Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Background of Study and Problem Identification

Ever since independence, the Malaysian public service has transformed itself through various stages for the purpose of improving not only the services of the organization but also the skills of its personnel.

Coming into the 21st century, the Malaysian public service is more determined than ever to prepare itself for the new millennium. The fact that the present political leaders are also inclined to reengineer the public sector, this very much has given the advantage for public servants to strive for improvement. The steps to improve the public sector began in the 1980s with the launching of Gerakan Budaya Kerja Cemerlang by the Prime Minister, Dato' Seri Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamad on the 27th November 1989. The main purpose of this movement was to encourage continuous quality in the work process of the civil service. Much emphasis and money have been spent onto the subject of Human Resource plus training and development. These were strange terms sort of to say twenty years back. To add further to the challenges of today's civil servants, we are now given the task to achieve

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1 Pengurusan dan Peningkatan Kualiti Dalam Perkhidmatan Awam, (Unpublished) Unit Pemodenan Tadbiran Malaysia (MAMPU), Prime Minister Department, 1990.
quality in all sense may it be service and productivity or management as a whole. The penetration of this new work philosophy affect every corners of the services provided by the public sector. Many circulars were issued as guidelines to ensure proper implementation of improvement efforts over areas such telephone operator service, proper minutes format for meetings, formation of Quality Control Circle, the public service innovation award, the client's charter and more.\(^2\) Indeed the task is not meant as an obligation of a particular group of workers but the principle is rather total commitment of all from top to bottom.

If we recalled one of the popular government policy back in the 1980s was known as the Look East Policy, the idea was simply to change the working culture of Malaysians in particular with reference to the working culture of the Japanese and the Korean. Indeed I very much agree that the culture itself is a very important decisive element as to whether a society or (for the purpose of this research) the organization is willing to forego their conventional practices and values in return for something new.

Coming back to the public service organization in Malaysia, the structure that we are having today is actually a descendant of what was left by our colonial masters. *It has been pointed out that the bureaucracies of newly independent countries inherited the mantle of the colonial bureaucracies they replaced* (Ferrel Heady)\(^3\). Obviously this comes along with the system and rules within the organization itself. Unlike the modern form of organization management, the colonial style of management stresses much on ranks, status and power. B. B. Misra commented on this by stating, *In the context of India's authoritarian and status-bound society, both ministers and bureaucrats tried to ape the British imperial tradition by attempting to have their prestige measured in terms of the salary, the quality of their furniture and furnishings, the size of their laws and office rooms, their allowances, privileges and prerequisites.* (Misra, 1986)\(^4\).

If we are to compare between public and private organizations, the most significant difference between them is that the former is not a profit based organization. But nevertheless public organization involves a lot in **policy making and policy implementation** of the country. With this characteristic, it has made the public organization an important body of **decision making**. That is why we have heard a considerable amount of public complaints on the services of the public organization as being **slow** because most of the

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\(^4\) Ibid, p 259
peoples' interest in the public organization are concerning about approvals and getting things done.

As mentioned earlier, the government's effort in bringing changes and improvement into the public sector is indeed appropriate and timely. However it is also interesting to know to what extent has this effort been a success knowing that we are talking about adopting new culture and values in the teachings of things like Total Quality Management or ISO 9000 for that matter. What are the kinds of obstacles we are facing along this road? To what extent are we able to be totally committed? What kind of office culture are we having and how conducive is it for changes to happen? How possible are we to have this top-bottom communication and relationship? Is it possible to take away the barriers that divide the top from the bottom? What about the question of making decision, does everyone have a fare share of it? Or is it possible to be shared to a certain extend so that everyone will be able to voice out their opinion and contribute in decision making? Perhaps these last two questions are important when we talk about the concept of down-sizing in the public organization, thus need to be responded sincerely and correctly.

The term down-sizing simply means optimality rather than wastage of a human resource. The concept is actually a synonym of "a one man band" or a situation whereby a person is able to perform more than one task (from the simplest to the most challenging kind of task, example making the right
decision). At this point the person needs to be more dynamic in his knowledge, skills, creativity and ability. A handicap in any of these significant areas will only hinder his performance, work productivity and thus disappointment of expectation onto him.

In the newspapers, we have heard how disastrous the new appraisal system has been among most of the civil servants. From office talks, we've heard the de-motivated tones of the executives who had failed to either gain the co-operation of his staff or convince his superior over his new 'revolutionary' ideas just because it is not in line with the common practices in the organization. To make matters worst, there is nothing much that he could do since he has no power to make it possible even as a trial-out within his unit or section.

1.2. Justification for selecting the research problem

The public servant today (as it seems) is no longer expected to maintain the traditional bureaucratic red-tapes that has been an antic costume of the organization. Today the bureaucrats are more interested in talking about paradigm shift, re-engineering, human resource development, quality and many more bombastic terms. So as civil servant myself, I saw various implications in the form of responses, as a result of these new challenges.
From my perspective, we have to look into the sustainability of these new values against the old values that have been accepted for long as part of the office culture in the organization. I think it would be unfair if I am to categorize this as a generation-gap problem because there are senior officers and old guards who are in favor for changes and those young ones who are not. But then the problems are there. Phrases like, "Why must we talk about quality now? Before, we still manage to fulfill our job," "Why get the trouble to obtain ISO 9000 certification and do all these documentation of our work processes? Without it we still get things done," "Why border to do appraisals, there are many other priorities to be attended to."

I strongly believe that these are the kind of problems that do exist in most public organizations. To understand this we have to look at some of the essential fabric in a public organization which one of them will be the culture. The impact of this element must be given serious thought in order to ensure a solid plate form for the civil servants to change and disembark into the new millenium. So, the justification for selecting the research problem is presented in a different way. First, the elements of culture that has never been sufficiently look into in a public organization even though their impact is possibly high within the activities of the organization like in this case, decision making. Secondly, this is a current and timely problem since most public organization are in their midst of being urged to reformations and buckle-up their human resources and services. Thirdly, the problems mainly circulate
among middle management (executives) who are mostly innovative and creative with new ideas and approaches but powerless within their organization cultural setting. Finally, hopefully that the research problem suggested a significant inputs for the Human Resource Department of any public organization to dwell further.

1.3. Area of Study

This study will focus on the areas of organization culture and decision making among public executives and how do these two areas link and cause a possible influential effect to the decision making behavior. In achieving this objective, the study will look at three aspects namely: first, the possible indicators that formed the organization culture such as the accepted values in work performance which are endorsed as being normal by members of the organization; secondly, how do the executives react to their working environment, the changes and challenges. What qualities do they (the executives) portray in responding to their office problems especially over the issue of decision making; and, finally, what are the requirements expected of the organization in order to achieve increase efficiency and quality in it's executives' performance.

Analysis on the impact of culture on decision making among executives will cover aspects such as, the pattern of decision making, the jurisdictions and limitations of giving opinions among executives participation in making
decisions, and evaluating the level of two-ways communications between the executives and the senior management plus level of communications between the executives and the subordinates. The second part of the analysis will try to look into the individualistic pattern and the influencing factors that dominate the executives when come to making decisions. The third and final part of the analysis is to see if there is any significant correlation between existing organization culture with the executives behavior in decision making. What improvements or recommendations can be made from the findings?. This is crucial in assuring the readiness of the organization and its human resources to live up to the public expectations, and also cruising into the new millenium.

1.4. Objectives and Hypothesis

The objectives of this study will be based on its ultimate objective and immediate objectives. The ultimate objective of this study will be to see if the culture that prevail in the organization is relevant and conducive to the kind of organizational change as being preach into the public sector today and to see how significant and relevant are the impact of organization culture on the individual decision making behavior among public executives or is there not any correlation at all.
The immediate objectives of this study will be:

a) To study the determining factors that shaped the attitude towards decision making among public executives; is it more of an external factor as in the organization culture or is it more of an internal factor as in his/her personality and psychological set-up.

b) Based on the analysis carried out in the study, to make constructive recommendations into areas that may need improvement in the sense of identifying the right culture for an innovative and dynamic public organization for the millennium and, to highlight on public executives attitudes towards decision making.

c) To contribute to the body of literature on issues pertaining to impact of organization culture and individual decision making behavior.

This research will have the intention of looking into the nature of the variables mentioned in the research statement whether there is any significant relations between them. Of course in this research the independent variables will be the possible indicators\(^5\) of the organization culture and decision making behavior, whereas the dependant variables will be organization culture and decision making behavior. By the end of the survey, the researcher would hope to determine the validity of the following possible hypotheses:

\(^5\) Identification and selection to these indicators are based on the theoretical review as discussed in chap. 2
Hypothesis 1: Organization culture is influenced by such norms as risk taking, rewards for change, openness, common goals and autonomy.

Hypothesis 2: Members of an organization have the tendency to inherit the existing culture in the organization and are not dynamic in attitudes towards change.

Hypothesis 3: Factors such as decision maker’s types of personality, type of decision to be made (problem), and decision maker’s potential for dissonance, are influential onto the decision making behavior.

Hypothesis 4: Public executives are more of having external personality type and are incline to systematic thinking rather than having internal personality type and adopt intuitive thinking approach in making decision.

Hypothesis 5: There is a strong impact of organization culture on the decision making behavior of public executive thus showing a significant correlation.

1.5. Significance of study

The significance of this study can be considered from the following perspectives:

i) The finding will be beneficial to the public organization in recognizing the significance weight and impact of organization culture and individual behavior in decision making among the executives

ii) Findings from the study will also be of benefit to any organizations that intend to bring up any form of reengineering effort onto its management style
iii) The literature as on the subject of organization culture and individual behavior in view of their impact onto decision making, especially for public organization is still scarce and therefore the findings of this study could provide some contributions to the literature on the subject.

1.6. Scope and Limitation of study

It was indeed the initial intention of the researcher to conduct the study on all government organization but due to unavoidable circumstances, primarily budget constraint among other reasons, so I have decided that the research will be conducted on a case study basis, taking the Ministry of Primary Industry of Malaysia as the population of study.

The study will be confined to the executives or middle-class management or commonly categorized as the Professional and Management group in the public sector. For the purpose of this study, they will be collectively referred to as the executive or bureaucrat intermittently. It must also be mentioned that the study will exclude the other categories of workers that do not fall under similar position and job specification as the executive.

To avoid terminological confusion, the term decision making and making decision will be used intermittently but will be referring to the same meaning within the context of this research work.
1.7. **Methodology**

The study objectives will call for both quantitative and qualitative information. However, for quantitative purposes, survey questionnaires will be distributed to the respondents. The questionnaires are used as the main source in obtaining primary data. The questionnaires comprise of 'close-ended' questions with multiple-choice answers that allow the respondents to answer them with ease. The close-ended questions also make it easier for the answers to be tabulated and quantified. The data collected will then be processed based on a statistical method by means of regression and correlation technique through the SPSS, which will be explained in depth in Chapter IV on research methodology.

1.8. **Research report organization**

The research report will be written based on the following break down; **Chapter One** will focus on the problematical background of the research question, the objectives of the study, significance of this study, scope of study, the analytical model, and the research methodology. **Chapter Two** of the study provides the literature review and theoretical support of the research. **Chapter Three** will be describing the background of the population. **Chapter Four**, will be describing on the research methodology used on this survey. **Chapter Five** explains the result of the survey and analysis on the
overall findings. Finally, **Chapter Six** gives the summary of the findings, the conclusion and recommendations based on the study done.