

CULTURE AND CLIMATE OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

by:

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What type of school culture do we have in our institution? This question made me sit and pause for a while when I decided to transfer from St. Francis National High School to BLISS Elementary School, the fear of the unknown enveloped me and triggered me to reconsider whether I wanted to leave my previous workstation or embark on a journey in a new horizon. This predicament is not only faced by me but also by other educators who experienced being transferred from one station to another. Like me, they are also asking what is the culture and climate of the new school I am assigned to, will I fit in?

Honestly, these questions are very difficult to answer. In my case, I started reading about culture, climate, and the Professional Learning Communities (PLC). How can understanding these concepts will lead to the adjustments and adaptation of the newly transferred educators and reassigned educational leaders? Let us expound on the concept of Professional Learning Communities to further understand how these concepts can help them adapt to the culture and adapt to the changes that they bring.

According to Hoy and Miskel (2008), organizational culture and climate are two contemporary perspectives for examining the distinctive characteristics of schools. The Culture of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) is defined as self-managing teams of teachers who aim to improve and maintain quality instruction. In my case, School Heads serve as the instructional leaders who effectively and efficiently manage the Curriculum and Instruction to ensure the delivery of quality education from the Old Normal to the New Normal and later on to the next normal.

DuFour (2004) added that PLCs have concise curricular standards, conduct regular team meetings, and use standardized assessments. In this light, schools as PLCs implement the curriculum mandated by the Department of Education and the Commission in Higher Education. For basic education PLCs, the K-12 Curriculum provides learning for kindergarten pupils up to Senior High School learners. Also, as part of the responsibilities of school leaders, team meetings are conducted on a weekly or monthly basis to update the teachers and guide them on the newly implemented school directives and educational policies. Aside from that, PLCs use standardized tests to measure the academic performance of the learners as well as monitor and evaluate the performance of the school.

Given that the descriptions of PLCs are clear, how will culture and climate affect the relationship between human resources and the total function of schools as open systems? In this context, School Culture is the personality of schools. The way things are done and the norms that are practiced compose the school culture. On the other hand, School climate is the attitude of schools. How the internal and external stakeholders behave is part of the school climate. Imagine, if you are working with your previous school with different beliefs, norms, traditions, and rituals and are transferred to another school with extreme culture, you will be shocked to the bones. Also, if the attitudes of the teachers, and administrations are a long way different from your previous experience, I guess tons of turmoil runs in your heart and mind. In PLCs, conflicts will arise if the opposing forces of school culture and climate clash with the intentions of the human resources within the school community. Being caught in a sea of torments will wither the motivations of the teachers to teach and the students to learn. In this troubled time, the leadership skills of School Heads play a vital role in compacting a harmonious relationship within and outside the school as well as in the successful implementation of the school policies and educational policies spearheaded by the Department of Education. Moreover, the firm but loving arms of school administrators and leaders help newly transferred teachers to adopt and adapt to the new culture and climate gradually.

To end up, never be afraid of a new culture or climate as you embark on new horizons, you may have lost a piece of gold but in the end, you may have found a diamond.

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