

The Relationship between School Culture and Professional Learning Community in Malaysia

Mohd Faiz Mohd Yaakob
Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia

Jamal@Nordin Yunus
Associate Professor, Sultan Idris Education University, Malaysia

DOI Link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v6-i12/2489>

Published Date: 08 December 2016

Abstract

School culture creates a psychosocial environment that profoundly impacts teachers, administrators, students and shapes its organization. Besides, the school considered as learning community and should practice the Professional Learning Community (PLC). This descriptive correlational study examined the relationship between school culture and PLC. This study found that the school culture and PLC have moderate positive relationship ($r=0.428$). This research also provides ideas for future research by practitioners in this field.

Keyword: School Culture, Professional Learning Community, Educational Management, Educational Planning.

Introduction

School culture is a pervasive element of schools. It permeates everything within a school: the way people act, how they dress, what they talk about or avoid talking about, whether or not they seek out colleagues for help, how teachers feel about their work and their students, and how students feel about the school (Deal & Peterson, 1999). An examination of school culture is important because each school has a culture of its own, and understanding these features is helpful in making it a better school (Goodlad, 1984).

School culture can be regarded as a bridge or barrier to change. As Peterson and Deal (1998) pointed out, understanding school culture is an essential factor in any reform initiative. It is part of the school change and innovation process (Dalin et al., 1993)

A positive school culture is often considered as one in which meaningful staff development and enhanced student learning are encouraged and practised (Engels et al. 2008) Furthermore, several studies confirm that school culture plays an important role in enhancing school effectiveness (Heck and Marcoulides, 1996; Maslowski, 2001; Sammons et al., 1995). In other word, school culture is closely related to the healthy and sustainable development of a school, the development and well-being of the school members, and the teaching and

learning objectives (Fullan, 2001). Meanwhile, Hoy and Miskel (2013) defined culture as “*a distinct element that affects the behavior of the school and its interaction*”.

Meanwhile, schools with positive culture present some characteristics such as an attractive classroom climate, teachers who are committed to teaching, student involvement in teaching and learning activities, the prevalence of order and discipline, existence of good relationship between school staff and students, effective management, and teamwork in the school and classroom. Consequently, the necessary infrastructure and facilities are in place and are neat and safe for teaching and learning. Lastly, principals and teachers maintain high professional standards (Rampa, 2004).

Developing schools as professional learning communities (PLCs) is being strongly advocated by education reformers and researchers as a systematic and effective way to improve teacher quality. Teachers’ qualities, such as teachers’ self-efficacy and collective efficacy as well as their commitment to students, have been shown to affect students’ achievements (Bandura, 1997; Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2004; Park, 2005; Thompson, 2004).

In the restructuring of schools, the emphasis on professional community is important in teachers’ professional development (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996). Louis et al. (1996) described shared values, a focus on student learning, collaboration, deprivatized practice, and reflective dialogue as five elements of professional communities which could be considered as important components in the restructuring of schools.

The concept of professional learning community (PLC), a concept associated with professional development, is also being used by many researchers. Hord (1997) proposed five dimensions of PLC which included supportive and shared leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and application, supportive conditions, and shared personal practice.

Although there is no universal definition of a PLC, a consensus view drawn from educational researchers and administrators is that a PLC exists in a school when a group of teachers collaboratively and critically exchange their instructional practices in an on going, reflective, inclusive, learning-oriented and growth promoting way to support innovation and knowledge sharing.

This study will investigate about the relationship between school culture and PLC among teachers in Malaysia. The PLC’s programme in Malaysia is under the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) national blueprint. There is interest to study this relationship to ensure that the school culture and the PLC will improve the performance and quality of education in Malaysia.

Methodology

A quantitative approach and survey research design was chosen for this study because the intent is to ask narrow objective questions generating quantifiable data that can be analyzed using statistics (Creswell, 2008). This study was a descriptive-correlational study.

Population and Sample

The target respondents are among all the primary school teacher in Malaysia. The samples were selected using the multistage cluster sampling techniques. The study involved 612 primary school teachers from five zone areas of Malaysia represented by the states of Kedah, Selangor, Johor, Terengganu and Sarawak. This sample size achieve the minimum sample size

according to Krejcie & Morgan (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). There is 112 (18.3%) from Kedah, 163 (26.6%) from Selangor, 114 (16.5%) from Terengganu, 101 (18.6%) from Johor and 122 (19.9%) from Sarawak. The total sample size as shown in Table 1

Table 1:
Population and Sample

Zone	State	(N)	%
North	Kedah	112	18.3%
Centre	Selangor	163	26.6%
East	Terengganu	114	16.5%
South	Johor	101	18.6%
Borneo	Sarawak	122	19.9%
	Total	612	

Instrument

The questionnaire is used as a primary survey instrument in collecting quantitative data in numerical form. The structure of the questionnaire was developed based on School Culture Elements Questionnaire (Cavanagh, 1997) and Professional Learning Community Questionnaire (Huffman, J. B. and Hipp, 2003).

Reliability

Reliability will be assessed through Cronbach alpha with threshold 0.600 and above (Nunnally, 1978) calculated using SPSS. The result of reliability is 0.963 and 0.974.

Table 1.
Result of Reliability

Variables	Cronbach Alpha
School Culture	0.963
Professional Learning Community	0.974

FINDING

The significant Pearson correlations apparent in this study were between School Culture and PLC ($r = .428$, $p < .000$). The result showed there is moderate positive relationship between school culture and PLC among primary school teachers in Malaysia.

Table 2.
Result of Correlation

Correlation		School Culture	Professional Learning Community
BS	Pearson Correlation	1	.428**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	612	612
KPP	Pearson Correlation	.428**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	612	612

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3.

Suggested Interpretations of Measures of Association

Values	Appropriate Phrases
+ .70 or higher	Very strong positive relationship.
+ .50 to +.69	Substantial positive relationship.
+ .30 to +.49	Moderate positive relationship.
+ .10 to +.29	Low positive relationship.
+ .01 to +.09	Negligible positive relationship.
0.00	No relationship.
- .01 to -.09	Negligible negative relationship.
- .10 to -.29	Low negative relationship.
- .30 to -.49	Moderate negative relationship.
- .50 to -.69	Substantial negative relationship.

Source: Davis (1971)

Conclusion And Recommendation

In this study, school culture has a positive and moderate relationship to PLC. As a social organization, a school is the locus for the interactions between administrators, teachers, students, parents, and communities. PLC of teachers have potential as powerful professional development contexts. However, the result showed the relationship moderate positive. The model of PLC should be with better assessed and comprehensive planning. The understanding the right and suitable model of PLC will help in achieving the national vision and agenda of the national education policy.

Corresponding Author

Name : Mohd Faiz Mohd Yaakob
 Affiliation : Sultan Idris Education University
 Country : Malaysia
 email ID : p20131001410@siswa.upsi.edu.my
 Address : Sultan Idris Education University,
 Faculty of Management and Economics
 35900, Tg Malim, Perak

References

- Bandura, A. (1997), *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*, W. H. Freeman and Company, New York, NY.
- Cavanagh, R. . (1997). *The culture and improvement of Western Australian Secondary Schools*. Curtin University.
- Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Research Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd Editio). SAGE.
- Dalin, P., H. Rolff, and B. Kleekamp. 1993. *Changing the school culture*. London: Cassell
- Deal, T. E., & Peterson, K. D. (1999). *Shaping school culture: The heart of leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Engels, N., Hotton, G., Devos, G., Bouckenooghe, D., & Aelterman, A. (2008). Principals in schools with a positive school culture. *Educational Studies*, 34(3), 159–174.
- Fullan, M. G. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Fullan, M.G. (2002). The change leader. *Educational Leadership*, 59(8), 16-20.

- Coleman, J.S., Campbell, E.Q., Hobson, C.J., McParland, J., Mood, A.M., and Weinfeld, F.D. (1966), "Equality of educational opportunity", U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC.
- Costello, A.B. and Osborne, J.W. (2005), "Best practices in exploratory factor analysis: four recommendations for getting the most from your analysis", *Practical Assessment*, Vol. 10 No. 7, pp. 1–9.
- D'Amico, J. J. (1982), "The effective schools movement: Studies, issues, and approaches", Philadelphia: Research for Better Schools, available at: <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED231091> (accessed 20 January 2016).
- Deal, T.E. and Peterson, K.D. (1999), *Shaping school culture: The heart of leadership*, Jossey-Bass Inc., San Francisco, CA.
- Dipaola, M.F. and Hoy, W.K. (2008), *Principals improving instruction: Supervision, evaluation, and professional development*, Jossey-Bass Inc., San Francisco, CA.
- Edmonds, R. (1979), "Some schools work and more can", *Social Policy*, Vol. 9 No. 5, pp. 28–32.
- Forsyth, P.B., Adams, C.M. and Hoy, W.K. (2011), *Collective trust: Why schools can't improve without it*, Teacher College Press, New York, NY.
- Goddard, R.D., Hoy, W.K. and Hoy, A.W. (2004), "Collective efficacy beliefs: Theoretical developments, empirical evidence, and future directions", *Educational Research*, Vol. 33 No. 3, pp. 3–13.
- Goodlad, J. I. (1984). *A place called school*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Heck, R.H. & Marcoulides, G. A. (1996). The assess of principal performance: A multilevel evaluation approach. *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education*, 10(1), 11-28.
- Hord, S. (1997). *Professional learning communities: Communities of continuous inquiry and improvement*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.
- Hoy, W. K., Miskel, C. G., & Tarter, C. J. (2013). *Educational administration: Theory, research, and practice* (9th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Huffman, J. B. and Hipp. (2003). *Professional Learning Communities: Initiation to Implementation*. Scarecrow Press.
- Krejcie, R. V, & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining Sample Size for Research Activities Robert. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 38(1), 607–610. <http://doi.org/10.1177/001316447003000308>
- Louis, K. S., Marks, H. M., & Kruse, S. (1996). Teachers' professional community in restructuring schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 33(4), 757e798. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/00028312033004757>.
- Maslowski, R. (2001). *School culture and school performance: an explorative study into the organizational culture of secondary schools and their effect*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. University of Twente, Netherlands.
- Nunnally, J. C. (1978). *Psychometric theory* (2nd ed.). New York: MacGraw Hill.
- Park, I. (2005). Teacher Commitment and Its Effects on Students Achievement in American High Schools. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 11 (5), 461–485
- Rampa, S. H. (2004). *The Relationship between Total Quality Management and School Improvement*. (Doctoral thesis, University of Pretoria, South Africa)
- Sammons, P., Hillman, J., Mortimore, P., 1995. *Key Characteristics of Effective Schools: A Review of School Effectiveness Research*. OFSTED, London
- Thompson, S. C. (2004). Professional learning communities, leadership, and student achievement. *Research in Middle Level Education*, 35-54.