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A Study of School Culture in Secondary Schools of District Swat Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

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Abstract: Schools' culture is a key indicator for schools' effectiveness and overall activities of the school. Its influence is much more significant at the level of secondary schools that are having the duty for the provision of quality graduates to institutions of higher education and skilled people to the job market. School culture consists of norms, beliefs, principles, rituals and behaviors which designs the rules of thinking, feelings and action inside an educational organization and ultimately influences school performance. Having the significant role of school culture in the background, the study aimed to investigate the school culture at secondary level. The objectives of the study were; to investigate the schools' culture at secondary level and recommend strategies for the improvement of school culture in secondary schools. The design of the study was quantitative descriptive survey. The population of the study was 162 male heads of secondary schools in District Swat. The researcher selected a sample of 118 heads through simple random sampling, developed a Likert questionnaire, validated it and pilot tested for the determination of its reliability. The data were gathered through self-administered questionnaires from the respondents and analyzed with mean scores, standard deviation and Chi-square test. The study found a positive school culture with clear chalked out visions and missions, heads of the school took initiatives for achieving the vision of schools, teachers themselves prepared the rules for functioning of the schools and the head and teachers had collegiality for achieving schools' visions. The administration of the schools were ambitious, friendly and supportive for the students, democratic in decision making, resolved the problems of teachers and students and were competent enough to satisfy the needs of the schools, teachers worked for the academic excellence of their students, regularly assessed students' academic progress, focused on co-curricular activities and observed positive human relationship. It further forwarded recommendations for the improvement of the school culture at secondary level.

Introduction

School's culture may be defined as traditions, norms, mores, expectation and established practices inside the educational institution or the school (Portner & Collins, 2013). Stripling (2015) further clarified the definition by adding attitudes, beliefs and behaviors to this definition. Nieto (2009) view culture as the aggregate of values, traditions, socio-cultural relationship in a particular society with common

historical, geographic, linguistic and ethnic background. School culture consist of norms, beliefs, principles, rituals and behaviors which designs the unwritten rules of thinking , feeling and action inside an educational organization that influences school performance. The indicators of culture are values, ceremonies, rituals and artifacts. Secondary schools have a sense of inherent cultural, full of amazing

matrices of objects, ceremonies, rites beyond anyone who directly influences the way their inhabitants negotiate their living conditions in these associations (Heming, 2000).

According to Richardson (2010) School culture is the gathering of many people's beliefs and standards. It is not only based on individual potentials but also on group potentials (e.g., Ali, 2017; Ali, Sharma, & Zaman, 2016). It is the compromise about what is significant. Deal and Peterson (2009) says school culture affects how people interact in an organization. Whatever that is happening inside a school is an important part of the school culture. For the efficiency and realization of an organization the culture is the most significant element. Culture affects what people focus on. It also disturbs inspiration and inspiration disturbs production. Brown (2004) says a school culture needs such sort of governance that inspires and keeps on-the-job learning, flexibility, risk-taking, modernization and addition to change and also care hard work and great success

According to Robbins (2002) Culture is a combined form of mutual human knowledge, principles, behavior, attitudes, aims, and practices. Cultural patterns are different from one organization to another that is from home to multinational organizations. So it is the responsibility of the founders of an organization to explicitly state their vision, purpose and existence at the outset. In order to revive this vision, it is essential that members of the organization share a common culture. At first, they may find it hard to adjust and adopt it, but in the end, the group's culture encompasses the employer's and employees' comfort zones.

Similarly, Schein (2004) worked on the basic principle of the organization's culture is the maximum level of basic beliefs and expectations shared by members of the organization, which function unconsciously and which fundamentally define an "assumption" of an organization's vision of it and its environment. . This is the core of school culture and what makes it so difficult to understand and change.

Brady (2008) says that contemporary secondary schools are complex institutions with

difficult selections of customs, ceremonies as well as civilizations, and consists on a range of fundamental beliefs; these unique entities deeply influence the details of the groups in them. Secondary schools around the world have evolved into mini-complex companies each with their own objects, highlighted value systems and basic premises. The degree of success of secondary schools in these institutions is related to the degree to which they value school culture and the formal education process. He further concludes that schools are such sort of complex organizations where officially changes are occurring and these changes directly influence the way of the life of people who are inside these institutions.

Salili, Chiu and Lai (2001) in their study assume that cultural values and practices influence student's motivation and subsequent achievement. Maslowski (2001) exposed that in the real sense students and teacher's characteristics are the most important 'school' factors i.e. teachers' qualifications, experiences, and competences in verbal skills. Deal and Peterson (1990) concluded that shared vision of principals is nested in the history reflecting the hiring of competent school staff to achieve the organizational goals.

Maslowski (2001) defined school rituals as the social norms or customs which are embedded in the events of school are significant as these are retrieved from the overall social norms of the society. These values and rituals have importance in the eyes of the staff members of school therefore, it is imperative for the school to operate according to these rituals and social norms. Further, principals, teachers, and students all have a tendency for how they expect their institutions to function and often they do not feel they can function in any other way (Brady, 2008).

According to Schein (2004) Outcomes are visible or tangible and they can often be seen, heard or heard in organizational experience - and often the first thing we notice in the organization as we enter. Norms, standards and customs are just as much findings as the more physical features of corporate life. Social conventions are easy to maintain, such as

the celebration and forms of direction of the organization, but they can be difficult to decipher because the way to return to the value that pushed the object is not always direct or clear. Pink and Resnick (2001) viewed that schools' administrators are responsible for positive schools' culture for arrangement of effective teaching learning process.

Lakomski (2001) studied the claim that among an organizational learning and the role of a leader there is unplanned relation which is important for organizations culture and also for bringing organizational change. Nyaanga (2004) says that a school, as an organization, would like to realize its objectives. Society has a claim of interest in the performance of the school arising from the realization that the school sources its human and material resources solely from society.

Oyetunji (2006) studied the association among governance style and school environment in Botswana secondary schools. Top priority for the Ministry of Education, head teacher, teachers, and other stakeholders is an environment in which the head teacher can work efficiently, teachers are given the opportunity to perform their work with zeal, students like and appreciate learning and steps shall be taken to ensure the participation of the parents in the school activities and they must be appreciated for their participation. Njoroje (2008) studied that how school culture affects upon achievement in Kiambu West District. A school culture can motivate students and teachers to achieve academic excellence. Research was carried out to indicate the powerful effect of school culture on students' performance.

Statement of the Problem

Secondary education is of paramount importance as it provides graduates for higher education and semi-skilled workers for the job market. Generally, it is observed that secondary school education is suffering from lack of resources, mismanagement and poor budgetary allocations that result in the sub-standard performance of this vital sector of education. The quality of this sector is mostly determined

by the culture of these institutions, therefore; the study investigated the culture of the schools at secondary level.

Aims and Objectives

The study was focused on the following objectives:

1. To investigate the schools' culture at Secondary level.
2. To recommend strategies for the improvement of school culture at secondary level.

Method and Procedure

The design for the conduction and reporting of the study was quantitative descriptive survey in which the researcher collected the data from a sample of respondents about the school culture at secondary level. The population of the study was 162 male secondary schools in District Swat (Independent Monitoring Unit, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 2019).

Keeping in view the Krajcic and Morgan table for determining the sample size, the researcher randomly selected 118 heads of Secondary Schools through simple random sampling for collecting quantitative data to study the research problem.

The researcher reviews the literature about the variables of the school culture at secondary level. After the review the researchers also met with heads and teachers of secondary level and discussed with them the issue and tried to understand the issues of school culture in the local context. After this the researcher developed a Likert scale questionnaire about the culture of the school. The researcher validated the questionnaire with the expert opinions of the faculty members of the center for education and staff training and then pilot tested the develop version by applying to forty respondents. The reliability of the tool was determined with SPSS by the use of Cronbach's alpha $\alpha = .832$ and it was good for the collection of data as according to Griffiee (2012) alpha level of $\alpha = .70$ is appropriate for data collection.

The data were collected with self-

administered questionnaires from participants. The participants were told about the purpose of the research before the conduction of the data. They were ensured about the confidentiality of the provided information. The data were analyzed with the mean scores, standard

deviation, chi-square and linear regression. The researchers observed ethical standards during the conduction and reporting of the study. The informed consent of the participant was sought, the anonymity of the participants and privacy of information.

Results

Table 1: School Culture (Vision and Mission of the School)

Statements	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	Chi-value	P-value
The school has a clear chalked out vision and mission	118	4.372	.68932	95.559	.000
School administration follow vision and mission of the school	118	4.449	.57879	45.068	.000
Head of the school takes initiative for achieving the vision of school	118	4.042	1.10472	76.492	.000
Teachers themselves prepare the rules for functioning of the school	118	4.042	1.16497	48.983	.000
The head and teachers work as a team for achieving school's vision	118	3.084	1.32418	29.288	.000
Cumulative	118	19.9915	2.49614	55.898	.000

Table 1 highlights the culture of the secondary schools in terms of their vision and mission. The mean score 4.372 with S.D .68932 indicated that participants were agreed that the school has a clear chalked out vision and mission. Responses were not scattered.

The mean score 4.449 with S.D .57879 indicated that participants were agreed that school administration follow vision and mission of the school. Responses were not scattered.

The mean score 4.042 with S.D 1.10472 indicated that participants were agreed that Head of the school takes initiative for achieving the vision of school. Responses were scattered.

The mean score 4.042 with S.D 1.16497 indicated that participants were agreed that teachers themselves prepare the rules for functioning of the school. Responses were scattered.

The mean score 3.084 with S.D 1.32418 indicated that participants were agreed that the head and teachers work as a team for achieving school's vision. Responses were scattered.

The cumulative mean score 19.9915 with standard deviation 2.49614 highlighted that the respondents were agreed that overall the schools had clear vision and mission. By applying the Chi-square test of significance the findings were found statistically significant.

It is concluded that schools had clear chalked out visions and missions, school administrations followed their vision and mission statements, Head of the school took initiatives for achieving the vision of school, teachers themselves prepared the rules for functioning of the school and the head and teachers worked as a team for achieving school's vision.

Table 2: School Culture (Qualities of Administration)

Statements	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	Chi-value	P-value
The school administration is ambitious about the activities of the school	118	4.389	.66710	29.763	.000

The administration is friendly and supportive for the students	118	4.533	.53401	55.644	.000
School administration has a democratic nature in decisions	118	4.432	.74511	103.627	.000
School administration resolves the problems of teachers and students	118	4.016	1.04581	83.271	.000
The administration is competent enough to satisfy the needs of school	118	4.042	1.10472	76.492	.000
Cumulative	118	20.991	2.39961	85.593	.000

Table 2 highlights the school culture in secondary schools in terms of qualities of administration. The mean score 4.389 with S.D .66710 indicated that majority of participants were agreed that school administration is ambitious about the activities of the school. Responses were not scattered.

The mean score 4.533 with S.D .53401 indicated that majority of participants were strongly agreed that administration is friendly and supportive for the students. Responses were not scattered.

The mean score 4.432 with S.D .74511 indicated that majority of participants were agreed that school administration has a democratic nature in decisions. Responses were not scattered.

The mean score 4.016 with S.D 1.04581 indicated that majority of participants were agreed that school administration resolves the problems of teachers and students. Responses were scattered.

The mean score 4.042 with S.D 1.10472 indicated that majority of participants were agreed that the administration is competent enough to satisfy the needs of the school. Responses were scattered.

The cumulative mean score 20.991 with S. D 2.39961 for the qualities of administration in the culture of the school showed that respondents were agreed that the school administration is ambitious, friendly and supportive for the students, has a democratic nature in decisions, resolves the problems of teachers and students and is competent enough to satisfy the needs of the school. On applying the chi-square test, the findings were statistically significant.

It identified that administration of the schools were ambitious, friendly and supportive for the students, had a democratic nature in decisions, resolved the problems of teachers and students and were competent enough to satisfy the needs of the school.

Table 3: School Culture (Curricular and Co-curricular activities)

Statements	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	Chi-value	P-value
Teachers work for the academic excellence of their students	118	4.016	.89617	65.458	.000
Regularly assessment students' academic progress in three months	118	4.550	.72321	120.983	.000
The school works for showing good results in board exams	118	4.161	.67899	83.966	.000
school tries for good performance in co-curricular activities	118	4.110	.74860	76.915	.000
The moral development of students is equally focused with academics	118	4.245	.77279	77.322	.000
The leadership skills of students are enhanced in the school	118	4.152	.67466	106.746	.000

Life skills of students are developed in the school	118	3.847	.84355	59.492	.000
Cumulative	118	29.0847	3.10659	61.153	.000

Table 3 highlights the school cultures in secondary schools in terms of nature of curricular and co-curricular activities. The mean score 4.016 with S.D .89617 indicated that majority of participants were agreed that teachers work for the academic excellence of their students. Responses were not scattered.

The mean score 4.550 with S.D .72321 indicated that majority of participants were strongly agreed that there is regular assessment students' academic progress in three months. Responses were not scattered.

The mean score 4.161 with S.D .67899 indicated that majority of participants were agreed that the school works for showing good results in board exams. Responses were not scattered.

The mean score 4.110 with S.D .74860 indicated that majority of respondents were agreed that the school tries for good performance in co-curricular activities. Responses were not scattered.

The mean score 4.245 with S.D .77279 indicated that majority of participants were agreed that the moral development of students is equally focused with academics. Responses were not scattered.

The mean score 4.152 with S.D .67466 indicated that majority of participants were agreed that the leadership skills of students are

enhanced in the school. Responses were not scattered.

The mean score 3.847 with S.D .84355 indicated that majority of participants were agreed that life skills of students are developed in the school. Responses were not scattered.

The cumulative mean score of 29.0849 with S. D 3.10659 showed that about the nature of academic and co-curricular activities the respondents agreed that teachers work for the academic excellence of their students, regularly assess students' academic progress in three months, school works for showing good results in board exams, tries for good performance in co-curricular activities, the moral development of students is equally focused with academics, leadership skills of students are enhanced in the school and life skills of students are developed in the school. On application of Chi-square test, the findings were statistically significant.

It highlighted that about the nature of academic and co-curricular activities in schools; teachers work for the academic excellence of their students, regularly assess students' academic progress in three months, school works for showing good results in board exams, tries for good performance in co-curricular activities, the moral development of students is equally focused with academics, leadership skills of students are enhanced and life skills of students are developed in the school.

Table 4: School Culture (Human Relationship)

Statements	Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	Chi-value	P-value
The school has effective communication system	118	4.550	.53265	57.271	.000
Teachers are happy to work in this school	118	3.906	.95172	92.254	.000
Teachers have trust in themselves and their students	118	4.118	.66884	111.017	.000
There is positive relationship of school with community	118	4.449	.60761	40.898	.000
The positive work of teachers is encouraged and rewarded	118	4.016	.89617	65.458	.000
Cumulative	118	21.0414	1.77572	69.932	.000

Table 4 highlights the school culture in secondary schools in terms of human relationship. The mean score 4.550 with S.D .53265 demonstrated that majority of participants were agreed that the school has effective communication system. Responses were not scattered.

The mean score 3.906 with S.D .95172 highlighted that majority of participants were agreed that teachers are happy to work in this school. Responses were not scattered.

The mean score 4.118 with S.D .66884 demonstrated that majority of participants were agreed that Teachers have trust in themselves and their students. Responses were not scattered.

The mean score 4.449 with S.D .60761 indicated that majority of participants were agreed that there is positive relationship of school with community. Responses were not scattered.

The mean score 4.016 with S.D .89617 demonstrated that majority of participants were agreed that the positive work of teachers is encouraged and rewarded. Responses were not scattered.

The cumulative mean score of 21.0414 with S. D 1.77572 showed that respondents were agreed that school has effective communication system, teachers are happy to work in this school, teachers have trust in themselves and their students and positive work of teachers is encouraged and rewarded in the school. On application of Chi-square test, the findings were found statistically significant.

It demonstrated that there was a positive human relationship in these schools. There were effective communication system, teachers were happy to work in these schools, have trust in them and their students, there is positive relationship of school with community and positive works of teachers were encouraged and rewarded in the school.

Discussions

About the culture of the school, the study found that schools had clear chalked out visions and missions, school administrations followed their vision and mission statements, head of the

school took initiatives for achieving the vision of school, teachers themselves prepared the rules for functioning of the school and the head and teachers worked as a team for achieving school's vision. Similar finding have also been reported by Barns (2012) that when the school environment is better there will be no problems with in the school. In the similar vein (Deal and Peterson (2016) established that a vision statement can serve as a blueprint for change and improvement efforts, acting as a framework from which to ask additional questions concerning more specific aspects of school change. Similarly, Gruenert and Whitaker, (2015) identified that the vision of the school includes the statement of purpose and the way for achieving the vision statement. Vision is the result of successfully achieving mission and purpose. As such, each is an essential part of the foundation upon which school culture is built. Mission and purpose are deeply intertwined with values and beliefs. In order to have authentic mission and purpose, the school must reflect on its shared values and beliefs. One challenge of this is that values are often unconscious to those who hold them and thus difficult to articulate to others. The findings of the study are also in agreement with the findings of the study by Maslowski (1997) who described that the better the school's culture and climate, the lower the level of violence within the school is. Another study is also in agreement with that schools' cultures are those assumptions, norms, values, and cultural artifacts that are common among the school participants and it has a strong influence on their working at school.

It further found that administration of the schools were ambitious, friendly and supportive for the students, had a democratic nature in decisions, resolved the problems of teachers and students and were competent enough to satisfy the needs of the school. Similarly, Gruenert and Whitaker, (2015) demonstrated that the vision is the result of successfully achieving mission and purpose. As such, each is an essential part of the foundation upon which school culture is built. They further identified that Language is not only an

important element of ceremonies; it is also an essential component of school culture. Oftentimes, language is the most explicit boundary between those who are and those are not a part of the culture. Non-comprehension of the local language and present a little productivity in the eyes of culture.

About the nature of academic and co-curricular activities in schools; teachers work for the academic excellence of their students, regularly assess students' academic progress in three months, school works for showing good results in board exams, tries for good performance in co-curricular activities, the moral development of students is equally focused with academics, leadership skills of students are enhanced and life skills of students are developed in the school. Similar finding have also been reported by Willard Waller (1932) who identified that some schools focus on co-curricular activities along with curricular activities while other doesn't. Similarly, Sammons, Thomas & Mortimore, (1997) described that better schools are those which constantly work for the better academic performance of the students. In addition, Mortimore et al., (2003) found in relation to the performance of the school under the influence of its culture; that students' achievements are attendance rates and promotion, significance scores which are gained by controlling various backgrounds of students and schools. Similarly, students' social and effective outcomes including students' attitudes and self-concept have been discussed in school effectiveness studies much of the studies in this field are related to cognitive outcomes.

Regarding human relationship, there was a positive human relationship in these schools. There were effective communication system, teachers were happy to work in these schools, have trust in themselves, there is positive relationship of school with community and their students and positive works of teachers were encouraged and rewarded in the school. Similar to the findings of the study, Challenger (1994) found that the education and trainings of the individuals that lead towards the development of social character of human beings. Further the quality of education and

educational institutions culture do matters on the overall product in term of social character building of individuals. Similar findings have also been reported by the studies of Deal and Peterson (2016) who identified positive human relationship in the schools that significantly contributed in the performance of the students who used to get education over there.

Recommendations

As per findings and objectives of the study the following recommendations are made:

1. It is necessary for schools that there may be a clear vision and mission in secondary schools so that it will be easy for the administration and the staff member to follow it easily.
2. It is the responsibility of the heads and the teachers of the secondary schools to make the rules for proper functioning of school and they may work as a team for achieving these rules.
3. For fulfilling the needs of the students it is the responsibility of the administration that they may be cooperative, enthusiastic and friendly for the students, should have a democratic nature in decision making and have the ability to solve the problems of teachers and students.
4. In secondary schools there may be equal focus on curricular as well as on co-curricular activities. For academic excellence there must monthly tests, board exams on the basis of which student academic excellence may be reported and for co-curricular activities there may be debates, sports events. There must be an equal emphasis on academics, leadership skills of students to be enhanced and life skills of the students may be developed in the secondary schools.
5. In secondary schools there may be such an environment where teachers are happy to work and there may be a positive working relationship between teacher and student and students should be encouraged and rewarded for their work.

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