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Connext ED Foundation: A Study of Organizational Culture in a Foundation Contributing to Thai Educational Quality Enhancement

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Abstract

This research analyzes the organizational culture of The Connext ED Foundation, a foundation established to develop Thai educational quality enhancement, and its impact on organizational success. Using qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews and content analysis, the study examines executives, employees, and foundation project participants. Findings reveal that the foundation integrates four organizational cultures: Clan Culture, fostering collaboration and engagement; Hierarchy Culture, ensuring structure and efficiency; Adhocracy Culture, promoting innovation and adaptability; and Altruistic Culture, driving social impact.

This balanced cultural integration enhances employee engagement, operational efficiency, and sustainable innovation. Key enablers, such as visionary leadership, open communication, and flexible structures, create an environment conducive to long-term success. The study highlights how educational foundations and/or non-profit organizations can design a culture that harmonizes diverse values while prioritizing social good.

These insights contribute to the broader understanding of cultural integration in educational foundations and/or non-profit organizations, emphasizing that a well-balanced culture fosters both internal effectiveness and external impact. The findings provide a framework for other organizations aiming to achieve sustainable social transformation through strategic cultural management.

Keywords: organizational culture, cultural integration, educational foundations, non-profit success, social impact, leadership

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduce the Problem

In an era where education and human resource development are crucial factors for national progress, Thailand's educational development still faces several significant challenges. Educational inequality and resource limitations are particularly concerning, as reflected in the consistently below-international-average PISA assessment results (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2022). Despite the government allocating 15 percent of the national budget to education, problems persist, especially in areas remote from the capital or major cities, where there are shortages of teachers, instructional materials, and various infrastructure elements conducive to improving the quality of Thai education (World Bank, 2021).

This situation led to establishing The Connext ED Foundation, which represents a collaborative effort among various sectors in Thailand—including private businesses, government agencies, and civil society—to develop Thai education. This aligns with Bryson, Crosby, and Stone's (2015) concept of Cross-sector Collaboration, which emphasizes integrating resources and expertise from multiple sectors, as well as Kania and Kramer's (2011) Collective Impact concept, which highlights the importance of creating shared goals and strong support systems from various sectors.

The Connext ED Foundation, initially established through the collaboration of 12 leading private organizations in Thailand operating since 2017, is an interesting example of how different sectors can work together to drive educational change. It mainly focuses on creating a sustainable culture of academic participation, elevating the quality of educational management to international standards, and connecting mechanisms to integrate education comprehensively and equitably. This aligns with Mulgan's (2019) concept of Social Innovation, which emphasizes creating innovations to address social problems. The Connext ED Foundation exemplifies outstanding Cross-Organizational Collaboration as it brings together diverse organizations with different operational characteristics

that can work efficiently and successfully (Schein and Schein, 2017). This reflects a fascinating "collaborative work culture" that can set direction and maintain consistency among network partners to address clear missions. Of particular interest is True Group, one of the private founding organizations of the foundation, which has received the Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) award and serves as the foundation's manager (True Corporation, 2023). Receiving the DJSI award demonstrates global excellence in organizational sustainability, benefiting foundation management in several areas, such as applying good sustainability practices, building credibility and trust from stakeholders, and increasing efficiency in resource and risk management (S&P Global, 2023). The collaborative operations within The Connext ED Foundation are closely linked to organizational culture, which Schein and Schein (2017) describe as a system of shared beliefs, values, and behaviors that members of an organization adhere to. This aligns with Cameron and Quinn's (2011) research, which indicates that appropriate organizational culture is crucial for organizational effectiveness, especially in organizations aiming to create social impact.

Furthermore, Austin and Seitanidi (2012) found that organizations with a culture prioritizing collective benefit can effectively connect and coordinate collaboration across diverse sectors. This aligns with Le Ber and Branzei's (2010) research, indicating that shared goals for social benefit, particularly in education, help reduce conflicts between organizations with different cultures and working models. Murphy et al. (2015) also discovered that a public-minded culture is a crucial factor enabling sustainable collaboration between government, private sector, and civil society in educational development, as it builds trust, commitment, and genuine participation from all industries. Studying the organizational culture of The Connext ED Foundation is vital in multiple dimensions: understanding the foundation's success factors, developing knowledge in social enterprise management, and creating guidelines for other organizations aiming to create social change. Moreover, in Thailand's context of rapid economic and social transformation, understanding organizational culture patterns that influence effective operations will benefit the development of the education system as a whole. This study, therefore, focuses on analyzing the organizational culture of The Connext ED Foundation to decode the organizational culture that promotes success in non-profit foundations or organizations in Thailand, particularly in education.

The research findings will help create an understanding of the role of organizational culture, strategic use of values, and efficient working environments that can be applied to other similar organizations (Denison, 1990). Additionally, having an internationally recognized organization as the foundation's manager in this research will provide interesting perspectives in analyzing organizational culture that promotes success and sustainability.

1.2 Literature Review

1) Organizational Culture

Organizational culture is a crucial factor affecting organizational efficiency and success. Cameron and Quinn (2011) presented the Competing Values Framework (CVF) as a tool for diagnosing organizational culture. Successful organizations typically blend four cultural types in proportions appropriate to their context and goals:

- Clan Culture: This culture emphasizes participation, teamwork, and personnel development. Leaders act as mentors and advisors, promoting a family-like work atmosphere and prioritizing employee engagement and mutual care.
- Adhocracy Culture: This culture focuses on creativity, innovation, and adaptability to change. Leaders are visionaries with courage, and the organization values developing new products or services.
- Hierarchy Culture Centers on structure, regulations, and control. Leaders coordinate and organize systems, and the organization prioritizes efficiency, reliability, and stability.
- Market Culture: Emphasizes competition and achievement. Leaders focus on goals and results, prioritizing market share and organizational growth.

Creating an effective and sustainable organizational culture requires the integration of several key factors: a clear vision that establishes shared direction and goals; core values that guide behavior and decision-making at all levels; consistent practices that reflect these values throughout all work processes; personnel who play crucial roles in driving and modeling the culture; and inspiring narratives that help transmit and reinforce organizational values through shared experiences. Combined, these elements form a strong and sustainable ethical foundation for the organization. (Harvard Business Review, 2021)

Studying The Connext ED Foundation's organizational culture is essential as it impacts operational efficiency in achieving goals and missions to help Thai children reach their potential as "good kids with abilities." Using the CVF framework for analysis helps understand current organizational culture and future development approaches, leading to effective change.

2) Concepts and Theories of Altruistic Culture

- Hoffman (2000): Empathy-altruism is foundational for social work in non-profit contexts. Successful organizations promote understanding others through creating opportunities for direct experience with target groups, sharing stories of service recipients, and collective reflection on work impact.
- Eisenberg et al. (2010) Found that empathy can be developed through organizational training and experience, leading to a sustainable organizational culture that promotes helping others.
- Batson (2011): Presented the Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis, explaining that genuine understanding and perception of others' feelings (Empathy) motivates altruistic behavior without hidden motives (Pure Altruism), distinct from behaviors with hidden personal motives (Egoistic Motives).
- Van Dierendonck (2011) studied servant leadership's impact on organizational culture, finding that these leaders create atmospheres of trust, promote cooperation, develop staff potential, stimulate innovative thinking, and strengthen commitment to the organizational mission.
- Khan (2024): Compassionate leadership is not merely a moral choice but a valuable strategic advantage in modern organizational management coupled with communities that recognize social responsibility. When organizational leaders forge a culture that blends empathy and civic-mindedness, the result is a qualitative enhancement of the organizational ecosystem, fostering deep engagement among personnel and creating positive contributions to the broader society. Furthermore, in an era where organizations face the complex challenges of the modern world, embracing and nurturing this compassionate leadership approach may serve as a key to sustainable prosperity and driving significant change for organizations and society.
- Penner et al. (2025) Supported this theory, finding that organizations encouraging staff to understand and care about target groups' needs tend to create social impact effectively, as staff have genuine internal motivation to help others.

3) About The Connext ED Foundation

The Connext ED Foundation is a dedicated organization committed to systematically developing Thai education. The foundation's establishment objectives include 1) creating a sustainable culture of educational participation, 2) elevating the quality of education management to meet international standards, and 3) connecting mechanisms and integrating education to make it accessible and equitable. Established in 2016 by senior executives from 12 leading organizations in Thailand who serve as School Sponsors, they provide strategic and budgetary support through volunteers from founding organizations known as School Partners (SP). These partners work collaboratively with directors of 3,342 Pracharath schools, planning to expand the project to 7,424 schools nationwide (Siam Commercial Bank, 2021).

True Group plays a key role in managing the foundation, following the chairman's emphasis on human resource development through education as a foundation for sustainable national development. The focus is on nurturing Thai youth to grow with morality, ethics, and desirable characteristics, maximizing benefits for individuals and society.

2. Methods

2.1 Target Sample

The population for this qualitative research comprises individuals associated with The Connext ED Foundation, specifically True Group representatives, including the foundation's manager and key project implementers. The informants were selected through Purposeful Sampling to ensure participants had direct knowledge and experience relevant to the study topics and were capable of providing in-depth information aligned with research objectives.

The informant group comprises True Group executives and employees, categorized by position and experience. Additional informants were selected using Intensity Sampling to obtain quality in-depth data, focusing on individuals who can provide the most comprehensive and transparent information (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). The chosen participants include:

1) One Senior Executive (Director level and above) with a minimum 1-year work experience.

2) One Middle Management Executive (Manager to Associate Director level) with a minimum 1-year work experience

3) One Operational Staff (Senior Officer and below) with a minimum 1-year work experience

4) Three employees from any position level with a minimum 1-year work experience who have participated in the

foundation's projects as a School Partner (SP)

5) One Human Resources Management Executive from True Group

This participant selection ensures a comprehensive representation across organizational levels while maintaining the quality and depth of information required for the research objectives.

2.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

This research employs Content Analysis as the primary approach for analyzing qualitative data, focusing on examining Patterns, Themes, and Meanings emerging from collected data. Following the systematic process outlined by Elo and Kyngäs (2008) and Krippendorff (2013), the analysis consists of these main steps:

1) Data Preparation: Detailed transcription of in-depth interviews, data verification through informant review, and multiple data readings for comprehensive understanding.

2) Data Reduction: Screening data relevant to research objectives, extracting significant statements from the complete data, and summarizing key content into codes for data categorization.

3) Data Categorization: Analyzing derived codes and organizing them into main categories, identifying interconnected data trends to develop themes, and using continuous comparative analysis to compare data between informants.

4) Interpretation and Conclusion: Interpret data meaning within the study context, present analysis results with empirical evidence and informant quotes, and verify analysis reliability using triangulation by comparing data from various sources and research methods to ensure reliable and accurate analysis results. This research also employs Peer Debriefing and Respondent Validation to confirm that concepts and findings reflect the actual data from informants, as shown in Figure 1.

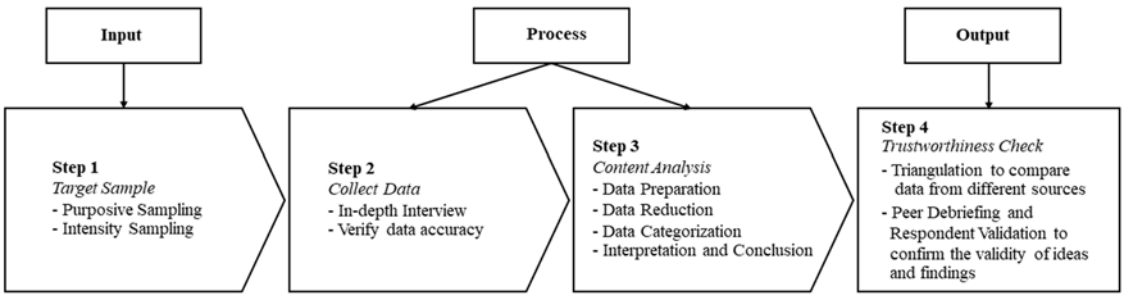

Figure 1. Research Methodology

3. Results

3.1 The Study and Analysis of The Connext ED Foundation's Organizational Culture Demonstrates the Integration of Organizational Cultures to Support the Foundation's Success

Organizational culture can be classified into four types, consisting of three organizational culture models based on Cameron and Quinn's (2011) concept: Clan Culture, Hierarchy Culture, Adhocracy Culture, and one additional form discovered by the researcher: Altruistic Culture. Each type is interconnected and mutually reinforcing, with details as follows:

Table 1. Summary of components and results of The Connext ED Foundation's Organizational Culture

Organizational Culture	Key Components	Supporting Factors	Results/Outcomes Achieved
Clan Culture	• Family-like relationships • Participatory decision-making • Teamwork	• Open communication • Relationship-building activities • Decentralization of authority	• Employee organizational commitment • Effective knowledge sharing • Supportive work environment
Hierarchy Culture	• Standardized work systems • Quality control • Transparency	• Knowledge management • Monitoring and evaluation system • Risk management	• Operational efficiency • Organizational credibility • Cost-effective resource utilization
Adhocracy Culture	• Continuous self-development • Creativity • Experimentation with new ideas/approaches	• Learning support • Acceptance of change • Collaborative networks	• Educational innovation • Creative problem-solving • Adaptability to change
Altruistic Culture	• Public consciousness • Mission commitment • Work value appreciation	• Servant leadership • Inspiration creation • Social connectivity	• Sustainable social impact • Stakeholder trust • Achievement of organizational mission

3.1.1 Clan Culture

The study found that The Connext ED Foundation demonstrates a prominent family-like organizational culture, reflected through close relationships and high trust among personnel. Staff at all levels can communicate and exchange opinions openly, with essential decisions typically involving participation from all parties. The family-oriented nature of the organization is expressed through mutual care, support, and collaborative learning. Personnel feel part of a more prominent family sharing a common goal in developing Thai education. Executives function as mentors who provide guidance and support for personnel development. This family culture results in high organizational commitment, low turnover rates, and effective informal knowledge sharing. Staff members feel confident expressing opinions, proposing new ideas, and collaboratively solving problems. These research findings align with and encompass the interview responses from the foundation's executives, as reflected in the following quote: "…People sitting next to us are more than colleagues. We see everyone as members of the same family who care for each other. This facilitates genuine participatory decision-making, making teamwork occur naturally. We maintain open communication through various regular relationship-building activities and support decentralized management. The apparent outcome is that employees have deep organizational commitment, resulting in effective knowledge sharing within a mutually supportive work environment…"

3.1.2 Hierarchy Culture

While maintaining high familiarity, the foundation emphasizes systematic and standardized work processes. The research found clear organizational structures and work systems, with documented policies, guidelines, and work standards, that remain sufficiently flexible to adapt to situations. Quality control and evaluation are crucial to the organizational culture, with regular project progress monitoring, transparent reporting systems, and efficient resource utilization checks. Systematic knowledge management helps the organization effectively retain and transfer essential knowledge. This balance between structure and flexibility has resulted in stakeholder trust, efficient resource management, and consistent quality outcomes. These research findings align with the comprehensive interview response from the foundation's operational staff member, who stated: "…We work through strong quality control processes, maintaining transparency at every step. We all participate in knowledge management, have a creative monitoring and evaluation system, and carefully manage risks without fearing change. These elements enable us to work efficiently, be a credible organization, and utilize resources most effectively…"

3.1.3 Adhocracy Culture

The study also found that the foundation has a distinct culture promoting innovation and learning. Personnel are encouraged to think outside the box, experiment with new methods, and learn from mistakes. The work environment facilitates creativity and innovation development. The organization has various learning support mechanisms, including training, experience sharing, cross-functional work, and building external collaborative networks. Staff members are encouraged to develop themselves continuously and have the freedom to devise new working methods. This innovation-focused culture enables the foundation to develop creative projects and activities that address Thai educational development needs, adapt to changes, and create tangible social impact. These research findings align with and cover the above aspects, as reflected in the interview response from a

foundation volunteer staff member, who stated: "…We are continuously developed to think boldly and try new things. Our strong learning support system normalizes accepting change, making our collaboration with all sectors highly effective. This organizational culture enables us to create educational innovations, solve problems creatively, and adapt quickly when facing new challenges during our work in the field…"

3.1.4 Altruistic Culture

The most distinctive characteristic of the organizational culture is public consciousness, which serves as the core connecting other cultural aspects. Personnel at all levels are committed to creating change in the Thai education system, seeing value and meaning in their work, and ready to dedicate themselves to public benefit.

Implementing Servant Leadership principles, focusing on self-dedication for others, has led executives and staff to emphasize creating benefits for others with understanding and empathy while being ready to develop their potential for more significant impact. This public-benefit-oriented culture results in continuous and sustainable foundation operations, earning stakeholder trust and building strong collaborative networks. These research findings align with the comprehensive interview response from a foundation executive, who stated: "…Public consciousness is everyone's commitment to the foundation's work. We see value in everything we do. The foundation's top executives nurture us to be selfless and dedicated to serving others, which is an inspirational process for each other, creating genuine social connections. Together, these elements enable us to create sustainable social impact, earn trust from all sectors, including private sector partners, government, and civil society, and achieve our vision and mission in concrete ways…"

3.1.5 The Integration of Organizational Cultures

The Connext ED Foundation's distinction lies in its balanced integration of four organizational culture types. Family-like relationships (Clan Culture) foster engagement and knowledge sharing, systematic standards (Hierarchy Culture) ensure operational efficiency and credibility, innovation promotion (Adhocracy Culture) enables continuous development, and public consciousness (Altruistic Culture) serves as the core foundation making work meaningful and sustainable. The balanced integration of these four cultural aspects has led to the foundation's success across multiple dimensions: operational efficiency, personnel development, innovation creation, and social impact. Staff members show strong organizational commitment, continuous potential development, and motivation for social work. Simultaneously, they achieve educational system changes, develop student, school, and community potential, and build strong collaborative networks. This success is supported by several key factors: visionary and exemplary leadership, flexible and transparent systems, open and comprehensive communication, and adequate support. These factors create an environment conducive to the foundation's growth and development. These research findings align with the comprehensive interview response from a foundation senior executive, who stated: "…The foundation's success comes from the perfect blend of values and organizational cultures, not just one type. All of this is driven by public consciousness to create benefits for others, our society, and our country. This balance has led to success in strategic operations, personnel development, and social impact creation, supported by visionary leadership, flexible transparent systems, and open communication…"

The research demonstrates that the foundation's success doesn't depend on any single organizational culture but on a balanced integration of diverse cultures, with public benefit consciousness as the core connecting all components. This study provides valuable insights for developing other foundations or non-profit organizations aiming to create social change.

4. Discussion

The study found that The Connext ED Foundation's organizational culture exhibits characteristics of Clan Culture, Hierarchy Culture that emphasizes standards for credibility, and Adhocracy Culture, which aligns with Cameron and Quinn's (2011) concept stating that organizations focusing on personnel relationship development, promoting innovation and building credibility typically have effective potential for social operations. Additionally, promoting an Altruistic Culture is crucial in motivating staff's internal drive to work for social benefits. Furthermore, organizations with Servant Leadership can better enhance cooperation and trust, resulting in an environment conducive to personnel development and sustainable achievement of social goals. The research findings can be discussed in the following key points:

4.1 The Integration of Organizational Cultures

Clan Culture emphasizes family-like relationships and participation, creating a supportive work atmosphere and organizational commitment. Hierarchy Culture establishes transparent work systems and standards, enhancing organizational efficiency and credibility. Adhocracy Culture promotes innovation and learning, enabling the organization to adapt to changes and creatively develop new projects. Altruistic Culture connects other cultures

through public consciousness and collective goals, creating meaning and motivation for personnel. This cultural integration reflects Cameron and Quinn's (2011) concept that no single culture suits every organization, but selecting appropriate cultures and balancing them helps organizations succeed in their specific contexts, which is shown in Figure 2.

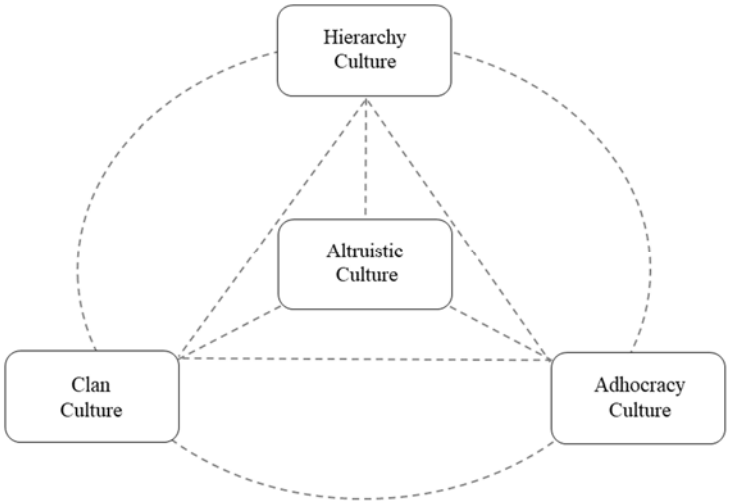

Figure 2. Integration of The Connext ED Foundation's Organizational Culture

4.2 Social Impact Creation

The Connext ED Foundation's distinctive feature is its perfect blend of multiple organizational cultures, where each type has specific interconnected and complementary roles supporting organizational goals. The research found that Altruistic Culture is vital as the core driver of other cultures and connects to create social impact. This concept aligns with Grant's (2008) research, indicating that organizations emphasizing public consciousness and collective goals motivate employees to dedicate themselves and create genuine social benefits. Additionally, applying Servant Leadership in the organization helps foster inspiration and stakeholder trust, corresponding with Greenleaf's (1977) concept that leaders focusing on serving others will create valuable and sustainable organizations

4.3 Organizational Commitment and Sustainability

Having a Clan Culture and Hierarchy Culture helps build employee engagement and operational efficiency, which are key factors in creating organizational sustainability. This research finding aligns with Schein's (2010) work, which states that employee commitment stems from creating a culture conducive to knowledge sharing and teamwork. Meanwhile, having transparent systems and standards helps reduce conflicts and increase work transparency.

4.4 Innovation and Adaptation

Promoting Adhocracy Culture helps the foundation develop innovations and adapt quickly to changes, which is crucial in an era of constant technological and global change. This concept aligns with Tushman and O'Reilly's (1996) work, which indicates that organizations with a culture of learning and experimentation can better handle challenges and create new opportunities.

4.5 Importance of Communication and Leadership

The research also shows that open communication and visionary leadership support successful organizational culture integration. This aligns with Kotter's (1996) concept that leadership is crucial in building a strong organizational culture, and clear communication helps build understanding and trust.

5. Conclusions

The study and analysis of The Connext ED Foundation's organizational culture demonstrates the importance of balanced integrating multiple organizational cultures to support the foundation's success across multiple dimensions. The foundation integrates four organizational cultures, including Clan Culture, Hierarchy Culture,

Adhocracy Culture, and Altruistic Culture, with each type having specific complementary roles in creating a work environment conducive to growth, development, and organizational and social impact. This balanced integration of four cultural types has resulted in the foundation's success in multiple dimensions, such as employee engagement and supportive work atmosphere, efficient and credible operations with cost-effective resource utilization, development of innovations addressing Thai educational development, and the creation of sustainable social impact. The foundation's success is not solely due to organizational culture but also supported by key factors such as leadership through visionary executives who set good examples, open communication that builds organizational understanding and trust, and flexible structure with transparent work systems that can adapt to situations.

Implementation Guidelines: This research can guide various foundations, especially educational foundations, and other non-profit organizations, in designing appropriate organizational cultures. It emphasizes the balanced integration of diverse cultures with public benefit consciousness as the core principle for creating sustainable social impact.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Policy Recommendations

Development of national-level support mechanisms for non-profit organizations: Government agencies should consider developing policies and measures facilitating educational non-profit organizations' operations, especially creating ecosystems that promote social innovation, cross-sector collaboration, and success scaling.

Promotion of social work culture: Educational institutions and relevant agencies should develop curricula and activities that cultivate public consciousness, promote learning through social work, and build learning networks among social organizations.

Development of social measurement and evaluation systems: Assessment tools and standards appropriate for non-profit organizations' context should be developed, considering both quantitative and qualitative dimensions, including long-term social impact.

6.2 Practical Recommendations

The development of integrated organizational culture for foundations or non-profit organizations should emphasize developing an organizational culture that balances the strengths of various organizational culture types, with public benefit consciousness as the core, through multiple processes:

- Defining values and desired behaviors: Create clear guidelines for organizational values and behaviors while developing leadership and personnel to promote desired organizational culture.
- Developing communication systems and participation: Develop effective communication methods and create participation mechanisms to ensure personnel at all levels understand and participate in organizational culture.
- Evaluating and improving organizational culture: Conduct continuous assessment and improvement processes to align with societal needs and changes.
- Building sustainability and collaborative work skills: Promote organizational sustainability by developing support systems and mechanisms while building strong networks and cooperation with diverse stakeholders.
- Knowledge management and innovation: Develop knowledge management systems and innovations, with succession planning, to develop a new generation of leaders capable of creating social change.

6.3 Recommendations for Future Research

1) Comparative studies of organizational cultures among foundations working in different areas should be conducted to understand the similarities and differences of organizational cultures in different contexts or founding objectives.

2) Quantitative research should be conducted to develop measurement tools and organizational culture assessments appropriate for non-profit organizations in Thailand.

3) The organizational culture change process during transitions or crises should be studied to understand factors affecting successful organizational culture transformation.

4) Long-term research should be conducted to study the relationship between organizational culture and long-term social impact.

5) The role of digital technology in organizational culture development should be studied in the digital transformation era.

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Authors' contributions

Abhicha Buabanprom and Asst. Prof. Dr. Boonwadee Montrikul Na Ayudhaya was responsible for the study design and revision. Abhicha Buabanprom was responsible for data collection and drafting the manscript, assisted by Asst. Prof. Dr. Boonwadee Montrikul Na Ayudhaya revised it. The authors read and approved the final manuscript, and designated Abhicha Buabanprom as the primary coordinator for the publication process.

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Obtained.

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No additional data are available.

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