



الجامعة الإسلامية العالمية ماليزيا  
INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA  
بَوَسَّطِ رَبِّي اسْلَمْتُ اِنْ شَاءَ رَبِّي اِيْمَانًا مُلْتَمِسًا

**ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN SCHOOL  
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY OF  
SEKOLAH MENENGAH MANIR, KUALA TERENGGANU**

**BY**

**SABARIAH BT MUHAMMAD YUSOF**

**PROJECT PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF MANAGEMENT**

**MANAGEMENT CENTER  
INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA ISLAMIC  
OCTOBER 1997**

## ABSTRACTS

This study was specifically done to help the school principal, teachers, parents and students of Sekolah Menengah Manir, to understand and to discover the nature of their existing culture and for teachers to compare their existing culture with that of their preferred culture. For that purpose, the researcher decided to do a case study on the mentioned school. A random sample of 76 teachers, the school principal and 13 of its supporting staffs (clerks, laboratory assistants and the school gardeners) were given a questionnaire on diagnosing the school culture. The instrument was an adaptation of Roger Harrison's (1994) questionnaire on diagnosing organizational culture.

The findings revealed that there were slight variations between the male and female teachers ranking of the existing culture. The male teachers ranking for their existing culture were in the following order: Support, Achievement, Role and Power culture. On the other hand the female teachers ranking were Role, Achievement, Support and Power. However, the researcher felt that the variance found was not significant enough to be debated.

The possible explanation for the variance would be the difference in gender perceptions on the situations they faced. However, the rankings for

their preferred culture seemed to be unanimously agreed upon with Power culture as the most preferred culture, followed by role culture, support culture and Achievement as the least preferred culture.

A preference for Power culture simply means that there was high dependence for trust, empathy and personal communication for its effectiveness. Organizational members prefer few rules and little need for bureaucratic procedures. Besides surveys, observations and interviews were also conducted to strengthen the findings. As a whole, the researcher felt that the use of qualitative methods of assessing school culture was most suitable since the fundamental content of culture was unconscious and highly subjective. Thus, it requires an interactive probing to access otherwise inaccessible and unconscious cultural material. Finally, each culture is idiosyncratic and unique and requires a non standardized assessments. From the observations and interviews, the weak culture, as identified, proved to be an eye opener to the principal, teachers, supporting staffs, parents and students that an appropriate measures need to be taken to match existing culture to that of organizational members preferred culture.

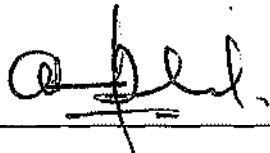
TITLE OF PROJECT PAPER: ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN SCHOOL:  
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY OF  
SEKOLAH MENENGAH MANIR, KUALA  
TERENGGANU

NAME OF AUTHOR : SABARIAH BT. MUHAMMAD YUSOF

The undersigned certify that the above candidate has fulfilled the condition of the project paper prepared in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Management.

**SUPERVISOR**

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

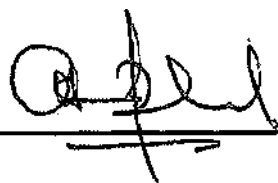


Name: Dr. Ahmad Zohdi Bin Abdul Hamid

Date: 31<sup>st</sup> October 1997

**ENDORSED BY:**

\_\_\_\_\_



Assistant Professor Dr. Ahmad Zohdi Abdul Hamid  
Head, Master of Management Program  
Date: 31<sup>ST</sup> October 1997

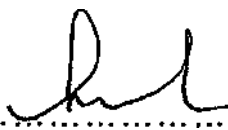


Associate Professor Dr. Syed Abdul Hamid Al-Junid  
Executive Director, IIUM Management Center  
Date: 31<sup>st</sup> October 1997

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Other sources are acknowledged by referenced notes and bibliography is appended.

Date... 31/10/97.....

Signature..... .....

Name: SABARIAH BT. MUHAMMAD  
YUSOF

© Copyright by Sabariah bt Muhammad Yusof and  
International Islamic University Malaysia

Dedicated to:

My dearest husband, Mohd Nasir Bin Ibrahim,  
My four loving children: Nina Kathalena,  
Fatma Alysha,  
Muhammad Aizat Fikri  
Nur Ruzzana Fikriah.

My success in completing this course is all because of your never ending love  
and unfailing support.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. AHMAD ZOHDI BIN ABDUL HAMID, my supervisor, for his professional advice, guidance and motivation. Without his persistent encouragement, this research would have never been accomplished.

Appreciation is also extended to Associate Professor Dr. Syed Abdul Hamid Al-Junid, the Executive Director, IIUM Management Centre, for his understanding and continued support.

I am indebted to the Ministry of Education and Institute Aminuddin Baki's twining programme, for giving me an opportunity to pursue my Master's degree.

A sincere thank you is also extended to all organizational members of Sekolah Menengah Manir who have participated in the study and to all those unmentioned who have helped in their own special ways.

My special words of gratitude are for my beloved husband, Mohd Nasir Bin Ibrahim for his sincere sacrifices to single-handedly taking good care of our four children during their most tender years. His sincere love based on his



constant awareness and faith in the mercy of God Almighty has always been my inspiration during the completion of this study programme.

To my children; Nina, Aiysha, Aizat and Ruzanna, I am much aware and grateful for their sacrifices, perseverance and understanding and am deeply touched by their spirit of endurance, able to bear with my absence especially during the moments when they needed me most.

Finally, my appreciation goes to other family members whose love, care and support have helped made this study possible.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	2
Approval page.....	4
Declaration.....	5
Copyright Page.....	6
Dedication.....	7
Acknowledgements.....	8
Table of Contents.....	9
List of Tables.....	13
List of Figures.....	14

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

2.1	Definition of Organizational Culture.....	29
2.1.1	Cultural Network.....	31
2.2	The School as an Organization.....	34
2.2.1	School and Parent Relationship.....	35
2.3	A Symbolist and Post Modern Theory of Culture... ..	38
2.4	Theoretical Educational Excellence.....	40
2.5	The Study of School Culture.....	42
2.6	A Concept of School Climate.....	45
2.7	Relationship of Teachers and the School Culture .	46
2.8	Describing and Assessing Teachers Climate in School.....	48
2.8.1	School Climate and Teacher Culture.....	50
2.8.2	Diagnosing Culture of School Members.....	51

2.9	Historical Contribution.....	55
2.9.1	Symbolic Management.....	56
2.9.2	Contemporary Research Contribution.....	57
2.10	Summary of Literature Review.....,	59

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1	Ethnography.....	60
3.2	Research Instrument .....	63
3.3	Data Collection Procedure.....	63
3.4	The Model.....	65
3.5	Scoring Instrument and Interpretation.....	66
3.5.1	The Power Oriented Culture.....	67
3.5.2	The Role Oriented Culture.....	68
3.5.3	The Achievement Oriented Culture.....	70
3.5.4	The Support Orientation.....	71

## Chapter 4 : PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1	General Description of Participants.....	73
4.2	Observation.....	78
4.2.1	Students.....	80
4.2.2	Buildings and School Surroundings.....	81
4.2.3	School Canteen.....	82
4.2.4	School Office.....	83
4.2.5	School Staff room.....	83
4.2.6	Survey.....	84

## CHAPTER 5 : DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1	Discussion of Finding.....	90
5.1.1	Teachers Existing Culture.....	90

5.1.2 Teachers Preferred Culture.....	92
5.1.3 Implications.....	93
5.1.4 Recommendations.....	94
5.1.5 Conclusions.....	95

Bibliography.....	97
-------------------	----

## APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Diagnosing Organizational Culture Questionnaire.....	101
Appendix II: Letter to Respondents.....	106
Appendix III: Participants Data Base.....	107
Appendix IV: Interview Questions.....	109
Appendix V: Struktur Organisasi Pentadbiran.....	110
Appendix VI: Struktur Organisasi Operasi.....	111
Appendix VII: Maklumat Pencapaian PMR 1993-1996.....	112
Appendix VIII: Analisa Keputusan SPM-1992-1995/Sasaran 1997.....	113
Appendix IX: Sekolah Menengah Manir- Pelan Sekolah.....	114

## LIST OF TABLES

1. Manifestations of Culture: From Shallow To Deep.....	32
2. Levels Of Culture And Their Interaction.....	33
3. Participants Population Size by Gender.....	74
4. Demographic Variables For Participants.....	75
5. Interview Responses.....	76
6. a) Summary of Organizational members Existing and Preferred Culture Index.....	86
b) Summary Score and Ranking of Female teachers.....	87
c) Supporting Staffs Preferred Culture.....	88
d) Summary of teachers and Supporting Staffs Existing Culture Orientation.....	89

## LIST OF FIGURES

1. Manifestations of culture: from shallow to deep.....32
2. Levels of culture and their interaction.....,....33

# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background of Study

Over the past decade, a succession of business professors, management consultants, journalists, and futurists have spent considerable time preaching on 'renewal', 'revitalisation', and 'transformation', telling senior executives how to convert sluggish corporation into agile competitors. But despite all the effort, maintaining the status quo appears to be winning out. Why do so many efforts at change produce disappointing results? It is tempting to blame employees. A Schiemann (1993) survey of senior executives in the Fortune 500 found that 76% cited that employees resisted to do things in new ways, as their primary roadblock to change. From the executive suite, according to the survey, 39% of the executive felt that the lack of management agreement on business strategy was a key barrier to change. Almost half blamed an unsupportive culture as the impediment, and a third faulted management's leadership in implementing change.

Similarly, educational community is constantly being challenged by the underachievement of students. Various theories are targeting the student, the student's social and cultural environment, and the school setting have been offered as explanations for this disturbing phenomenon. It is due to the

competitive nature of schools nowadays call for the study of school culture in the hope of bringing about 'school effectiveness'.

## **1.2 Significance of study**

Finger pointing is hardly productive. Besides, few would argue with the proposition that senior executives should shoulder the prime responsibility for implementing the changes necessary for business success or educational success. The question is, how can key managers become more effective leaders? In view of this problem, it is thus important for us to study about organisations because we all work in organisations and are affected by them in so many ways. We need to know and understand what organisations are, where they come from, how they operate, and how they can be changed. But the fact is that most of us take organisations for granted and assume that having to study them is an exercise in boredom. It is also the objective of this paper to make us aware that failure to understand organisations and organising, dooms them to repeat the mistakes of others as their careers in the organisations unfold. Earnest (1992) has stated that managers have to learn to live with organisational culture so that they can play their part in changing it when necessary. Whether they like it or not, there will be established norms and values governing their behaviour, especially in a bureaucratic, highly structure organisation these norms are likely to be strong and difficult to ignore. In a more loosely formed 'organic' organisation the norms will be flexible, but they will still exist. After all, if norm is to behave



informally, it takes courage and strength of character to deviate from it to a great extent.

Therefore, this research endeavour will provide an alternative approach to finding tentative explanations to the problems faced by many schools in Malaysia. Thus, the study on the teachers culture of Sekolah Menengah Manir will expose the share of assumptions, values, ethos and the social rule governing the relationship between teachers and other members of the organisation. Understanding the cultural make-up of the organisation will not only be useful for reinforcing the positive values within the organisation but more importantly will facilitate the most effective performance in the organisation for the achievement of world class schools

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

Since emphasis have been made on the importance of knowing organizational culture, this research aims at achieving five specific objectives. Firstly, it was hope that this study would contribute to the understanding of the concept of organizational culture in school by examining the taken for granted assumptions, shared knowledge and cognition, integrated feelings and values and cultural rules governing the daily life experiences of the members of the organisation. Thus, the ultimate goal of the exercise was to add another dimension based on the reality of the organisational life as perceived by the

actors in their life experience, in the quest for alternatives explanation or solutions to enhance the capability of the existing machinery of the government.

The second aim of this study was to provide an alternative approach to organizational analysis and research that is by providing a descriptive view of the school culture. If past efforts concentrated on an objective approach, this study will give a subjective or interpretative view to culture studies. More specially, this study is intended to view the functioning of the schools from the nature or indigenous perspective in which the language, symbols rituals and patterned behaviour provide a rich source of implicit and explicit information for the understanding of the teaching profession in reality.

The third goal of the study was to help organizational members discover the existing culture of the school and to compare it against its ideal or preferred culture. With the knowledge acquired , it is hoped they can help plan strategies to enhance cooperation and co-ordination amongst staffs in its effort to improve its performance and pursue the school's goals.

Fourthly, to enable organizational members to be aware of the implications of culture incongruent and to be responsive enough to the needs of cultural change should the need arise. For with the ever changing needs of the school, a considerable understanding of the existing culture in an organisation is vital before even considering culture change.

Finally, it is the objective of the study to enable to explore the possibility of using a non participative observation approach for school culture analysis. In this endeavour, a set of data gathering techniques were used to elicit the native view points. After that the data were analysed by using certain analytical techniques to yield teachers culture profile that would form the basis for cultural description of the chosen school.

#### **1.4 Limitations of the Research**

The researcher realised that the topic of this paper has not yet gained attention from Malaysians. Many are still not aware of the significance of the subject and the most excruciating problems faced in this research at this point were as follows:- First and foremost there were very limited recent studies done on the topic using indigenous approach conducted or published. If any, research study on the topic was based on schools in foreign countries public administrations and business enterprise, abroad and none from the local setting especially from the educational organisation. With this in mind, the researcher was left on her own in pursuit of this relatively new avenue of research. Nevertheless, not to deny that the limitation is offset by the availability of research materials, assistance from the researcher's supervisor and studies made by many cultural anthropologist and ethnographers. Though rather backdated, they do provide a formidable mirror of this research.

The time constraint to complete the research pose serious problems. In the effort to search for literature reviews, it was terribly time consuming. To date, the researcher had not come across research relating to present the topic understudy done in the Malaysian setting. However, it is hope that the theories and concept of school culture as presented would provide the necessary and relevant guidelines.

Finally, one has to caution that this case study would not be a representative of other similar school organisational culture since the study is inward looking or rather micro in perspective. To compare this case study with another school or to regard as a benchmark to their own would definitely be unfair since different organisations have different set of culture and uniqueness on its own.

## **1.5 School Background**

Sekolah Menengah Manir, is situated 7 kilometers north of Kuala Terengganu town. It was officiated by the Menteri Besar Terengganu on the 30<sup>th</sup> July 1986. It also s erves as feeder schools to the neighbouring primary schools, namely; Sekolah Kebangsaan Manir, Sekolah Kebangsaan Teluk Pasu, Sekolah Kebangsaan Kampung Tengah, Sekolah Kebangsaan Kebor Air, Sekolah Kebangsaan kebor Besar, Sekolah Kebangsaan Banggol Peradong and Sekolah Kebangsaan Durian Mas. The student population is

about 1500 and the teachers of 107. To this date the school has been through successions of school principals. The school organization charts, the PMR and SPM result are as enclosed in the appendixes

## **1.6 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY**

A basic assumption of this study was that administrative and organisational analysis in schools and universities, and in other public organisations, should best be viewed as a multiple perspective activity. Theories of administration, therefore, should not be viewed as competing, instead each theory of administration is better able to illuminate and explain certain aspects of the problems administrators face but not others. Increased understanding depends upon the use of several theories, preferably in an integrated fashion.

According to Sergiovanni and Corbally (1990) theoretical perspectives in administration comprised of at least two distinguishable components. One component was the explicitly formulated and stated assumptions which gave a particular perspective structure, form and definition. The other component referred to the background assumptions which were tacit.

Gouldner (1970) in his background assumptions defined how events ought to be interpreted and what events were to be accepted as fact and real. As the assumptions changed so did the characteristics of practice. In this sense there was no separate reality in organisational behaviour and administrative functioning. Objectivity and truth were evasive and no order exists beyond what was created in the minds of persons and that was imposed upon the organisation by persons. Some of the known multiple perspective governing man in their activities were described as follows:

### **1.6.1 Artificial Science Perspective**

Simon (1969) explained activities from the perspective of the artificial sciences, reality was said to be created by human conventions rather than by being inherent in the nature of the universe chemical elements and genetic characteristics, for example, human respond according to natural laws. The human sciences, by contrast stated that humans do not behave, they act. Actions differ from behaviour in that they are born of preconceptions, assumptions, and motives. Actions have meaning in the sense that as preconditions change, meanings change regardless of the sameness of recorded behaviour.

## 1.6.2 Efficiency Perspective

The efficiency perspective reflected the commonly accepted principles of 'good management which characterized the organization and operation of schools and universities and believed in clearly defined roles and goals.

Weick (1982) suggested that efficiency management principles assumed the existence of four properties for the organisations in question the presence of a self-correcting rational systems among closely linked and interdependent people, consensus, on goals and means, co-ordination by dissemination of information, and predictability of problems and problem responses.

Schools and universities by contrast, were loosely structured with ambiguous goals and large spans of control. Weick noted that when the efficiency principles were applied to schools and universities and other loosely structured organisations effectiveness declined, people became confused, and work did not seem to get done. With respect to schools he concluded that they were managed with the wrong model in mind. The efficiency perspective thus did not give adequate attention to the human side of life in educational organisations. Such issues as individual personality and human needs and such conditions as job satisfaction, motivation and morale seemed to be clearly secondary.

### **1.6.3 Person Perspective**

According to McGregor (1960) the person perspective on the other hand was reflected in human relations and human resources management theories. He even suggested that persons were primarily motivated by social needs and obtain their basic satisfactions from relationships with others. That persons were more responsive to social forces of their peer group than to extrinsic incentives and management controls. Finally, a person's identity and loyalty to management and organisation was said to be dependent upon the extent to which interaction and acceptance needs were provided for at work.

### **1.6.4 Political Perspective**

Sergiovanni and Corbally (1990) elaborated on the political perspective, of which the main concern was with the dynamic interplay of the organisation in relation to the external forces of the environment. Schools and universities, for example were viewed as open rather than closed systems, as integral parts of a larger environment not as bounded entities isolated from their environment. They received inputs, processed them and returned outputs to the environment. Political views did not consider goals as given to be administrative. Goals were considered to be highly unstable and constantly changing. Therefore, understanding the process of bargaining in the development of consensus and understanding that sensitivity of such