established in this study.

**Table 2**  
Correlation Coefficient between Professional Commitment and Principal Support

Support	Professional Commitment			
	Affective	Continuance	Normative	Overall
Principal Support	.41*	.20*	.53*	.56*
Emotional	.45*	.19*	.55*	.58*
Appraisal	.39*	.24*	.50*	.56*
Informational	.39*	.18	.51*	.53*
Instrumental	.35*	.15	.46*	.47*
Collegial Support	.29*	.28*	.47*	.51*

\* correlation is significant at the .05 level

### Professional Commitment and Collegial Support

Table 3 presented the correlation results between professional commitment and collegial support. Pearson correlations revealed that professional commitment was significantly related to collegial support at .05 level of significance. Based on the guidelines suggested by Elifon, et al. (1998), professional commitment was also moderately correlated with collegial support ( $r = .51$ ).

Table 3: Correlation Coefficient between Professional Commitment and Collegial Support

Support	Professional Commitment			
	Affective	Continuance	Normative	Overall

.28\*                      .47\*                      .51\*

\* correlation is significant at the .05 level

With regards to the three components of professional commitment, the results revealed that affective, continuance and normative commitments were also positive and significantly correlated to collegial support. However, in terms of the magnitude of correlation, normative commitment was substantially more correlated ( $r = .47$ ) with collegial support than affective ( $r = .29$ ) and continuance commitment ( $r = .28$ ). This result implied that teachers who worked in a collaborative setting where colleagues are highly supportive of each other were more likely to remain in the teaching profession.

This finding was found to be consistent with previous education literature (Richard & O'Brien, 2002; Woods & Weasmer, 2002; Pounder, 1999; Abdul Manaf, 1998; Nijhot, et al., 1998; Singh & Billinglsey, 1998; Gersten & Brengelman, 1996; Hart, 1994; Firestone & Penell, 1993; McLaughlin, 1993). It has been extensively grounded in literature teachers who faced a work setting where a highly supportive collegial environment existed, teachers demonstrated higher commitment to teaching.

The results of this study were also in accordance with past studies in the non-education settings where workplace condition, such as coworker support were also found to be related to commitment (Kim 1999; Nijhof, et al., 1998; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Spector, 1997). However, this finding contradicted the findings of Kim (1999) and Richard and O'Brien (2002), whose research failed to establish any significant association between collegial support and commitment. Collegial support was found to be unrelated to commitment. Nevertheless, the results of this study provided empirical evidence on the significant association between collegial support and professional commitment. Therefore, it would be a mistake to ignore the importance of collegial support, given that an increased in collegial support could significantly enhance the commitment of teachers towards the profession.

### Predictors of Professional Commitment

To determine this contribution of professional support towards the variance of professional commitment, this study employed a stepwise multiple regression analysis. Both components of professional support, principal support and collegial support, were entered into the regression equation. The results in Table 4 revealed that both principal support and collegial support are selected as significant predictors of professional commitment. These two predictors when combined accounted for an  $R^2$  of 34.5 % of the explained variance in professional commitment.

Table 4: Stepwise Multiple Regression of Professional Commitment on Predictor Variables

Variable	Beta	R	$R^2$	$R^2$ Change
Principal Support	.387	.556	.309	.309
Collegial support	.255	.587	.345	.036

Sig. F = .001

Principal support by itself contributed an  $R^2$  of 30.9% of the variance in professional commitment. When collegial support was included into the multiple regression model, the additional variance in the criterion variable that could be explained by this predictor was 3.6%. It means that collegial support accounted for an additional 3.6% of the variance beyond that contributed by principal support. Thus, the results of the regression analysis indicated that both principal support and collegial support were the significant predictors of professional commitment ( $F = 28.175$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The total amount of variance in the criterion variable, that was predictable from these two predictors, amounted to 34.5%. This result implies that professional commitment could be significantly enhanced by providing principal support and encouraging collegiality in the workplace.

## IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

concept of defining professional commitment, instead of results of the study recognised the existence of three different components of commitment among the teachers understudied. Different teachers could experience varying degree of all the components of commitment. Considering that fact, management of technical schools concerned should not be easily contented upon finding that teachers were committed to the profession. It would be potentially important to find out the types of commitment exhibited by the teachers. Since each component could develop differently, it implies that not all components of commitment were alike. Some could be emotionally committed (affective), while others could be committed because the cost of leaving was perceived as high (continuance) or commitment could be driven by feelings of moral obligations (normative). By filtering out the different components of commitment, the management of technical schools would be able to recognise and take into account the different types of commitment displayed by teachers. Therefore, if instilling and strengthening teachers' commitment is deemed important, relevant strategies should be implemented by school management to achieve the desired level of commitment to the teaching profession.

In view of the significant results arising from adopting a multidimensional approach in measuring commitment, its importance cannot be overlooked. It is a topic that has not been widely researched upon in prior studies and possibly this is the first study that dealt with professional commitment of technical school teachers in Sarawak. Most studies in the past have often viewed commitment as a unidimensional construct with strong emphasis on affective commitment, overlooking that commitment has continuance and normative components. Therefore, more studies should be conducted using similar approaches. The data from this study has provided a foundation for further researchers to investigate further into the multidimensional conceptualisation of commitment towards the teaching profession.

This finding also provided strong empirical evidence that professional support (both principal and collegial support) was an important factor contributing positively to the professional commitment of technical school teachers in Sarawak. Teachers who received support from both their principals and colleagues helped to increase the level of teachers' affective, continuance and normative commitment.

Given that principal support and collegial support are important in maintaining commitment to the profession, how these aspects can be improved in schools, should also be a concern in order to prevent the occurrence of lowly committed teachers. The principal should not only be concerned about running the school smoothly or to bring forth the school to excellence but should also be concerned in providing substantial support to the teaching staff so as to enhance their commitment towards their profession, as revealed in this study. To enhance collegial support, teachers need to work in a collaborative and cohesive work setting that is conducive for collegiality to take place. Specifically, creating school environments where teachers can interact and assist each other especially in matters dealing with professional concerns, give constructive feedback and be supportive of each other in solving problems, both pedagogical and non-pedagogical, ultimately can have a significant impact on teachers' commitment.

information that professional commitment was significantly predicted by both principal support and collegial support. However, these two predictors only explained 34.5.1% of the variance in professional commitment. Hence, further field studies on professional commitment should be encouraged to look into other possible contributing factors that were not investigated in this study. Perhaps professional commitment could be linked to stress and burnout, parental support, organisational culture, principal leadership or job involvement. Exploring these additional variables might provide information to uncover findings not established by this particular model.

It should also be noted that the samples of this study were drawn from a target population represented by technical school teachers in one region in Malaysia and the results of this study can only be generalised to this population of the teaching profession. Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers conduct additional research using a larger scale to increase the validity and generalisability of the research findings. For instance, by replicating the study on all the technical schools in Malaysia on a nation wide scale might increase the boundary for its applicability.

Additionally, it might be of interest for future researchers to pursue additional investigations on other non-technical schools to find out whether it produces similar results as those reported in this study. Other research that might be worthy of research is to explore whether the commitment model constructed can clearly distinguish between commitment of technical and non-technical teachers. By expanding the study to include a variety of school teachers in different types of schools, it would be able to reflect more accurately on teachers' professional commitment in the educational setting.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research has made a theoretical contribution to the growing interest on commitment, first by adopting a multidimensional aspect of conceptualizing commitment and secondly by investigating into its relationship with professional support. It has provided empirical evidence on the importance of professional support in influencing professional commitment of technical school teachers in Sarawak.

This is perhaps the first research to apply a multidimensional concept of professional commitment to the study of technical school teachers in Sarawak. Although this research may have inherent biases in which the research model was derived from focusing on one type of school, it is hoped that it has provided education department, training institutions and school administrators in technical schools an insight into the different types of professional commitment displayed by teachers in the study. The various practical recommendations provided could be useful for them when targeting relevant strategies or intervening mechanism to further enhance the commitment of these teachers towards the teaching profession.

addressing a subjective and abstract issue such as and complex process requiring multiple strategies and research. It is still an issue that will be confronting the education system for many years to come. Needless to say, it is an issue that needs to be seriously looked into and constantly monitored if the quality and productivity of teachers are not to be undermined.

## REFERENCES

- Abdul Manaf, M. (1998). *Faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi komitmen guru-guru sekolah rendah terhadap organisasi*. Master Thesis, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Malaysia.
- Balfour, D.L., & Wechsler, B. (1996). Organizational commitment: Antecedents and outcomes in public organizations. *Public Productivity and Management Review*, 29, 256-277.
- Benkhoff, B. (1997). Disentangling organizational commitment. *Personnel Review*, 26, 114-131.
- Billingsley, B. S., & Cross, L.H. (1992). Predictors of commitment, job satisfaction and intent to stay in teaching. A comparison of general and special educators. *Journal of Special Education*, 25(4), 453-472.
- Chan, N. (1998). *Hubungan Stress dengan sokongan di persekitaran kerja di kalangan guru sekolah menengah*. Master Thesis, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Malaysia.
- Cross, L. H., & Billingsley, B. S. (1994). Testing a model of special educators' intent to stay in teaching. *Exceptional Children*, 60(5), 411-421.
- Darchan Singh, J.K. (1998). *An investigation into teachers' commitment to the teaching profession with reference to selected secondary schools in Ipoh, Perak*. Master Thesis, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Malaysia.
- Elifson, K.W., Runyon, R.P., & Haber, A. (1998). *Fundamentals of social statistics*. Third Edition. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Firestone, W. A., & Pennell, J. R. (1993). Teacher commitment, working conditions and differential incentive policies. *Review of Educational Research*, 64(4), 489-525.
- Fong, C.M. (1993). A longitudinal study of the relationships between overload, social support, and burnout among nursing educators. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 32, 24-29.
- Gersten, R., Brengelman, S.U. (1996). The quest to translate research into classroom practices. *Remedial & Special Education*, 17(2), 67-75.

ality of work life: Integrating work experiences,  
morale. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational*

- Kacmar, K. M., & Carlson, D. S. (1999). Antecedents and consequences of organizational commitment: A comparison of two scales. *Educational & Psychological Measurement, 59* (6), 976-995.
- Kim, S.W. (1999). Behavioural commitment among the automobile workers in South Korea. *Human Resource Management Review, 9*(4), 419-452.
- Leiter, M.D. (1991). Coping patterns as predictors of burnout: the function of control and escapist coping patterns. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 12*, 123-144.
- Littrell, P., Billingsley, B., & Cross, L. (1994). The effects of support on general and special educators' stress, job satisfaction, health, school commitment, and intent to stay in teaching. *Remedial and Special Education, 15* (5), 297-310.
- McLaughlin, M. W. (1993). What matters most in teachers' workplace context? In *Teachers' work: Individuals, colleagues, and contexts*, ed. J.W. Little & M. W. McLaughlin, (pp. 79-103). New York: Teachers College Press.
- McManus, M.E., & Kauffman, J.M. (1991). Working conditions of teachers of students with behavioural disorders: A national survey. *Behavioral Disorders, 16*(4), 247-259.
- Meyer, J.P., & Allen, N.J. (1991). A three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment. *Human Resource Management Review, 1*(1), 61-89.
- Meyer, J.P., & Allen, N.J. (1997). *Commitment in the workplace: Theory, Research and Application*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Meyer, J.P., Allen, N.J., & Smith, C.A. (1993). Commitment to organizations and occupations: Extension and test of a three-component conceptualization. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 78*, 538-551.
- Nijhof, W.J., de Jong, M.J., & Beukhof, G. (1998). Employee commitment in changing organizations: An exploration. *Journal of European Industrial Training, 22*(6), 243-248.
- Porter, L.W., Steers, R.M., Mowday, R.T., & Boulian, P.V. (1974). Organizational commitment, job satisfaction and turnover among psychiatric technicians. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 59*, 603-609.

ams: Exploring job characteristics and work-related  
enhancement. *Educational Administration Quarterly*,

Richards, B., O'Brien, T., & Akroyd, D. (2002). Predicting the organizational commitment of marketing education and health education teachers by work related rewards. *Journal of Industrial Teacher Education*, 32(1).

Shin, H.S., & Reyes, P. (1995). Teacher commitment and job satisfaction: A causal analysis. *Journal of School Leadership*, 5(1), 22-39.

Singh, K., & Billingsley, B. S. (1996). Intent to stay in teaching: Teachers of students with emotional disorders versus other special educators. *Remedial and Special Education*, 17(1), 37-47.

Singh, K., & Billingsley, B.S. (1998). Professional support and its effect on teachers' commitment. *Journal of Educational Research*, 91(4). 229-240.

Spector, P. E. (1997). *Job satisfaction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Thomson, W.C., Wendt, J.C. (1995). Contribution of hardiness and school climate to alienation experienced by student teachers. *Journal of Educational Research*, 88(5), 269-275

Thornhill, A., Lewis, P., & Saunders, M.N.K. (1990). The role of employee communication in achieving commitment and quality in higher education. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 4(1), 12-20.

Wiener, Y.(1982). Commitment in organizations: A normative view. *Academy of Management Review*, 7, 418-428.

Woods, A. M., Weasmer, J. (2002). Maintaining job satisfaction: Engaging professionals as active participants. *Clearing House*, 75(4), 186-190.