

School Climate, Teachers' Efficiency and Learning Outcomes in Koronadal City Schools Division, Philippines

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Abstract: The study explored the school climate, teachers' efficiency and pupils' learning outcomes in *Koronadal City, Philippines*. It also tested the theory that these variables are associated to each other. In this study, school climate was uniquely coined to refer to the social, physical, academic, and leadership environments felt or experienced by the teachers and pupils. In contrast, the efficiency of the teachers was assessed in terms of their leadership, classroom management and curriculum delivery, while pupils' learning outcome was quantified out of their grades across the five (5) core subject areas. Results showed that pupils and teachers alike have comparable judgments of "extremely favorable" on school climate. Teachers' efficiency was viewed as excellent. Conversely, the pupils' learning outcome was merely "marginally good." In particular, pupils showed off in MAKABAYAN but fared relatively low in English. No significant relationship was identified between school climate, teachers' efficiency, and pupils' learning outcome.

Key words: school climate, teachers' efficiency, pupils' learning outcomes, Philippine Basic education

1. Introduction

Philosophically, the purpose of education is both social and individual. For social, it is to assist each learner become more effective member of society by transmitting the experiences of the past to the present. And for individual, it is to facilitate one to lead a more productive life by preparing him to handle new experiences successfully. These are the functions that schools try to perform. Formal education is acquired through organized study or instruction, as in public elementary schools. The school is considered the second home for children. Thus, it should be made comfortable, pleasant and safe since it is the extension of home. It is also a community where people interact with each other doing common goals. These people, the physical structures and the atmosphere as one make up a place that may affect each other, contributing to the learning environment and school climate.

Pupils' learning outcomes are affected by their educational experiences (YAS, 2005). These experiences depend on various factors like intellectual capacity, social interactions, emotional and environmental settings.

In the Philippines, many criticisms have been told on the quality of public school education. Most common includes the competence of teachers and the quality of learning environment that are significant to pupils'

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everyday learning. If schools do not have facilities, teachers and other learning resources, the learning of pupils might be adversely affected. A lot of concerned people see that the provisions of good school environment will make a big difference in improving the quality of education. Heeding the call for regionalization and globalization, international standards are tried to meet so Filipino learners and teachers can be at par with their counterparts worldwide.

Teachers face many challenges in their work. There's the disciplining of pupils who misbehave, the shortage of books and instructional materials and, the meager salary. It can be easily assumed that teachers, despite the professional setbacks, can have some ease from burden if they see their pupils' progress academically. Motivation is also strengthened if they work in a school or classroom that provides sufficient opportunities to perform effectively.

Nevertheless, people's attitudes are shaped by the facilities and environment through which they are mediated (Ferreira, 1995). The condition of school environment reflects the physical and psychological aspects that are more vulnerable to change and that provide the preconditions necessary for better teaching-learning intercourse. This is related to the school climate that is a vital element in discussions about improving academic performance and school reform.

But, what really makes a school climate favorable to both learners and teachers? Does it require larger school buildings, spacious classrooms, the sophisticated audio-visual equipment, and friendly teachers? Do these things really make important impact on the improvement of the pupils' learning outcomes and teachers' efficiency?

Perry (1908), as cited by Cohen (2006) posited that components of school climate can be collated in terms of its academic, social, physical and leadership aspects. Academic climate is indicated by the presence of opportunities for pupils to achieve their educational goals and for teachers to enforce academic policies. Social climate is characterized by the good communication between teachers and learners, and sound relationships with their peers.

Thus, for a closer perspective, the public elementary schools in the City Schools Division of Koronadal were explored to understand indeed how the academic community viewed the local school climate. Undoubtedly, teachers and pupils have precise observation and perception on what are practically taking place, available and prevalent in schools.

As studied, school climate refers to the academic, social, leadership and physical facilities condition that are prevailing inside the campus. Pupils' learning outcomes included their average grades during the first, second and third grading periods in the subjects, namely: English, Mathematics, Science and Health, Filipino, and MAKABAYAN. Moreover, teachers' efficiency was limited to the most common aspects of teachers' educational tasks like leadership, management, and curriculum delivery.

In particular, the study was directed towards achieving the following objectives:

- (1) To describe the school climate, teachers' efficiency, and pupils' learning outcomes in public elementary schools;
- (2) To compare the perceptions of the pupils and teachers on school climate; and
- (3) To examine the relationships among these variables.

2. Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

This study is anchored on some relevant theories propounded by social theorists and researchers. In his work,

Tableman (2004) described school climate and categorized it into academic and social aspects. In the case of Deal (1985), he posited that school climate includes physical and psychological environments. Along this line, Halpin and Croft (1962) found that organizational climate predicts leadership behavior and social interaction of personnel in the organization. The Western Alliance for the Study of School Climate (2008) enlightened that school climate is comprised of several aspects of the school's physical and social environment, such as appearance and physical plant, faculty relations, student interactions, leadership decision making, disciplined environment, learning environment, attitude and culture, and school-community relations.

Although there is not one commonly accepted definition for school climate, many researchers and scholars stress that basically the term reflects subjective experiences in school (Cohen, 2006). The study of Miskel & Ogawa (1988) viewed school climate as an antecedent rather than an outcome variable. It focused on factors affecting academic achievement of pupils and effectiveness of teachers.

Moreover, the research examined cultural elements of climate, such as the norms shared by learners and teachers. It also examined subsets of climate such as academic, social, leadership and physical climate, and its association to teachers' efficiency and pupils' learning outcomes. In their related proposition, Young et al. (1994) purported that improving student behavior and academic performance generally requires changing school climate and school culture. Ethnographic and perception studies indicated that poor school facilities negatively impact teacher effectiveness and performance, and therefore have a negative impact on student performance. Earthman (2002) carried out studies about the influence the physical environment has upon teacher performance.

The importance of the teacher in the classroom cannot be overemphasized. According to Porter & Brophy (2008), effective teaching researches emphasized the importance of the teacher in providing a climate conducive to learning. The effective teacher is one whose classroom and curriculum are "managed" and all activities are purposeful as well as implemented in an orderly fashion.

Effective teachers tend to utilize more interactive teaching or direct instruction. Researchers agree in proposing that the master variable of pedagogy is the amount and intensity of student engagement in appropriate learning tasks. This is a result of a case of teacher-centered activities, or, more pointedly, of teacher involvement with students as opposed to paperwork or neutral monitoring (Mackenzie, 1983).

Cognizant of these reviewed theories and literature, Figure 1 is fittingly laid out as the research paradigm.

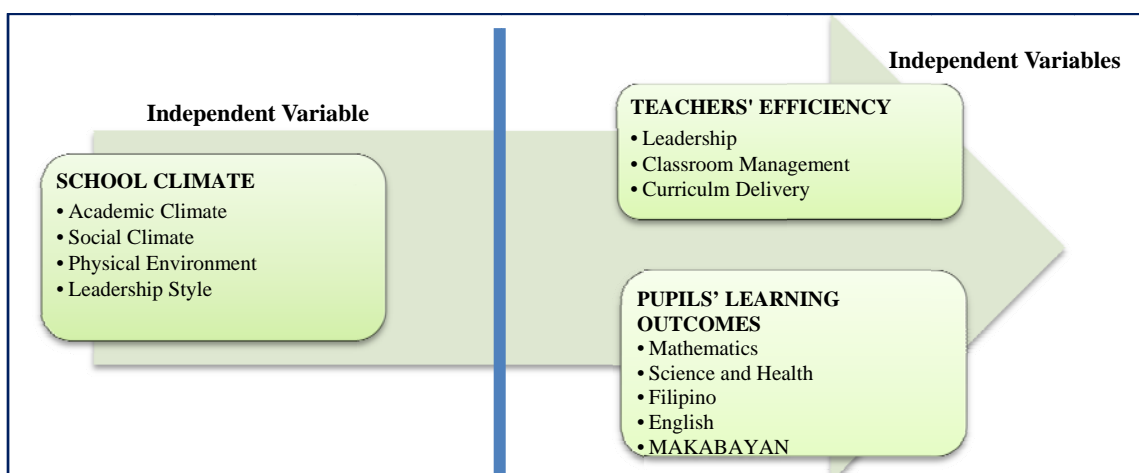


Figure 1 Research Paradigm Showing the Relationships of the Variables

3. Methods

The study made use of a descriptive-correlational research design to amply explain the school climate as well as its purported relationships to teachers' efficiency and pupils' learning outcomes. It was undertaken during School Year 2012-2013 in selected public elementary schools within the six (6) school districts of Koronadal City Division, namely: West District I, West District II, South District I, South District II, East District I, and East District II. In determining the respondents, both purposive and clustered random sampling techniques were used. Initially, schools were grouped into district and categorized into either big or small. In each district, two (2) schools were taken to represent each category. All of the 30 Grade VI teachers assigned in these schools were purposely taken, while 282 pupils were randomly selected from a total of 960 sixth graders.

In gathering the data, three (3) sets of questionnaires were used. These instruments were originally drafted by the researchers following existing standards. Face and content validations were done to properly enhance the tools; three (3) experts in the field of educational management were tapped for the purpose. The enhanced instruments were also administered to 30 Grade VI pupils and 11 teachers at Magsaysay Elementary School for reliability testing. Analysis of the responses resulted to a Cronbach Alpha of 0.85 signifying the reliability of these questionnaires.

Essentially, the first set of the survey instrument deals with the prevailing school climate. Teachers and pupils chose responses for each item-indicator as 5 for Excellent, 4 for Very Satisfactory, 3 for Satisfactory, 2 for Fair and 1 for Poor. As to the next questionnaire, the same rating scale was used by the respondents in evaluating teachers' efficiency along with leadership, curriculum delivery, and classroom management. On pupils' learning outcomes, the Grade Sheets of teachers were utilized as sources of data. Using the 2002 Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) guidelines, the learning outcome was interpreted observing these intervals, namely: 95-100 (Excellent), 90-94 (Very Good), 85-89 (Good), 80-84 (Marginally Good), and 79 and below (Needs Improvement).

Data analysis made use of descriptive and inferential statistics. These include simple mean, standard deviation, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, t-test, among others. The alpha level was set at .05 during the hypothesis testing.

Moreover, data gathering was realized following the diagram in Figure 2. The steps and procedure are clearly shown.

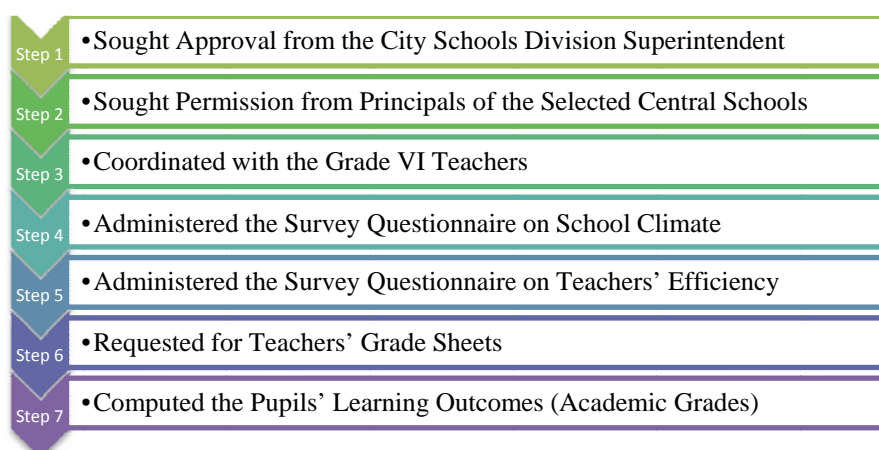


Figure 2 Flow Chart of Data Gathering Procedure

4. Results and Discussions

With the aid of Microsoft Excel application and the foregoing statistical tools, data were tabulated and suitably analyzed. The major findings of the study are discussed as follows:

4.1 School Climate

Data indicated that teachers and pupils assessed the school climate in public elementary schools in the City Division of Koronadal as extremely favorable. In particular, these statistical results were drawn out from the data treatment: academic climate was “extremely favorable” as perceived by the pupils ($M = 4.39$, $s = .07$) and teachers ($M = 4.57$, $s = .09$); social climate was “extremely favorable” as perceived by the pupils ($M = 4.35$, $s = .18$) and teachers ($M = 4.55$, $s = .05$); both pupils ($M = 4.02$, $s = .31$) and teachers ($M = 3.75$, $s = .10$) rated physical environment as “highly favorable”; and leadership style was “extremely favorable” as perceived by the pupils ($M = 4.40$, $s = .06$) and teachers ($M = 4.41$, $s = .58$).

In all likelihood, these results denote that public elementary schools in Koronadal City have safe, healthy, and welcoming learning environment. Also, high expectations, respect, responsibility, and trust are evident in each classroom, and the academic program engages and energizes pupils. Educators have collegial, rather than simply congenial relationships with one another; and students from diverse backgrounds and social groups regularly interact and work together. School leaders are approachable and inclusive.

Using t-test of independent means, the perceptions of the pupils and teachers were found to be comparable ($t_c = 0.10 < t_{tab.05} = 1.960$). Thus, they possessed similar views on the prevailing conditions of academic, social, and leadership as well as the physical environment in school. Most likely, the mutual experiences they have in school every day brought about these parallel observations. The finding obviously disputes the common notion among teachers that they have better judgments than the pupils as regards the type of environment, relationships and even structures that schools should have to uphold and establish. Implicitly, the idea that pupils are neither part nor worthy to be consulted when considering school reforms should not be discounted due to this fact. It also connotes that pupils are not ignorant, but equally attentive of what are happening in school.

4.2 Pupils' Learning Outcomes

The sixth graders showed a “marginally good” performance across the core subject areas. In descending order, the learning of pupils is ranked from MAKABAYAN, Filipino, Health and Science, Mathematics and English. The break downs of the data indicated that pupils got the highest mark in MAKABAYAN while lowest in English. Basically, the first subject integrates areas related to Social Studies, Values Education, Technology and Livelihood Education, as well as, Music, Arts, and Physical Education. Its goal is to help each Filipino pupil to develop a healthy personal and national identity. Despite the reported problems met by the Department of Education (DepED) in implementing this curricular reform yet the current data shows positive implication. On the other hand, English is centered on learning communication arts and skills in the foreign language. This result is actually a common trend among pupils and students in many public schools in the country. A typical report from DepED Nueva Ecija (2012) claimed that limited exposure of students in the use of the language caused the low mastery of English. As cited, after learning the structure and other aspects of it, “there is no application as they are not using what they have learned when they go out of their classes. Even in watching TV program they prefer those in Filipino or translated in Filipino. Second, teachers of other subjects who supposed to use English as medium of instruction are using the first language. Third, some of the teachers handling English subject have also

an average English proficiency level.”

4.3 Teachers' Efficiency

In this study, teachers' efficiency was evaluated by their School Principals with respect to their skills and competence in leadership, classroom management, and curriculum delivery. Through simple mean and standard deviation, the results were described as follows: leadership of teachers was excellent ($M = 4.41, s = .25$); classroom management was excellent ($M = 4.51, s = .12$); and curriculum delivery was excellent ($M = 4.54, s = .11$). To summarize, the teachers' efficiency can be regarded as generally excellent ($M = 4.49, s = .07$). The result simply suggests that teachers exceed the requirements contained in the job description as expressed in the 3 evaluation criteria. They often and actively seek opportunities to learn and apply new skills; and they unfailingly exhibit behaviors that have strong positive influence on students.

4.4 School Climate, Teachers' Efficiency and Learning Outcome

When computed, there appears a moderately small correlation between school climate and teachers' efficiency. The test revealed, however, that the relationship is not significant ($r_{\text{comp}} = 0.2985 < r_{\text{tab},05} = 0.602$). Likewise, a negative and moderate small correlation between school climate and pupils' learning outcome was noted yet it was also verified not significant ($r_{\text{comp}} = |-0.2399| < r_{\text{tab},05} = 0.602$). The findings imply that, in the current case, there is no way school climate can be associated with teachers' efficiency and pupils' learning. Remarkably, this contradicts the usual notion and many literatures that claimed the existence of a favorable school climate promotes enhanced learning outcome or higher efficiency among teachers.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

With the foregoing findings, it is concluded that school climate in the City Division of Koronadal, Philippines is extremely favorable. The teachers and pupils have similar views about it, hence, material evidence that the perception is indeed accurate. The learning outcome of pupils across Mathematics, Science and Health, English, Filipino, and MAKABAYAN subjects is marginally good only. This manifests the unfortunate learning achievement of pupils in the locality particularly in English. Obviously, this is not attributable to school climate. The teachers' efficiency is excellent, but, it is not due to favorable school climate since after all they are not related.

Having these inferences at hand, the researcher recommends the following actions:

(1) The schools and teachers, in particular, should find ways to improve the current state of the pupils' learning outcome. To do this, action researches to define exactly the real cause of these unfortunate academic achievements may be taken as initial step.

(2) The Department of Education, in the district or division level, should conduct programs and projects which could lessen the problem on English proficiency. Intensive intervention or training programs may be carried out for this purpose after a careful need assessment activity.

(3) The fact that school climate shows no association with the pupils' learning outcomes, in-depth study has to be done to identify specific factors that can be manipulated to really transform the response variable. Determining these elements will be easy for schools and teachers to outline suitable strategies and activities to enhance learning outcome or cause affirmative result.

It is also suggested that studies be done using other methodologies or enhanced survey tools to further clarify

the current finding on the “non-association” of school climate and teachers’ efficiency, as well as, school climate and pupils’ learning outcome.

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