RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS AND CHARACTER BUILDING OF PUPILS IN CHINESE PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN MALAYSIA

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Asia e University

2013

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS AND CHARACTER BUILDING OF PUPILS IN CHINESE PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN MALAYSIA

HO NEE YONG

A Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
Asia e University, in fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Education

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many special thanks are due to Prof Dr Siow Heng Loke, Dean, School of Graduate Studies Asia e University, who has kindly consented to be my supervisor for this study and whose sterling support has catalysed this effort. I am indeed very grateful and appreciate his valuable guidance in the write-up of this thesis. My gratitude also goes to Prof Dr Lim Chooi Kwa of Institute of Chinese Studies, Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) for vetting through my questionnaires; Dr Chang Peng Kee of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia for his guidance on statistical data entries; Dr Soon Seng Tah of Ministry of Education Malaysia for the approval letter to conduct the survey in schools; Heads of Chinese primary schools and educators who have kindly helped in the questionnaires survey and interviews to add credence to the findings; and Ms Choo Min Joo for her excellent work in formatting my thesis. I wish also to record here my appreciation to the late Datuk Dr Ian Chia, a Harvard PhD scholar, whose encouragement and inputs given me as an old friend will always be cherished. My heartfelt appreciation to my wife, Goh Oi Neoh, whose support for my advocacy in lifelong learning is a natural inspiration for this thesis. To all others who have contributed to this study in one way or another, I will always treasure their assistance and concern.

Ho Nee Yong

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

21 April 2013

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis submitted in fulfillment of the PhD degree is my own work and that all contributions from any other persons or sources are properly and duly cited. I further declare that the material has not been submitted either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university. In making this declaration, I understand and acknowledge that any breach in this declaration constitutes academic misconduct, which may result in my expulsion from the programme and/or exclusion from the award of the degree.

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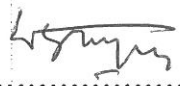

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ENDORSEMENT

I certify that I have supervised/read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in quality and scope, as a thesis for the fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Relationships between School Characteristics and Character Building of Pupils in Chinese Primary Schools in Malaysia

Abstract

The main research question for this study is: To what extent do school characteristics contribute to the character building of pupils in Chinese primary schools in Malaysia? The operational definitions of 'characteristics' in this study are the eight independent variables namely: 1) Dong Jia Jiao (DJJ 董家教), an abbreviation of School Boards of Governors and Parent-Teacher Associations, 2) Mother tongue education, 3) Trilingualism, 4) Confucianism, 5) School discipline, 6) Teachers, 7) Pedagogy, and 8) Environment - home and school. These eight variables were condensed into six based on Confirmatory Factor Analysis. The sole dependent variable is Character building of which the operational definition encompasses the eagerness to study, practising good values and having a sense of shame. (Chen, 1966) A total of 554 sets of questionnaires were sent to 45 Chinese primary schools in 14 states in Malaysia, and 508 sets (91.7%) were returned. The different tests used in this study included factor analysis, t-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Chi-square test, and Multiple Linear Regression. The triangulation approach was adopted to triangulate the quantitative data from the questionnaires derived from literature review, with the qualitative data obtained from the interviews. The final analysis of data showed that school characteristics contributed 36.8% to the character building of Chinese primary school pupils as follows: Teachers and pedagogy (24.3%), Environment (6.6%), Mother tongue education (3.1%), DJJ (1.2%), Confucianism and school discipline (1.0%), and Trilingualism (0.6%). The balance of 63.2% therefore comes from other

external factors which affect the character building of pupils. Recommendations have been offered to Chinese primary schools for the further enhancement of character building of pupils. The future research study on developing educational innovations towards character building, better national integration and racial harmony in Malaysia will be a vital research to pursue. From the insightful mentors of China from the East to the distinguished educators of the West come the teachings and practices of education which vary as greatly as the expanse between these continents. Their goal, however, is united: to spawn educated individuals with wholesome personalities. Their goal is plain and noble: for a better and more virtuous future generation through an all-round education. This study therefore aims to provide a harmony of learning to children and to nurture them with a versatile form of teaching. As the paths to a better and full education converge, so will the objectives of a sound knowledge, namely for children to be achievers in their careers while retaining their morals.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIHS	Chinese Independent High Schools (独立中学)
Dongzong	United Chinese School Committees' Association of Malaysia [UCSCAM or Boards of Governors' Association] (董总)
df	Degrees of freedom
Dongjiajiao (DJJ)	Joint committee of United Chinese School Committees' Association of Malaysia [UCSCAM and PTAs] (董家教) or Boards of Governors and PTAs
EU	European Union
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
Jiaozong	教总 United Chinese School Teachers' Association of Malaysia [UCSTAM]
LCE	Lower Certificate of Education
MCA	Malaysian Chinese Association
PPSMI	*Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik dalam bahasa Inggeris* [Teaching and Learning of Science and Mathematics in English Language]
PTA	Parents-Teachers Association
SC	School Certificate
S.D.	Standard Deviation
SJK(C)	*Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan (Cina)* [Chinese National Type Schools or Chinese Primary Schools]
SMJK	Conforming Secondary Schools (改制中学)
SJK(T)	*Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan* (Tamil) [Tamil National Type Schools or Tamil Primary Schools]
SK	*Sekolah Kebangsaan* [National Schools or Malay Primary Schools]
UPSR	*Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah* [Primary School Achievement Test or Standard Six Evaluation Test]

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The Chinese schools in Malaysia have had a history of about 200 years, with the 100-year-old Confucian Chinese Independent High School in Kuala Lumpur as its living testimony. To the Chinese emigrants to Malaysia, education of their young is as important as craving a living in the new country. From the very outset, the Chinese wanted not only to impart useful knowledge but also to nurture the Confucian values of respect for the elders and character development. Of equal importance they hoped to instil values of scholars in their children. Character building is thus synonymous with Chinese education and it therefore has become the main purpose of Chinese parents wanting to send their children to Chinese schools since the early years. Parents wanted their children to be nurtured to have filial piety, good manners, and integrity, the last of which was testified by businessmen whose words were as good as sealed agreement. The schools were self-reliant, the teachers dedicated, and the school culture was that of learning and educating.

As years passed by and with the society becoming more affluent, the status of teachers was affected in a materialistic world. Respect for individuals began to be weighed on silver and gold. Teachers who are not decently paid might become the object of sarcasm (Becker, 1949); and though monetary returns may not be the sole motivating factor in teaching, a low salary neither inspires the teachers. (Kelly, 2010) With the emergence of globalization and easy access of communications at current

time, human behaviours, social values, mores change and Criminal Breach of Trust have become common even among the top leaders of organisations and political arena. Thus there appears to be a need for rethinking the school on how moral education and the teaching of good citizenship are being taught.

The Chinese primary schools in Malaysia are unique because of their school characteristics. This in turn affects the character building of pupils. The teaching of three languages, the teaching of Confucian values, and the existence of Boards of Governors are characteristics of Chinese primary schools but not the National schools. The school characteristics are also common knowledge to Chinese educationists and society for the past 50 years. Hence, the conceptual definition of these school characteristics, together with character building, will justify their selection as the Independent Variables (IVs) and Dependent Variable of this research.

If the Chinese primary schools of the early years were synonymous with character building, can it be said to be so in the twenty-first century? The school characteristics basically remain the same. It is the character building of pupils in these schools that is to be examined in this research. The research is to find out whether the Chinese primary schools still maintain that legacy of having produced pupils of character, with existing school characteristics. The main research question will then be: To what extent do school characteristics contribute to the character building of pupils in Chinese primary schools in Malaysia? Relationships between school characteristics and character building of pupils in selected Chinese Primary schools are thus deemed to be worth researching.