The role of professional learning communities on organizational citizenship behavior in educational institution

Roslan bin Awang,
University of Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia
E-mail: roslanclk@gmail.com

Wan Rashid bin Wan Ahmad
University of Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia
E-mail: mdrashid@uthm.edu.my

Abstract

The education institution needs to transform in order to cope with the competition and globalization issue. The transformation process requires full participation and commitment from the entire members in the institution. Hence, it is important for organization to utilize their human resources in order to ensure effective operation. Employees in the organization should be able to realize the organization transformation mission in order to achieve transformation process. As such, organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) is crucial to be identified because the OCB would have a positive impact on the organizational performance and effectiveness. The success of OCB will be more effective when the OCB becomes the culture in an organization rather than as individual initiative. Failures to have a collective OCB may affect the organizational transformation process. The collective working environment can be enhanced through collaborative working approach. The professional learning communities (PLC) are professional development approach which focuses on collaborative effort and effective strategy for school positive changes and improvement. The five dimensions of PLC will be employed in this study namely, supportive and shared leadership, collective learning, aim mission and vision, supportive condition and shared personal practice (Hord, 2004). Therefore, this study attempts to investigate the PLC influence teacher’s OCB in the school context.

Keywords: Transformation, organizational citizenship behavior, professional learning communities

1. INTRODUCTION

The school success depends on the student achievement. In order to achieve the target, the fundamental role is on the teachers who are competence and willing to go beyond role expectations voluntary (DiPaola and Tschannen-Moran, 2001). Employee voluntary behavior is not part of the job description and also is not enforceable. Employee organizational voluntary behavior is termed as organizational citizenship behavior (OCB). It is defined as “a set of helpful, discretionary and extra-role behavior exhibited that are not directly or clearly recognized by the
formal reward system” (Organ, 1988 p. 4). The OCB has been conceptualized as having positive implications both for employee and organizational performance (Bolino, Turnley, Gilstrap and Suazo, 2010; Organ, Podsakoff and Mckenzie, 2006). Besides, the OCB provides additional resources and removes the needs for expensive formal mechanism for the successful processes in an organization (Somech and Drach-Zahavy, 2000; Bogler and Somech, 2004).

In Malaysia, the Polytechnic Transformation Agenda 2010-2020 has been launched to enhance their performance (DPE, 2010). The transformation is in line with the National Higher Educational Strategic Plan 2007-2020. To achieve this mission, transformation process needs fully commitment and participation from the entire employee because an organization cannot transform but employee did (Hall and Hord, 1987). Therefore, teachers play a pivotal role to realize this mission. Hence, organizational transformation success depends on teachers who are willing to contribute to the organizations’ success regardless of their formal job requirements. In addition, it is important for organization to utilize their human resources in order to ensure effective operation. This is because OCB is critical to organization functioning because it reduces the need to allocate scarce resources to the maintenance function within organization (Bolino, 1999: Oplatka, 2009).

The performance of schools is usually determined by the teachers’ performance and commitment (Yucel, 2008). However, not all teachers are willing to go beyond their job description. Furthermore, the OCB is an individual initiative and contingent upon whether the performance of OCB is seen to yield a positive outcome to the individual (Haworth and Levy, 2001). For an example, the positive OCB outcome is may contribute from leader appreciation or more likely to receive help from colleagues in return when needed (Deckop, Cirka and Andersson, 2003). Hence, it maybe concluded that, the reason why some teachers are not performing OCB is because they are suffering from the collaborative working environment. This is in line with Stoner et al, (2011) suggestion that, excessive OCB can make employee stress, role overload and reduced task performance. Therefore, school needs to develop the collaborative working culture that can support teachers to perform OCB in their daily working basis (Deckop et al, 2003).

Professional learning communities (PLC) is a professional development approach which focus on collaborative effort and effective strategy for school positive changes and improvement (Du Four, 2004; Herrington, 2010). Researchers have suggested that teacher expertise will improve when teachers are members of the PLC (Donaldson, 2006; DuFour, 2004; Gwin, 2008). The PLC creates an interactive social environment in organization and thus may enhance the OCB. Therefore, this paper aims to review the relevant literature and subsequently propose a conceptual model to explain the relationship between the PLC and OCB.

2.LITERATURE REVIEW
2.1 **Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB)**

The operation of school as a service organization is different as compared to non-educational setting because teachers are generally committed to do what is the best for their clients (DiPaola and Hoy, 2004). OCB in school refers to teacher’s discretionary behaviors that go beyond existing role expectations and are directed (a) toward the student (doing extra class, visit student house) (b) the team (helping other teacher who have heavy workloads, orient new teachers) and (c) organizations (doing extra job, making innovative suggestion for school improvement) (Oplatka, 2009; Somech and Drach-Zahavy, 2000). Scholars in educational settings show that OCB is positively and significantly related to student achievement and other school characteristics. Among studies on OCB in the school context are Bogler and Somech, 2004; Christ, Van, Wagner and Stellmacherl, 2003; DiPaola and Hoy, 2004; DiPaola, Tschannen and Moran, 2001, DiPaola, Tarter and Hoy, 2005; Oplatka, 2006, 2009, 2011; Bogler and Somech, 2004; Somech and Ron, 2007; Somech and Drach-Zahavy, 2000.

Besides teaching period and co-curriculum activities, teachers also help students with class material, volunteer for school committees, set learning programme for substitute teachers, helping absent teachers and work collaboratively with others. All of these OCBs related to technical core of the organization (Diefendorff, Brown, Kamin and Lord, 2002). Although OCB is not stated in the teacher employment contract and cannot be enforced by the employment, these responsibilities must be built-in each individual teacher to increase the student achievements. This aligns with the prior research which indicates that an emotional care for students might results student will pay more attention in learning and enhance their academic achievement (Moore, 2004). Inherently, teachers who perform OCB should be contributed to the organizational performance and effectiveness.

According to exchange theory, as individual interact over time, they experienced the need to reciprocate the support and assistance of other person (Blau, 1964). Therefore, supportive working environment is important to encourage teachers to perform OCB continuously. Research indicates that teacher participation in decision making provide advantage to student and organization because they can provide more inputs about their students and directly OCB can be enhanced (Bogler and Somech, 2004). Hence, principal should emphasis on teachers’ intrinsic rather than the extrinsic job satisfaction (Hassanreza, 2010). For that reason, principal should allow teacher to participate in school discussion not only regarding student achievement but also in term of decision making. This is because teachers who have high social needs will feel that isolated professionalism will constraint them from deliver the best idea for colleagues and organization (Somech and Drach-Zahavy, 2000).

2.2 **Professional learning communities and OCB**
The professional learning communities (PLC) comprises of a group of educator, administrator, community member and other stakeholders. These groups collectively examine and improve their own professional practice (DuFour, 2004). Usually, there is a regular meeting among group members to discuss about their profession needs and school development. They will share their knowledge and experience to contribute to the classroom content for the student learning and achievement (Langer, 2000). Besides, the PLC would create an interactive social process in organization. This process may nurture the collaborative working culture and simultaneously can enhance OCB (Organ and Paine, 1999). Researchers have suggested that teacher expertise will improve when teachers are members of the PLC group (Donaldson, 2006; DuFour, 2004; Gwin, 2008).

Further, PLC is a powerful professional development approach and an effective strategy for school positive changes for organization improvement (Herrington, 2011). The concept of PLC as a professional development is different as compared to the traditional model. The traditional model provides teacher with skills and knowledge to be distributed to their students (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999). It is a professional development which is the concept workshop based (Lumpe, 2007). In contrast, the PLC professional development is based on knowledge that is acquired for further experiment and investigation (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999). In addition, the culture of PLC as the professional development is a continuously process and it is within the organizational members. Previous research shows that professional development opportunities related to perceived organizational support (Wayne, Shore and Liden, 1997). Therefore, PLC working environment may encourage teacher to perform OCB.

In today’s era of scarce resources and accountability, PLC seems to be crucial to benefit for student and organization. In this context, the relationship between PLC and many variables have been examined. Among these variables, are collaboration (Little, Gearhart, Curry and Kafka, 2003), student achievement (DuFour, 2004; Du Four, Du Four, Eaker and Many, 2006), teacher performance, (Hipp and Huffman, 2003), characteristics (Hord, 2004), formation, sustainment and perception (Hord, 2004) of PLC. Besides the individual researchers, there are also several educational related bodies whose research on PLC at the national level in United States such as Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL), National Staff Development Council (NSDC) and Association for Curriculum Development (ASDC).

In a PLC environment, the organization needs to provide a regular time and suitable place for communities to have a discussion. This will be the platform for the teachers and administrators to give an input or their teaching and learning process. For an example, school in Japan and Singapore has allocated certain hours in their weekly schedule for communities to discuss their successes and challenges purposely for
student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 1996; Lemke, 2010). Hence, when teachers meet their colleagues over time, they will experience the need to reciprocate the support and assistance of the other person. Therefore, when individuals work in group normative obligations may generate (Blau, 1964). In addition, the success of the PLC implementation action in Singapore, Finland and Korea is shown by the result of international tests namely Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (Lemke, 2010).

This study represents the PLC dimensions of Hord (2004), which explored the concept and operational of PLC and their outcomes for teacher to perform OCB in their working environment. The literature on PLC repeatedly gives attention of such PLC dimension: supportive and shared leadership, collective learning, shared value and vision, supportive conditions and shared personal practice. Therefore, to implement PLC in schools need commitments and contributions from teachers and administrators.

2.2.1 Supportive and shared leadership and OCB
Principals need support and commitment from the members in the organization. Therefore, the principals should develop a strong relationship with teachers. When teachers feel respected and supported, consequently they will feel obliged and to act supportively and helpfully in return by OCB (Moss, 2010). This reciprocity behavior is a positive part of the OCB. Supportive and shared leadership is one of the PLC dimension and it is also known as the type of transformational leadership. In schools, the concept of shared leadership has moved to the forefront of leadership approaches compare to the instructional role (Murphy, 2002; Sanzo, Shermain and Clayton, 2010). This shows that teachers and principal have a leadership impact that occurs in school (Printy and Marks, 2010). As Bandura writes “strong principal excels in their ability to get their staff to work together with a strong sense of purpose and to believe in their capabilities to surmount to educational attainment (Bandura, 1993 p. 141). Therefore, leader supportiveness had a direct effect on OCB (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman and Fetter, 1990).

Basically, teachers from different discipline frequently work in teams; discuss their task, curriculum, co-curriculum or instructional expertise and provide feedback based on student learning outcomes but without formal leadership (Printy and Marks, 2010). This is because each person represents unique knowledge and capability in a key function of the organization. Through their collaborative discussion and share experiences, teachers established the purpose of working together to develop clarity about what are valued and their future focus (Wenger, 1998). Therefore, teachers may feel empowered at school and reflect their feelings of commitment towards organization, the profession and OCB (Bogler and Somech, 2004). Despite that, the relationship between an employee and their organization is described as a social exchange
relationship (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Social exchange is the degree to which an individual feels the need to reciprocate after perceived benefits (Lambert, 2000). Shared leadership is a concept that has grown for the realization that leadership can be effectively shared or distributed among member of a group or team (Pearce and Conger, 2003; Kahnweiler and Thompson, 2000). Therefore, OCB carries great advantages for other member in organization including teachers, students and the school (Bogler and Somech, 2004).

2.2.2 Collective learning and OCB
Individual learning is a continuous cycle that involves a change in individual’s behavior. This is the on-going quest for knowledge, skills improvement, advancement and a shift in the world view. While, collective learning involves an organizational process that individual learning can be shared, evaluated and integrated with others (Duncan and Weiss, 1979). The collective learning may improve the work and the process of innovations, the adaptations to the changing environment and can optimize the learning for individuals (Mittendorf et al., 2006). In schools, collective learning is a collaborative relationship which is centred on developing informed decision making and a knowledge-based that positively impacts practice (Hord, 1997). It emphasizes the cognitive process that result from effective PLCs and importance of working collectively with curricular outcomes.

The collective learning moves from the individual to the collective. Although the individual in organization is only the entity who learns but the learning must be viewed as a part of learning system with exchange of what is learned by individual (Tompkins, 1995). In addition collective learning is not limited only on learning but it is also the collective to learn from experiences drawn by the employee while working (Backstrom, 2004). The collective and its application have roots in reflective conversation where staff members discuss the learning of students and teaching (Hord, 2004). For example, a study at Cottonwood Creek School, found that teacher is productive to develop and maintain close working relationship within and across grade levels (SEDL, 2001). This essential component of teachers learning and applying new knowledge to improve their own instruction and student learning is a main principle of PLCs (Herrington, 2010).

2.2.3 Shared Value and Vision and OCB
Vision is an old term these days, and at various times it refers to mission, purpose, goals, and an objective (Isaacson and Bamburg, 1992). Vision is not just agreeing with a good idea but it is particular mental image of what is important to an individual and to an organization. Researchers have indicated that it is essential that staff members have a shared mission, vision, values and goals (DuFour et al., 2006). Sharing the same values and norms will empower the staff because they become personal to all who share them. In PLC, teacher are encouraged not only to be
involved in the process of developing a shared vision but to use that vision as a guidepost in making decision about teaching and learning in school (Hord 1997). Having common values and sharing the same vision for the school is a goal of a PLC (Herrington, 2010; May, Hamid, Ijab and Hsiao 2009). Consequently, teachers will experience an obligation to commit with the mission and perform OCB.

2.2.4 Supportive conditions
In PLC, supportive conditions determine when, where and how staff regularly comes together as a unit to do the learning, decision making, problem solving, and creative work (DuFour, 2004). In order for PLC to function productively, the physical conditions and the human qualities and capacities of the people involved must be optimal (Boyd 1992; Louis & Kruse, 1995). Particularly, in areas that have impact on employee's immediate work environment such as pay and working hours (McCarthy, Reeves and Turner, 2010). They added that, these supportive conditions can have significant impact on employee commitment and OCB. Supportive conditions would allow employee to experience satisfaction with their jobs because when the firm is maintaining or improving their work environment, they perceive a moral obligation to reciprocate through greater levels of commitment and OCB (Coyle-Shapiro and Kessler, 2002; Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). In contrast, when employees feel that the firm has failed to provide a beneficial work environment, employees will reduce their OCB. Organizations have an incentive to provide employee with sufficient autonomy to engage in OCB, because these behaviors can associate with organizational effectiveness (Organ et al., 2006). Employees who experience satisfaction with the workplace are more likely to engage in OCB (Murphy et al., 2002).

2.2.5 Shared personal practice
In PLC, knowledge is not viewed as an object or something that can be owned. Shared personal practice appears in school when teachers share their practice and enjoy a high level of collaboration in their daily work life (Wignall 1992). For an example, communities can develop strategies to solve their problem, discuss individual situations and needs, talk about common concerns, act as surrounding boards, develop personal relationships and coach each other. Mutual respect and understandings are the fundamental requirements for this kind of workplace culture to gain shared personal practice (Berlinger-Gustafon, 2004). This participation of leadership need to be collective and facilitative and has the ability to work together with staff without dominating.

Teachers need to talk with each other to better understand how to approach their work, including such things as what expectations they should have for their students (Printy and Marks, 2004). Specific teacher characteristics or behavior directly impact the student learning because they use a range of learning strategies that enable them to adjust, adapt and differentiate to meet student needs, learning goals, topics and methods (Darling-Hammond, 2003).
2.3 Conceptual framework

Based on the literature review, a conceptual framework is proposed as figure 1. The PLC dimensions: supportive and shared leadership, collective learning, shared mission and vision, supportive conditions and shared learning are assumed to enhance teacher to perform OCB. It is reasonable when the working culture of PLC is developed in schools consequently OCB of teachers exist and school performance will increase.

3 Conclusion

This concept paper is to develop for the educational settings to show the enthusiasm of the PLC on OCB and simultaneously may enhance the organization performance. Researchers have shown that educations who implement PLC have gain successful for their students. Besides, this collaborative working approach may develop teachers to perform OCB. Continuous changes in the educational system needs an organization to develop the system that can suite with any changes. Because, education cannot take a long period as students learning session is continuous and no turning back. My ultimate goal is to promote a culture of working environment (PLC) that benefits employees and their organizations. I hope that this paper will stimulates further research into the relationship between PLC and OCB.
Bibliography


Boyd, V. (1992). School context: Bridge or barrier for change?


ATTACHMENTS

Figure 1: Proposed conceptual framework