MALAYSIAN PRIMARY SCHOOLS:
A CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARATIVE STUDY

Dr Nordin Abd Razak

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ABOUT THE BOOK

This book is based on extensive work and presents a comparative study of culturally based Malaysian primary schools that are strongly related to the three major cultural groups, namely, the Malay, Chinese and Indian ethnic groups. The investigation of the similarities and differences between these three groups employed the main variables in this study, cultural orientation, school transformational leadership, in-school working condition with different forms of teacher commitment as the criteria. The analyses were conducted at three different levels that is, teacher, school and ethnic group levels with extensive used different techniques of data analysis to test several models developed arising from the research questions. The results showed that the similarities and differences are dependent on the school types or ethnic groups, indicating the influence of cultural effects on different aspects of teacher commitment. The moderating effects operating between levels signified the complexity and subtlety of the structures and processes within and between these three ethnic-based school types. The findings and their implications for the continuation of research into teacher commitment and cultural orientation as well as their implications for the national education system in Malaysia are discussed.

This book is suitable for use by educational policy makers, administrators, educational researchers and practitioners, school principals, teachers and students of education. It is particularly recommended to post-graduate students as an insightful guide to the quest for knowledge.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Nordin Abd Razak, has worked in the field of education for more than 30 years in different sectors and now affiliate with School of Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia. He holds his Ph.D. from Flinders University, Adelaide. His area of interest is in the Quantitative Research Methodology, Measurement and Statistical Data Analysis and Cross-cultural Comparative study on the educational leadership and management as well as organisational behaviour from the socio-psychological perspective.

REVIEWS

This is an impressive thesis. It clearly indicates the breadth and depth of knowledge, and the sophisticated research skillss of Mr Nordin Abd Razak. The thesis is long, but the extent to which Mr Abd Razak develops his research problems, reviews the relevant literature, and carries out his detailed analysis demonstrates the high quality of the finished product.

The topic of the study is extremely important. Teachers constitute the core of an educational system. Without good teachers the best resourced educational system will be lacking. One aspect of the quality of teachers is the extent to which they have a commitment to their profession and students. Razak not only justifies this substantive topics of teacher commitment and culture, but also makes a strong case as to why this topic is important in the Malaysian context, where there are three distinct cultural groups cutting across the school systems. Overall, this is a very ambitious thesis. The amount of work it represents is enormous. Most importantly, Razak demonstrates a very high level of competence in the way in which he conducts his research ... and the thesis is extremely well presented.

Professor Lawrence Saha, Adjunct Professor, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Australia National University, Canberra
A major contribution to the field of teacher commitment in education that examines the influences of cultural orientation, transformational leadership in schools, and in-school working condition on the sense of duty held and expressed by teachers in Malaysian primary schools. The complex nature of the field demands the innovative use of multilevel and multivariate modelling in this substantial and exceptionally well-researched and well-presented study.

Prof. John P. Keeves, Adjunct Professor, The University of Adelaide, South Australia
Organisation of the Book

This book is divided into five major sections. The first section is comprised of two chapters that are introductory in nature. Chapter 1 discusses the background and rational, research purposes and questions as well as the significance of the study. Chapter 2 presents general information about Malaysia, the structure and composition of the societies, the education system, which is strongly linked with three major ethnic groups, namely, the Malays, Chinese and Indian, and information pertaining to teacher education and preparation or training.

The second section focuses on a review of the literature associated with the four main variables examined in the study; (a) Cultural orientations; (b) School transformational leadership; (c) In-school working conditions; and (d) Teacher commitment. This section consists of four chapters, namely, Chapter 3 to Chapter 6. Chapter 3 discusses the rationale for taking culture as the anchoring construct in the study, defining the concept and explaining Hofstede’s four cultural orientation dimensions used in this study; (a) Uncertainty avoidance; (b) Individualism-Collectivism, (c) Power distance; and (e) Masculinity-femininity. Chapter 4 discusses and defines the School transformational leadership variable. In addition, this chapter presents the relationships or the influence of culture on leadership behaviour and effectiveness. Specifically, this chapter links each of Hofstede’s cultural orientation dimensions with school transformational leadership behaviours. Chapter 5 considers the In-school working conditions variable. This chapter discusses and explains the development of this variable, and defines each of the scales that form this construct. Furthermore, this chapter links the Hofstede cultural dimensions as well as School transformational leadership with In-school working conditions. Finally, Chapter 6 presents the criterion or dependent variable examined in this study, Teacher commitment, and explains how this construct is formed. Moreover, this chapter discusses the relationships between the concepts of Hofstede’s cultural dimensions, school transformational leadership as well as in-school working conditions and teacher commitment.

The third section considers the framework and modelling that underpins the relationships between the variables examined in this study, the design and methods of the study, and the data preparation for the main analysis in order to answer the research questions advanced. This section contains four chapters, Chapter 7 to Chapter 10. Chapter 7 presents the framework and model of the relationships between the variables involved in this study. In this chapter, propositions associated with the relationships between the variables are advanced. In addition, the operationalisations of each construct and its respective manifest variables are presented. Chapter 8 discusses the design of the study. In this chapter, the sampling method used and the characteristics of the sample are discussed. This chapter also presents the trial testing results for each instrument that measures each construct and the development of the instruments for the final fieldwork surveys. Chapter 9 presents the approaches employed to analyse the data of the main study. This chapter is closely related to Chapter 10 and the other remaining chapters. Chapter 10 describes the details of the systematic data preparation for the main analyses.

The fourth section, consisting of Chapter 11 through Chapter 15, discusses the results of the study. Chapter 11 presents the descriptive information about the teachers, school head and school characteristics involved in the study. In addition, this chapter discusses the results of the analysis carried out using, bivariate correlation, two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and multidimensional discriminant analysis. Chapter 12 discusses the results of the analysis using the Partial Least Square (PLS) path analysis technique. This chapter seeks to answer the similarities and differences of the relationships between the many predictor variables and the criterion variable Teacher commitment across ethnic groups or school types at both the teacher and the school level. Chapters 13 and 14 report on the use of multilevel techniques employed to tease out the factors influencing Teacher commitment.
and other types of teacher commitment. Chapter 13 focuses on two-level analyses while Chapter 14 focuses on three-level analyses. Chapter 15 gives more comprehensive views of the analysis by combining both the multilevel and structural equation modelling methods. The technique involved is known as Multilevel structural equation modelling using the MPLUS statistical program.

The final section is Chapter 16 that presents the main conclusions and discussion of the findings of the study by providing answers to the research questions, in addition, the implications of the findings of the study for theory, practice and further research are also given in this chapter.