

Research on the Impact of "Slogan" in Schools of Different Countries on Students' Behavior Performance: A Research Based on Grounded Theory

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Abstract: This study analyzes interview data from students across multiple countries and schools, using grounded theory to construct the factors influencing the impact of school slogans on student behavior. The research examines the effects of slogans from various perspectives, including educational learning, social participation, moral development, and the cultivation of student traits. The findings indicate that school slogans play a multifaceted role in shaping student behavior. Slogans convey the educational philosophy and academic spirit of the institution, influencing students' academic attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, slogans impact students' participation, thereby affecting their involvement in social affairs and the formation of social views. School slogans also contribute to the development of students' moral values and sense of norms. The slogans in schools from different regions contain unique cultural and social elements, promoting the development of regionally distinct personalities and cultural traits in students. Furthermore, school slogans influence students' behavior in other areas in various ways.

Keywords: School, Slogan, Student Behavior, International Comparative Education, Grounded Theory

1. Introduction

In the field of educational research, there is an increasing focus on the influence of educational environments on student behavior. Among the various educational environments, schools are the most familiar. The elements present within the school environment have a multi-layered and multifaceted impact on the learners within it. Among these elements, school slogans (which here refer to mottos, symbols, school songs, disciplinary rules, and instructive image designs) hold a significant position. In Mainland China, the education authorities have explicitly mentioned school mottos, anthems, emblems, and other cultural carriers in their guidance on higher education campus culture construction [1]. In Western countries, such as the United States, there are at least 2,000 university campus slogans [2]. Prestigious institutions like Harvard University have even introduced slogans such as "Managing Yourself" and "The World's Thinking." The presence of these slogans in schools serves, in many respects, as a means of disciplining and motivating students, underscoring the unique role of slogans within the cultural elements of the campus.

However, current discussions on the impact of school slogans on student behavior often limit the effects of slogans to their influence on students' academic performance, either as motivation or

discipline. The broader impact of slogans on students' cultural traits, civic awareness, cultural perspectives, and moral development is often overlooked. Moreover, due to the cultural and educational differences across regions, school slogans from different areas reflect distinct regional cultural characteristics in both their content and form, showcasing the unique social and cultural features of each region. Thus, it is necessary to explore the forms and contents of school slogans in different regions and how these slogans influence various aspects of student behavior.

This study adopts a grounded theory approach, interviewing individuals with educational experiences from different countries and regions, comparing the results, and systematically analyzing the mechanisms by which school slogans in different areas influence student behavior.

2. Research design

2.1. Research subjects and methods

Foreigners who have received education in foreign schools but now live in China continue to be influenced by the school slogans from their time abroad, despite no longer being in the educational environment of their home countries. This gives them a deeper and more objective understanding of the cultures, religions, and educational settings in both China and other countries. Thus, to study the influence of school slogans on students from different countries and regions, this research turns to foreigners who have received education in foreign schools.

To accurately investigate the impact of school slogans on student behavior and development, this study will adopt grounded theory for analysis [3]. Grounded theory is a qualitative research method that systematically collects and analyzes data to derive theory. It emphasizes generating theory from actual data rather than testing existing theories. The analytical process of grounded theory includes three stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Each stage progressively abstracts the data, building a theoretical framework.

This research employs a three-tiered coding approach to thoroughly analyze the original data, ensuring comprehensiveness and reliability.

2.2. Data collection

Purposeful sampling was used to obtain data, selecting Israeli foreign teachers, Belgian students, and Malaysian students who study and work at a university in Beijing, China. The interviewees all have educational experience abroad and have lived or worked in China for over two years.

Data was mainly collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews. From May to June 2024, the researcher conducted interviews with the participants. The interviews focused on the following seven questions:

Share some of the slogans and mottos from your school.

Please describe in detail the form of the school's slogans and mottos (e.g., posters, banners, etc.).

Which slogans left a deep impression on you? Can you sketch a simple image to illustrate it?

How would you describe yourself and the students around you at that time?

What is the biggest change you have undergone since your time at school?

What aspect of the school's slogans and mottos had the greatest impact on you?

In the future, what changes do you think your school's slogans might undergo?

2.3. Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using grounded theory and a three-tiered coding method. Taking the interview with the Malaysian student as an example, the specific steps are as follows:

Open Coding:

The interview recordings and text materials were initially classified, identifying repeated keywords and themes. For example, in the interview with the Malaysian student, keywords included "multiculturalism," "family values," "school norms," and "religious influence."

Axial Coding:

The concepts and categories identified in the open coding phase were related and classified at a higher level of abstraction. For instance, "multiculturalism" and "family values" were categorized as "cultural influences," while "school norms" and "religious influence" were classified as "behavioral norms."

Selective Coding:

Core categories were selected, and other relevant categories and concepts were integrated around these core categories, ultimately building a theoretical framework. For example, "cultural influences" and "behavioral norms" were chosen as the core categories, integrating the specific influencing factors of the Malaysian student, and constructing a comprehensive theoretical framework of how school slogans impact student behavior and development.

3. Data analysis

3.1. Analysis of the case of Malaysia

Table 1: List of axial coding results of impact of Malaysia school slogans on student behavior

Main Category	Category	Category Definition	Node Frequency
Impact of School Slogans	Slogan Types	The types of school slogans, such as religious slogans, moral slogans, motivational slogans, etc.	12
	Visual Design	The visual presentation of slogans on campus, including posters on walls, sculptures, school motto tablets, etc.	10
	Content Themes	The core themes of slogan content, such as moral constraints, learning motivation, behavioral norms, etc.	15
Student Responses to Slogans	Motivational Effects	The motivational impact of slogans on student learning and behavior.	18
	Behavioral Norms	The role of slogans in disciplining student behavior.	14
	Cultural Identity	The students' cultural identification with the content of the slogans.	8
Student Behavior and Personality	Learning Motivation	The students' motivation and interest in learning.	16
	Behavioral Patterns	The behavior patterns of students at school, including self-discipline, discipline, and interest-driven actions.	14
	Growth Background	The influence of students' upbringing and background on their behavior and personality.	4
Educational Environment and Cultural Background	Campus Culture	The overall cultural atmosphere and environment of the school and its impact on students.	12
	Educational Policies	The differences in students' responses to and understanding of slogans based on their cultural backgrounds.	9
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During the data analysis process, the following axial coding categories were found to have high frequency:

During the data analysis process, the following axial coding categories were found to have high frequency. In terms of motivational impact and learning motivation, the highest frequency was observed in Malaysia's educational environment, where school slogans such as "Study Hard, Strive

for Excellence" play a crucial role in motivating students and fostering their learning motivation. This indicates that Malaysian schools emphasize using positive slogans to inspire students' interest in learning and their intrinsic motivation.

Regarding multiculturalism and cultural inclusion, multicultural slogans such as "Live in Harmony" frequently appear, highlighting the strong emphasis Malaysian schools place on cultural inclusion and diversity education. These slogans help students understand and respect peers from different cultural backgrounds, promoting harmony within the campus.

Family values and life balance were also a prominent theme, appearing with relatively high frequency. Slogans emphasizing family values, such as "Home is a Warm Harbor," suggest that while schools encourage academic achievement, they also emphasize students' family life and mental well-being. These slogans help students find a balance between academics and family, fostering overall well-being.

Another significant category was religious influence and behavioral norms. As Malaysia is a multi-religious country, religious influence is prominent in school slogans. Slogans like "Respect Faith, Embrace Diversity" are common, reflecting how schools not only regulate students' behavior but also promote understanding and respect for different religions.

A particular verse from the Quran may have also inspired one of the interviewees. During the interview, a participant mentioned: "Whenever we study the Quran, we take notes, learn its meaning, and its translation. Many teachings encourage us to be independent and become better individuals. Every time I face difficulties, I have faith that something good will happen in the future." This statement reflects the positive motivational impact of Quranic teachings on students. When facing challenges, students derive psychological support and encouragement from religious teachings, fostering a belief in positive outcomes. This faith and optimistic mindset not only influence their psychological state but also strengthen their ability to confront difficulties.

3.2. Analysis of the case of Belgium

Table 2: List of axial coding results of impact of Belgian school slogans on student behavior

Coding Stage	Main Category	Subcategory	Definition & Examples	Node Frequency
Open Coding	Slogan Types	Scientific Quotes	E.g., "Science will conquer the darkness" (ULB slogan), emphasizing rational thinking.	12
		Motivational Slogans	E.g., "Free thinking is our tradition" (ULB slogan), encouraging independent thought.	10
	Visual Design	Artistic Styles	Slogans displayed via sculptures or murals to enhance campus aesthetics.	8
Axial Coding	Academic Orientation	Rational Thinking	Scientific slogans cultivate analytical skills.	15
		Cultural Freedom	Reflects universities' emphasis on free thought (e.g., ULB's ethos).	12
	Student Engagement	Political Participation	Slogans inspire students to engage in social issues (high frequency).	9
Selective Coding	Core Category: Academic Freedom and Cultural Inspiration			
	- Science-Driven Slogans		Shape scientific inquiry and critical thinking through quotes.	
	- Promotion of Free Values		Slogans reflect Belgium's multiculturalism, reinforcing inclusivity.	

During the data analysis process, several key axial coding categories emerged with high frequency in the context of Belgian schools. Academic motivation and intellectual inspiration appeared as a dominant theme, as many school slogans in Belgium emphasize scientific inquiry and intellectual growth. For instance, slogans like "Science Will Conquer the Darkness" encourage students to adopt a rational and scientific approach to learning. These academic-oriented slogans reflect Belgian schools' strong emphasis on fostering independent thinking and intellectual curiosity.

Another prominent category was university culture and institutional identity, which is particularly evident in the differentiation between universities such as ULB (Université libre de Bruxelles) and KU Leuven. ULB's slogans frequently highlight free thinking and secular education, reinforcing the institution's identity as a space for open intellectual exploration. In contrast, KU Leuven's slogan "Sedes Sapientiae" (Seat of Wisdom) reflects a focus on historical prestige and academic tradition rather than direct engagement with students' individual development. These differences in institutional identity contribute to variations in how students engage with school culture and learning environments.

Student engagement and political involvement also emerged as a significant factor. In Belgian universities, particularly at ULB, students are encouraged to actively participate in social and political discourse. This engagement is shaped by the university's emphasis on free thinking, where slogans serve as reminders of the importance of intellectual independence. As a result, students in such environments tend to be more politically active and socially aware compared to their counterparts at more traditional institutions like KU Leuven, where the student body generally exhibits a lower level of political engagement.

Another recurring theme was the transition from high school to university life, where students experience a shift from idealism to pragmatism. High school environments in Belgium often lack prominent slogans, which contrasts with the more slogan-rich culture of universities. Many students entering university for the first time encounter motivational phrases that shape their academic journey and critical thinking development. Over time, students in Belgian universities develop a more realistic outlook on education and society, influenced by the institutional philosophies embedded in school slogans.

Finally, social awareness and cultural exposure played an important role in shaping student behavior. The diverse and international nature of Belgian universities means that students are frequently exposed to various cultures and perspectives. This exposure, reinforced by school slogans that encourage open-mindedness and global awareness, leads to an increased understanding of social and economic distinctions. Many students reported that their time in university—particularly at ULB, with its emphasis on free thought—broadened their perspectives on global issues and deepened their appreciation for social diversity.

Through these findings, it is evident that Belgian school slogans serve not only as academic motivators but also as cultural and political influences. Whether fostering scientific inquiry, shaping institutional identity, or encouraging political engagement, these slogans play a critical role in students' intellectual and personal development.

3.3. Analysis of the case of Israel

Table 3: List of axial coding results of impact of Israeli school slogans on student behavior

Coding Stage	Main Category	Subcategory	Definition & Examples	Node Frequency
Open Coding	Slogan Types	Scientific Quotes	E.g., "Innovation is the cornerstone of the future" (Tel Aviv University).	15
		Disciplinary Slogans	E.g., "Discipline shapes excellence", enforcing behavioral rules.	12
	Visual Design	Modern Art Elements	Slogans use abstract patterns or floor inscriptions to attract attention.	9
Axial Coding	Dual Academic-Disciplinary Focus	Scientific Inspiration	Slogans elevate academic aspirations (e.g., engineering department logos).	14
		Behavioral Regulation	Disciplinary slogans directly guide conduct (e.g., punctuality rules).	11
	Cultural Uniqueness	Innovation Tradition	Reflects Israel's emphasis on technological advancement (e.g., "Nation built on tech").	10

Table 3: (continued)

Selective Coding	Core Category: Balance Between Science and Discipline			
	- Science-Oriented Values		Slogans instill a sense of mission in scientific exploration.	
	- Discipline-Driven Behavior		Clear norms cultivate self-discipline to support academic goals.	

During the data analysis process, several key axial coding categories emerged with high frequency in the context of Israeli schools. Academic excellence and scientific exploration stood out as a dominant theme, as many Israeli school slogans emphasize knowledge, research, and intellectual ambition. Slogans like "Through Science, We Shall Prevail" encourage students to develop a strong commitment to scientific inquiry and problem-solving. This reflects Israel's broader emphasis on innovation and technological advancement, where education is closely linked to national progress and development.

Another prominent category was discipline and behavioral expectations, which was particularly evident in the structure and rules reinforced by school slogans. Many Israeli schools, especially those with a strong military or religious background, use slogans to instill discipline, resilience, and a sense of responsibility. These slogans often promote perseverance and self-control, shaping student behavior by reinforcing the importance of order, hard work, and national service. Given Israel's unique social and political landscape, school environments often integrate themes of responsibility and duty into their educational culture.

Cultural identity and national pride also played a significant role in shaping school slogans. Israeli schools frequently use slogans to foster a sense of national belonging and historical consciousness. Many slogans reference Jewish heritage, collective memory, and the importance of contributing to society. Students are often encouraged to see themselves as part of a larger national mission, which aligns with Israel's emphasis on civic responsibility and military service. This sense of collective identity is reinforced through educational messages that highlight perseverance, unity, and the importance of community contribution.

Another recurring theme was the encouragement of critical thinking and debate, a characteristic feature of Israel's education system. School slogans often reflect an emphasis on questioning, analyzing, and engaging in open discourse. This aligns with the broader Israeli cultural norm of fostering independent thought and argumentation, which is widely seen in academic settings. Schools encourage students to challenge ideas, engage in discussions, and seek deeper understanding, shaping their approach to both academic learning and social interactions.

Finally, innovation and entrepreneurship emerged as a key influence in Israeli school slogans. Many slogans emphasize creativity, adaptability, and the pursuit of new ideas, reflecting Israel's reputation as a global leader in technology and start-up culture. Schools encourage students to take initiative and think outside the box, reinforcing an educational culture that values problem-solving and resourcefulness. This emphasis on innovation is not only reflected in school mottos but also in broader educational policies that promote scientific research and entrepreneurship from an early age.

Through these findings, it is evident that Israeli school slogans serve as more than just motivational phrases—they actively shape student behavior, intellectual development, and national consciousness. Whether promoting scientific achievement, reinforcing discipline, fostering national identity, or encouraging debate and innovation, these slogans reflect Israel's unique cultural and educational priorities.

4. Conclusion

The analysis underscores the critical role of cultural context in shaping the design and impact of school slogans. In Belgium, slogans emphasizing scientific inquiry and free thinking (e.g., “Science will conquer the darkness”) align with the country’s historical emphasis on secular education and intellectual freedom. This resonates with studies highlighting how European educational systems prioritize critical thinking and student autonomy [4]. Conversely, Malaysian slogans, heavily influenced by religious and familial values (e.g., “Respect faith, embrace diversity”), reflect the nation’s multicultural and multi-religious fabric. Such findings align with research on Southeast Asian education, where moral and religious education often intertwines with national identity-building [5]. In Israel, slogans blending scientific rigor and behavioral discipline (e.g., floor-engraved quotes from renowned scientists) mirror the society’s dual focus on innovation and structured governance—a pattern consistent with studies on Israeli education’s emphasis on STEM and civic responsibility [6].

By integrating these insights, this study advances a cross-cultural framework for understanding school slogans as cultural artifacts that mediate between institutional values and student behavior. Unlike prior research, which often reduces slogans to academic motivators [7], this framework highlights their multidimensional roles in fostering moral development, cultural cohesion, and social awareness—a contribution that bridges gaps in comparative education study.

Future research could expand on these findings by incorporating quantitative methods to validate the grounded theory model, allowing for a more systematic measurement of slogan influence on student behavior. Additionally, as digital education continues to evolve, exploring the role of school slogans in online learning environments—such as virtual classrooms, e-learning platforms, and digital school branding—could provide new insights into how slogans adapt to contemporary educational challenges. By bridging traditional and digital learning spaces, future studies could further refine our understanding of how educational messages shape student development in an increasingly interconnected world.

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