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**INDIVIDUAL CHARACTERISTICS, FAMILY,
SELF-EFFICACY, CURRICULUM, UNIVERSITY AND CLASSROOM
LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS, TEACHING APPROACHES AND TEACHER
FACTORS, LEARNING APPROACHES, AND STUDENT OUTCOMES IN
A MALAYSIAN PRIVATE UNIVERSITY:
A MIXED RESEARCH STUDY**

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**This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the
School of Education
Faculty of the Professions
University of Adelaide**

September, 2006

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Abstract

The study sets out to examine the relationships among students' individual characteristics, distal and proximal learning contexts, approaches to teaching and other teacher factors, approaches to learning, and related outcomes in the Malaysian private higher education context.

A theoretical framework was designed to examine the possible relationships among students' individual characteristics, family context, general self-efficacy beliefs, university-level and classroom-level learning environments, curriculum, approaches to teaching and teacher factors, approaches to learning, academic attainment, self-directed learning readiness and mental health. The theoretical base was drawn from Bronfenbrenner's Theory of Human Development, Bronfenbrenner and Ceci's Bio-Ecological Model of Human Development, Biggs' 3 P Model of Learning, and Prosser, Ramsden, Trigwell and Martin's Model of Teaching. In this way, the theoretical framework integrated the constructs from the fields of learning environment, approaches to learning, and approaches to teaching. Seven research propositions were generated.

The study used a concurrent triangulation research design where a large cross-sectional questionnaire survey and structured in-depth interviews, for both students and teachers of a private university in Malaysia, were used simultaneously. Single-level and multi-level quantitative statistical analyses were carried out on the survey data. The in-depth qualitative interview data complemented the quantitative results by providing rich insights into the quantitative results obtained. Both the quantitative and qualitative data were later merged to examine the research propositions. The survey data were drawn from a total of 44 classrooms, 392 students and 32 teachers. Interviews were conducted with three teachers and 18 students selected from the quantitative study.

The mixed research results have revealed that the approaches to learning students adopted and the related outcomes are a reflection not just of the dynamic inter-play between the students' individual characteristics, general self-efficacy beliefs, university and classroom learning environments, approaches to teaching and teacher factors but also of the influence of the family context, in Malaysian private higher education. The path analysis using the partial least square path (PLSPATH) technique at the student level revealed that parental

involvement continued to influence student learning process and related student outcomes at the university level; and a surface approach to learning was related to poor quality outcomes and a deep approach to learning was related to high quality outcomes. The multi-level analysis using the hierarchical linear modelling technique (HLM) revealed how approaches to teaching and teaching factors directly and indirectly influenced approaches to learning and related student outcomes. The qualitative findings extended the study by providing findings on the types of parental involvement, peer group effects, complex relationships between memorising and higher cognitive processes in the learning process, effective teaching practices and learning environments that foster meaningful learning.

The study in general contributes to the literature of learning environments, student approaches to learning and approaches to teaching. The distal and proximal factors in the learning environments need to be considered conjointly to understand further student learning and related outcomes in higher education. In particular, the results have indicated that the various factors in explaining student learning and related outcomes need to be considered as being embedded in social contexts that facilitate and shape students' life opportunities.

Recommendations based on the study's quantitative and qualitative findings, include suggestions for parental involvement in higher education, developmental teaching practices, student learning support, and the creation of effective learning environments to enhance deep approaches to learning.

In summary, the study suggests that to understand the contextual factors that influence a student, the total or holistic learning environment of the individual, needs to be taken into account. If the development of a particular student's outcomes is to be fully understood, then it is necessary to identify the context and learning variables of the student's learning environments.