School Culture:
Perspectives from Taiwanese and South Floridian Educators

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ABSTRACT. The study compared Taiwanese and South Floridian educators' perspectives on school culture. Participants were enrolled in a master of science program in Educational Leadership at a South Florida university. They completed a survey designed to assess the beliefs and values inherent in school culture. Both quantitative and qualitative survey data, when interpreted using the literature in the field, provided insights into the participants' curriculum and instruction decisions. In addition, the research value of the survey used was affirmed. Also, codes established to describe the micro-level of school culture have potential for expansion into a framework to enhance theory development.

The study reported here explores culture. Culture, as defined by anthropologists, refers to "the acquired knowledge people use to interpret experience and generate behavior" (Spradley, 1980, p. 6). Educational researchers can explore what people know and make use of in an effort to garner understanding about culture (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). In this study, what educators reported as their values and beliefs about curriculum and how they made use of them in schooling, gave insights into the similarities and differences between the school cultures of two countries.

Study Justification

The purposes or goals of schooling are based on four foundations: societal forces, treatment of knowledge, human growth and development, and knowledge about the learning process (Tyler, 1949; Wiles & Bondi, 1992). The goals generated by these four foundations are "then 'screened' through the school's philosophy" (Posner, 1995, p.13). This philosophy is based on shared values and beliefs. The result the goal generation and screening is the curriculum we observe being implemented in schools.

It is easy to see how issues or events within the four foundations regularly impact curriculum and instruction. For example, concern about drug and alcohol abuse, a societal force, has spurred the development of drug and alcohol education programs. This societal force impacts curriculum. Posner's (1995) notion of "screening" is evident here as well. Since decisions are made about what will be taught based on school philosophy, it is obvious that reducing drug and alcohol abuse is valued and that prevention programs are seen as a vehicle to accomplish that goal.

According to Wiles and Bondi (1989) the study of goodness, truth, and reality, expose the values and beliefs that are the basis of educational philosophy. That philosophical outlook, or values/belief system, is played out in everyday practice through the school culture. In the course of everyday work within the culture, expectations and norms for behavior evolve based on values and beliefs (Deal, 1987; Sergiovanni & Starrat, 1988). Hence, a chain of connections occurs: reflection on goodness, truth, and reality exposes the beliefs and values held in the school's philosophy, which in turn are implemented through the norms for behavior in the school culture.

School culture is seen as a powerful cohesive force in schools (Deal, 1987; Owens, 1987). It is described with consistency from school to school, from one decade to the next, and across national boundaries (Myer & Rowan, 1983). It is viewed as the foundation for effective schools, an important factor in school improvement (Lane, 1992; Purkey & Smith, 1982), and a critical component of instructional leadership (Lane, 1992; Hallinger & Murphy, 1987). It is explored through reflective practice (Sergiovanni, 1995) and is built through transformational leadership (Mitchell & Tucker, 1992).

In the latter, transformational leadership, the leader must reflect on what is occurring in the school culture and then work to build relationships and help people to identify goals with strategies for accomplishing them. Mitchell and Tucker (1992) noted that the leader must determine "whether the schools are seen as part of an established, successful system for the socialization of the young or as institutions in need of redirection and reform, restructuring to meet new conditions or reach new goals" (p. 32). Reflective practice can provide that information. Tanner and Tanner (1975) further suggested that a lack of reflection on what constitutes goodness creates a school that "is expected to do the bidding of whatever powers and forces are most dominant in the larger society at any one given time" (p. 64). Thus, the need for reflection on school culture is critical. It can help educators make decisions about the knowledge base taught. One must examine the micro-level, the values and beliefs, to truly understand school culture. It is the exploration of this micro-level of school culture that is the focus of the research reported here.

Toward this end a series of questions arise. What are the guiding beliefs of the people who work in the schools? What values are inherent in those beliefs? How do those beliefs and values relate to the delivery of education to students? Do these basic beliefs and values vary between educators from two different countries? How are beliefs and values, as evidenced in philosophy, articulated in school culture?

Method

Participants

The research questions were answered by educators from two cultural groups: Taiwan and South Florida. Participants were recruited from graduate students enrolled in an Educational Leadership master of science program in South Florida. The students were educational leaders or training to become leaders.

Twenty four Taiwanese educators and sixteen South Floridian educators participated in the research. The following paragraphs describe the demographics of the participant groups.

The Taiwanese educators were all Chinese. They were 92% male and 8% female. The students explained that the role of women was changing in Taiwanese culture and women were now beginning to move into leadership positions. (In fact, subsequent cohort groups entering the master's program had increasing numbers of women.) Participants in the study were predominantly educators (96%), with a majority of those occupying roles in higher education (74%). The participants in higher education were pursuing degrees because of new degree requirements at their places of employment. The remaining participants (21%) represented both the public and private school systems equally. They were pursuing their degrees for the purposes of job advancement.

The South Floridian educators reflected the cultural diversity of the area: white (69%), black (6%), asian/pacific islander (6%), and Spanish origin (20%). The participants were 56% female and 44% male. This slightly higher female enrollment may reflect a trend for women in the US. Research has shown that women in education are increasing seeking the advanced degrees required for promotion (Shakeshaft, 1989). Participants in the study were predominantly educators working in K-12 schools (94%), with a small percentage (6%) working in social service agencies with educational components. The majority of the participants worked in public schools (63%), although private schools were represented (31%).

Data Collection

Two types of data were collected using a survey: quantitative frequency count data and qualitative data via written responses. Data accuracy was verified through oral discussion with the participants.

Survey

The survey used in this research, "Options for Educational Objectives" (Wiles & Bondi, 1989, p. 45), was designed to assess personal perspectives about the philosophies that underlie educational objectives. The survey was based upon the work of McNeil (1976) which suggested that certain questions are helpful in ascertaining individuals' values and beliefs about schooling, and hence their philosophical assumptions. (See Appendix for a copy of the survey.)

Procedure

Participants were asked to complete the survey "Options for Educational Objectives" on their own. The completed surveys were then discussed as a group with participants sharing their responses and rationales for selecting specific multiple choice items. After the data was frequency counted and coded, the results were presented to the participants for further discussion.

Analysis

Multiple choice responses were frequency counted for each branch of each item and percentages were calculated in order to provide comparisons between unequal groups. All percentages were rounded at .05 up to the next highest number, sometimes yielding a total of 101%. A response rate over 50% on any branch of a multiple choice item was considered a majority response for that item. Percentage responses across groups were seen as virtually equivalent when a 5% or less numerical difference occurred between percentages for the two groups.

Written responses were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Coding categories (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) were established using triangulation: origination, nomination, and verification (Constas, 1992). This was accomplished via a four step process.

First, data was chunked into comments that revealed the values and beliefs. In the second step of the process, data chunks were reviewed for similarity in content. Categories were originated based on content similarities in the written responses and were nominated using accepted terminology in the literature. When a broad based category developed based on clusters of responses, the clusters were then termed properties. For example, the category of "social responsibility" emerged for the comments written by the Taiwanese educators. Properties in this instance included comments such as "understanding of team work" and "prepares for cooperation in society." The entire coding process was then repeated to insure saturation of the categories and to identify disconfirming evidence. The third and fourth steps comprised category verification, thus further contributing to validity and reliability (Silverman, 1993). In the third step the participants, through presentation and discussion, reviewed the categories and properties for accuracy in interpretation. The fourth step completed category verification. The literature was reviewed to support or disconfirm categories. The literature review also provided information for data interpretation. (See Figure 1 for a listing of codes and properties.)

Limitations

The participants for this study were not randomly selected from within the master of science program nor from within the larger population of educators. Therefore, the results of this research can not be generalized to other populations.

However, the perspectives of the students that participated in this study can enhance our understanding of culture. This study examines schooling from the point of view of some of its participants, those participants being from two distinct cultures. Taken together with other research in the field, this study can help to provide a piece of the puzzle that is school culture.

Additionally, since this research is qualitative in nature, it's external validity and rigor lie with it's contribution to the literature, both to theory development in the field and methodological growth in qualitative research (Constas, 1992; Silverman, 1993). These issues are addressed in the implications section of this article.

Results and Interpretations

The results of the study reported in this article compare the responses between the Taiwanese and the South Floridian educators. For ease in reading the results are reported with interpretations on an item by item basis.

Item One

According to to the responses on multiple choice item one, Taiwanese and South Floridian educators' beliefs about schools and the social order were virtually equivalent (Taiwanese 58%, South Floridian 63%). Responses in for both groups were that schools should seek to change or improve the social order. However, slight variations in the rationale for selection were noted in written responses.

The Taiwanese educators indicated in their written responses that schools should exist for societal improvement. South Floridian educators saw

South Floridian Educators	Both Groups of Educators	Taiwanese Educators
	Schools are for societal improvement	
	Schools "save" society	
Influence of societal issues on curriculum	To function in society students should learn:	
	cooperation	social responsibility
decision making — problem solving - discuss controversial issues - present options - seek new ideas - use inquirey techniques - employ logic		- morals & values - traditional culture - team spirit - team work - human relationship
	academics/basic skills	

Figure 1. Coding categories and properties describing beliefs and values in school culture.

schools predominantly as a source of change and that the change should improve society. Other South Floridian educators' comments suggested that schools should teach students to evaluate what is relevant and useful and "scrap" what is not. The most prominent category that emerged from both groups--that of schools existing for societal improvement--is best interpreted by examining some of the purposes of education in Taiwan and in the United States from an historical perspective.

Taiwan's educational history has been traced to mainland China as it's point of origin (Lin, 1977 as cited in Parker, 1986). Throughout China's history, education has been viewed as the means to
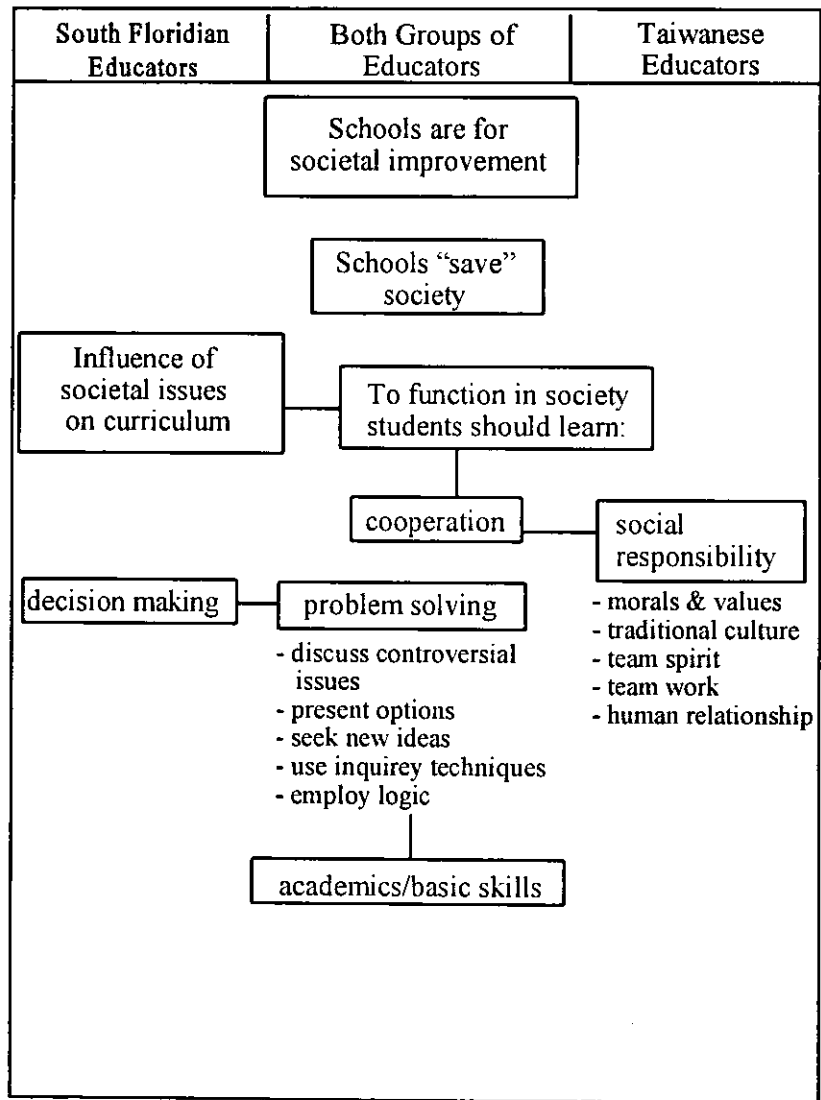
"save" or improve the Chinese nation (Rozman, 1981). Chinese society therefore respects learning (McDaniel & Soong, 1981) and views personal knowledge as a goal (Kuo & Spees, 1983). Interestingly, despite the goal for personal knowledge, Chinese culture has dictated that the individual be subordinated to the society (Fairbank, 1966). Preservation and improvement of society is the overarching goal to which the individual is subordinate. This subordination of the individual is one of the basic cultural norms for Chinese and Taiwanese, which include the traditional Chinese personality characteristics of inner harmony, concern for others, and submissiveness to authority (McDaniel & Soong, 1981). These goals and cultural norms have long been the core beliefs and values of Chinese and Taiwanese education. Thus, the Taiwanese educators' responses that schools exist for societal improvement can be seen as an echo of broader national goals and cultural norms.

The purpose of education in the United States parallels the expectations society holds for education in Taiwan. Beginning with the desire of the Pilgrims to learn to read the Bible in order to be saved from the devil (Wiles & Bondi, 1992), schools in the U.S. have functioned to educate the populace towards self-improvement and the improvement of society. Societal issues have had a continuous effect on educational improvement as can be seen with recent events, from Sputnick's impact on science and math education in the 1960s to the plethora of national reports that spurred the reform and restructuring movements of the 1980s and 1990s. The "saving" ability ascribed to U.S. schools, coupled with schools' constant improvement based on societal issues, explain the South Floridian educators' responses in this study.

Clearly, both the Taiwanese educators' and the South Floridian educators' responses reflect the purposes of schooling ascribed to education in their countries. Both nations believe that schools can improve the social order and should exist for the betterment of society. However, fine differences emerged between the two groups that indicate national cultural differences. The belief articulated by the Taiwanese educators that schools should teach morals and values clearly reflected the cultural norms of their country. The South Floridian educators' comments that schools should teach students to evaluate what is relevant and "scrap" what is not reflected the trend for U.S. education to be changed by current societal issues. The difference here is important: morals and long standing national cultural norms versus the pressure to change with current societal issues.

Item Two

In the responses to item number two, an open ended statement asking what schools could do better than any other existing institution or agency, the differences between the Taiwanese educators and the South Floridian educators were striking. The Taiwanese educators felt that schools can teach social responsibility better than any other existing institution or agency, while South Floridian educators saw a blend of academics, social responsibility, and fostering change as what schools can do better.

The coding category of social responsibility was developed to describe a recurring theme in the Taiwanese educators' responses. Written responses on the activity continuously reinforced the need for students to become responsible members of society. Specific comments on what schools should

teach--morals and values, the traditional culture, team spirit, team work, human relationships, preparation for cooperation in society, and skills for living--revealed this theme of social responsibility. Of primary importance appeared to be the student's responsibility to social life: the need for adherence to cultural norms in society. Also an effort to change what is bad in society, while improving and caring overall for society, was indicated as important.

The Taiwanese educators' written comments on item number two again echoed Chinese national goals and cultural norms--the teaching of morals. The cultural norm of moral propriety arose in Chinese society as early as 25-220 AD when virtuous conduct was the prime criterion for those selected to serve in the government (DeCrespigny, 1966 as cited in Parker, 1986). Moral development through education was evident during the Han Dynasty. At that time moral instruction and harmony with nature were the foci of Confucian education (Kusumoto, 1957). Moral superiority gained through education was a fundamental Confucian principle that became part of Chinese cultural tradition (Chen, 1984). Following the establishment of Taiwan as a separate nation in 1911, nationalism had renewed significance. This resulted in moral virtues and civic concerns emerging as part of the basic school curricula. Moral and ethical principles, virtuous conduct, and the development of these through education continues today in Taiwanese society. Oztuk (1992), in her article on teaching students about diverse cultures, noted that the Chinese have "deeply rooted ethical principals of accepting and carrying out one's duties" (p. 80). These principles were articulated in the Taiwanese educators' responses throughout the activity they completed in this study. A concrete example is their responses to item number two. Schools can teach social responsibility better than any other institution or agency.

The South Floridian educators' responses, evidenced social responsibility as a priority, but also identified academics as a priority. An emerging pattern of multiple ideas without a majority in any one area occurred frequently throughout the South Floridian educators' responses on the activity. Such variety in responses typifies the U.S. response to educational issues in general. A specific example of this "variety of response" can be found in two articles on multicultural education located in the same edition of *Educational Leadership*. Ravitch (1992) suggested that a multicultural curriculum must:

> teach core democratic values that enable us to work together, to reach decisions, and to live peaceably as citizens of the same society, values such as tolerance, a sense of responsibility for the common good, and a readiness to participate in civic life. . . . (and) demonstrate that racial and ethnic diversity may be a source of strength-- as they are in the United States. (p. 11).

Hilliard (1992), on the other hand, presented the notion of a pluralistic curriculum. He cited that:

> the primary goal of a pluralistic curriculum process is to present a truthful and meaningful rendition of the whole human experience. . . . Ultimately, if the curriculum is centered in truth, it will be pluralistic, for the simple fact is that human culture is the product of the

struggles of all humanity, not the possession of a single racial or ethnic group. . . . Respect for diversity is the hallmark of democracy. (p. 13)

Each author stated their opinion about whose culture schooling should reflect. Ravitch (1992) suggested the teaching of a common culture, while Hilliard (1992) expounded on the need for all cultural groups to be represented in the core curriculum. This example illustrates the continuous variety or diversity of ideas in education in the U.S.

Therefore, it is easy to understand the split responses of the South Floridian educators. They imitated the variety of responses to school issues nation wide. In addition, the subject pool for the South Floridian educators was a diverse group that mirrors the cultural diversity of South Florida, again supporting a diverse response.

Item Three

In response to item number three, the common objectives that schools should promote, the responses of the Taiwanese educators were virtually the opposite of their responses on the previous question. The majority of the Taiwanese educators' comments suggested that they felt schools should promote knowledge and basic skills as common objectives for all. Since the response of the Taiwanese educators was not consistent with any of the other items on the activity, it may suggest that social responsibility, a primary purpose of Taiwanese education, is assumed as a basic skill in the category of knowledge and basic skills.

The South Floridian educators' comments placed social responsibility items as their highest priority with knowledge and basic skills secondary. These responses are consistent with the South Floridian educators' responses on the previous item.

Item Four

On whether or not program objectives should stress competition or cooperation, item number four, the majority of both Taiwanese educators and South Floridian educators indicated in their multiple choice responses that cooperation was their highest priority (Taiwanese 88%, South Floridian 63%). Taiwanese educators' written responses evidenced a theme of social responsibility (48%) and promotion of learning (52%), while South Floridian educators' comments focused on promoting the ability to get along with others.

It is important to note that the Taiwanese educators' selection of cooperation as an objective was twenty five percentage points higher than that of the South Floridian educators. The high rate of response for the Taiwanese educators again illustrated the value of cooperation in their society, as discussed previously in this article.

In the U.S., on the other hand, competition is pervasive (Eitzen, 1992). The push for cooperative learning in education has only come about within the last twenty years. Research on

cooperative learning indicated that "cooperative methods that incorporate group goals and individual accountability accelerate student learning considerably" (Slavin, 1990, p. 54). In addition, for affective outcomes, cooperative learning produced positive effects (Slavin, 1990). The positive effects noted in the recent research may have influenced the positive comments on the part of participants responding to the activity. As students in a master of science program they would be more apt to have been exposed to research in the field and would also have the skills necessary to integrate the research into practice. However, it is surmised that the newness of cooperative learning in education in the U.S. may account for the substantially lower response rate of the South Floridian educators on this item in comparison with the Taiwanese educators.

Item Five

On multiple choice item number five regarding school objectives, Taiwanese educators and South Floridian educators again gave equivalent responses. Both groups indicated by a large majority that schools should have objectives that deal with controversial issues (Taiwanese 83%, South Floridian, 88%). Written comments for both groups reflected the same categories of responses, but at varying rates. Taiwanese educators' responses indicated that dealing with controversial issues promotes inquiry, thinking, and problem solving, in contrast with only half as many similar comments by South Floridian educators. Societal issues and change were infrequently commented on by the Taiwanese educators while over half of the South Floridian educators commented on the same. The differences proved to be quite interesting upon analysis.

Apparently, the Taiwanese educators were aware of the power of teaching using controversial issues. Their written responses included words and phrases like: discussion, present opinions, seek new ideas, inquiry techniques, logic, and problem solving. These comments can also be found imbedded in Johnson and Johnson's (1988) work, particularly in the definition of controversy and in the listing of it's benefits.

> Controversy is a type of academic conflict that exists when one student's ideas, information, conclusions, theories, and opinions are incompatible with those of another and the two seek to reach agreement. Structured academic controversies are most commonly contrasted with concurrence seeking, debate, and individualistic learning. (p. 59)

> "(S)tructured controversy results in greater student mastery. . . higher quality decisions and solutions to problems. . . the promotion of creative insights. . . and an increase in the number and quality of students' ideas, feelings of stimulation and enjoyment, and originality of expression in problem solving, resulting in greater emotional commitment to solving the problem, greater enjoyment of the process, and more imaginative solutions. (p. 63)

Interestingly, academic conflicts are avoided by U.S. teachers because they view conflicts as divisive. Research indicated that educators also felt conflicts could possibly alienate students from each other thus leading to defeat and humiliation for the less capable students (Collins, 1970; DeCecco & Richards, 1974 as cited in Johnson & Johnson, 1988). Even though South Floridian

educators selected controversial issues as a multiple choice item, their written comments did not evidence strong support for teaching using controversial issues. The research findings cited here suggest a possible explanation for the difference between the South Floridian educators' written responses and the Taiwanese educators' responses.

In addition, the South Floridian educators' written responses indicated that societal issues and change strongly influenced their feelings that objectives should deal with controversial issues. Societal issues are a major driving force in U.S. education, as pointed out previously. Recent Gallup Polls of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools (Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994). indicated that the most frequently mentioned problems with which schools must deal were: violence in the schools and a lack of discipline, lack of school funding, and drug use. Controversial issues such as these, which generate from society, impact the schools. For example, drug problems have resulted in drug and alcohol abuse prevention programs becoming a standard part of many school curricula. However, these programs have had limited success (Schamai & Coambs, 1992). The lack of program evaluations that drive program improvement has been cited as one reason for the limited success of such programs (Chelimsky, 1993; Minnesota State Department of Education, 1992). More importantly, the fact that schools have been unable to change students' behavior through drug and alcohol education programs has been attributed to cultural influences (Shamai & Coambs, 1992). In support of this fact are the findings that successful programs make use of support networks within the culture: peer assistance programs and community involvement (James, 1992; Empey, 1993). Returning to the results of the South Floridian educators' comments that societal issues strongly influenced their beliefs that objectives should deal with controversial issues, the impact of culture can be seen on their beliefs. Their responses reflected the reality of everyday life in U.S. schools: the schools must change to meet societal issues but the success of these changes is embedded in the broader societal culture.

On the other hand, the Taiwanese educators' responded that societal issues and change were low in their influence on educational objectives. This may be due to the fact that the controversial issues identified by U.S. citizens do not appear to be as much of a concern for Taiwan. Perhaps the national cultural norm of social responsibility decreases the potential for problems with violence, discipline, and drugs. In addition, since the education system in Taiwan is nationally funded and given a high priority in funding, financial concerns for education may be less of an issue. The Taiwanese education system does not appear to be buffeted by the same rapid changes required in U.S. schools.

Item Six

When asked if schools should teach attitudes, fundamental skills, or problem-solving strategies, the majority choices for multiple choice item six were similar for both Taiwanese educators and South Floridian educators. Both groups indicated that all three areas should be taught (Taiwanese 56%, South Floridian 63%). The rationales for the responses on this item also were similar across both groups. Both groups indicated in written comments that schools should prepare students with the skills necessary for living and to be successful in everyday life. Problem solving and good decision making were listed by both groups. The consistency of responses between the educators of both

groups showed the impact of foreign influences upon Taiwan and the influence of John Dewey's work on the education systems of both countries.

Foreign influences have been seen as continuously molding Chinese education and it's own past is thought to continue to shape schools (Chen, 1970). One of the foreign influences that was particularly important in Chinese history occurred at the turn of the century when Martin, a missionary, helped to introduce western culture into China (Parker, 1986). Foreign influences continued to have an impact on education over time. Another example of an important influence was John Dewey's philosophy, spurred by his visit to Taiwan in 1949. Dewey's work had such a powerful effect on the education in Taiwan that by 1974 Confucian philosophy was being compared to Dewey's philosophy of schooling, as both men believed learning was not solely an intellectual pursuit but that learning occurred through action (Scharfstein, 1974).

Dewey's books (1916, 1917, 1920, 1922, 1925) shaped what is known as pragmatism, "an American philosophical creation" (Power, 1982, p. 121). Pragmatists see the purpose of education as providing experiences to students that would educate them to live in the real world and meet the problems that arise in it. Education, guided by pragmatism, focuses on personal and social growth. Dewey also felt that schooling should deal with the most pressing problems in society. Clearly, the pragmatic philosophy of schooling, as defined by John Dewey, has had a profound impact on schools in both Taiwan and the U.S.. In this study educators' comments from both groups clearly evidenced this impact.

Item Seven

On item number seven, the educators were asked if the school should emphasize, through teaching, subject matter or behavior found beyond the classroom. The Taiwanese educators ranked behavior as their first choice at fifty percent (50%). Thirty eight percent (38%) of the South Floridian educators chose behavior while another thirty eight percent (38%) selected both academics and behavior. Academics alone was chosen by twenty one percent (21%) of the Taiwanese, and by twenty five percent (25%) of the South Floridians. Interestingly, although neither group reached a majority in multiple choice responses nor were their responses similar, the written comments for both groups were similar. The Taiwanese educators' comments reflected social responsibility, and the South Floridian educators' comments indicated the need for students to function in society.

The responses to this item mirrored a pattern typical of each group's responses on the activity in general. The Taiwanese educators' responses echoed their national cultural beliefs and values about social responsibility, while South Floridian educators' responses reflected the diversity of ideas in U.S. education discussed previously in this article.

Item Eight

On the final item, the focus of schools' objectives, there was a considerable difference between the responses of the Taiwanese educators and those of the South Floridian educators. The majority

of the Taiwanese educators indicated that objectives should be based upon the society at large (67%), while the South Floridian educators' responses did not achieve a majority. Forty four percent (44%) of the South Floridian educators felt that the schools should have objectives that are based upon the needs of the local community, the society at large, and upon the expressed needs of students. Across all categories for both groups' written responses, social issues were given as the primary rationale. The Taiwanese educators noted that living in, improving, and caring overall for society was important and that "wrong learning" makes one unsuitable for society. South Floridian educators commented on the ever changing nature of society, the student's ability to cope with it, and the responsibility of students to improve society.

The Taiwanese educators' responses are consistent with Chinese cultural values, where the individual is subordinate to society. These responses again evidenced the impact of John Dewey, who believed that education should be for personal and social growth while considering the important issues of society.

The South Floridian educators' responses replicated a combination of Dewey's and Tyler's beliefs about schooling. Ralph Tyler long advocated that objectives be based on content in various disciplines and that the content should be grounded in the needs of society and students (Brandt & Tyler, 1983). Tyler's objectives for schooling are the reality of U.S. education; it is driven by societal issues.

Findings and Conclusions

Answers to the questions posed in the introduction to this research are now clear. These answers are summarized here.

What are the guiding beliefs of the people who work in schools?

The guiding beliefs for both the Taiwanese educators and the South Floridian educators who participated in this study were traced to their countries' cultures.

Chinese cultural themes include: inner harmony, concern for others, submissiveness to authority and respect for learning (McDaniel & Soong, 1981). Confucian philosophy espouses moral instruction (Kusumoto, 1957) and was compared to John Dewey's work in its focus on learning by doing Scharfstein, 1984).

Cultural themes in the United States are varied and diverse, reflecting the diverse nature of our population. Split responses on answers to questions by the South Floridian educators reinforced this belief. However, educators' beliefs were clearly impacted by societal forces, as with the current reform and restructuring movements. In addition, the impact of John Dewey's pragmatic philosophy of schooling was evident in the educators' responses to objectives being centered on the educating students for life in the real world and the problems that arise in it.

What values are inherent in those beliefs?

The Taiwanese educators clearly value social responsibility. This was a recurring theme in their responses on the activity used in this research. Values and morals were specifically referred to, as well as team spirit/ team work, traditional culture and cooperation in society.

The key value for South Floridian educators appeared to be preparation of students for life in the real world. This was an outgrowth of beliefs about the impact of societal forces on education and on the pragmatic philosophy of John Dewey.

How do those beliefs and values relate to the delivery of education to students?

The Taiwanese educators felt that curriculum objectives should focus on social responsibility. Dealing with controversial issues was the favored delivery style. Controversy was believed to improve problem solving skills, which relates back to the notion of improving overall society (through problem solving) as part of social responsibility. Also, cooperation was a favored method, again reflecting the notion of social responsibility.

The South Floridian educators also believed in the use of controversy as a delivery style, but cited the impact of social forces as a more pressing influence. US schools are continuously impacted by societal issues, as evidenced by several examples given in the previous section of this paper. The societal issues that impact the schools reflect the beliefs and values of the US culture. Also, South Floridian educators favored cooperation as a learning style, but to a lesser degree than the Taiwanese educators did. This was traced to the recency of the cooperative learning movement in the US

Do these basic beliefs and values vary between educators from two different countries?

Some of the key beliefs and values are the same: preparing students for real life and the problems that arise in it, teaching using problem solving and cooperation, and that schools can improve society.

Differences occurred in the strength of responses within these given areas. The Taiwanese educators tended to be more unified in their responses. This was traced to cultural differences, particularly to the diversity in the United States. Also, South Floridian educators felt stronger about the impact of societal forces upon education, an historical fact of US education as evidenced from the advent of the first religious schools to the impact of reform and restructuring.

How are beliefs and values, as evidenced in philosophy, articulated in school culture?

Clearly, the similarities and differences in school culture as described by the Taiwanese and South Floridian educators evidenced articulation of the beliefs and values of the participants. The similarities supported one of the premises cited previously in this research paper: consistency among school cultures and across national boundaries (Myer & Rowan, 1983). This similarity was traced

to school philosophy, in particular Pragmatism as developed by Dewey. This philosophy was evident in the responses of educators from both cultures. Differences in cultures (Yukl, 1994) were noted in the responses to written items on the survey. For example, Taiwanese educators valued social responsibility highly, while South Floridian educators focused more on current societal issues.

Mitchell and Tucker (1992) pointed out in their article about transformational leadership that "in settled cultures . . . well-established norms and shared beliefs interpret ordinary activities and guide inhabitants . . . . Effective leadership . . . rests on coordination and expertise" (p. 32). However, the authors stated that in a culture in flux, "leadership emphasizes culture building and problem solving--individual differences may be respected, but there is an obvious need for common experiences and a shared commitment to the emerging community" (p. 32). The well established Taiwanese culture is similar to the culture described in the first quote. The homogeneous group of educators responding to the activity in this research reflected a higher level of agreement on items than did the diverse South Floridian educators. The latter group is better described by the second quote above, as a group needing culture building and problem solving. The US history of culture and education is brief in comparison to that of Taiwan, hence it might be termed as less well established. In addition, the US is composed of a wide diversity of people who have a wide diversity of beliefs and values.

As can be seen by the previous discussion, the participants' perspectives supported the notion that school culture has some consistency from school to school and across national boundaries (Myer & Rowan, 1983). Yet, despite a surface sameness, there were distinct differences in the perspectives reported in this study. These differences can reflect the developmental stages of cultures (Mitchell & Tucker, 1992; Yukl, 1994).

Implications

Three points can be made based on this study. First, the findings of this study on the similarities and differences in school culture were traced to the values and beliefs held by educators. As was seen in the Results and Interpretations section of this article, the micro-level reflections on school culture provided valuable information. In this instance, when taken together with the literature in the field, the information was able to explain the rationales for curriculum and instruction decisions made by the study's participants. Hence, the value of micro-level exploration and reflection on school culture was affirmed.

Second, the survey used for micro-level exploration in this study served as a rich source of information. Future studies should further explore it's value as a tool to understand school culture. For example, it could be used at an individual school site level to gather information to enhance educational decision making on curriculum and instruction for school improvement.

Finally, coding categories that described the micro-level of school culture were established as part of this study. Research using these categories, refining and developing them further, can create a framework for examining school culture. Such a framework could make a significant contribution to theory development in the area of school culture.

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I believe that schools
1. a. should accept the existing social order
   b. should adopt to the social order as it changes
   c. should seek to change or improve the social order
   because _____
   _____
   _____

2. can do the following things better than any other existing institution or agency_____
   _____
   _____

3. should promote the following common objectives for all students _____
   _____
   _____

4. should have program objectives that stress
   a. competition
   b. cooperation
   because _____
   _____

5. should have objectives that
   a. deal with controversial issues
   b. deal only with things supported by established knowledge
   because _____
   _____

6. should teach
   a. attitudes
   b. fundamental skills
   c. problem solving strategies
   because _____
   _____

7. should emphasize the following through teaching:
   a. subject matter
   b. behavior found beyond the classroom and school
   because _____
   _____

8. should have objectives based on
   a. needs of the local community
   b. the society at large
   c. the expressed needs of students
   because _____
   _____

Figure 3.1 Options for Educational Objectives