Workplace culture, professional development skills and work aptitude: Basis for fostering excellence framework for teachers

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Abstract

In the dynamic field of education, fostering excellence among teachers is paramount for achieving high-quality learning outcomes. A supportive workplace culture, characterized by a positive working atmosphere, mutual trust, and strong professional identity, provides the foundation for continuous growth. This study aims to workplace culture, professional development, and work aptitude and develop a framework that can be used as a basis for fostering excellence among teachers, ensuring they are well-equipped to meet the challenges of modern education. This study adopts a descriptive design using 391 faculty members as respondents from six selected universities in China. The findings reveal that respondents highly value a positive workplace culture, characterized by a supportive working atmosphere, mutual trust, and a strong professional identity. Additionally, there is significant agreement on the importance of continuous professional development, particularly in enhancing technical skills, soft skills, and overall knowledge. The study also highlights a high level of work aptitude among respondents, reflected in their cognitive abilities, work ethics, and emotional intelligence. Furthermore, the research identifies a highly significant relationship between workplace culture, professional development, and work aptitude. Based on these insights, a comprehensive framework has been developed to guide the promotion of excellence among teachers, emphasizing the critical role of these interconnected factors.

Keywords: workplace culture, professional development skills, work aptitude, fostering excellence framework for teachers

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1. Introduction

University human resources are a huge and diversified group, including teachers, administrative staff, teaching staff and other positions. Together, they provide a strong support for the development of higher education. How to effectively motivate and mobilize teachers' work enthusiasm and improve their work performance has become the primary task of human resource management, and is the key to the development of colleges and universities. Workplace culture, professional development and working ability together constitute the core competitiveness of human resources in universities. Through continuous training and personal development, a steady stream of impetus into the prosperity of higher education. The excellence of the education system is inseparable from the development, and cultivating excellent teachers is the key to ensure the quality of education. This study aims to deeply explore the impact of workplace culture, professional development skills and work ability on teacher excellence in China to construct a comprehensive training framework.

College workplace culture plays a key role in shaping the role of educators in the field of education. The culture of respecting traditional values and emphasizing teamwork enables teachers to build strong relationships with students, colleagues and parents. Mutual trust is built on open communication. Working together to achieve our goals will help build a stronger relationship of trust and a united team. In the workplace culture, affirming the achievements and contributions of employees is an important means of establishing professional identity. Through public praise and reward system, employees can feel their value in the organization. The Chinese workplace culture emphasizes teamwork, respect for elders, attention to detail and efficiency. In terms of professional development skills, Chinese teachers need to constantly improve their teaching skills, innovation ability and cross-cultural communication skills. In addition, the development of work ability also includes problem-solving skills, communication skills and teamwork skills.

College teachers need to continuously improve their academic research ability, teaching design ability and student guidance ability. In addition, professional development also includes interdisciplinary cooperation, research project management and international exchange and cooperation. In terms of working ability, college teachers need to have critical thinking, problem-solving ability and team spirit. In university settings, teachers' professional development skills are crucial. Continuous learning has become a necessary condition for training excellent teachers, enabling them to constantly update their knowledge and adapt to educational changes. In addition, the application of educational technology has also become a key factor, in order to improve the teaching effect, teachers are trained to skillfully use modern teaching tools. Teachers and staff should have solid professional knowledge, in-depth understanding of the latest research progress, and constantly update their subject knowledge system. Master and flexibly use modern educational technology, including online teaching platform, multimedia teaching tools, to improve the teaching effect. It also requires a scientific methodology to be able to conduct independent research and be able to deliver research results to peers through clear academic writing. Soft skills require good communication skills to be able to establish positive communication relationships with colleagues, students and parents to promote teamwork. They also have the ability to solve problems independently, to make decisions quickly and take effective actions in the face of challenges.

In end, the assessment of one's ability to work requires a comprehensive consideration from multiple aspects. Cognition, work ethics, and emotional intelligence are all important factors, because they jointly determine an individual's performance and development potential at work. Understanding different workplace cultures allows to find a great fit, reducing stress and boosting productivity. You'll be able to navigate office dynamics and build strong relationships. By developing the professional development skills, it can stay relevant, position for promotions, and gain the confidence to tackle challenges. Finally, honing the work aptitude improves efficiency,

teamwork abilities, and overall performance, making you a valuable asset to any employer.

Objectives of the Study - This study aimed to examine the workplace culture, professional development skills and work aptitude among teachers in China that will be the basis in developing an excellence fostering framework for teachers. Specifically, to determine the workplace culture as to working atmosphere, establishing mutual trust relationship and shaping professional identity; describe the professional development skills as to technical, soft skills and knowledge and skills; assess the work aptitude in terms of cognitive, work ethics and emotional intelligence; test the significant relationship between workplace culture, professional development skills and work ability; and develop an excellence fostering framework for teachers.

2. Methods

Research Design - This research mainly employs descriptive research. Descriptive research is a type of research methodology that aims to describe and present a comprehensive overview of a particular phenomenon or group without manipulating any variables. It focuses on observing, documenting, and analyzing existing conditions, characteristics, behaviors, or attitudes within the research context. The primary objective of descriptive research is to provide an accurate and detailed account of the subject of study, allowing researchers to gain insights into the current state or characteristics of the target population or phenomenon.

Participants of the Study - This study aims to investigate the Workplace Culture, Professional Development Skills and Work Aptitude in China: Basis for Fostering Excellence Framework for Teachers. This study adopts a descriptive design to reveal the current Workplace Culture, Professional Development Skills and Work Aptitude in China. Data were processed and 391 faculty members from six selected universities in China were selected to participate in the survey.

Instruments of the Study - In this study, the questionnaire was used as a data collection tool for the current study. The first part of the questionnaire evaluates the professional teachers in the working environment and establishes a mutual trust relationship. The second part of the questionnaire is about staff skills, knowledge ability and including intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The first and second parts of the questionnaire were self-constructed. These questions are based on literature reading and published papers. The third part of the questionnaire is about professional ethics, cognition, emotion and so on.

Data Gathering Procedure - Upon the approval of the title, the researcher pursued first the authorization of the head of the organization and other approving authorities. As approved, the researcher distributed the questionnaire via WenJuanXing (Chinese online questionnaire) form and hard copies, assuring respondents that their personalities would be kept anonymous and that the data they provided would be kept confidential and used only for academic and professional publication or presentation. The researcher gave respondents enough time to fill out the questionnaire. When the questionnaire was retrieved and handled statistically, the researcher used it to interpret and analyze the data

Ethical Considerations - By including a brief notice attached to each questionnaire, the researcher ensured that all information collected from respondents was provided voluntarily and voluntarily in accordance with the Code of Ethics. In order to obtain a useful response, the researchers made sure that respondents were respected and valued for their integrity. In addition, the study is conducted in line with the Data Privacy Act of 2012, which states that it would secure and safeguard any personal information it obtains while doing its duties.

Data Analysis - The more consistent the questionnaire results are with the content to be investigated, the higher the validity. The reliability mainly reflects the consistency of the questionnaire results. First, the KMO sampling adequacy test and the Bartlett sphere test are carried out on the survey data. It is generally believed that if the KMO is less than 0.5, it is not suitable for factor analysis. The result of the table shows the total scale, the KMO value is 140.965, and the validity test is passed. At the same time, the KMO values of each dimension are greater than 0.5, the test passes. Depending on the research questions, parametric tests such as t-tests or analysis

of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to compare means between groups. Non-parametric tests, such as the Mann-Whitney U test or Kruskal-Wallis test, were utilized when assumptions for parametric tests were not met. Regression analysis was performed to examine relationships between dependent and independent variable. An SPSS version 28 will be used for all the analyses.

3. Results and discussions

Table 1

Summary Table on Workplace Culture

Key Result Areas	Composite Mean	VI	Rank
Working Atmosphere	3.70	Strongly Agree	3
Establishing Mutual Trust Relationship	3.81	Strongly Agree	1.5
Shaping Professional Identity	3.81	Strongly Agree	1.5
Grand Composite Mean	3.77	Strongly Agree	

Legend:3.50-4.00=Strongly Agree;2.50-3.49=Agree;1.50-2.49=Disagree;1.00-1.49=Strongly Disagree

The overall composite average for this table is 3.77, which indicates that respondents generally "strongly agree" with the performance of workplace culture in different key outcome areas. The significance of this study is to assess the impact of workplace culture on employee satisfaction and organizational effectiveness, and how to enhance the overall work experience of employees by improving the work environment, building trusting relationships, and shaping professional identity. The indicators with the highest weighted averages were "building trusting relationships" and "shaping professional identity," both with weighted averages of 3.81, which respondents "strongly agreed with." High ratings for these two indicators may reflect employees' awareness of the importance of building trust and personal professional development in the workplace. At the same time, the shaping of a professional identity is essential for an individual's career development, contributing to work engagement and loyalty (Bram et al., 2023). For those indicators that have a significant relational dimension, such as "building trusting relationships," the building of trusting relationships is key to facilitating effective communication and collaboration within an organization. In addition, trusting relationships can reduce workplace conflict and increase employee engagement (Jiang et al., 2023).

Table 2

Summary Table on Professional Development Skills

Key Result Areas	Composite Mean	VI	Rank
Technical	3.76	Strongly Agree	2.5
Soft Skills	3.82	Strongly Agree	1
Knowledge and Skills	3.76	Strongly Agree	2.5
Grand Composite Mean	3.78	Strongly Agree	

Legend:3.50-4.00=Strongly Agree;2.50-3.49=Agree;1.50-2.49=Disagree;1.00-1.49=Strongly Disagree

The table, entitled "Summary of Professional Development Skills", has an overall composite average of 3.78, indicating that respondents generally "strongly agree" with all aspects of professional development skills. The significance of this study lies in the comprehensive assessment of teachers' abilities in technology, soft ability and knowledge skills, and how these skills together contribute to the professional growth of teachers and the improvement of teaching quality. Soft skills, with a composite average of 3.82, are increasingly important in education, such as communication, teamwork and creative problem solving, which help teachers interact more effectively with students, colleagues and parents. Soft competencies are critical to the professional success of teachers as they contribute to a positive learning environment and promote well-rounded student development (Bram et al., 2023).

"Technology" and "knowledge and skills" tied for second place, with a combined average slightly lower than "soft abilities." Soft abilities are on the rise in importance in the field of education, as they are essential for the social and emotional development of students. Soft competencies help teachers succeed in a diverse and changing educational environment. According to table 3, the tabular average of 3.69 indicates that respondents

generally "strongly agree" with all aspects of their ability to work. The significance of this study lies in the comprehensive assessment of an individual's abilities in the three key outcome areas of cognitive ability, work ethic and emotional intelligence, which are essential for workplace success and productive work performance.

Table 3

Summary Table on Work Aptitude

Key Result Areas	Composite Mean	VI	Rank
Cognitive	3.70	Strongly Agree	2
Work Ethics	3.71	Strongly Agree	1
Emotional Intelligence	3.67	Strongly Agree	3
Grand Composite Mean	3.69	Strongly Agree	

Legend:3.50-4.00=Strongly Agree;2.50-3.49=Agree;1.50-2.49=Disagree;1.00-1.49=Strongly Disagree

The indicator with the highest weighted average is "work ethic," with a combined average of 3.71, which is perhaps considered the most important component of work ability as it relates to aspects such as integrity, responsibility and adherence to social norms, which are highly valued qualities in the workplace. Professional ethics is closely related to employees' work performance and career success (Peng, 2023). The measure with the lowest weighted average was "emotional intelligence," with a composite average of 3.67. According to the literature, emotional intelligence is essential for an individual's career development, teamwork, and leadership (Liu et al., 2024). In addition, people with high emotional intelligence are better able to manage work stress and establish good interpersonal relationships (Liu et al., 2022). For those indicators that have a significant relational dimension, such as "work ethic," we can provide a more in-depth explanation. Professional ethics is the cornerstone of building trust and professional reputation in the workplace. Is essential to maintaining integrity and justice in the work environment.

Table 4

Relationship Between Workplace Culture and Professional Development Skills

Variables	rho	p-value	Interpretation
Working Atmosphere			
Technical	0.428**	< .001	Highly Significant
Soft Skills	0.347**	< .001	Highly Significant
Knowledge and Skills	0.357**	< .001	Highly Significant
Establishing Mutual Trust Relationship			
Technical	0.487**	< .001	Highly Significant
Soft Skills	0.470**	< .001	Highly Significant
Knowledge and Skills	0.330**	< .001	Highly Significant
Shaping Professional Identity			
Technical	0.697**	< .001	Highly Significant
Soft Skills	0.532**	< .001	Highly Significant
Knowledge and Skills	0.423**	< .001	Highly Significant

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

As seen in the table, the computed rho-values ranging from 0.330 to 0.697 indicate a weak to strong direct relationship among the sub variables of workplace culture and professional development skills. There was a statistically significant relationship between workplace culture and professional development skills because the obtained p-values were less than 0.01.   As shown in the table, the calculated rho values ranging from 0.330 to 0.697 indicate a direct relationship from weak to strong between the sub-variables of workplace culture and professional development skills. There was a statistically significant relationship between workplace culture and professional development skills, as the obtained P-value was less than 0.01.

This shows the correlation (rho value) and statistical significance (p-value) between different aspects of workplace culture and the sub-variables of professional development skills (technology, soft competencies, knowledge and skills). It is important to understand how workplace culture affects professional development skills, which is important to improve the quality of education and teacher career satisfaction. The mid-ranking correlation indicators include "building trust relationships" versus "technology" (rho=0.487), "building trust

relationships" versus "soft competencies" (rho=0.470), and "building professional identity" versus "soft competencies" (rho=0.532). These correlations were rated as "highly significant," suggesting that trusting relationships and professional identity shaping in workplace culture have significant positive effects on the development of both technical skills and soft competencies.

For those indicators that have a significant relational dimension, such as the sub-variable of "shaping professional identity" versus professional development skills, we can provide a more in-depth explanation. The shaping of professional identity contributes to the continuous progress of teachers in terms of technology, soft abilities and knowledge skills (Fernandez et al., 2023). A work environment that promotes professional identity development can increase teacher satisfaction and retention intentions (Bram et al., 2023).

Table 5

Relationship Between Workplace Culture and Work Aptitude

Variables	rho	p-value	Interpretation
Working Atmosphere			
Cognitive	0.366**	< .001	Highly Significant
Work Ethics	0.401**	< .001	Highly Significant
Emotional Intelligence	0.480**	< .001	Highly Significant
Establishing Mutual Trust Relationship			
Cognitive	0.187**	< .001	Highly Significant
Work Ethics	0.206**	< .001	Highly Significant
Emotional Intelligence	0.236**	< .001	Highly Significant
Shaping Professional Identity			
Cognitive	0.239**	< .001	Highly Significant
Work Ethics	0.186**	< .001	Highly Significant
Emotional Intelligence	0.209**	< .001	Highly Significant

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

As seen in the table, the computed rho-values ranging from 0.186 to 0.480 indicate a very weak to moderate direct relationship among the sub variables of workplace culture and work aptitude. There was a statistically significant relationship between workplace culture and work aptitude because the obtained p-values were less than 0.01. As shown in the table, the calculated rho values ranging from 0.186 to 0.480 indicate a very weak to moderate direct relationship between the sub-variables of workplace culture and work capability. There was a statistically significant relationship between workplace culture and work inclination, as the obtained P-value was less than 0.01. Correlation (rho value) and statistical significance (p-value) between different aspects of workplace culture (work environment, building trusting relationships, shaping professional identity) and sub-variables of work ability (cognition, work ethic, emotional intelligence). The significance of this study is to assess the impact of workplace culture on individual work ability, which has important practical implications for improving work performance and career development.

The indicator with the highest correlation (rho value) in the table is "emotional intelligence" and "work environment", with an rho value of 0.480, indicating a moderate-strength positive correlation between the two. This may mean that a positive work environment can significantly improve an individual's emotional intelligence, including the ability to recognize emotions, regulate emotions, and understand emotions. A positive work environment can promote the development of emotional intelligence because employees in such an environment are more likely to receive training and practice related to emotional intelligence (Jiang et al., 2023). As seen in table 6, the computed rho-values ranging from 0.219 to 0.566 indicate a weak to moderate direct relationship among the sub variables of professional development skills and work aptitude. There was a statistically significant relationship between professional development skills and work aptitude because the obtained p-values were less than 0.01.

Correlation (rho value) and statistical significance (p-value) between different professional development skills (technical, soft abilities, knowledge and skills) and sub-variables of work ability (cognition, work ethic, emotional intelligence). All associations were rated as "highly significant," indicating a statistically significant

positive relationship. The significance of this study is to understand how professional development skills interact with work capabilities, which has important practical implications for personal career development and organizational effectiveness.

Table 6

Relationship Between Professional Development Skills and Work Aptitude

Variables	rho	p-value	Interpretation
Technical			
Cognitive	0.274**	< .001	Highly Significant
Work Ethics	0.219**	< .001	Highly Significant
Emotional Intelligence	0.293**	< .001	Highly Significant
Soft Skills			
Cognitive	0.327**	< .001	Highly Significant
Work Ethics	0.253**	< .001	Highly Significant
Emotional Intelligence	0.251**	< .001	Highly Significant
Knowledge and Skills			
Cognitive	0.566**	< .001	Highly Significant
Work Ethics	0.397**	< .001	Highly Significant
Emotional Intelligence	0.405**	< .001	Highly Significant

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

The indicator with the highest correlation (rho value) in the table is "knowledge and skills" and "cognition", with an rho value of 0.566, which indicates a very strong positive correlation between the two. It means that the higher the level of professional knowledge and skills of teachers, the stronger their cognitive abilities, including problem solving, decision-making and critical thinking. The index with the lowest weighted average is "technology" and "professional ethics", with an rho of 0.219. I would ask myself why this correlation is relatively low. Although technical skills have a certain impact on teachers' professional ethics practice, professional ethics may be more influenced by personal values and organizational culture (Song Jiajin, 2018). For those indicators that have a significant relational dimension, such as "knowledge and skills" versus "cognition", teachers' professional knowledge and skills can promote the development of cognitive abilities, enabling them to respond more effectively to complex problems in teaching. Professional development training can improve teachers' cognitive flexibility and innovation. (Bram et al., 2023)
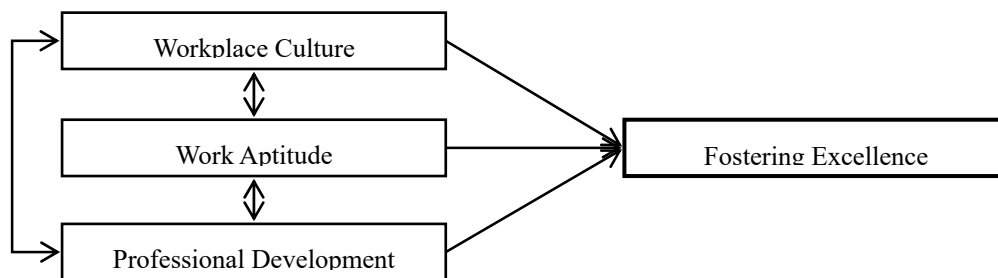
Research Output

Figure 1. Fostering Excellence Framework for Teachers

The Fostering Excellence Framework for Teachers recognizes the intricate relationship between three key elements that contribute to a teacher's success: workplace culture, work aptitude, and professional development. While each plays a distinct role, they are truly interdependent when it comes to creating a thriving environment for both teachers and students.

Workplace culture sets the stage for teacher satisfaction and effectiveness. A school that fosters collaboration among teachers, offers strong leadership support, and provides ample opportunities for professional development fosters a sense of community and shared purpose. When teachers feel valued, supported, and have opportunities to learn and grow alongside their colleagues, they are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and ultimately, more effective educators.

Work aptitude, encompassing a teacher's natural talents and skills, forms the foundation for their teaching practice. Strong communication skills, effective classroom management strategies, and the ability to inspire students are all crucial for fostering a positive and productive learning environment. However, even the most naturally gifted teachers benefit from ongoing development.

Professional development bridges the gap between work aptitude and a teacher's full potential. Through workshops, courses, and mentoring programs, teachers can refine existing skills, acquire new knowledge, and stay current with educational best practices. A strong professional development program empowers teachers to adapt their teaching styles, address student needs more effectively, and ultimately, create a more engaging and impactful learning experience for their students.

By addressing these three interconnected elements, the Fostering Excellence Framework creates a holistic approach to teacher development. It recognizes that a supportive and stimulating work environment empowers teachers with natural talent to thrive, and that ongoing professional development allows them to continuously improve their craft and reach their full potential as educators.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

The respondents highly agreed on the workplace culture such as working atmosphere, mutual trust relationship and shaping professional identity. The respondents highly agreed on the professional development skills in terms of technical, soft skills and in the knowledge and skills. There is high work aptitude in terms of cognitive, work ethics and emotional intelligence. There is highly significant relationship between workplace culture, professional development and work aptitude. A framework has been developed to foster excellence among teachers. The universities may stay updated on industry trends and identify any emerging technical or soft skills that might be needed by the teachers. The HR Department may conduct a skills gap analysis to identify areas where teachers might need additional training or resources. The proposed framework may be adopted by the university to foster excellence among teachers. Future researchers may conduct deeper qualitative surveys to understand what specifically fosters trust and professional development in the workplace.

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