

## **SCHOOL TYPE AND SCHOOL SETTING DIFFERENCES IN TEACHERS PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL CULTURE**

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### ***Abstract***

The main purpose of the present study was to investigate secondary school teachers' perceptions of school culture in Ethiopia. Respondents were 381 secondary school beginning teachers in East Shoa and West Arsi Zones of Oromiya regional state, Ethiopia. They responded to a two-part questionnaire—demographic variables, and the School Culture Survey (Gruenert & Valentine, 1998). Scale results showed that beginning teachers in Ethiopia claim high levels of school culture—collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, collegial support, and unity of purpose; while their perceptions of learning partnership tend to be neutral. Results also showed that significant differences were found in teachers' perceptions of school culture, when grouped by school type and school setting. Public secondary school teachers perceived higher teacher collaboration, professional development and collegial support than private secondary school teachers. Teachers in suburban schools perceived higher teacher collaboration than those in urban schools. Implications and recommendations for school practices and future research are discussed.

**Key Words:** Collaborative leadership, Collegial support, Learning partnership, Perception, professional development, School culture, School setting, School type, Teachers collaboration, Unity of purpose.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

To understand the contributing factors to the success of any community, business entity, or organization, it is important to study their culture. Similarly, to understand the success of any school, it is critical to study its culture—the everyday realities and profound configuration of school life (Brown, 2004; Raywid, 2001). Raywid (2001) noted that endeavors for educational reformation to achieve excellence are prone to failure unless they are significantly connected to the distinctive culture of the school. School improvement and change research has revealed that school culture is fundamental in enhancing curriculum, instruction, professional development, and learning (Peterson & Deal, 2009).

The impressions that the school culture reveals are also crucial for a beginning teacher. If the school culture reveals a negative impression, the beginning teacher will most likely sooner or later end up dropping out of the teaching profession. On the other hand, positive school culture may result in motivating and encouraging the beginning teacher to persist through challenges and succeed in the profession.

Generally, school culture has a significant influence on the operational effectiveness of any school. Thus, school leaders need to play a vital role in shaping and improving school culture (Gamage & Pang, 2003).

The purpose of this study is twofold:

- a. To assess secondary school beginning teachers' perceptions of school culture in Ethiopia.
- b. To discover how the school type and school setting variables impact secondary school beginning teachers' perceptions of school culture.

To better understand the stated problems of the study, this researcher has endeavored to investigate the following two questions:

- a. What are the beginning teachers' perceptions of school culture in Ethiopia?
- b. Do the beginning teachers' perceptions of school culture differ significantly across school type and school setting?

## 2. Review of Related Literature

School culture can be defined in a number of ways. Writers commonly define school culture as the normative adhesive that holds a specific school together (Hoy & Hoy, 2006; Schein, 2004; Sergiovanni, 2000). Barth (2002) defined school culture in a more concise way as "a complex pattern of norms, attitudes, beliefs, values, ceremonies, traditions, and myths that are deeply ingrained in the very core of the organization" (p. 7).

Although the concept of school culture may embrace number of factors, Gruenert and Valentine (1998) have identified six dimensions of school culture. These dimensions are believed to provide insight about the shared values/viewpoints, the patterns of activities, and the interactions in the school. Each dimension measures a distinctive feature of the school's shared values (Gruenert & Valentine, 1998). This study will focus on these six factors—collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development collegial support, unity of purpose, and learning partnership—which if present will have a positive impact on schools. The succeeding sections will focus these six dimensions of school culture.

### 2.1. Collaborative Leadership

Collaborative leadership refers to the extent to which teachers' ideas, suggestions, and contributions are accepted by school leaders, and how much school leaders trust, encourage, and consult teachers in decision-making (Gruenert, 2000). Lieberman (as cited in Clement & Vandenberghe, 2003) believes that "a collaborative school culture with shared leadership and professional networking holds the best prospects for the development of teacher' knowledge and beliefs" (pp. 123-124). Gruenert (2000) has identified a positive effect of collaborative school culture for student and teacher learning. Gruenert further reported that teacher collaboration can be enhanced by "learning about the concept of school culture, collecting data to assess your school culture, creating structures and opportunities for collaboration and rewarding teachers that collaborate" (p. 1).

### 2.2. Teacher Collaboration

Teacher collaboration refers to the level to which teachers participate in

constructive discourse that furthers the shared educational dream of the school. Do all teachers in the school cooperate in planning, observing, and discussing teaching practices, evaluating programs, to develop understanding of the practices and programs of each other (Arthur-Kelly, Lyon, Butterfield, & Gordon, 2006; Gentzler, 2005; Gruenert, 2000)? Leithwood et al. (2003) explain that collaborative culture promotes the barter of thoughts and supports joint problem solving by means of giving favorable conditions for exercise of teacher leadership, and appropriate stimulus for impending teacher leaders to gain experiences that will result in academic excellence.

### 2.3. *Professional Development*

Professional development refers to a practice of enhancing one's professional skill and competence through workshops, professional growth seminars, trainings, resource persons, professional publications and other resources (Gruenert, 2000). The purpose of professional growth in teaching is to maintain contemporary knowledge, especially contemporary knowledge regarding instructional strategies (Gruenert, 2000).

### 2.4. *Collegial Support*

According to Gentzler (2005) and Hoy and Hoy (2006), collegial support refers to the work-linked support that group members provide to each other by sharing common concerns, information experiences, and knowledge at the workplace. Evans (2003) suggests that collegial support is an interpersonal relation, and includes "features such as the degree and quality of teamwork, cooperative ways of working, consultation, and interdependence and support among colleagues" (p. 145).

### 2.5. *Unity of Purpose*

Unity of purpose refers to the degree to which teachers collectively focus on the common visions and objectives of the school (Gruenert & Valentine, 1998). The vision of the school should mirror the hope, benefit, needs, values, and dreams of all stakeholders and teachers realize, support, and execute their duties in harmony with the visions of the school (Sergiovanni, 2000). Sergiovanni further noted that unity of purpose provides the school with sense of direction and it is a key to success. Harisson and Dymoke (2006) suggested that unity of purpose can be illustrated by school's approach to collaborative working condition and its stipulation of prospects for combined planning and teaching.

### 2.6. *Learning Partnership*

Learning partnership is concerned about the relationships between school leaders, teachers, parents, and students. Do school leaders, teachers, and parents work cooperatively trust each other and help students focus on improving their performance and succeeding at school work (Arthur-Kelly et al., 2006; Busher, 2003; Gentzler 2005)? Witmer (2005) believes that "it is our connections with our parents, children, spouses, siblings, friends, and teachers that provide us with meaning and genuine learning" (p. 224). According to Brown (2004), the root of culture is relationships. Good relationships create a conducive atmosphere for partnership.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive-comparative research design. The primary purpose of this study was to assess beginning teachers' perceptions of school culture in Ethiopia and compare them according to teacher characteristics. Their

perceptions were assessed using the survey instrument for data gathering and data were analyzed using SPSS for Windows version 11.5. Interpretation of the results was based on the statistical analysis of the data. The main variable was school culture and its six scales were (a) collaborative leadership, (b) teacher collaboration, (c) professional development, (d) collegial support, (e) unity of purpose, and (f) learning partnership.

### 3.1. SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

#### 3.1.1. School Culture Survey (SCS)

The questionnaire for this study included demographic questions and the SCS. The SCS was developed by Gruenert and Valentine (1998) at the Middle Level Leadership Center at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Since this 35-item instrument was constructed in a different cultural environment, namely, the US, to review the instrument in terms of language usage and ensure conceptual and cultural understanding, it was administered to a sample of Ethiopian students. The students reported no problems with the instrument. Permission was obtained from the developers to use this instrument.

*Validity and reliability.* To ensure its validity in an Ethiopian context, three experts in Ethiopian education and culture evaluated the items (questions) and confirmed that SCS is suitable for the proposed study. The reliability of the SCS established by the developers (Gruenert & Valentine, 1998) showed that all but one of the scales had Cronbach's alpha values of greater than 0.70 as indicated in Table 1 (Gruenert, 2000). This indicates that the instrument is sufficiently reliable to be used for the study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2007). Each item in this scale was rated using a 5-point Likert scale from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5).

Table 1 Summary Table of Reliability Coefficients of SCS

Scales	Cronbach's alpha
Collaborative leadership	0.91
Teacher collaboration	0.83
Professional development	0.66
Unity of purpose	0.82
Collegial support	0.80
Learning partnership	0.87

#### 3.1.2. Validity Analysis of the Instruments

Since the SCS used in this study was developed in the western context, it was necessary to conduct a validity analysis in the Ethiopian context. Literature indicates that for fully structured, developed, and validated instruments, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is the only appropriate method of hypothesis testing and AMOS for SEM is appropriate for CFA (Byrne, 2001). Thus, the CFA was done using AMOS for SEM software version 17.0 to check whether each scale could be formed into an independent

model with a goodness of fit and with each item contributing significantly to the scale in terms of the sample population of this study. Models of goodness of fit were generated and then the models for each of the scales were examined with model fit indicators and significance indicators. Significant  $\chi^2$  values for the models would suggest a poor fit. In such cases, other fit indices such as goodness of fit index ( $GFI > 0.90$ ), normed fit index ( $NFI > 0.90$ ), comparative fit index ( $CFI > 0.90$ ), Critical Ratio ( $CR > 1.96$ ), and  $p$ -values ( $p < 0.05$ ) were examined especially in relation to the sample size of the present study (Byrne, 2001).

The CFA analysis for each of the six scales and 35 items of the SCS (Gruenert & Valentine, 1998) was modeled with its complete items, and then the models were examined to assess the model fit. Results of the model fit indices ( $GFI > 0.90$ ,  $NFI > 0.90$ , and  $CFI > 0.90$ ), and Critical Ratio ( $CR > 1.96$ ) and  $p$ -values ( $p < 0.05$ ) for each item of the scales confirmed that each of the six scales of SCS is a measurement scale, with items contributing significantly to the scales in this study.

### 3.1.3. Reliability Analysis of the Instruments

To ensure their quality and reliability in terms of the Ethiopian context, reliability analysis of the instrument was conducted using SPSS for windows version 11.5. Internal consistency was tested with Cronbach's alpha. The reliability coefficients of the 35-items and six scales SCS ranged from 0.65 to 0.89 compared to the alpha coefficients of 0.66 to 0.91 reported by the developers (Gruenert & Valentine, 1998). In both studies the highest alpha value was for collaborative leadership. In this study, the lowest alpha value was for collegial support (0.65) while in the previous study, the lowest alpha value was for learning partnership (0.66). Similar to the previous study (Gruenert & Valentine, 1998), all of the coefficients have alpha values over 0.60 indicating adequate reliability for the analysis of the data and interpretation of the results.

## 4. Research Locale, Population and Sample

This research was conducted on public and private secondary schools in East Shoa and West Arsi zones of Oromiya Regional State, Ethiopia. The rationale for choosing Oromiya state and these two zones is that Oromiya is the largest state in Ethiopia in terms of both geographical and population size, and it is located in the heart of the country. The two selected zones are among the zones with a high concentration of schools, teachers, and students.

The target population for this study was beginning secondary school teachers, randomly selected proportionally from the schools in the zones, using stratified random sampling methods. To determine the sample size, statistical formula for unknown population was used (Creative Research systems, 2012). Based on this formula, with 95% level of confidence and 0.95 confidence interval the sample size needed was 381 beginning secondary school teachers.

Out of a total of 33 public and 15 private secondary schools in these regions, 23 public and 11 private secondary schools were randomly selected for the study. The participants responded to the questionnaire consisting of demographic variables and SCS. A total of 537 questionnaires was distributed, out of which 392 (73%) were returned.

### 4.1. Data Analysis

The following steps were taken in the process of data analysis: All the responses were coded and analyzed using SPSS for windows version 11.5, or AMOS for SEM version 17.0. Preliminary data analysis was conducted to examine the degree to which the statistical assumptions of the study were met. Preliminary analysis of screening data was done to check for missing data, outliers, the normality, homogeneity, linearity, reliability, and validity. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were obtained for each of the variables.

#### 4.2. Description of the Respondents

Table 2 shows the demographic profile of respondents, which was used in the data analyses.

The majority of beginning teachers come from the young age group who are in the age category of 26 and below (63.8%). Only 6 beginning teachers (1.6%) were in their early thirties and one teacher (0.3%) in the late thirties.

The majority of beginning teachers are males (89.0%). This is consistent with the general composition of the secondary school teaching staffs across Ethiopia. Furthermore, the data obtained from the secondary schools sampled for this study showed that male teachers comprised 87.0% of the total teaching force. This shows that there is gender imbalance in education and the need to attract more females to join the teaching profession.

Three quarters (76.0%) of the teachers had bachelor's degrees, while diploma holders make up 22.0%. In the secondary schools sampled for this study, there was no teacher with more than a bachelor's degree. This indicates that the maximum qualification required to teach at Ethiopian secondary schools is a bachelor's degree. Those with more than a bachelor's degree may be assigned to some administrative duties or transferred to teach at higher levels.

Table 2

#### *Demographic Profile of Teachers (N = 381)*

Demographic Variable	Category	N	%
Age	Below 26	243	63.8
	26-30	130	34.1
	31-35	6	1.6
	36-40	1	0.3
	Over 40	0	0
	Missing	1	0.3
Gender	Male	339	89.0
	Female	42	11.0
	Missing	2	0.5
Level of education	College diploma	84	22.0

	BA/BSC	289	76.0
	Other	8	2.0
	Missing	3	0.8
School type	Public	268	70.3
	Private	113	29.7
School setting	Urban	82	21.5
	Suburban	299	78.5

There were more respondents from public schools (70.3%) than private schools. This is because the number of public schools as well as their student population is higher than private schools.

The majority of beginning teachers (78.5%) taught in suburban school settings, while only one third (29.2%) taught in urban school settings. The fact that moving to urban schools is based on seniority and is considered as promotion, contributes to this situation. As their years of teaching experience increase the majority of teachers move to urban schools, and those who newly join the teaching profession are assigned to suburban schools. Teaching at urban schools provides teachers with better working and living conditions and more professional development opportunities than in suburban schools. Because of this, it appears that suburban public schools especially have become experimental grounds for relatively young and inexperienced teachers, which might result in an imbalance in the quality of educational practices.

## 5. ANALYSIS OF DATA AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This section presents the analysis of the data to answer the two research questions addressed in this study.

In the perceptions of unity of purpose the highest mean score for this scale was 4.09, ( $SD = 0.94$ ) and the lowest mean score was 3.64, ( $SD = 1.12$ ), both falling within the *agree* response category. The overall mean score for this scale was 3.89, ( $SD = 0.99$ ), falling within the *agree* response category (see Table 3). The mean score for all of the five items under this scale, fell within in the *agree* range.

The highest mean score for perceptions of collegial support scale was 3.93, ( $SD = 1.00$ ) and the lowest was 3.69, ( $SD = 0.98$ ), both falling within the *agree* response category. The overall mean calculated for this scale was 3.76, ( $SD = 1.03$ ). This value is moderately high and within the range of *agree* response. For each item of this scale, mean scores were high, and within the *agree* category.

The calculated mean and standard deviation scores for each of the five items of professional development were generated. The mean score for all the items fell within a range of *neutral* to *agree* category, The highest mean score of the scale was 4.00, ( $SD = 0.95$ ) and the lowest mean was 3.33, ( $SD = 1.28$ ). The overall mean score was 3.63, ( $SD = 1.11$ ), falling within the *agree* response range.

The mean scores for all of the six items of teacher collaboration fell within a range of *agree* to *neutral* category. The highest mean score was 3.80, ( $SD = 1.04$ ) and the lowest mean score was 3.32, ( $SD = 1.20$ ). The overall mean score for the scale was 3.53, ( $SD = 1.12$ ) indicating that beginning teachers' perceptions of teacher collaboration is high.

The mean scores for all of the 11 items of collaborative leadership fell within a range of *neutral* to *agree* response category, the highest mean score being 3.82, ( $SD = 1.09$ ) and the lowest mean score being 3.17, ( $SD = 1.22$ ). The overall mean score for the scale was 3.50, ( $SD = 1.17$ ) indicating that beginning teachers' perceptions of collaborative leadership is high.

The highest mean score for learning partnership scale was 3.50, ( $SD = 1.25$ ) and the lowest was 3.08, ( $SD = 1.38$ ). The overall mean calculated for this scale was low 3.37, ( $SD = 1.26$ ). Each of the items means scores were also low and within a *neutral* response range. As indicated in the summary table (Table 3) the statistical analysis for SCS showed that on a 5-point scale, the highest mean score was for the factor unity of purpose, followed in descending order by collegial support, professional development, teacher collaboration, collaborative leadership, and learning

Table 3  
*Summary Results of Teachers' Perceptions of School Culture (N = 381)*

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpretation
Unity of purpose	3.89	0.99	Agree
Collegial support	3.76	1.03	Agree
Professional development	3.63	1.11	Agree
Teacher collaboration	3.53	1.12	Agree
Collaborative leadership	3.50	1.17	Agree
Learning partnership	3.37	1.26	Neutral

Note: Mean categories: *Strongly disagree* = 1.00-1.79; *Disagree* = 1.80-2.59; *Neutral* =

2.60-3.39;

*Agree* = 3.40-4.19; *Strongly agree* = 4.20-5.00.

partnership. In general, except for the learning partnership of the school culture factor, beginning teachers' perceptions of all the school culture factors were found to be relatively high. Responses for these school culture factors fell in the *agree* category.

#### *Comparisons of Teachers Perceptions of School Culture*

The second research question asked, "How do the perceptions of the beginning teachers on school culture differ across the selected demographic variables: school type and school setting? The matching null hypothesis of this research question stated, "There is no significant difference in beginning teachers' perceptions of school culture when grouped according to school type and school settings."

*School type.* Independent samples *t* tests were performed to test whether beginning teachers' perceptions of school culture differed according to school type (see Table 4). The analysis showed that a significant difference existed in teachers' perceptions of teacher



collaboration ( $t = 2.45, p = 0.02$ ), professional development ( $t = 1.96, p = 0.05$ ), and collegial support ( $t = 2.03, p < 0.05$ ) when grouped by school type. Considering teacher collaboration, public school teachers perceived more teacher collaboration than private school teachers ( $MD = 0.20$ ). Public school teachers also scored higher in their perceptions of professional development than private school teachers ( $MD = 0.16$ ). Similarly, public school teachers perceived more collegial support than private school teachers ( $MD = 0.16$ ).

Table 4  
Comparison of Teachers' Perceptions of School Culture by School Type (N = 381)

Variables	School type	N	M	SE	MD (SED)	t-value	p-value																																																								
Collaborative leadership	Public	268	3.49	0.05	-0.04(0.09)	-0.42	0.68																																																								
	Private	113	3.53	0.07				Teacher collaboration	Public	268	3.59	0.04	0.20 (0.08)	2.45	0.02*	Private	113	3.38	0.07	Professional development	Public	268	3.68	0.04	0.16 (0.08)	1.96	0.05*	Private	113	3.52	0.07	Collegial support	Public	268	3.81	0.04	0.16 (0.08)	2.03	0.05*	Private	113	3.65	0.07	Unity of purpose	Public	268	3.85	0.04	-0.12(0.08)	-1.60	0.11	Private	113	3.97	0.07	Learning partnership	Public	268	3.34	0.06	-0.11(0.10)	-1.06	0.29
Teacher collaboration	Public	268	3.59	0.04	0.20 (0.08)	2.45	0.02*																																																								
	Private	113	3.38	0.07				Professional development	Public	268	3.68	0.04	0.16 (0.08)	1.96	0.05*	Private	113	3.52	0.07	Collegial support	Public	268	3.81	0.04	0.16 (0.08)	2.03	0.05*	Private	113	3.65	0.07	Unity of purpose	Public	268	3.85	0.04	-0.12(0.08)	-1.60	0.11	Private	113	3.97	0.07	Learning partnership	Public	268	3.34	0.06	-0.11(0.10)	-1.06	0.29	Private	113	3.44	0.08								
Professional development	Public	268	3.68	0.04	0.16 (0.08)	1.96	0.05*																																																								
	Private	113	3.52	0.07				Collegial support	Public	268	3.81	0.04	0.16 (0.08)	2.03	0.05*	Private	113	3.65	0.07	Unity of purpose	Public	268	3.85	0.04	-0.12(0.08)	-1.60	0.11	Private	113	3.97	0.07	Learning partnership	Public	268	3.34	0.06	-0.11(0.10)	-1.06	0.29	Private	113	3.44	0.08																				
Collegial support	Public	268	3.81	0.04	0.16 (0.08)	2.03	0.05*																																																								
	Private	113	3.65	0.07				Unity of purpose	Public	268	3.85	0.04	-0.12(0.08)	-1.60	0.11	Private	113	3.97	0.07	Learning partnership	Public	268	3.34	0.06	-0.11(0.10)	-1.06	0.29	Private	113	3.44	0.08																																
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Note: Mean categories: *Strongly disagree* = 1.00-1.79, *Disagree* = 1.80-2.59, *Neutral* = 2.60-3.39, *Agree* = 3.40-4.19, *Strongly agree* = 4.20-5.00. SE = Standard error of the mean. MD = Mean difference. SED = Standard error of the difference. \*Significant at 0.05 level.

*School setting:* The null sub-hypothesis for this section stated that "there are no significant differences in beginning teachers' perceptions of school culture when grouped by school setting." Independent samples t test was performed to test this hypothesis. Summary of the test is indicated in Table 5. As the analysis shows a significant difference existed in teachers' perceptions of teacher collaboration when grouped by school setting ( $t = -2.57, p = 0.01$ ). Teachers in suburban school settings perceived higher teacher collaboration than their counterparts in the urban school settings ( $MD = -0.24$ ). Thus, the null sub-hypothesis was rejected.

**Table 5**  
**Comparison of Teachers' Perceptions of School Culture by School Settings (N = 381)**

Variables	School setting	N	M	SE	MD(SED)	t-value	p-value
Collaborative leadership	Urban	82	3.50	0.09	0.00 (0.10)	0.02	0.98
	Suburban	299	3.50	0.05			
Teacher collaboration	Urban	82	3.34	0.09	-0.24(0.09)	-2.57	0.01**
	Suburban	299	3.58	0.04			
Professional development	Urban	82	3.53	0.09	-0.13(0.09)	-1.41	0.16
	Suburban	299	3.66	0.04			
Collegial support	Urban	82	3.66	0.08	-0.12(0.09)	-1.41	0.16
	Suburban	299	3.79	0.04			
Unity of purpose	Urban	82	3.96	0.08	0.10(0.09)	1.13	0.26
	Suburban	299	3.86	0.04			
Learning partnership	Urban	82	3.34	0.10	-0.03(0.11)	-0.31	0.76
	Suburban	299	3.38	0.05			

Note: Mean categories: *Strongly disagree* = 1.00-1.79, *Disagree* = 1.80-2.59, *Neutral* = 2.60-3.39, *Agree* = 3.40-4.19, *Strongly agree* = 4.20-5.00. SE = Standard error of the mean. MD = Mean difference. SED = Standard error of the difference. \*\*Significant at 0.01 level.

## 5. DISCUSSIONS

School culture embraces a number of factors and this study focused only on six of them. Using a 5-point Likert scale this study revealed that beginning higher levels of teachers' perceptions of school culture—unity of purpose ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ ), collegial support ( $M = 3.76$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ), professional development ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ), teacher collaboration ( $M = 3.53$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ), collaborative leadership ( $M = 3.50$ ,  $SD = 1.17$ ) but lower levels in their perceptions of learning partnership ( $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ) was low. Among the six school culture variables, unity of purpose was rated the highest ( $M = 3.89$ ).

The study of Herndon (2007) on elementary school teachers in the US indicated the highest rating for school culture—professional development ( $M = 4.25$ ,  $SD = 0.22$ ), followed in descending order by unity of purpose ( $M = 4.24$ ,  $SD = 0.24$ ), collegial support ( $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 0.24$ ), collaborative leadership ( $M = 3.95$ ,  $SD = 0.36$ ), learning partnership ( $M = 3.86$ ,  $SD = 0.31$ ), and teacher collaboration ( $M = 3.59$ ,  $SD = 0.32$ ). Brinton (2007) indicated that the non-veteran high school teachers' levels of perceptions of school culture were professional development ( $M = 3.90$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ), unity of purpose ( $M = 3.87$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ), collegial support ( $M = 3.65$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ), and collaborative leadership ( $M = 3.32$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ).

As indicated above, school variables were rated differently in different studies but with close similarity. This could be due to cultural contexts and teacher characteristics. The

low perceptions of learning partnership in this study could be due to either beginning teachers are not aware of the school's learning partnership programs or that they were not given the opportunity to participate in learning partnership programs.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The demographic characteristics in this study showed the following results. Most beginning teachers were young, in the category of age 26 and below (64.0%). The majority of the respondents were males (89.0%). Most of them were BA/BSC degree holders (76.0%). Years of teaching experience were almost evenly distributed. Most of the respondents were from public (70.3%), suburban (78.5%) schools.

Among the six school culture variables, teachers perceived relatively a higher level of unity of purpose, collegial support, professional development, teacher collaboration, and collaborative leadership. The responses for these variables fell within an *agree* category. Learning partnership relatively rated the lowest of the school culture variables.

Significant differences were found in teachers' perceptions of school culture, when grouped only by school type and school setting. Beginning public secondary school teachers perceived higher teacher collaboration, professional development and collegial support than private secondary school beginning teachers. This may be due to the fact that teachers in public schools receive more support in different forms such as material support, incentive plans, scholarship, professional growth and development workshops and training, from the government than private schools. Secondary school beginning teachers in suburban schools perceived higher teacher collaboration than those in urban schools. This may be due to the fact that teachers in suburban schools have more opportunities to socialize and share experiences with each other than those in urban schools who have other options to spend their time.

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