

An Investigation of Organizational Culture, Workplace Partnership and its Supply Chain Role for Sustainable Employment Relations in Public Universities in Malaysia

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Abstract—The organizational culture is different to every businesses and company. It aims to provide employees with a guiding principle on the work and organization system and a sense of direction by achieving organizations' aspirations. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the organizational culture and workplace partnership for achieving sustainable employment relations at public universities in Malaysia. This study is designed using a qualitative approach through observation and interviews. This study reveals that a loose organizational culture and partnership arrangement existed between the Academic Joint Consultative Committees (JCC) management and vice versa. The finding established that the desire to move forward is being felt however still concerned with whom the authority in decision making. This research argues that the management will continue to make final decisions; thus will preserve its supremacy as the single authority in public universities in Malaysia. The result warrants some amendments toward the organizational culture and workplace partnership in preserving industrial harmony. This study recommends a new form of organizational culture and workplace partnership for sustainable employment relations for a better working environment.

Keywords— *organizational culture, workplace partnership, decision making, consultation*

1. Introduction

Most of the businesses and corporations have their own organizational culture. Organizational culture is to provide employees with a guiding principle on the work and method in the organization [1]. It helps employees to have a sense of direction by achieving organizations' aspirations

[2]. Extensive research often discusses organizational culture and job performance, satisfaction, productivity, and organizational behavior [3]-[4]. However, the debates on the importance of organizational culture and workplace partnership and its contribution to the field of industrial relations studies are still lacking. The workplace industrial relations (IR) system and practices in Malaysia were highly influenced by three major socio-economic factors [5]. Firstly, Malaysian society is known for a mix of people having different religions, languages, cultures and social custom, and the social divisions that cause stress in many aspects of life [6]. Since Malaysian society is heterogeneous, therefore society is a bit difficult to handle, unlike the homogenous society in Europe, which is simpler to handle [5]. Secondly, the government adopted an open economic policy and encouraged export-oriented industrialization in pursuit of development [5]-[6], respectively. Thirdly, Malaysia's rapid economic growth recently has shown three important consequences related to short of employment, the raising of women in the labour market and, the rise of human resource management in recent years [7]. Fourthly, the influence of trade unions has been limited due to the non-union-friendly of the existing labour laws and policies embedded. Therefore union density has not been improved [8].

Additionally, globalization has also contributed to the changes to the IR landscape in recent years. During this era, a new form of work method has been raising [9]. Subsequently, the privatization, out-sourcing, part-timers, and consultant unions and the increasing number of women that enter the labour market in which they were not under the

coverage of trade unions. Therefore, most of the organization prefers a simple non-hierarchical structure such as Joint Consultative Committees (JCC) instead of having unions [5], [8]. Three major factors contributed to the development of non-hierarchical structures which includes the government and the law; the anti-union campaigns and the composition of the Malaysian society.

Not all establishment regards workplace partnership as an asset to the organization. However, the workplace partnership has been placed in all twenty public universities in Malaysia, as stated in the Service Circular No. 2 the Year 1992, respectively [8]. However, since the importance of the organizational culture and workplace partnership was not the focus of the management, the Academic JCC was still being managed the traditional way [10]; therefore the role and function of the Academic JCC has not been improved. Therefore, a stronger and bolder organizational culture and workplace partnership are urgently required in the current business exposure to promote industrial harmony. Additionally, research on organizational culture and workplace partnership, particularly the Academic JCCs in public universities, are still lacking. Subsequently, there is a need to benchmark the organizational culture and workplace partnership arrangements with developed countries such as in Western Europe [2]. Lastly is to determine factors that hinder the Academic JCC to move forward in the pursuit to be relevant by implementing a sustainable employer-employee relationship.

This paper highlights the emerging issues of organizational culture and the workplace partnership at three public universities in Malaysia with particular emphasis on JCC particularly the Academic Staff Association (Academic JCC). The objectives of this paper are (i) to study the importance of organizational culture and workplace partnership mechanism (ii) to evaluate its practice in decision-making, and subsequently to recommend a new form of workplace partnership for sustainable employment relations in public universities in Malaysia.

2. Literature Review

Most of the literature described Joint Consultative Committees (JCC) as an effective platform for information, communication, and

consultation made available in organizations. Marchington (1992) and Markey (2001) regards JCCs as a meaningful forum for managers and workers to meet regularly mainly to discuss on matters concerning work and work-related issues which are not the subject of collective bargaining (CB) [11]-[12]. Ramsay (1983) views JCC as a medium to undermine the power vested to unions [13]. While Beardwell & Holden (2001) in contrast, regards JCCs as allies to the management; thus endorsed initiatives respectively [14].

However, in the United Kingdom (UK) the interest on JCCs has recently been the centre of the discussion by the introduction of Information and Consultation of Employees (ICE) following the European Union (EU) Directive 2002 for information and consultation [15]. The Work Councils in the EU is the most preferred worker partnership platform due to it has legal standing. Kouginnou (2013) reported that the ICE is still evolving and manage to attract researches, scholars, and, practitioners to continue researching on JCCs [15].

In the context of the public universities in Malaysia, the Academic JCCs were focusing on the welfare aspect of the members at large. As such, the Academic JCCs have lost some of its significant due to it is being managed traditionally. This issue was very similar to JCCs in the UK in the 1980s. It also has lost some of its importance in the organization [10]. Besides, Ab Rahman (2019) emphasized that Academic JCC does not influence the final decision in the university [2]. It is, therefore, it is utmost important to the Academic JCCs and the influence on the organizational culture.

There are two models to be reviewed with regards to the study of JCC as the preferred workplace partnership. In [15], the JCC Model consists of five specific components namely objective, subject matter, consultation, power, and membership were often used to understand how the component corresponds at the operational level. At this level, it determines whether the JCCs, in particularly the Academic JCC to showcase their strength in terms of consultation, negotiate or to endorse management initiatives. Subsequently, the ability of the Academic JCC to have a say in meetings can be seen through four models of consultation. Firstly, An Adjunct to Collective Bargaining (CB); in this model, the consultation

was initiated and developed to resist CB. It suggests that the management pays more attention to JCCs rather than the unions. Unions will be avoided, and JCCs are seen to be higher than unions in terms of power and jurisdiction. Secondly, Marginal to CB in which the consultation structure in this model suggest that the JCC has a minimum impact on workers and management. There is only a small portion of mutual benefit gained from this consultation practice. Thirdly, Competing to CB; this model, the consultation practices is seen as a direct threat to the CB due to conflicting objectives. It suggests that JCCs and CBs are always conflicted in terms of ideology and beliefs. Fourthly, An Adjunct to CB; in this model, there is a clear demarcation on the roles and functions of the JCCs and unions. The JCCs are instead a compliment rather than a threat to unions due to the common goals between both in the organizations. These four consultation models were tested in the private sectors in Malaysia [16]-[17]. However, it is not theoretically applied in the public sector, in particular, the public universities.

3. Methodology

The methodology applied was a qualitative case study design using in-depth interview techniques and other techniques such as documents. A total of 45 informants involving Professors, Associate Professors, Senior Lecturer and, Lecturers who are members of the Academic JCCs were interviewed from three public universities in Malaysia. The interviews were compiled thematically, triangulated and, transcript into verbatim data. This paper views the President and the Honorary Secretary of the Academic JCC from each university are presented. For ethical reasons, the name of the public universities will not be revealed. The analysis is categorized by three case studies at three public universities in Malaysia. These cases were chosen due to each university has different in terms of its year of establishment, the niche-focused area of studies and geographical location. The informants and the case studies profiling is as shown in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1: Informants and Case Studies Profiling

Key Informants	UniA	UniB	UniC	TOTAL
President	1	1	1	3
Honorary Secretary	1	1	1	3
TOTAL	2	2	2	6

Table 2: Case Studies Profiling

Profiling	UniA	UniB	UniC
Year of Establishment	1968 (50 years)	1984 (34 years)	1994 (25 years)
Academic JCC Establishment	1971 (49 years)	1986 (33 years)	2015 (4 years)
Niche	Research	Management	Comprehensive

4. Results

293.1 The importance of workplace partnership in UniA, UniB, and UniC

The literature suggests that workplace partnership has significant importance in the organization [12]. It was debated that the workplace partnership in organizations enhances the quality in decision making, reduce workloads of supervisors, encourage skills development in the workforce, and improved employee relations [18]. In the context of this study, the workplace partnership such as Academic JCC is a platform for information and communication in public universities environment [19]. It is a formal communication system between management and academics, mainly to discuss work and work methods. The platform enables the management to meet the academics regularly to exchange views and utilizes member's knowledge and expertise in dealing with a common interest; however, matters concerning policy, procedures and, regulations are the subject not to be touched by the Academic JCC. In other words, the Academic JCCs ultimate purpose is to serve the members; therefore, it became important to the academics at large. The findings reveal that Academic JCCs are important in UniA, UniB, and UniC as shown in the Table 3.

Table 3: The Importance of Academic JCC in UniA, UniB, and UniC

UniA	The Academic JCC in UniA was important <i>"The Academic JCC is an avenue for the academics to meet, discuss and share of ideas with the management for the benefit of the members; to us, this avenue is important"</i> President, 5 Sept 2019
UniB	The Academic JCC in UniB was also important <i>"The Academic JCC is the only platform</i>

	<p><i>looking at members welfare; therefore it is important to us”</i> President, 8 June 2019</p>
UniC	<p>The Academic JCC in UniC was also important <i>“We know the Academic JCC is important in terms of taking care of our interest”</i> President, 30 July 2019</p>

In sum, it can be analyzed that the Academic JCC was an important platform for the academics in UniA, UniB, and UniC specifically in terms of taking care of the member’s welfare and interest. The platform was also used to disseminate information and communication to the faculty members in the universities.

Subsequently, further questions related to the importance of the Academic JCC were asked and been arranged thematically as follows:

4.1.1 Academic JCC Leadership in UniA, UniB, and UniC

Leadership is one aspect that is important to determine a good and effective voice that able to influence the organizational culture. Table 4 illustrate on the leadership of the Academic JCC of UniA, UniB, and UniC, respectively.

Table 4: Academic JCC Leadership in UniA, UniB, and UniC

UniA	<p>Strong leadership of the Academic JCC in UniA <i>“The good relationship with the management is not new. The previous leadership has left us with a good foundation for us to move effectively.”</i> Honorary Secretary, 7 September 2019</p>
UniB	<p>Restricted leadership of the Academic JCC in UniB <i>“We have a good relationship with the management; we just follow through the process. We work very well with the management, and we try not to offend the management.”</i> Honorary Secretary, 10 June 2019</p>
UniC	<p>Weak leadership of the Academic JCC in UniC <i>“I can say the previous leadership just washed their hand. We have to pull ourselves together to form this establishment.”</i> Honorary Secretary, 2 August 2019</p>

In sum, it can be concluded that strong Academic JCC leadership of UniA was due to the support received from the previous leadership and continue receiving their support at present. While in UniB, support received from the previous leader was restricted on welfare issues only and has been focusing on the matter of welfare at present. In contrast, the weak Academic JCC in UniC was due to the lack of support received from the previous leadership.

4.1.2 The Benefit of Strong Academic JCC leadership that influenced the organizational culture of UniA, UniB, and UniC

Having strong Academic JCC leadership can be determined through the support received from the management. It can be seen through a good relationship with management. Table 5 below illustrates the benefit of having a strong Academic JCC leadership, respectively.

Table 5: Benefit of having strong Academic JCC in UniA, UniB, and UniC

UniA	<p>The support for the Academic JCC in UniA was excellent <i>“I have good support from the management and the VC. Whenever he calls me, it means he wants my support before making any decisions.”</i> President, 8 May 2019</p>
UniB	<p>The support for the Academic JCC in UniB was satisfactory <i>“I have good relationship with the VC. There is no need for an appointment, and I can just go in. Others do not have such privilege”</i> President, 8 June 2019</p>
UniC	<p>The support for the Academic JCC in UniC was minimal <i>“The management does not see us as important to them.”</i> President, 30 July 2019</p>

Table 5 captures that there are benefits that can be gained for being strong Academic JCC. In these case studies, the support for the Academic JCC in UniA was excellent. While the support for the Academic JCC in UniB was satisfactory. In contrast, the support for the Academic JCC in UniC was minimal. Subsequently, a related question on the benefits of having strong leadership among the Academic JCCs can be seen in the Table 6.

Table 6: Leadership Training for Academic JCC in UniA, UniB, and UniC

UniA	Leadership training for the Academic JCC in UniA was important <i>“If we need to go for leadership training, flight, accommodation and time-off is granted to us. On top of that, we are also eligible to claim for subsistence allowance.”</i> Honorary Secretary, 7 September 2019
UniB	Leadership training for the Academic JCC in UniB was less important <i>“Our flights, hotel and time-offs and subsistence allowance for the whole period of the leadership training was borne by the management”</i> Honorary Secretary, 10 June 2019
UniC	Leadership training for the Academic JCC in UniC was not important at all <i>“Since inception, we are yet to see whether the management will give us their support in terms of flight tickets and accommodation if we have to attend leadership training with MAAC”</i> Honorary Secretary, 2 August 2019

Table 6 shows that the Academic JCC in UniA and UniB receiving air ticket, accommodation, time-off in performing duties and, also eligible to claim for subsistence allowance. While the Academic JCC at UniC, has not been accorded any of these privileges. When asked whether the Academic JCCs were given support staff in assisting the daily operation and activities, Table 7 is the response received with regards to support staff.

Table 7: Support Staff for UniA, UniB, and UniC

UniA	Receiving Support Staff for Academic JCC in UniA <i>“I have an assistant to manage the register of our AJCC. She is in our payroll. Among her duties was to ensure the governance aspect related to other government agencies are being adhered to. For example, the compulsory annual general meeting report. She does the entry, I check and submit. She is a great help since I have other commitment including teaching, research and publication.”</i> Honorary Secretary, 7 September 2019
UniB	No Support Staff for Academic JCC in UniB <i>“As the Secretary, I am using my staff in the office to do stuff for the AJCC. The</i>

	<i>staff tackles all issues of governance. However, I can't force her to do it because it is not her job anyway.”</i> Honorary Secretary, 10 June 2019
UniC	No Support Staff for Academic JCC in UniC <i>“We don't have additional staff to manage our activities. I think this is the main cause of the previous establishment failure to submit their AGM report to ROS for three consecutive years”</i> President, 30 July 2019

Table 7 reveals that only the Academic JCC in UniA has support staff that deals with daily operation and specific tasks. In contrast, the Academic JCC in UniB and UniC had no privilege of having a support staff. Additionally, the issue of having a complete office for the Academic JCCs in UniA, UniB, and UniC was asked. Table 8 highlights the response to this issue, respectively.

Table 8: Complete Office for UniA, UniB, and UniC

UniA	Complete Office for the Academic JCC in UniA was excellent <i>“The management has endowed us a building. The building is for us to run our meetings and activities.”</i> President, 5 September 2019
UniB	Complete Office for the Academic JCC in UniB was not sufficient <i>“We still have to book meeting rooms and board rooms just like others. We were often told to organize our meeting elsewhere if the management wants to use the meeting rooms. There should be a specific room for us to run our activities.”</i> President, 8 June 2019
UniC	Complete Office for the Academic JCC in UniC was insufficient <i>“We still have to book for meeting rooms and board rooms like others. I strongly feel there should be a specific room or office for us to run our activities.”</i> President, 30 July 2019

It can be analyzed from Table 8 that only the Academic JCC in UniA was granted a complete office for their daily operations and events. The Academic JCCs in UniB and UniC still struggling

to find locations to organize their activities, respectively. Financial status has always been measured to determine a strong or weak organization. Concerning this, a question was asked about annual financial assistance received from the management as shown in the Table 9.

Table 9: Financial Assistance from the management for UniA, UniB, and UniC

UniA	The Academic JCC in UniA was Self-Reliance <i>"We collect revenues from the building. We don't need financial assistance from the management because of our self-reliance status. It is sufficient for us to manage our activities on our own"</i> Honorary Secretary, 7 September 2019
UniB	The Academic JCC in UniB rely on Membership Fee <i>"We rely on membership fee from members only. We received financial assistance from the management annually. It is for us to manage our activities."</i> Honorary Secretary, 10 June 2019
UniC	The Academic JCC in UniC rely on Membership Fee <i>"Previously, the management granted us with financial assistance annually for operational activities. However, since the previous Academic JCC was revoked; we are yet to receive the monetary assistance respectively."</i> Honorary Secretary, 2 August 2019

It can be analyzed in Table 9; the Academic JCC in UniA was in the situation of self-reliance due to their capability to collect revenues from the building on a monthly basis. UniB and UniC are unable to collect revenues from their activities; therefore, only rely on the membership fee. In summary, as an indicator, it can be said that effective leadership largely depends on the quality of the leader. A good leader will be able to influence the organizational culture, respectively. In this respect, the Academic JCCs can be important as in UniA, restricted as in UniB, and weak as in UniC depending on the strong leadership quality of the appointed leader.

4.2 The influence of the workplace partnership practice to the organizational decision making

An Academic JCC leader that possessed related qualification needs is essential to enable them to

perform their duties diligently. The required requirement is merit as leaders. Table 10 showcases the reality of the Academic JCCs in UniA, UniB, and UniC respectively.

Table 10: Leaders of the Academic JCC in UniA, UniB, and UniC

UniA	The leaders of the Academic JCC in UniA was exemplary <i>"I am a Criminologist by qualification; this is my area of specialization. As the President, my other specialization includes knowing the law. I am well-versed with the power of the Senate and the Board. I also know the power of my AJCC. I have been re-elected as the President for three consecutive years."</i> President, 5 Sept 2019
UniB	The leaders of the Academic JCC in UniB was strong <i>"My field of expertise is the law. I know the power of the Board and the Senate. Knowing the law is to my advantage because I know how to deal with the management on welfare issues."</i> President, 8 June 2019
UniC	The leaders of the Academic JCC in UniC was weak <i>"I am an Educationist by qualification. I am the current President. As the President, I have big responsibilities to protect the interest of the members."</i> President, 30 July 2019

From Table 10 it reveals that having related qualification can give impact to the leadership quality. For example, in UniA, the leader of the Academic JCC is a Criminologist in which he is well-versed in the law. Similarly, UniB has a law background and knowing the law is an advantage to him in dealing with the management. However, since the leader in UniC is an Educationist and has limited knowledge of law in which is detrimental to the Academic JCC struggle. Subsequently, the analysis shows that strong leadership can be transmitted through the practice of the five elements in the conventional JCC Model that is objective, subject matter, consultation, power and, membership.

4.3 The objective of the meeting between management-Academic JCCs in UniA, UniB, and UniC

Following a question on the objectives of the Academic JCC in UniA, UniB, and UniC, the informants have responded as shown in the Table 11.

From Table 11, it can be analyzed that the informants were clear about the objectives of the management- Academic JCCs meetings in UniA, UniB, and UniC, respectively. This has brought to a conclusion that the objectives of the Academic JCC were known to all; therefore, early preparation could be done.

Table 11: Objectives of the meeting between management-Academic JCC in UniA, UniB, and UniC

UniA	The objectives of the Academic JCC in UniA was clearly transmitted <i>“early notice were given to us stating the objectives of the meeting at least 2 weeks in advance”</i> President, 5 September 2019
UniB	The objectives of the Academic JCC in UniB was clear <i>“I am aware of the objectives of the meeting due to the early notice given”</i> President, 8 June 2019
UniC	The objectives of the Academic JCC in UniC was not known to many <i>“We know the objectives of the meeting through the early notices given to us”</i> President, 30 July 2019

4.4 Subject Matter of the Academic JCCs in UniA, UniB, and UniC

The platform provided by the management should be optimized by the Academic JCC. As such, the Academic JCC should use this platform wisely by bringing up matters of members’ interest as well as the university interest. Table 12 explained the subject matters brought up to management attention.

Table 12: Subject Matter of the Academic JCC in UniA, UniB, and UniC

UniA	Subject matter of the Academic JCC in UniA ranges from welfare to strategic importance issues <i>“We often discuss not enough parking spaces, food in the canteen and, many</i>
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	<i>other issues which may sound not important. But you know, not enough parking spaces can lead to high-stress level among us. We are involved in the transformation plan”.</i> President, 5 September 2019
UniB	Subject Matter of the Academic JCC in UniB focusing on welfare only <i>“The issue often raised in the meeting is always the concern of not enough parking spaces, food in the canteen, safety issues in campus and on some football matches, LASBELA and others”</i> President, 8 June 2019
UniC	Subject Matter of the Academic JCC in UniC was controlled by the management <i>“We don’t have any say on welfare and strategic issues of UniC. Both matters are in the hand of the management”</i> President, 30 July 2019

It can be analyzed that in Table 12, the Academic JCC in UniA is involved in less important issues and to a more strategic important issue. This can be seen that the management has high regard to the Academic JCC. In UniB, the Academic JCC only focused on welfare issues and is not participating in the strategic issues of UniB. In contrast, the Academic JCC in UniC has not been involved in both less important and strategic importance issue of UniC.

4.5 The Consultation Practices of Academic JCC in UniA, UniB, and UniC

The consultation process refers to the managements’ desire to consult the Academic JCC in UniA, UniB, and UniC before making decisions in the universities. Table 13 reveals the level of Academic JCC participation in the consultation process.

Table 13: Consultation Practices the Academic JCC in UniA, UniB, and UniC

UniA	The consultation process was important in UniA <i>“We don’t have to punch in and out of the campus. The honesty is at the part of the academics. However, this privilege is only for academics. It is not extended to the administrators and professionals.”</i> Honorary Secretary, 7 September 2019
UniB	The consultation process on welfare

	<p>issues was important in UniB <i>"We wanted to copy UniA that is no punch in and out every day. It took us close to two years for these issues to be materialized. Now the academic in UniB need to punch in once (coming to work) only. In this sense, the honesty is really in the hands of the academics."</i> President, 8 June 2019</p>
UniC	<p>The consultation process was not important at all in UniC <i>"The VC asked me, are you a government servant? I answered, YES. If you are, then you have to punch in and out just like the rest of us. When he said that, the case closed."</i> President, 30 July 2019</p>

	<p>weak <i>"We are totally out in the decision-making process. As the President, I feel very sad that I could not serve the members better."</i> President, 30 July 2019</p>
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Table 13 provides the information about the consultation process between the management and the Academic JCC; the academics in UniA do not have to punch in and out of the campus. As for academics in UniB, the requirement is to punch in once daily. At the same time, the academics in UniC was required to punch in and out daily because the consultation on this matter has been declined.

4.6 Powers of the Academic JCCs in UniA, UniB, and UniC

The ability to influence the organizational decision making is essential to determine the power of the Academic JCCs in UniA, UniB, and UniC, respectively. Table 14 determines the power of each Academic JCCs.

Table 14: Power of the Academic JCC in UniA, UniB, and UniC

UniA	<p>Power of the Academic JCC in UniA was bold <i>"At one time a lady lecturer was dismissed unfairly by the management. What we did was to bring this matter to court. It takes about two years to solve the case. We won the case, and the lecturer was reinstated will full compensation."</i> President, 5 September 2019</p>
UniB	<p>Power of the Academic JCC in UniB as restricted <i>"We are not going to get involved in matters which do not concern us."</i> President, 8 June 2019</p>
UniC	<p>Power of the Academic JCC in UniC as</p>

Table 1 clearly shows that the Academic JCC in UniA can bring cases to court and has won the case. As for that, the management is mindful of the power of the Academic JCCs in UniA. The Academic JCC in UniB, on the other hand, transmits their power if the issues affect the livelihood of the members while strategic issues are in the hand of the management. In UniC, the management has taken control of welfare and strategic issues; therefore, the Academic JCC in UniC has no power at all in the decision-making process.

4.7 Membership Composition in Meetings between Management and the Academic JCC in UniA, UniB, and UniC

Usually, the membership composition in meetings is at the ratio of 50:50 among the related parties involved. In this case, the 50% members represent the management and another 50% represented by the Academic JCC executive councils. Table 15 displays the commitments from both parties during meetings.

Table 15: Membership Composition in meetings with the management

UniA	<p>Has no conflict of interest in UniA <i>"The VC, the Registrar and, the Bursar are the permanent members, while at our part the President, Honorary Secretary and, Treasurer are the permanent members."</i> Honorary Secretary, 2 August 2019</p>
UniB	<p>Was in the situation of conflict of interest in UniB <i>"The VC himself is also an academic but couldn't decide for the academics per se. They decide on the administrative aspect"</i> Honorary Secretary, 10 June 2019</p>
UniC	<p>Was in the situation of conflict of interest in UniC <i>"The management team is also our members; therefore there is no transparency in terms of airing our concern"</i> Honorary Secretary, 10 June 2019</p>

Table 15 shows that there are balance representatives in meetings between the management and the Academic JCCs in UniA, UniB, and UniC. In all three universities, the management team is academics as well; therefore, this scenario was observed on their perspectives. For example, the Academic JCC in UniA says he does not see the situation of conflict arise; instead felt that it is leverage to them. While the Academic JCC in UniB and UniC believed that at the present situation was of conflict of interest in terms of making decisions.

In the context of this study, the earlier section has mentioned that the Malaysian society is known for a mix of people having different religions, languages, cultures and social customs, and the social divisions that cause stresses in many aspects of life. Therefore the Malaysian society is heterogeneous that makes them challenging to handle, unlike in Europe, their society is homogenous nature which is simple to handle. Due to its complexity in handling the issue of multi-ethnicity, multi-racial and multi-cultural the five element of the conventional JCC Model was not sufficient in the Malaysian context; therefore the element of culture is necessary to be added to the model. In this study, it was identified that the 'culture' element is referred to as 'partnership'. Figure 1 displayed a better view of the additional element to add to the conventional JCC Model.

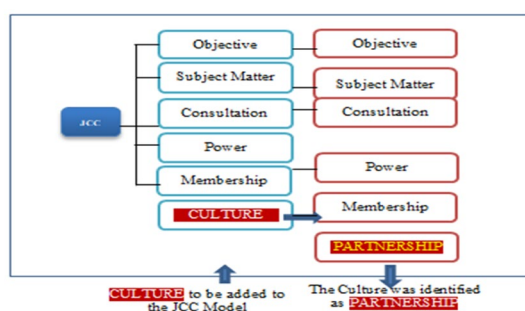


Figure 1: Transformation of the JCC Model for UniA, UniB, and UniC

5. Conclusions

Based on the above findings, it can be analyzed that even though workplace partnership the Academic JCCs in UniA, UniB, and UniC has existed for many years, it is still not bold enough to navigate the uncertainties faced by the public universities. It was also found that the final decision is still in the hand of the management. Subsequently, the

strength of the Academic JCCs leadership is essential as an enabling factor for the academic voice is being heard in decision making. However, the management still has the full authority to decide with or without consultations with the Academic JCCs. Therefore, it can be concluded that the partnership arrangement for effective consultation between management and the Academic JCCs both on less important issues to strategic issues of the universities can still be argued. However, the research has established that the desire to move forward is being felt; but at the same time concern about who is the authority. Hence, the implication of this study reflected that the Academic JCCs has to become efficient strategist in dealing with the management and be partners instead of having conflicting objectives; thus change in organizational culture mind-set is a challenging endeavour.

Ironically, the three universities were established in accordance with UUCA, 1971 and, apparently subscribed to the same circular particularly the Service Circular No. 2 the Year 1992 in establishing their respective workplace partnership through the Academic JCCs that outlined the same scope and jurisdiction. However, the practices of the Academic JCC are unique because the practices differ from one university to another, depending on the strength of the leadership. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that the final decision is in the hand of the management. Management intention has a direct impact on the level of EP in workplaces. In this case, the management is responsible for the authority in decision making in which the power to decide is in the hand of a few at the top; thus, delegation is avoided. However, in the current business environment, the management should be encouraged to enter a more sustainable workplace partnership arrangement.

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