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Organizational Culture of Successful Secondary School in District Larkana: An Ethnographic Research

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study is to examine the organizational culture of successful secondary schools. A criterion which is set to determine success is the obtaining of high scores by students through standardized achievement tests (SAT). The school which is selected on criterion-based were taken for the data collection. The criteria were 05 schools that remained on top in SAT results in Larkana District. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews and observations. The findings show that student-based variables and studies in the school for special exams play a more significant role than school-based variables on school success. The results also demonstrate that the organizational effective culture impacts the success of the schools holistically. The effective culture within the schools impacts the schools' performance and outcomes in general and specific. It is recommended that steps should be taken to keep healthy management roles for better outcomes for all stakeholders.*

Key Words: Organizational Culture, Secondary School, Successful Schools, SAT Test, Ethnographic Case Study

Introduction

Culture is directly proportional to humans, whether materialistic or non-materialistic. It means, by nature it is both physical and metaphysical, when we talk about the organizational culture which is contained in these dual aspects; it is typical to analyze it through familiar definitions or explanations (Deal, 1995). Organizational culture is mainly a collage of human behaviours or beliefs, which is not generally visible but certainly casting profound effects on human lives (Miller & Dess, 1996). Denison, (1990) renowned researcher has postulated by saying that "the number of studies has reflected the organizational culture has a pivotal role in the success of organizations" (p.212). Nevertheless, Evans (1996, p.44) has explained the influence of organizational culture inside the boundaries of an organization as a process whilst the outside of an organization is a product, which is being produced. It is an organizational culture which is transforming not mere personnel's personality but their learning modes in an organization, so it is an important factor to shape the organizational environment (Flint, 2000). Thus, organizational culture plays a variety of roles; (1) efficacy; (2) work satisfaction and organisational commitment; (Fey & Denison, 2000; Ojo, 2009); (Erdem, 2007; Lok & Crowford, 1999, 2004). In addition to the organisational quality of life, other topics include communication (Brown & Starkey, 1994), reform studies (Leit wood,

Jantzi, & Fernandez, 1994), and reform studies (Leit wood, Jantzi, & Fernandez, 1994).

The results of organizational studies are productive for the researchers who are utilizing their potential in the field of education, to adopt cultural elements to determine successful schools. According to Cunningham and Gresso (1993) and Ramsey (1992Every school has a distinct culture that may be powerful or weak, useful or useless. According to Celik (2009) "school culture is a collection of unwritten, passed-down rules, values, beliefs, traditions, and mythical meaning patterns that are used by organizational members" (p. 212). Thus, according to Goldring (2002), Gomez, Marcoulides, and Heck (2012), as well as Westhuizen, Mosoge, Swanepoel, and Coetsee (2005), organizational culture is a key component in determining school success. Despite this, a number of studies have suggested a cogent relationship between school culture, academic ambition, accomplishment, teachers work satisfaction, and commitment (McCollum & Yader, 2011; Ahin, 2011; Hatchett, 2010).

The role of culture is very crucial in goal attainment, which has fostered a number of studies highlighting the characteristics of school culture to determine whether it is academically successful or a high achiever. (Shaw, 1990; Benton, 1999; Nericcio, 1994; Kenner, 2000; Onoye, 2004; Smith, 2006). While, many of those pointed out similar characteristics of successful schools, which are: (01) school that created a comfortable atmosphere for teacher's communication to feel access at ease to share their ideas, suggestions, grievance, problems etc. and to act cooperatively, resulting enhancement of their job commitment level (Eubanks, 1994; Mitchell & Onoye; Sergiovanni, 1994; Benton, 1999; Lima, 2006); (2) where teaching faculty is involved in the decision-making for goal attainment (Kenner; Mitchell & Willower); (3) where studentsacademics, teaching facultys professional development and school general progress is focused (Benton; Maehr & Braskamp, 1986; Onoye); and (4) "where

leadership abilities are groomed" (Onoye, 2019, p.212).

From the perspective of national literature, studies on school culture reflect that those commonly adopt quantitative method rather than the qualitative, and show their findings either in positive or negative cultural features in schools (Sahin, 2004; Terzi, 2005; Gezer, 2005; Ylmaz & Oguz, 2005, Sonmez, 2006; Arslan, Satc, & Kuru, 2007; Frat, 2007; Korkmaz, 2008; Ayk & Ada, 2009; Aslan, Ozer, & Agroglu Bakr, 2009; Gedikoglu & Tahaoglu, 2010; Yavuz, 2012).

The term academic success refers to the attainment of desired goals in time (Bulu, Duru, Balkz, & Duru, 2011), whereas, (Bloom, 1998) described it as a balanced approach between goals and the behaviour of an individual. The definition of educational goals is "individuals' ambitions or desired results in the field of education, which are juxtaposed together in different categories" (Demirel, 2010, p. 106). They are divided into three categories: long-term objectives (the nation's educational policies and philosophies), general objectives (the major purpose to educate the public, such as acceptance of cultural values), and precise objectives (the goals of the discipline or course). Academic achievement in consonance with an educational institution is the attainment of intended goals as an output. Nonetheless, the success of a school is determined on the basis of obtained objectives revealed by assessment, measurement and evaluation. This research shows that student academic achievement is considered as the criteria for declaring school success, so, the higher rate of student achievement, the more successful school. The grades or percentages that pupils acquire in their academics can be used to explain academic achievement (Ozgven, 1998). In conclusion, grades or percentages can be used as a measure of students' academic achievement through assessment, measurement, and evaluation. It is quite justified that conclusions may not be drawn just by using different sorts of tools based on measurement and evaluations. Thus, in this qualitative study, school success is

subject to student skill achievement in designed courses at the secondary level, which is measured by the Standardized Achievement Test (SAT) conducted by the Sukkur Institute of Business Administration, Sukkur (SIBA). In this ethnographic research, the purpose was to provide a thorough description of the culture at a Secondary School in District Larkano that had a strong academic programme. The following research questions are being explored in depth in this qualitative study:

1. What traits define the culture of the school?
2. What are the participants' thoughts on the origin of academic success?

Methodology

Study Design

A qualitative research approach was used in this study to better understand school culture. To offer an in-depth understanding of real-world experiences, ethnographic or case study research methodologies were employed, as indicated by Merriam (1998, p. 14) (Yin, 1993, p. 3, 2003, p. 2). This study employed an ethnographic methodology that anthropologists frequently use to investigate various communities and their cultures (Hatch, 2002, p. 21; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p. 1). It included both an anthropological method that used cultural characteristics to characterize the school and a case study technique that concentrated on one particular school.

The Selection Criteria for School

The study group was chosen using a sample of criteria. Three factors were taken into consideration when selecting a school: (1) the SAT Test scores over the preceding five years; (2) the principal's incumbency; and (3) the school's willingness to participate in the study.

Tools for Data Collection

Unstructured observation, semi-structured interviews, and storytelling tools were used to get the data.

Unstructured Observation

This study used a substantial amount of unstructured observation, in accordance with the recommendations of Merriam (1998), Schein (1997), and Sar (2007). Merriam (p. 97-98) emphasized the value of watching informal activities, nonverbal communication, and significant elements in the educational environment, including the physical location, participants, activities, interpersonal relationships, and dialogues.

Semi-structured Interview

In the relevant field, semi-structured interviews were preferred over structured and unstructured interviews due to their advantages (Buyukozturk, et al., 2008, p. 234). The researcher's unstructured observations, sub-dimensions of school culture, theoretical explanations of school culture, and teacher-shared narratives were all considered in the interview format.

Stories

All cultures have a long-standing practice of telling stories (Mears, 2008, p. 407). Social actors communicate significant events and unique experiences through stories. According to Coffey & Atkinson (1996), p. 56, tales and their protagonists are commonly used to convey organizational culture as well as a cultural legacy. In this study, organizational tales were used as a data-gathering method to describe organizational culture. To record their own experiences that had a favourable or bad influence on them, researchers created questionnaires that administrators and instructors could complete.

Validity and Reliability

Coding coherence was evaluated for the study's validity and reliability which was found to be.87. Additionally, to ensure transferability, long-term interaction approaches and member checks were applied (Stake, 1995, p. 145).

Data Analysis

Researchers must evaluate a significant amount of data in qualitative analysis (Miles, 1979). This study included the examination of narratives, 11 individual interviews, and field notes. We conducted a content analysis on the information we learned from the tales, observations, and interviews. Data were categorized and presented using standard codes by the researchers using Microsoft Excel (Meyer & Avery, 2009) (Nergi Isik, 2010).

Findings

The findings of the investigation are presented in this section. The history and distinguishing characteristics of the school are first and foremost briefly summarised. The analysis of the teacher and school administration accounts is the second step. Finally, the research questions were taken into account while categorising the data acquired throughout the study.

Findings Collected from the Stories

There were seven (07) broad categories were used to classify the stories. These are as follows: (1) parental relationships, (2) sacrifice, (3) success, (4) teachers relationships, (5) administration, (6) pupils relationships, and (7) unusual events. It shows that 35% o tales collected by means of teaching faculty members and administrators are unfavourable, whereas 65% are found favourable. The parents and interactions with the administration are the subjects of the vast majority of the negative stories (11 stories out of 12).

History and Current Status of the School

The school underwent several transformations. The first transition occurred when there were few teachers and students in attendance. One may say that the faculty and management of the institution collaborate to improve academic success in exams. The second alteration resulted from the teachers' and administrators' popularity in the educational community as a result of their academic success. Also, the school's collaborative spirit was lost as a result of a sharp rise in the number of pupils and teachers as well as a recent change in the school principal's administrative responsibilities.

Issues and their Solutions

The school's two most frequent issues were (1) interference by parents in administrative issues and (2) ineffective teaching faculty members. The solution was that the school's administration, instructors, and parents shared a consistent approach to problem-solving.

Communication and Interaction in the School

During the interviews, questions about relationships and communication at the school were posed to teachers and administrators. All of the educators reported being able to speak with one another effectively. They also mentioned that communication among teachers with different ideas did not present any issues. They went on to say that the formation of a positive environment among the school's 80 teachers was largely due to the principal's equitable treatment of each employee.

Schools Academic Success (SAT)

The main factors that influence academic attainment were the subject of interviews with teachers, parents, and administrators and what methods used to achieve success. Parents and educators claimed that students were chosen for registration because of their prior academic success as the underlying cause of students' success. According to teachers, successful students were transferred to the school in the same manner as successful football players were transferred to a team. Another significant aspect of their academic performance was their high socioeconomic background. It was claimed that the popularity of the school as a result of academic achievement (SAT Test) had a motivating effect on both teachers and pupils. Other significant determinants of achievement include exam-oriented coursework and school-mandated achievement examinations.

Discussions

The study's prime objective was to provide a thorough description of the organisational culture of a successful secondary school in District Larkano. The following inquiries were looked into to help with this:

1. How do participants thoughts on the origin of academic success?
2. What traits define the culture of the school?

This is a discussion of the results.

What are the Participants' Thoughts on the Origin of Academic Success?

The goal of this research was to identify cultural traits that promote pupils accomplishment. Yet, every participant in the study agreed that student characteristics over schools were more important for academic success. Teachers indicated that, based on their prior experience, it seemed difficult for kids to achieve when they weren't qualified. Contrary to the literature, this research revealed that academically successful schools believed students had every chance of receiving an education and the skills they needed to succeed (Edmonds, 1979). (Scribner & Reyes, 1999). Teachers believe that the socioeconomic status of parents and student achievement are positively correlated. This supports Coleman's (1988) claim that pupils from affluent socioeconomic backgrounds excel in the classroom. According to Coleman (p. 110), cultural inheritance and sources, family construction, relationship with school, and help with homework all contribute to how students perceive school, boost their chances of success, and keep them from dropping out (Jenkins, 1995; Sui-Chuve Douglas, 1996; Bogen Schneider, 1997; Falbo & Lein, 1999; Beaulieu, Glenn, Glen, and Patricia, 2001; Hoy, 2012; Kaya, 2009, p. 265; Marks, Cresswell & Ainley, 2006). The study's participants said that academic work that is focused on exams is another important component of success. Due to the inadequate resources in the educational program, teachers felt they had to complete additional work in accordance with SAT Test. Parents are aware that SAT Test plays a significant role in educational programs and the exam topic (Durmaz, 2009; Yldrm, 2008). It may be concluded from the information provided by the participants that school culture has no bearing on academic accomplishment. Yet, two parents from nearly the same socioeconomic background claimed that they had transferred their children from their previous school because they thought the leadership was ineffective and that only a small percentage of the pupils were academically competent. This study may indicate that factors related to the school, in addition to those related to the students and instructors, may have an impact on student accomplishment. According to numerous studies (Thacker & McInerney, 1992; Nericcio, 1994; Westhuizen et al., 2005; Ayk & Ada, 2009; Demirtas, 2010; Peterson & Deal, 2002, p. 10; Smith, 2006), school culture has a significant impact on academic attainment.

What Traits Define the Culture of the School?

The study's findings highlight several aspects of school culture, including: 1) good relationships between instructors from various perspectives 2) a shared mentality in problem-solving, and 3) leadership.

1. Positive relationships between teaching faculty members with various backgrounds: The study discovered that like other studies (Lein, Johnson, & Ragland, 1997; Sergiovanni, 1994; Hadden, 2000; Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002; Kenner, 2000;), relationships and interpersonal conversation between teaching faculty members cast a positive impact on students academic success.

2. Sharing a similar outlook on problem-solving: It was discovered that school administrators and instructors shared a similar outlook on problem-solving. The culture of an academically successful school was investigated in research by Kenner (2000), and it was found that

teachers and administrators with divergent viewpoints share a shared approach to problem-solving. According to Onoye (2004), one of a leader's distinguishing characteristics is the capacity to work cooperatively with instructors to resolve issues.

3. Leadership: Two unique eras in the school are almost certainly going to be discussed. The principal of the school had been employed there for three years, and instructors acknowledged that the principal had a significant part in the academic success of the school. The prior principal's effective leadership skills were demonstrated by the teachers' discussions about his traits and activities. Despite this, due to the change in administrative staff and subsequent departure of school principals to work for other organizations, the administration was unable to affect the culture of the school. The School Education & Literacy Department of the government of Sindh had rules and regulations that regularly changed the leadership team and had both positive and negative effects on schools. (Kaya, 2012; Nartgün, Bayraktar & Akhulaq, 2012; Nural & Tak, 2012; Ozdemir & Yaman, 2011); mostly adverse effects on school culture (Tonbul & Sarolu, 2012), which decreased efficiency (Nuray & Tak).

Conclusion

The purpose of this case cum ethnographic study was to provide a thorough description of organisational culture in a successful secondary school in District Larkano. Participants in the survey claimed that factors connected to students had a greater impact on academic attainment or achievement in SAT tests, than other factors related to schools. The study found that achievement was significantly influenced by the families' high socioeconomic level. It may be concluded from the information provided by the participants that school culture has no bearing on academic accomplishment. Nonetheless, the administration and teachers claimed that parents from comparable socioeconomic backgrounds transferred their kids from private schools. They chose the school because it had a majority of successful students and strong leadership. Furthermore, It was found that the school had a positive culture, which is in line with the body of research showing how a positive school culture raises academic achievement. The three key contributors to success are the school principal's leadership abilities, positive relationships between teachers from various perspectives, and a shared approach towards problem-solving.

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