

The Relationship between Culture and Organizational Commitment among Chinese Primary School Teachers

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between school culture and organizational commitment. The study focused on twenty three Primary Chinese Schools (SJKC) in Kota Setar, Kedah, Malaysia. 200 teachers were randomly selected to be the respondents where they were asked to complete the School Culture Inventory (SCI) (Maslowski, 2001) questionnaire to test the school culture while Organizational Commitment (OC) (Meyer & Allen, 1990) to examine teachers' commitment. Descriptive statistics of the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 19.0 were used to analyze the data to determine the frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Using Alpha Cronbachs, the reliability test of the instrument is 0.90. To test the school culture and organizational commitment, statistical methods, descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Data collected was found to be not normal (K-S test) where Spearman correlation $p \leq 0.05$. Findings indicate that school culture is related to organizational commitment. Dimensions of human relations, open system, rational goal, internal process showed positive and significant relationships with organizational commitment, thus, proving that school culture is a predictor of organizational commitment.

Keywords: School Culture, Organizational Commitment, Chinese Primary School

1. Introduction

To materialise Mission 2020, the important aspect that needs to be addressed is the schools' organizational culture, teachers' commitment and school efficacy (Education Development Blueprint 2006-2010, 2007). Previous researches done showed the factor that impedes school success is the school organizational culture (Hopkins, 2005). Thus, in order to increase the quality of education we should focus on this factor.

Although similar curriculum is used throughout the schools in Malaysia, the school culture between the schools still differ. According to Marimuthu (1990), school culture consists of values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions, thinking styles and behaviours which are different from other social institutions. So, although schools are provided with the same infrastructure and work force the achievements of the schools still differ (Sharifah Md Nor, 2000; Huberman, 1992; Bolman & Deal, 1991). This proves that school leadership plays an important role in determining school culture (Sergiovanni, 2000; Deal & Peterson, 1999).

The performance of a school relates closely to teachers' high commitment for without it, the schools's target will be difficult to achieve. The effectiveness of teaching and learning depends on teachers' quality (Abdullah dan Ainin, 2005).

Teachers who are highly committed will ensure that every tasks delegated are completed successfully. Teachers' commitment is related to work performance and the ability to create and consolidate new ideas in their teaching, having influence on their students' achievement, and teachers' attitude towards the school (Tsui & Cheng, 1999).

Studies about school culture in Malaysia and effective schools are still scarce (EPRD, 2004). Although studies

conducted overseas are vast, majority are empirical qualitative studies and thus the data collection are from small schools (Colley, 1999; Kelley & Bredeson, 1987). Other studies on school culture only focussed on comparison between secondary schools (Cavanagh & Dellar, 1998; Pang, 1996). Therefore, this study aims to identify the school climate or culture at a primary chinese school (SJKC) in the district of Alor Setar and its relationship with teachers' commitment towards the school.

A study by Pang (1998) focussed on school culture in secondary schools in Hong Kong. Pang (1998) identified the school culture profile based on the composite score on four variable; bureaucratice relationship, culture relationship, authoritarian monitoring and laidback monitoring. However, Pang (1998) did not analyze the profiles to identify types of secondary school cultures. Thus, this study tends to explore the existence of types of secondary school cultures. The knowledge about school culture and values is vital. Schools can use this study to identify their own school cultures and display values that work towards their school success. If school cultures are identified, school administrators will be able to plan and implement appropriate actions to improve their schools.

Commitment also relates to the achievement of the organization's aims (Mintzberg, 1989). An effective should have committed teachers towards achieving the school's vision and mission. A study by Kushman (1992) showed that there is a strong relationship between commitment and school culture, collaboration and school climate. Nir (2002) stated that teachers' commitment is also related to the efficacy of the school, work performance, work satisfaction and students' achievement. Committed teachers are more motivated to work towards change and are responsible (Firestone & Pennell, 1993) more sensitive, dedicated and diligent (Elliot & Crosswell, 2003). Therefore, this study will focus on school culture and teachers' commitment of SJKC.

1.1 Objectives

The objectives of this study is to identify the school culture based on the dimensions such as human relation, open system, rational goals and internal process in SJKC in the district of Alor Setar in Kedah. This study also aims to examine the relationship between school culture and teachers' commitment.

- i. To identify school culture dimensions at SJKC in the district of Alor Setar in Kedah.
- ii. To identify the relationship between school culture and organizational commitment.

2. Literature Review

Fullan dan Hargreaves (1996) defines culture as beliefs, assumptions, and hope in terms of school operations. School culture is also defined as school beliefs and values that are shared together or agreed upon as true and accurate Hobby (2004). School culture aspects can be identified through similar content and strength (Maloswki, 1993). Content refers to basic assumption meaning, norms, and values shared together by the school community.

According to Pang (2006), the strength of a culture is a combination of a clear definition of values and the level of values and norms practices. The strength of a culture relates to the social control that suits the school's values and norms. A weak school culture generates teachers who only follow the set guidelines and do not act innovatively. A strong school culture will influence various values, norms, beliefs, symbols, traditions and language which will color the students' future. The school community has to be exposed to and practice good and effective moral values in line with the National Philosophy of Education (NPE) (Asmawati Suhid, 2005). School culture has to be identified and understood so as to increase school's performance and achieve the NPE objectives (PIPP 2006-2010, 2007).

Ng (2006) who conducted a school culture study in a normal primary school (SK) and SJK in Malaysia found that SK schools display hierarchy culture compared to SJK. The findings showed that younger teachers in SK respect their seniors, are humble and respectful; and maintain the good name of their schools. On the other hand, in SJK the teachers were more individualistic, selfish and outspoken although they know their words may hurt others and cause conflict.

Deal and Kennedy (1982) and Peters and Waterman (1982) suggested that the culture of an organization gives a great impact on the organization especially in terms of performance and commitment. Teachers' commitment is identified as one most critical factors to determine future performance of education and schools (Huberman, 1993). Teachers' commitment is related to work performance and the ability to create and consolidate new ideas in their teaching, having influence on their students' achievement, and teachers' attitude towards the school (Tsui & Cheng, 1999). To maintain the energy and the working spirit, teachers should uphold their personal commitment towards work (Day, 2004).

There is positive relationship between organizational culture and organizational commitment among the Chinese community in Taiwan according to a study by Chow et al (2001). The dimensions such as innovation, aggression, respectful, and stability showed a strong relationship with commitment and work satisfaction. Team work showed average

relationship. A study by Ritche (2000) showed that organizational culture has an influence and effect on the performance of an individual and organization.

There is positive relationship between secondary school teachers' commitment with school culture according to Jones (1998). 11 schools in New Jersey were tested by Jones (1998) to examine the relationship between commitment and school culture by involving the school administrators and teachers as respondents. The result showed that the relationship between variables such as loyalty, work environment, happiness, and information sharing among colleagues have positive relationship with commitment.

Three factors that influence teachers' commitment in schools are personal, school and system (Elliot dan Crosswell, 2001). Personal factor refers to personal daily life. Professional factor denotes to the importance of involvement and responsibility towards the profession. School factor relates to positive relationship with colleagues and the feeling of ownership while system factor refers to control, support, and teachers' influence towards the reform processes done. Lack of support from colleagues, students' parents and school administrators may influence teachers' commitment. It is difficult to be in schools that do not support change and development (Elliot & Crosswell, 2001).

Lee et. al. (2010) suggested the orientation of school aims as an important factor that affects teachers' commitment. The relationship between the teachers, especially a collaborative relationship is one important factor suggested by several researchers in their studies on school culture and teachers' commitment (Paine dan Ma, 1993).

The result findings of the study done by Wang et. al. (2007) showed that school culture affects teachers' commitment towards the school. Therefore, if a school increases the strength of its school culture, teachers will increase their loyalty. The literature review showed that the role of school culture is closely related to teachers commitment. The variables that relates to school culture have significant relationship on teachers' commitment towards school. The researcher aims to identify the relationship between school culture and teachers' commitment towards school.

There are five null hypotheses that will be studied here.

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between school culture and teachers' commitment.

Ho2: There is no significant relationship between human relations dimension and teachers' commitment.

Ho3: There is no significant relationship between open system dimension and teachers' commitment.

Ho4: There is no significant relationship between rational goal dimension and teachers' commitment.

Ho5: There is no significant relationship between internal process dimension and teachers' commitment.

3. Method

Since this study involved a huge number of respondents and there were differences between schools, a quantitative approach was suitable to be employed Pang (2006). Stratified random sampling was appropriate for mixed populations because this method could reduce the sample error, decrease variants, and give correct assumptions (Gorard, 2001), a less sample count and nearly represent a perfect population (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). Size Determinant Table for educational research activities built by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was used to determine the research sample and 228 teachers chosen from among several SJKC in the district of Kota Setar through simple random sampling were used as research sample.

To identify the school culture dimensions which focus on organizational efficacy values, questionnaire constructed by Krejcie dan Morgan (1970) was employed whereas to examine teachers' commitment Organizational Commitment (OC) (Meyer & Allen, 1990) questionnaire was used. Section A consisted of teachers' personal information such as gender, marital status, age, ethnic group, years of teaching experience, years of teaching in the school and level of education. Section B involved 4 school culture dimensions which contained 10 to 11 items for each dimension (human relationship (1-11), open system (12-21), rational aims (22-31), internal process (32-42) and five options were given; Never (N), Very Seldom (VS), Seldom (S), Often (O), Very Often (VO). Section C dealt with teachers' commitment which involved 24 items based on Organizational Commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1990) questionnaire. 5 Likert scale was given; 1= Disagree (D), 2= Slightly Disagree (SD), 3= Slightly Agree (SIA), 4= Strongly Agree (StA) and 5= Very Strongly Agree (VSA).

The pilot study was conducted at an SJKC in the district of Kubang Pasu to test the validity of the instrument. 45 teachers completed the questionnaire and data analysis showed Alpha Cronbach Coefficient Value (α) = 0.95 which meant the instrument was suitable to be used in the real study.

3.1 Data Collection

After attaining the approval to conduct the study from EPRD and from the Education Department in Kedah, the

researcher distributed the research instruments to the selected schools together with the documents listed below:

1. Letter to the Principal/Headmaster
2. Letter to the Teachers
3. A copy of approval letter to conduct the research

The respondents were given seven days to complete the questionnaire. Data collected was analysed by using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 19.0. To describe sample characteristics and school culture dimensions, frequency, average, standard deviation, and percentage were used. Anomaly test were also conducted. Spearman Correlation test were used to identify the relationship between school culture and teachers' commitment.

4. Results

4.1 Demographic Information

Research sample needed was 228 SJKC teachers in the district of Kota Setar. Although 240 sets of research instruments were distributed, only 210 were returned with the return rate of 87.5%. But only 201 questionnaires could be analysed. Descriptive analysis was used to explain the respondents' information in terms of gender and marital status. Based on Table 1, there were 18 male teachers (9.0%) and 183 female teachers (91.0%) involved.

Table 1. Respondents' distribution based on gender

Gender	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	18	9.0
Female	183	91.0
Total	201	100.00

Table 2 shows the mean result of the overall culture which is 4.31. Human relationship has the highest mean value which is 4.49. The mean for other dimensions are high; with human relationship (4.49) the highest, open system (4.23), rational aims (4.07), internal process (4.43).

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation for school culture

School Culture Dimensions	Mean	SD
Human Relationship	4.49	0.60
Open System	4.23	0.37
Rational Aims	4.07	0.45
Internal Process	4.43	0.75
Overall	4.31	0.53

To determine that the data collected is normal, anomaly test was conducted. Table 3 below shows the test result.

Table 3. Anomaly Test for school culture and teachers' commitment

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a	Shapiro-Wilk
Culture	.000	.000
Commitment	.000	.000

Shapiro - Wilk (W) test was .702 ($p < .05$) for school culture whereas for teachers' commitment Shapiro - Wilk (W) Test was .647 ($p < .05$). From the results, it showed that anomaly was not observed and so Spearman Test was used to test the relationship between school culture and teachers' commitment.

4.2 Hypothesis testing

Ho1 : There is no significant relationship between school culture and teachers' commitment.

Based on Table 4, the correlation analysis using Spearman test finding showed positive significant relationship between school culture and teachers' commitment ($r = .501, p < .05$). This result rejected Ho1. The analysis finding showed that a high practice of school culture will result in high level of teachers' commitment. The correlation value between school culture and teachers' commitment was averagely high.

Table 4 Spearman Correlation between school culture variables and teachers' commitment variables

Variables	Teachers' Commitment	
	Correlation Value (r)	Significant
School Culture	.501**	.000

Hypotheses	Hypotheses Statements	Method of Testing	Correlation Value	Test Findings
H ₀₂	There is no significant relationship between human relationship dimension and teachers' commitment at SJKC.	Spearman correlation	.998	Rejected
H ₀₄	There is no significant relationship between open system dimension and teachers' commitment at SJKC.	Spearman correlation	.500	Rejected
H ₀₅	There is no significant relationship between rational aims dimension and teachers' commitment at SJKC.	Spearman correlation	.502	Rejected
H ₀₆	There is no significant relationship between internal process dimension and teachers' commitment at SJKC.	Spearman correlation	.502	Rejected

Note: $p \leq 0.05$

Correlation analysis result using Spearman test in Table 5 showed positive significant relationship between human relationship dimension and teachers' commitment ($r = .998, p < .05$) statistically. This result failed to accept Ho2. The high positive relationship showed that a high level of human relationship was able to increase the level of teachers' commitment and vice versa.

The relationship between open system dimension and teachers' commitment was also positive and significant ($r = .500, p < .05$) which also rejected Ho3. The result showed that high level of open system practice resulted in high level of teachers' commitment and vice versa. Similarly with Ho4, there was positive significant relationship between rational aims and teachers' commitment ($r = .502, p > .05$) which failed to accept Ho4. With this, there was an averagely high relationship between both variables. The positive significant relationship showed that high rational aims brought about high teachers' commitment. Finally, the result for Ho5 was also significantly positive ($r = .52, p < .05$) which showed an averagely high positive relationship between internal process dimension and teachers' commitment. This result failed to accept Ho5. The positive significant relationship showed that an effective internal process resulted in high teachers' commitment and vice versa. Overall, human relationship dimension showed a high correlation value $r = .998$ compared to other dimensions which gained r value, $r = .50$.

5. Discussion

This study was conducted to identify the relationship between school culture and teachers' commitment at SJKC in Kota Setar district. This section will discuss the research questions and the findings. There are four school culture dimensions namely human relationship, open system, rational aims and internal process in this study. Overall, the mean score for all the four dimensions were high which exceeded 4 in the 5 Likert scale. The result finding showed that human relationship dimension is the dominant culture in SJKC with the mean value of 4.49.

This finding is similar to the study by Maslowski (2001) in Holland. According to Maslowski (2001), schools in Holland showed a higher score in the human relationship dimension compared to the other dimensions. In addition, the result found is also in parallel with the result by (2003) in a university in the state of Ohio. According to Berrio (2003), the university culture focused on flexibility, human consideration, and sensitivity towards customers.

A journal written by Johnson (2002) also claimed that a small size school can bring about a better school culture. This is due to the fact that teachers are more focused on their students because of the small number of students and they have good relationship with the students' parents. According to Gruenert (2005), schools with high human relationship will produce a high number of successful students.

The findings of this study are similar to the study done by Peterson and Deal (1999) who claimed that schools with high culture practice such as having the same goals and display good relationship with the surrounding community will increase teachers' commitment in schools. Peterson (2002) stated that schools with low culture practice will decrease the level of teachers' commitment to increase school achievement. The characteristics of low culture practice such as unclear vision and mission, no cooperation and unfriendly attitude with the surrounding community will decrease teachers' commitment.

Nevertheless, the finding of this study differs from the study findings by Ng (2006) which showed that the culture in SJKC did not emphasize on human relationship and internal process, instead, more focus is given to rational aims and open system. Ng (2006) said that teachers in SJKC are more individualistic in achieving the aims. They are more outspoken although their words might hurt other peoples' feelings and result in conflict. According to Ng (2006), teachers in SJKC are more responsible in undertaking their tasks because by doing so, they will be acknowledged.

Similarly, in a study done by Barth (2002), it was found that the dominant dimension is rational aims. His result finding is similar to the result by Yaakob (2007) who concluded that the dominant dimension in primary schools in Kedah is rational aims such as efficacy values, chasing aims and the success of aims orientation. The finding of this study proved that school culture has positive significant relationship with teachers' commitment at SJKC in Kota Setar district. From this result, research questions have been addressed and explained elaborately.

In materializing Vision 2020, the human capital needed originate from schools. School functions as the main education institution which is responsible to disseminate quality education to the children of our nation. Thus, teachers, as the main player in schools, should increase the quality of our education.

The government has realized that committed teachers will help in materializing the nation mission by practicing good school culture. Thus, school culture has been included in the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013 – 2025).

The finding of this study has mentioned that human relationship dimension is the dominant school culture. So, school sustenance program, parents' financial resources and EDRP have encouraged the involvement of the PTA and parents in the program organized by the schools. Parents' support and involvement is important towards the success of the school programs and the increase of teachers' commitment.

In conclusion, the government especially the Ministry of Education should give emphasis on school culture which has impact on teachers' commitment. Teachers' commitment will increase if they work in a good school culture.

Teaching and learning will become more effective. School excellence will be achieved. The mission and vision of the Ministry of Education will materialize. Thus, education in Malaysia can be at par with other countries in the world.

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