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Dynamics of School Management and Its Translations into School Climate



Abstract: - The study is grounded on Social Capital Theory and Ecological Systems which was introduced by Robert Putnam and Urie Bronfenbrenner. Through the multiple-case study among 27 participants from different secondary schools, the researcher explored participants' experiences with the development of a positive school climate. In determining the themes of the study, the researcher utilized Braun & Clarke (2006) Six-phased Thematic Analysis and Multiple Cross-Case Analysis by Miles & Huberman (1994). Results indicated that school management practices such as Teaching and Learning, Institutional Environment and Relationships are important considerations in building a positive school climate.

Keywords: flexible leadership model (FLM), multiple cross-case analysis, school climate, and school management practices

I. INTRODUCTION

School climate which refers to the learning environment of a particular academic institution has been of great interest to educators, researchers, and educational policy makers since the turn of the twentieth century (Bear, Yang, Gaskins, Blank, & Chen, 2014). As a result of the expanding number of research studies correlating school climate to important teacher and student outcomes, an immense body of work centered on school climate has emerged (Thapa et.al, 2013). However, it has been observed that only a small number of schools use effective indicators of school climate.

The climate of the school is defined as the quality and character of school life which represents norms, aspirations, beliefs, relationships, leadership, teaching & learning and organizational structure (National School Climate Center, 2015). Indeed, no meaningful teaching-learning can take place in an environment that is not conducive and safe to both learners and staff. It is therefore imperative that educational stakeholders foster a safe & secure environment.

How the principal lead has a direct influence on the climate of the school (McNulty, 2015). Principals are responsible for maintaining a climate that is collegial, interactive, and focused on supporting teachers and students throughout the educational process.

According to Kelley, Thornton, and Daugherty (2015), Effective leadership is the most critical component of a successful educational setting. The principal's capacity to create and sustain a healthy atmosphere is a critical part of leadership (Smith & Piele, 2016). When the atmosphere is pleasant, teachers are better equipped to meet the academic demands of their students.

The School principal has a beneficial influence through its favorable effects on the school climate. Thus, this research was conducted to uncover the principal leadership characteristics and traits that have been identified as having a good school climate. The development of quality decision-making policies is one of the objectives of this study.

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II. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

This study is grounded on Social Capital Theory by Pierre Bourdieu (1986) and Ecological Systems Theory (EST) by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979).

Social Capital Theory by Pierre Bourdieu (1986)

Bourdieu's conceptualization of social capital is based on the recognition that capital is not only economic but a symbolic power in society. Social Capital is a value derived from positive connections between people. It is a network of relationships among individuals who live and work in a community. For Bourdieu, social capital is based on the notion of "Power Over" its subordinates. It is attributed to social position and power by social norms. In a school setting, the principal benefits from social capital through their ability to influence the teachers and stakeholders. Where social capital is high, the atmosphere is positive, and it promotes motivation, commitment, and collaboration. Social capital is an important component of leadership. It requires a principal with high levels of emotional literacy and inspires large groups of people.

Ecological Systems Theory (EST) is a study of multiple interconnected environmental systems that influence individual development. It has four complex layers called systems. These systems are constructed by roles, norms, and rules. This theory relates to school climate because the basis of this theory derives from the reciprocal interactions of people, environment, and behavior.

The most important system of EST is the microsystem. Relationship in the microsystem is bi-directional, meaning the person can be influenced by other people in the environment and is also capable of changing the beliefs and actions of other people. If the principal has a strong nurturing relationship with teachers and subordinates, this is said to have a positive effect on them. Whereas distant and unaffectionate principals have the opposite impact.

III. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This Multiple Case Study aimed to unveil the dynamics of school management and its translations into school climate in selected secondary school in the Division of Eastern Samar, School Year 2022-2023, to provide insights from specific patterns emerging as themes from the case of investigation.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How do Secondary School Principals practice school management?
2. What leadership style emerged from the management practices?
3. How do these surfaced leadership styles translate into a positive school climate?
4. What unified leadership model emerged from the study?

V. METHODOLOGY

A. *Design*

The researcher employed qualitative research using multiple case study design and thematic cross-case analysis to come up with the report.

According to Yin (2003), a multiple case study enables the researcher to explore differences within and between cases. The goal is to replicate findings across cases. Because comparisons will be drawn, it is imperative that the cases are chosen carefully so that the researcher can predict similar results across cases, or predict contrasting

results based on theory. A multiple or collective case study will allow the researcher to analyze within each setting and across settings.

B. Research Locale and Participants

The participants of the study were from Public Secondary Schools in Twenty-Seven (27) Districts of Eastern Samar Division gathered through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is one that was selected based on the knowledge of a population and the purpose of the study.

The participants were selected under the following criteria: (a) passer of National Qualifying Examination for School Heads or NQESH; (b) have at least 3-year experience as a principal; and (c) provided honest answers in an interview.

C. Procedure

The data-gathering procedure secured a permit from the University President through the Dean of the Graduate School. The researcher safeguarded another authorization from the Schools Division Superintendent and School Heads in the Division of Eastern Samar to conduct the foregoing study on the premises of their institution.

The researcher visited each school personally and after the confirmation of the agreed time and place for the interview, the researcher gave an orientation about the purpose of this study. When the participants were ready for the interview, the researcher used an audio recorder and recorded the whole interview process. During the interview, the researcher strictly followed the questions specified in the interview protocol. After the interview, the recorded audio played with the participants to ensure proper recording.

The researcher hired individuals in transcribing the audio recordings. The transcripts of the interviews were reviewed as many times as possible to analyze the words, sentences and paragraphs which served as starting points for developing themes in the data collection process.

D. Data Analysis

In the analysis of data, all recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim to English. Analysis was done using Thematic Cross-Case Analysis. This process of analysis involved sorting or coding the data into themes and categories by identifying and analyzing repeating patterns that exist in the data.

In determining the themes of the dissertation problem, the researcher used Braun & Clarke (2006) six-phased thematic analysis in determining the dynamics of school management and its translations into school climate.

After determining the themes of the dissertation problem, the researcher conducted multiple cross-case analyses to distinguish the processes and outcomes across many cases and to expand the understanding of similarities and differences across cases. Further, multi-comparisons highlight the conditions and generic processes required for explaining how situations are related (Miles & Huberman 1994). **First**, within-case analysis was done using a conceptually clustered matrix. **Second**, reviewed the coding procedures using empirical examples to illustrate the benefits of working with descriptive, interpretive and pattern codes when formulating generalizations within cases. **Third**, a case-ordered meta-matrix was used to search for similarities and associations across case outcomes. **Fourth**, formed general explanations by mapping on scatterplots. When empirically possible, cases were ordered by type, causal relationships between variables are explained and theoretical predictions are made using devices such as predictor-outcome matrices and causal models. **Lastly**, concluded with a critical appraisal of the methodological quality of published studies based on cross-case analysis and discuss best practices in reporting findings.

Moreover, a triangulation procedure from teachers and other stakeholders were done to incorporate qualitative narrative responses of principals during the conduct of the study. Triangulation is the process of ensuring validity of the data gathered using various sources, methods, instruments, and theories (Polit and Beck, 2003).

In addition to the emerging themes based on the data from the participants in this study, the researcher created a framework of the case study being explored. This framework served as a contribution to the body of knowledge in Education research relative to Leadership and Management.

E. Establishing Trustworthiness

The issue of trustworthiness is critical to all studies including qualitative research. Trustworthiness can be established by examining the four criteria: credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability.

Credibility – The researcher will make use of member check strategy to establish credibility. Member checks will be used to access accuracy of the data being reported by participants to the researcher. They will provide key feedback and will clarify any misinterpretation that will be made that could bias the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

Dependability - Dependability is “ an evaluation of the quality of the integrated processes of data collection, data analysis, and theory generation” (Universal Teacher, 2013). To establish dependability, the study will be audited by the researcher’s adviser throughout the research process. He will review the coding procedures, read and comment on emerging themes, and affirms the research process consistency. The peer review process will provide the method for fostering dependability in the findings of the research. In addition, evaluation of the effectiveness of the process through reflection is another means of dependability (Shenton, 2004).

Confirmability – Another area to be used to establish trustworthiness is confirmability. This entailed using rich details to provide evidence of the research design and process. Confirmability ensured outcomes could be replicated or confirmed by others (Universal Teacher, 2013). I will obtain confirmability by using reflective journal notes, including structure of categories (themes, definitions, and relationships), research design and data choices (Blackstone, 2012). Moreover, I will maintain an audit trail by giving a clear description of the research process, which includes research design and decisions about data collection, as well as steps and procedures for data management, analysis, and reporting will be employed.

Transferability – This can be described as a way to obtain external validity via the use of external thick description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Patton (2002) referred to transferability as “lesson learned”. “Lesson Learned is the idea that the greater the number of sources supporting, the more rigorous the evidence” (p.565). I will provide transferability by using thick rich descriptions of the participants’ perceptions. Lastly, as noted by Guba and Lincoln (1985), using reflection is another way to gain transferability.

F. Ethical Considerations

Consistent with the standard ethical procedures, the researcher secured the following: institutional approval for interview, informed consent, and response confidentiality.

Institutional approval was secured by the researcher by sending a letter of approval to the University President, and to the Division Superintendent and School Heads of Eastern Samar Division. The researcher then commenced upon the approval of the same along with the issuance of a letter of authorization.

Before the interview of each participant, the researcher secured the informed consent in writing by handing them the consent form containing among others: (1) the summary of the study being conducted; (2) the fact that their responses shall be recorded by the researcher; and (3) that such information and responses and incidents

within the course of the interview shall be confidential information known only to the researcher. The participant signed the said consent form attesting knowledge of the contents therein and that they consent to the same.

G. Research Reflexivity

In this study, the researcher conducted a face-to-face interview with the participants to consider the ways in which the interactions might be influenced by professional background, experiences, and prior assumptions. The researcher is a student of Doctor of Education major in Educational Administration. As a public-school teacher, the researcher experienced different types of school principals with different leadership and management styles. Moreover, the researcher also had negative and positive experience of school climate.

VI. RESULTS

Based on the results of the study, the leadership styles of principals may vary, but it is directly influenced by the three pillars of school management such as **Teaching and Learning, Institutional Environment, and Relationships**. Principals may use democratic style, autocratic, transformational, transactional, servant or participatory styles of leadership or he/she may jump from one leadership style to another depending on the situation and the environment of the school. However, according to experiential trends, there is no perfect or definite leadership style, thus, the Flexible Leadership Model emerged.

Surrounding the three pillars of school management are important categories that helped the School Leader create a positive school climate. These categories are Monitoring and Evaluation, Problem Analyses, Incentive System, Financial Management, Professional Development, Consultative and Stakeholder’s Support.

LEADERSHIP MODEL EMERGED FROM THE STUDY:



Flexible Leadership Model (Mengullo, 2023)

VII. DISCUSSION

Teaching and Learning

Teaching and learning represents one of the most important dimensions of school climate. School leaders and teachers should strive to clearly define the sets of norms, goals, and values that shape the learning and teaching environment. Research supports the notion that a positive school climate promotes students’ abilities to learn.

A positive school climate promotes cooperative learning, group cohesion, respect, and mutual trust. These particular aspects have been shown to directly improve the learning environment (Finnan, Schnepel, & Anderson, 2003; Ghaith, 2003; Kerr, Ireland, Lopes, Craig, & Cleaver, 2004). For example, as also outlined in the “Relationships” section, research shows that the student-teacher relationship in kindergarten is related to later academic success and positive behavioral outcomes for students (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995)

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Institutional Environment

This section includes studies on the institutional environment, which can be broadly categorized in two aspects: (a) school connectedness/engagement and (b) school safety as well as resources and supplies.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2009) defines school connectedness as “the belief by students that adults and peers in the school care about their learning as well as about them as individuals.” There is a growing body of research that suggests that school connectedness is a powerful predictor of and/or is associated with adolescent health and academic outcomes (McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2012; Whitlock, 2016).

School space is another environmental dimension that impacts students’ feelings about safety. Astor et al. (2010) demonstrated that students felt unsafe in unsupervised areas of the school building. In fact, there is a growing body of research that illuminates how environmental variables, such as classroom layout, activity schedules, and student-teacher interactions, can influence student behaviors and feelings of safety (Conroy & Fox, 2014). The quality of school facilities has been found to affect student achievement through school climate as a mediator (Uline & Tschannen-Moran, 2018).

The school as an organization is fundamentally relational. The patterns of norms, goals, values, and interactions that shape relationships in schools provide an essential area of school management. One of the most important aspects of relationships in schools is how connected people feel to one another. From a psychological point of view, relationships refer not only to relations with teachers but also relations with stakeholders. Safe, caring, participatory, and responsive school leaders tend to foster a greater attachment to teachers and provide the optimal foundation for social, emotional, and academic learning (Blum, McNeely, & Rinehart, 2012; Goodenow & Grady, 2013).

Research has shown that in schools where students perceive a better structured school, fair discipline practices, and more positive student-teacher and teacher-principal relationships, the “probability and frequency of subsequent behavioral problems” is lower (Gregory & Cornell, 2009; M. C. Wang, Selman, Dishion, & Stormshak, 2010).

CATEGORIES OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

Problem Analyses

Problem Analysis is not just a tool but a systematic methodology used by leaders to eliminate chronic problems that greatly affect the organization or system (Allied Reliability, 2021). It is a popular and often-used technique that helps the people answer the problem (Mind Tools, n.d). And in order to perform a root cause analysis, finding out exactly what is the cause is and how to fix it should be done (Tableau, n.d).

There are three basic types of root causes that have potential impact to the problem: the physical causes, human causes, and organizational causes. Physical causes may arise due to problems with physical components, in which in a school may refer to the equipment and other school technological advances or school resources. Human causes occur due to human error, in which in a school setup, this can refer to students, teachers or school personnel. The organizational causes refer to the use of the system or process that is faulty or insufficient, in which in a school setup, may refer to rules and regulations, including the practices that happen within the school premises (Safety Culture, 2022).

Monitoring and Evaluation

To provide better quality education to children and build a positive school climate, the conduct of monitoring and evaluation is an imperative part of the system to provide effective information that can inform decision-making (Llego, n.d).The study provides an experiential trend among the participant the importance of imposing proper monitoring and evaluation process to all factors contributing to building a positive school climate.

Incentive System

The motivation to learn and participate needs to come from an incentive system. This could stimulate learning and motivates good behavior (Renard, 2020) Obviously, the existence of incentive or reward system is a characteristic of building a positive school climate. Hence, having a positive recognition encourages progression and good behavior among students (Whitfield, n.d).

Professional Development:

Employers who encourage their employees towards professional development is appreciated to build a stronger team and encourage higher productivity and job satisfaction (Parsons, 2022). Principals may manage educational programs in their schools in two ways: by providing chances for professional development and by ensuring the consistency of the curriculum. A school's standard of professional advancement, the work environment, and parent connections all have an impact on the interaction between the principal and the students (Sabastian & Allensworth, 2012).

Stakeholders' Support

Establishing good stakeholders' partnership and support creates a good and positive climate environment within the school premises. The school heads have the capacity to lead and open good partnerships even between the teachers and parents to create better intervention for the benefit of the school. A stakeholder engagement defines as the process wherein the organizations follow in order to listen to, collaborate with, or inform their existing stakeholders (Sedmak, 2021).

Security System:

The existence of the security personnel within the school ground before the time or before the start of classes to check their belongings is the constant discipline and part of their responsibilities to ensure and keep the students and school staff safe (Sears, 2022).

Aside from checking the belongings of students upon entering the school premises, the school heads also ensure that the security personnel use their log books to monitor and ensure that no outsiders will enter the school premises. Log books are important to enlist the information of various activities such as patrolling, visitor's information, guard records, transportation of goods, incidences, logs, etc. (Security IT, 2014)

Financial Management:

MOOE is an allocated funds for the schools spent on activities and necessities to support programs and maintain safety and healthy environment in school.

Although, the process is implemented before getting the supplies or equipment needed by the students or staff, MOOE is highly functional in delivering outputs within the school premises, *"The budget is also prepared by the regional offices. To this aim, the Division Superintendent plans and proposes a budget for his or her Division, as well as budgets for the schools under his or her authority. He or she also supervises all schools under his or her Division. In addition, the Division Superintendent is in responsibility of recruiting, promoting, punishing, and reassigning public school teachers as needed (ADB, 2002)"*.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

The three pillars of school management such as Teaching and Learning, Institutional Environment and Relationships are important aspects in developing a positive school climate. The Categories of School Management such as Monitoring and Evaluation, Problem Analyses, Incentive System, Financial Management, Professional Development, and Consultative and Stakeholders' Support are effective strategies alongside leadership styles of the principal.

Child Labor is the emerging cause of absenteeism, cutting classes, and bullying in schools. The long process of MOOE is the main reason for teachers and principals to use their own money to supply the needs within the school premises. Problem analyses and Home Visitations are working for the school heads to minimize the cases of absenteeism, cutting classes, and bullying inside the school premises.

Incentive systems and recognitions encouraged excellence and motivation among the students and the teachers. The leadership style emerged in this study is flexible and it depends upon a particular situation.

The common goal of school management is to ensure that conducive learning takes place for the learners, teachers, and stakeholders for the betterment of School Climate.

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