The Development Of Culture And Climate In The School Unit

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Abstract:
The functioning of an organization depends on the conditions that prevail in it and which inevitably affect executives and employees in the exercise of their daily work. This is true of all organizations, even more of school organizations. The school unit is called upon to produce the most important task for the society in the future, that of educating children and preparing them for their exit into the social arena. Today's students are tomorrow's citizens, in whose hands lies the organization, the administration, but also the democratic continuity of our society. Therefore, the work of their education must be done in an atmosphere of calm and cooperation between all the education agencies. The formation of the appropriate culture within the school unit is considered particularly important. So, this review deals with the factors that contribute to the development of climate and culture in a school unit.
Key Word: *culture; climate, school unit; leader.*

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I.   Introduction

Culture

In recent decades, the concept of culture and its importance as a driving force for the operation of various organizations has occupied many scholars in their efforts to understand problems, difficulties or even complex relationships that develop in them.

Culture is a characteristic feature of any organization and gives it a distinct entity. It is the social bond in an organization and it gives standard levels of behavior to new members of the organization helping to cultivate and develop a sense of loyalty. Thus, one could claim that the element of culture is an important factor in shaping the character of the organization and in particular the behavior and way of thinking of the members of the organization. In particular, the culture in a school unit affects the productivity of teachers, the academic performance of students and in general its effectiveness (Kowalski & Reitzug, 1993).

Levels of Culture

Still other researchers (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1993; Schein, 1999) in their attempt to face the problems of defining culture explained the specific concept by making special reference to its different levels. Specifically, Sergiovanni and Starratt (1993) refer to the following levels of culture:

The first level is represented by the creations of culture (myths, stories, symbols), the second level refers to the perspectives of people within the organization, the third level to the values that govern the organization and the last to the assumptions about the existence of the organization itself. More simply, culture is seen through what people say, how they behave, what stories they tell, what etiquettes they observe, what rules and norms they share, what their priorities are. The first includes visible characteristics of the physical environment of the organization as well as norms of behavior that help the persons in an organization to perceive the various aspects of its life and operation. Behavioral norms (e.g. supporting colleagues, avoiding criticism of the manager, getting to know colleagues, etc.) are transmitted through stories and rituals to members of the organization and provide visible examples of the culture in the organization.

At the second level of culture is placed a system of shared values that could be characterized as the pursuits of the organization. The existence of common values such as cooperation, trust, open communication, etc. affects the behavior of members in an organization who, knowing what is desired, try to transform values into behavioral norms.

Finally, the deepest level of culture consists of collective assumptions related to human nature, human relationships, truth, environment. For example, assumptions such as teachers being a family where they accept,

respect and care for each other, are responsible, able to control themselves and make decisions for the good of their students encourage the cultivation of values such as independence, professionalism and autonomy. On the other hand, the assumptions that the truth is determined by experienced teachers and administrators, the relationships of school members are hierarchical, teachers respect the autonomy of each of their colleagues in the classroom, encourage the cultivation of values such as respect for leadership, avoiding conflict.

Types of Culture

Cameron and Quinn (cited in Passiardi, 2004), propose the competing values model, which proposes four types of organizations, each with its own indicators, which present people's assessments of its performance organization. These values are the values and assumptions that apply to each individual organization and according to which the organization's performance is evaluated.

Hierarchy culture emphasizes stability, control, predictability and harmony. Interest is focused on the efficient functioning of the organization.

Market culture is determined by stability, differentiation, control and the effort to adapt and respond to changes in the environment so that the organization survives in competition (commonly found in private schools).

The culture of the "company" (clan culture) has as its basic values cooperation, participation, cohesion and loyalty. The purpose of the organization is to maintain good interpersonal relations.

Adhocracy culture seeks distinction, creativity, risk.

Subcultures

In a school organization the existence of various groups implies the coexistence of many kinds of culture. The main groups are teachers and students and respectively represent two different cultures, as the culture of teachers is a culture of work, while that of students is a culture of learning, since each group pursues different goals and has different needs and motivations. However, the stronger the cohesion of the two types of culture, the stronger the school's culture.

At the same time, a separate learning culture is formed within each section of students. In turn, the personal and group goals of the students further influence the school culture.

In general, subcultures usually develop in large organizations and reflect common problems, situations or experiences of members. They reflect the dominant culture, but add elements or modify core values.

Culture Change

The culture in any organization is not one and the same in today's society. In other words, school culture is not static. The culture of an organization may undergo some changes since it operates in a constantly changing society. Change in culture can happen in different ways and for different reasons. For example, evolutionary change is unplanned, unconscious simply because some new values, and I believe, are introduced as others fail. On the contrary, additive change is observed when norms, beliefs and values are modified by the introduction of innovations. Finally, transformative change is conscious and aims to change norms and values. Transformational change is usually observed through the actions or actions of new management personnel in a school unit (Stoll and Fink, 1996).

Undoubtedly, the issue of culture change is very important and according to Putman and Burke (1992) any transition from one culture to another is painful, no matter how beneficial the new culture may be. So organizations are reluctant to change traditional roles, to take risks, to adapt to changing circumstances and very often, teachers and principals because of their fears remain apathetic and argue that their school should not - and cannot - change.

The climate of any organization must be such that it encourages change, reform and innovation and encourages its staff to find new and effective ways of solving problems, even if they involve a high degree of risk. Culture and climate play very important roles in encouraging and creating a change. Culture shapes values and beliefs about positive attitudes toward change, and climate fosters interpretations of culture that translate into desired actions.

II. School Culture

Like any organization, the school has its own culture (teachers, students, principals and parents). Culture consists of basic assumptions, values and beliefs, which are accepted and transmitted to new members of the organization. The beliefs and values that are activated are a foundation for the process of improving the educational organization.

Culture is defined as a system of common perceptions that distinguishes one organization from another, as well as the identity of the school organization, where common orientations of the school (traditions, rules of conduct, values, vision of the school unit), contribute to its unity.

School culture essentially reflects the beliefs, values and beliefs of the people who work within the school. It also relates to what is actually done in the school, increases the commitment of the people who work in it and the stability of the school system, acts as a link in the school organization and creates levels of behavior. It also improves camaraderie and cooperation activities, builds the identification of student staff and administrators with the school, enhances the energy, motivation and vitality of staff, students and the community, increases interest in daily behavior and performance of greater attention to those of real importance and value to the school.

When there are many shared values, patterns of behavior and practices, and where the levels of culture are sufficiently interrelated, then a strong culture results, where it is an important asset to the school organization and encourages the participation and involvement of members of the organization, providing employees with important purposes to work. Thus, on the one hand, their loyalty to the organization and the cohesion of the organization increases, while on the other hand, the tendency to leave the organization decreases.

It is perceived that strong culture contributes substantially to school improvement initiatives, in contrast to weak culture, which is characterized by little consensus and isolation of employees in the organization.

The limited participation of the educational unit in the formation of the educational policy also means limited responsibility in the failure of the changes. However, non-participation, whether in success or failure, has the effect of reducing the possibility of exploiting its experience, hindering the development of an innovative professional culture among teachers for the development of new pedagogical approaches and teaching methods and not successfully dealing with specific local needs and particularities of the local community in which the school is located. (Mavriyiorgos, 1999, p.139).

Culture and human resources

It is easy to see the close relationship between culture and human resources. At this point, it should be pointed out that the term "human resources" of the educational unit does not include only the educational staff, but all participants in the educational process (administrative staff, students, support staff, etc.). The cooperation between them and above all the climate that pervades all forms of their interaction, exerts neuralgic effects on the functionality of the educational unit. As Anthopoulou (1999, pp 21-22) mentions, culture influences or in some cases even determines the behavior and performance of the people who experience it as it is responsible - to a large extent - for their attitude and position.

The culture and human resource management of an organization could be said to have some kind of interdependence. The culture is influenced by the people who study and work within the organization and vice versa, these people shape their behavior, thinking, attitude and therefore their performance, depending on the culture of the organization (Anthopoulou, 1999, p. 26).

III. The role of the Leader in formatting the School Culture

An important factor in achieving the above is the effective management of the various psycho-social events that Directors have to manage in their personal, professional and social lives. In these circumstances, managers as autonomous existential entities either reorient and restructure or become inactive and cling to their previously entrenched perceptions and dysfunctional practices (Dabrowski, 1966). As a result, and depending on the way Principals (re)think, feel and act, they function more or less as agents of change in the culture and operation of school units (Erkutlu, 2008; Mappaenre, 2014).

From the above, it appears that Principals as agents of change need to exercise their responsibilities with openness and flexibility with the aim of contributing to the reorientation and positive transformation of the current reasoning and behaviors of the teachers of their school units (Hargreaves & Goodson, 2006; Kitchenham, 2008). To this end, Directors need to:

- co-shape collective goals and common visions at the level of the teaching association,
- strengthen educational interventions, which promote co-activity, co-responsibility and interdependence (mentoring, project planning, feedback),
- be models of lifelong learning, dialectical discussion and critical (re)reflection,
- promote the principles of inclusion of diversity, mutual respect, mutual recognition of the social role of all those involved in school life,
- practice and acquaint teachers with verbal and non-verbal communication and the co-management of problematic psycho-social situations,
- adopt and reinforce experimentation and have positive attitudes towards any intention/attempt to reshape dysfunctional perceptions and habitual behaviors (Fullan, 2006, Stoll & Temperley, 2009; Creemers & Kyriakides, 2010).

IV. School Climate

The creation of the appropriate climate, in a school, is related to both the productivity and the performance of the teachers, but also the performance of the students. It contributes to shaping the special character of the school unit and the philosophical outlook of its members. It is influenced by behaviors, which have to do with the nature of human relationships and personality of those who make up the school unit. The leadership of the school also has an important role in shaping the climate, with the manipulations it carries out during the exercise of its duties.

When we talk about school climate, we mean the special atmosphere of a school unit, within which teachers and students work and which crucially affects the quality of the work performed. (Hargreaves, 1994). It is the set of dynamic interactions between various parameters of the school environment, such as psychological, academic (Hayes, 1994). It is logical that the educational work produced, as well as the mental disposition of the teachers for the performance of their teaching duties (enthusiasm, continuous self-improvement, information, pursued goals) is directly affected by the prevailing climate. The school climate places special emphasis on teaching and learning, since the prevalence of camaraderie, calmness and cooperation among the educational staff always benefits the students.

Four types of climate are identified:
- The open climate,
- the closed climate,
- the climate of active engagement and
- the distancing climate.

According to the open climate, the principal's role is more of a support role for teachers in their work and there is no strong guideline. Teachers cooperate with each other, aware of their responsibility in the exercise of their duties. The exact opposite happens in the closed climate. The principal is pushy, directs the teachers, does not support them and sets limitations. The suffocating climate of control results in teachers becoming indifferent, isolated and the quality of the work produced is degraded. In the climate of active involvement the Principal directs the teachers more, sets limitations and does not support or encourage them in the exercise of their duties. The teachers ignore the behavior of their Principals, they deal with their teaching work and their students, they are dedicated to the exercise of their teaching duties and there is a climate of unity between them. Finally, the climate of distancing is distinguished mainly by the distances kept by those involved in the educational project. The Director does not limit the teachers, nor does he direct them. Teachers do not cooperate with each other and there is a lack of familiarity.

Positive atmosphere

The existence of a positive climate in the school unit gives a sense of security, but also of calmness, situations necessary for the development of the educational work and the progress of the students, for which a collective effort is made by the teachers. The characteristics of a positive climate are obedience to common rules of conduct, collegiality, cooperation both between the staff and between the staff and the Director for the realization of the planned goals (Sergiovanni, 1990), making decisions in a democratic way (Hoy & Miskel, 2001), the effectiveness of the school unit, is the results of the existence of a positive climate. Teachers personalize teaching, depending on the needs of their students, using appropriate means, materials and teaching methods. The Director exercises his leadership role by giving freedom of movement to the teachers and collaborates with them to define the goals, but also to realize them.

The learning climate also plays an important role in the operation of the school unit and in promoting its effectiveness. How students perceive their classroom environment and how it affects them cognitively and emotionally. The acquisition of knowledge, but also their course at the academic level, is directly related to whether they feel as a team at school, feel satisfaction and support from their relationship with the teachers, whether the latter inspire them and orient them towards the goal they have to succeed.

In general, the climate that prevails in a school organization also shows the special identity of this organization. It is something that becomes known from the very first visit and consequently creates the corresponding feelings in a student. There are feelings of urge or the opposite, the frustration. It is the most important factor regarding the effectiveness or otherwise of the educational organization (Passiardi, 2001).

V. Conclusion

There is confusion in the literature regarding the concepts of culture and climate in an organization. According to Kythraiotis (2006, p.52) "These two concepts have their historical roots in different sciences. Climate comes from social and industrial psychology, while culture from anthropology and sociology."

Climate is defined by the shared perceptions of organizational members, it is a surface expression of culture, according to Van Houtle (2004), which makes it more easily measurable, it is evident from the first day

we go to school, it is a component of culture and its evolution into positive or negative is achieved relatively easily, because the human factor plays a role.

Culture consists of shared values and norms of the organization's members and describes its atmosphere. It is not easily measurable or immediately visible, it is reflected in the school climate, (Mintrberg, 1979), which is an element of the organizational culture, is a characteristic for every organization and gives it a distinct entity. It is usually accepted and passed on to new members.

We conclude that culture and climate give their special character to each school (Campo, 1993; Passiardis, 2001).

Finally, the principal as the leader of the school unit is the main shaper of the school culture.

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