On the Cultural Ecology and the Staff’s Development in School

Lan-Ran FANG
Nanyang Institute of Technology, Nanyang, Henan, China
f685018@163.com

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Abstract. School is the educational organization of cultivating people. Teachers are the main body of school, their growth and development is determined by the internal ecological situation, especially the cultural ecological situation. It’s greatly important to build the persistent system of promoting teachers’ development for school to build harmonious and upward internal cultural ecological situation.

School Ecology and Ecology of the Culture in Schools

Ecology and School Ecology

Ecology is a biological concept, its original meaning refers to the organic connections between organisms and the organism and the environment. Ecological research points out that the world is a complex ecosystem including human beings, society and nature as well as an organic whole. Ecosystem is composed of two parts, which are life support system for non biological substance and organisms with different functional properties. Since school is a special social organization, its organization structure, physical environment, values and behavior patterns form the situation of the growth and development of all kinds of school members. School is “a comprehensive network combined by ecological factors in n-dimensional space”, which composed a niche for teachers and students’ growth. [1] Ecology is a life system of interrelated and benign interaction between different life. Development of ecology shows that “ecology” not only figures out natural ecology but also includes human culture, namely cultural ecology. As a complex ecological system, school is not only a natural ecological environment of campus but also an internal cultural ecological environment including the group of teachers, school leaders and administrators, student groups and other factors. Marx Webber, a German famous sociologist, put forward a famous sociological hypothesis that behind any course there is an intangible cultural spirit which supports this course and sustains the success or failure of it. As for school, this school cultural spirit is the school’s cultural ecology.

Cultural Ecology at School

Cultural ecology first appeared as a research field in American anthropology. In 1955, J.H. Stewart, American cultural anthropologist, put forward the concept of “cultural ecology” in his book Theory of Cultural Change for the first time. Since then, more and more anthropologists and ecologists paid their attention to cultural ecology, which formed a new discipline. In cultural ecology, human beings, a part of the total life network in a given environment combining with the living body of the species population, constitute a biological layer of the sub social layer, which usually called a community. Importing cultural factors in this life network, people build up a cultural layer from the biological one. They interact with each other because there is a symbiotic relationship between them. This symbiotic relationship affects not only the general survival and development of human beings, but also the generation and the formation of culture and develops into different cultural types and cultural patterns. [2] Main contents of cultural ecology include the following parts, which are the interaction between culture and environment, composition, structure, distribution and developmental changes of the cultural community and environment. Its core concept is cultural ecosystem, which is a functional whole composed by all interacting cultural bodies and their environmental components in a particular...
cultural geographical environment.[3] With the development of cultural ecology, in addition to the interaction between culture and natural environment, the meaning of cultural ecology also includes the relationship between various complex variables of cultural development, especially the influence of science and technology, economic system, social organization and social values on people. According to people’s understanding of culture and the mechanism of relevance and structure in cultural ecology, maybe cultural ecology can be seen as the forms of the interrelated cultural elements in a certain era and the characteristic cultural structure. It specifies and represents the way of human existence and its interrelation essentially. [4]

As a physical space and a organization, there are many kinds of cultural forms inside. For example, it can be classified by activities into teaching culture, management culture, activity culture etc.; by the identity of school members into teachers’ culture, students’ culture, management culture etc.; by space into auditorium culture, classroom culture, playground culture etc. These forms of cultures constitute the overall ecosystem of school culture through organic links of mutual influence. School culture can be seen as an ecosystem determined by internal characteristics of school culture. [5] In fact, cultural ecology is a survival state of culture type. Specifically, it mainly refers to an orderly cultural environment for survival and development, which various cultural types and cultural factors influence, conflict, integrated with each other. From this, we can see that there are two main provisions of cultural ecology. One is various cultural types and factors inside, the other is an orderly organic connection between the cultural types and factors of diversity. [6] System theory research shows that a system should have complex and diverse internal components as well as form a stable relationship between various components. More importantly, these components constitute an open and closed whole.

Above all, school culture embodies the values of school leaders and administrators, teachers and students as well as organizational norms that all members of the school agree and abide by. The internal cultural ecological environment of a school will have a profound impact on the value orientation and behavior of teachers and students.

**School Cultural Ecology Teachers’ Behavior**

School is a social system with its own culture. School culture represents the value orientation, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors of school group members. School culture consists of system and standard, organization structure, attribution statement, value and goal. Any mature organization will have a consistent judgment and opinion on “what is worth doing” and “how to do it”. School culture is a thing that “many individual values and standards accumulate and integrate as well as a consensus for ‘what is the most important’”. Its group expectations not just individual’s expectation as well as the “way of everyone doing things.” As for the basic form of school culture, it is the way for school members to deal with things around them, including the goal, expectation, recognition and habits of this group. When everyone knows what to do in school, school culture will make action plans. School culture focuses on the core values and significance system that the school groups agree with, spread and influence. Therefore, school culture can be defined as a meaningful dissemination system consisting of standards, values, beliefs, symbols, rituals, traditions, and legends that are understood and recognized by the school community at a certain historical stage. This meaning system usually determines people’s thinking and behavior.

School culture is a complex ecosystem of norms, values, beliefs, assumptions, traditions, and rituals which teachers, students, leaders and managers work together and accumulated after a period of time. Culture is to an organization what personality is to a person. Culture reflects the personality of the school through the values and beliefs of the organization members. It identifies the task and goal of school and establishes a high sense of self-esteem to school beliefs. It is the psychological basis for the organization members to describe the basic objectives and objectives of the school. Culture is invisible, which permeates in the mind of each organization member. School culture is the virtual element that affects the future and destiny of school, determines the internal vitality of the
organization and coruscate the vitality of the organization members, especially the positive teacher

culture and learning culture, which has great significance for the school to be a learning community.

Human development is always achieved in an environment including a certain cultural ecology,

furthermore, the way of human existence is an integral part of cultural ecology. For teachers and

students, school cultural ecology is not only related to the inner environment of school but also related

to the change of teachers’ and students’ lifestyle and their life development. As a specialized agency

for cultivating people, school is a social organization. As main members of school, the growth and

development of teachers are jointly influenced by the internal and external environment. Research

based on the organizational behavior, teachers’ individual behavior in school depends on their

individual behavior and group environment, in other words, individual behavior of members in

teacher group is the result of the interaction between the school environment and the two characters.

School culture is the common understanding of teachers groups in awareness and behavior, running

through all activities of school and leading the factors that influence the teacher’s behavior in the

school internal environment. School cultural ecosystem is the “field” of school culture, influencing

the direction and intensity of teachers’ individual behavior as the main body of school organization.

As the core content of school culture values, it determines the value orientation of teacher groups in

school and influences the forming of teachers’ behavior.

**School Cultural Ecology and Teachers’ Development**

Now, in the management process of teachers’ growth and development in most of China’s schools,

most of them pursue the value called “Scientism”, which originates from Tailor’s scientific

management theory. Its connotation mainly includes four parts. The most fundamental goal of

management is improving production efficiency; the second one is employees ignore the subject spirit

of employers, regarding them as the tool to realize management goal; the third one is emphasizing the

need for scientific research to find the best working procedures and norms; the last one is establishing

a series rules and regulations, which is based on the scientific research, to strengthen management.

Practice shows that as for the growth and development of teachers management mainly depend on

experience, relying on the “rule of man”, adhering to “Scientism” may ignore the humanistic factors

such as the ideal goal and emotional needs of teachers as the main body of development and restrain

and even suppress the initiative, enthusiasm and creativity of teacher development. The management

of teachers’ growth and development should adhere to the ecological values. Ecological values refer
to that school fully respects the ecological law in the open ecological environment, and regard the

rational development of ecological values as the highest value standards. This idea includes the

following four parts. The first one is that man is a kind of material existence and also a kind of

spiritual subject and man’s development should follow the law of ecological development. The

second one is employers give full play to their dominance, but also fully respect the subjectivity of the

employees, leading the common development of groups. The third one is the fundamental purpose of

management is not improving production efficiency but maintaining the ecological advantage of

managers’ group. The last one is respecting both science and humanism, playing both the constraint

role of institutional norms and the incentive role of organizational culture so that the two support each

other, complement each other.

School culture has a strong function for orientation, cohesion and education. It includes unique

value standard, social psychology, basic beliefs, aesthetic taste, thinking modes and operative norms

as well as school, teaching and learning style, which are formed in the process of long-term and

followed by both teachers and students. In campus, school culture can create a kind of educational

environment and organizational atmosphere, which spread throughout the campus and affect the

teachers and students. This kind of environment and atmosphere influence and regulate students’

value choice, personality shaping, thinking mode, academic atmosphere, moral emotion, behavior

habit and so on. Outside the campus, it presents individuality, characteristic, goal and image of school.

Excellent school culture may enhance the internal cohesion and centripetal force. In fact,
establishment of school culture is the shaping process of human beings’ spirit and image. A good school culture atmosphere can cultivate the progressive attitude towards life and stimulate the spirit of pioneering force.

Some scholars hold the view that school culture is build up by teachers’ culture, students’ culture and curriculum culture. As a whole, teachers’ culture represents the school culture, including three kinds of cultures which are based on academy, school and subjects. Teachers’ culture is subculture of school culture. In terms of content, teachers’ culture refers to the values, attitudes, beliefs, attitudes and ways of doing things that are shared by a particular group of teachers or a wide range of teachers; in terms of forms, it refers to the relationship and communicate ways among teachers. An active teachers’ culture should have good communication, pleasant cooperation, strong gumption, serious working attitude and a high sense of responsibility. On the contrast, if teachers’ opinions conservative, no attempt to make progress, lack of creativity, living in a dull atmosphere and lack of cooperation among teachers, all of these will make such a kind of teacher culture which has a negative effect on teachers’ growth. On the issue of teachers’ growth and development, the prevailing phenomenon is that the school has never regarded the development of teachers as an important task of internal management and realized that teachers’ development is an overall and life-long concept. The real main body of a school is teachers, which professional development will affect the quality and reputation of school education directly. Based on the human-oriented idea, school should pay more attention to the development and growth of teachers, which are the main members of school and it is useful for school to study how to establish a perfect teachers’ professionalization mechanism at the school level.

With the application of the principles and methods of ecology to the educational psychology, research on the ecological orientation of teachers’ growth and development has been appeared. The research claims the study on teachers’ psychology activities and behaviors in the real environment and attaches importance to the influence of the group of teachers, culture and environment on the individual growth of teachers, which are based on a macro perspective. In fact, in the practice of improving teachers’ profession, school used to focus on teacher’s knowledge and skill, practice and reflection and then turns into a broader level that is how to build a better way to cooperate with each other for teachers, which is called the ecological-oriented teachers’ profession development. “The idealistic way of the ecological-oriented teachers’ profession development is development mode of cooperation, in other words, their development mode depends on the cooperation among teachers.” Human beings are living in a certain environment in the process of the formation and maintaining of organizational culture as well as their life relies on some certain spirit and cultural environment. Mankind creates cultural environment, conversely the cultural environment influence mankind. We can say that school cultural environment is essential to teachers’ development. Without a fine cultural ecological environment, there will be no way for the gathering of the outstanding, the formation of creative team, the development of the academic field and the cultivation of high level talents. Based on the ecological systemic theory, school is an important ecological system for the growth and development of teachers. It should study teachers’ growth and development from the perspective of school cultural ecology, create a fine school ecological environment from the quality of leaders, material support and interpersonal relationship and establish a long term mechanism for teacher development in order to improve teachers’ professional growth. The connotative development of a school should grasp the most focal point—that is cultural ecological construction, improve education connotation and quality through a good cultural ecology to realize the sustainable development of a school.

References


