

Creating a Student-centered Learning Climate for Public Elementary and Secondary Schools

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Abstract: This study aimed to assess the student-centred learning climate of public school administrators in the Division of Antique for School Year 2023-2024. This study was conducted from December 2022 to February 2023 with 394 elementary and 54 secondary public school administrators. A standardized research instrument adopted from the domains and competency strands of the National Competency-Based Standards for School Heads (NCBSSH) of the Department of Education (DepEd) - National Educators Academy of the Philippines (DepEd - NEAP) was used to gather data from the respondents. The statistical tools used in this study were frequency, percentage, standard deviation and mean. The study's findings revealed that in creating a student-centred learning climate, public school administrators as an entire group, regardless of the selected variables into which they were grouped, had a conducive student-centred learning climate. The study concluded that public school administrators must be fully equipped with the appropriate knowledge and skills to perform their functions and discharge their duties. The study also recommended that to raise the level of competence of public school administrators, they may institute measures to properly and religiously monitor their tasks in creating a student-centred learning climate.

Keywords: Student-Centered Learning; Climate for Public Elementary; Secondary Schools; External Stakeholders; Statements of Demand and Challenge; Community Organizations; Interdependent Relationships; Fundamental Direction.

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1. Introduction

In a student-centered school, learning occurs at every stage of the day, from when students enter the building to when they depart. Common school behaviours that schools engaged in to increase student learning were discovered by researchers from the University of Chicago Consortium on School Research [2]. The importance of the school's learning environment on students' achievement was highlighted by this research. One definition of school learning climate is the general vibe that permeates a school [31], [24]; [7]. What the staff and community hold in common in terms of standards, attitudes, and beliefs is also important [31]; [23]; [24]. Pieces of the multi-faceted concept include the relationships between students, instructional leaders, and classroom instructors as well as the students themselves, the school's physical and emotional surroundings, and the school itself [26]. Teachers, support staff, students, and community members all need to be able to work together to make change happen, and every school should have a system and interventions in place to make that happen. If school systems want to make sure that everyone knows the rules, they need to set simple, clear goals and implement practical professional activities and

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procedures. In their pursuit of student transformation and the establishment of a cohesive and all-encompassing learning support system, they must guarantee a certain level of uniformity in strategy and practise throughout the school [1].

The preceding statements demand and challenge every school administrator's intensive commitment, participatory leadership, and personal and professional technical expertise for a consultation to ensure that all school-related concerns of teachers and schools are properly addressed. Expertise and technical assistance skills are needed to address said concerns.

The student-centered learning framework encompasses numerous approaches. Cooperative learning, multiple intelligences, substantial reading, problem-based learning, positive education, and self-directed learning are all examples of such approaches. These approaches that focus on the students can work together and even enhance one another. An emerging social paradigm is a move toward greater agency for those at or near the bottom of social hierarchy, and student-centered learning is consistent with this trend. Take the last 200 years as an example: women have made tremendous strides in education and political empowerment. Abolition of slavery has occurred. Everyone has more rights, but minorities and blue-collar workers especially. Greater agency for both students and educators in the management of educational institutions is one manifestation of this movement toward equality in the classroom [14].

The Antique Division of the Department of Education (DepEd) has emphasised the responsibilities and functions of the various levels within the Department. The Division Office is primarily responsible for assisting the schools in leading, guiding, monitoring, and evaluating the implementation of basic education services in order to achieve the DepEd focus [5].

This study was anchored on Zimmerman's Empowerment Theory [20]. The theory recognizes that people's creative, innovative, and productive capacities can be tapped more effectively if they participate in the activities that influence their lives (e.g., join in making decisions that directly affect them). Although the goal is self-determination and autonomy, empowerment helps individuals and groups develop methods and resources for engaging in interdependent relationships [36].

Moreover, empowerment theory embraces notions of sociopolitical control [20], critical understandings of environments [6], and democratic participation in the lives of groups and communities [13] and recognizes processes and outcomes at multiple levels of analysis according to the ecological approach [35].

When people are empowered, they are better able to understand their social situations, acquire resources they need, and have a say in decisions that impact them. As a group or an individual, you can achieve mastery over your problems through this technique [20]. When a procedure aids in the growth of abilities like reasoning and decision-making, we say that it empowers the participants. Encouraging engagement in community organisations and groups at the individual level, shared leadership and decision-making at the organisational level, and accessible government, media, and other community resources at the community level are all examples of empowering processes [19]. A community or individual is empowered when they have the knowledge, abilities, and connections to make positive changes in their own life.

This study aimed to assess the student-centred learning climate of public elementary and secondary schools as perceived by the school administrators when taken as a whole and when categorized according to the position of school administrators, school level, and school size.

2. Review of Literature

2.1. The National Competency-Based Standards for School Heads Framework

The National Competency-Based Standards for School Heads (NCBSSH) have been officially adopted via the BESRA's operationalization and the Implementing Rules and Regulations of Republic Act No. 9155. A genuine, functioning, responsive, impartial, and coherent set of principles must have informed the development of the NCBSSH.

In order to ensure that all students have the opportunity to receive an education that is both challenging and personally meaningful, school administrators demonstrate the qualities of transformational leadership and professionalism. School administrators can base their decision-making, actions, and function performance on the standards defined by the NCBSSH through the domains and strands. Indicators defined per strand in every domain further clarify knowledge, abilities, and values, in addition to providing essential direction from the set of standards.

The National Council for School Supervision (NCBSSH) will serve as the foundation for all future professional development opportunities for school administrators, with an emphasis on supply-driven training programmes designed to improve their effectiveness, efficiency, and performance on the job. In addition to guiding succession planning and development, it can serve

as a foundation for qualifying exams and other screening activities linked to the promotion and hiring of school administrators. The same document will also serve as the basis for any revisions made to the performance appraisal.

The purpose of the National Competency-Based Standards for School Heads Training and Development Needs Assessment (NCBSSH-TDNA) is to help identify the specific professional development opportunities that school heads (SHs) require to enhance their leadership skills and lead their schools more effectively. The NCBSSH-TDNA competencies are grounded in the educational leadership requirements outlined in RA 9155 and its IRR, as well as the national leadership competency standards outlined in DepEd Order No. 32 series of 2010 [12], "The National Adoption and Implementation of the National Competency-Based Standards for School Heads." Evaluation instrument for school administrators developed by the National Educators Academy of the Philippines (NEAP) based on their needs assessment methodology.

What makes a good school principal is defined by the NCBSSH Framework. It makes it very evident that a good school principal can bring about institutional culture change, improve learning outcomes for students, and institute a continuous improvement programme.

2.2. Creating a Student-Centered Learning Climate

The National Competency-Based Standards for School Heads (NCBSSH) outline a number of goals for educational leadership, one of which is to foster an environment where students can thrive academically. Effective school leaders, according to this domain, must recognise students' accomplishments while setting high expectations for them. It also involves making sure that students have the chance to become functionally literate. They foster an atmosphere that is conducive to learning, where students feel comfortable and supported in their pursuit of knowledge [12]. Two parts of the NCBSSH's framework for building student-centered learning environments are (A) having high social and academic expectations and (B) making sure that students' needs are met in the classroom.

School curricula are undergoing fast transformations. The traditional classroom model, in which pupils sit neatly and attentively while teachers impart wisdom and information, is completely illogical. However, things are very different in the modern era. It seems like students have it in their heads that the second their teacher walks into the room and starts "teaching," not only will their lives become incredibly dull very fast, but they can also expect an increase in the number of tests and quizzes they will fail and the likelihood that they will feel increasingly stupid. How then do they manage? They use a variety of well-planned diversions to get out of class or send sleep-inducing texts to their mates. There is an ongoing struggle for every educator who plans to "teach" in a middle or high school classroom [29].

The truth is that there is no silver bullet for every situation. When students enter a classroom, they bring with them the values and norms of the community in which they reside. I mean, how else could it be? The ideal job for a lot of Americans would be one in which they could sit about all day and collect six-figure salaries while doing absolutely nothing. Avoiding work is some people's primary goal at work. The same values or lack thereof are conveyed to the youth, for instance. Without their participation, education will not take place, and they fail to grasp this. They fail to see that pursuing higher education is both their duty and their entitlement [29].

Fortunately, there are some pupils who aren't completely oblivious. A growing number of people, including students, are calling for a more inclusive educational system. The pupils are not uninterested. They want to know everything there is to know and will do whatever it takes to find out. A teacher can more easily accommodate a wide range of student needs in a classroom that is student-centered. The goal of a classroom that is student-centered is to empower each student to take responsibility of his or her own education and develop into lifelong learners [29].

As a result, teachers are shifting their focus from being merely a "impartor of knowledge" to also serving as mentors and advisors. Students are not only permitted, but actively encouraged and even mandated to assume a greater degree of responsibility for their own learning in numerous innovative and fruitful programmes and techniques. More motivating programmes include student-centered learning spaces, project-based learning, student-to-student instruction, and do-it-yourself activities. Technology in the classroom opens up new possibilities for engaging student-teacher and class-to-class communication and collaboration on a scale never before seen [29].

Some of the student-centred learning literature can be summarized into the following elements:

- The reliance on active rather than passive learning;
- An emphasis on deep learning and understanding;
- Increased responsibility and accountability on the part of the student;
- An increased sense of autonomy in the learner;

- An interdependence between teacher and learner;
- Mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship; and
- A reflexive approach to the teaching and learning process on the part of both the teacher and the learner.

Chow [15] investigated what skills school administrators need to foster an environment where students are the primary focus of instruction. According to the results, they excelled in the following areas: fostering an atmosphere that encourages the use of technology by both students and educators; establishing and maintaining a safe, orderly, nurturing, and healthy environment; designing a stimulating learning environment; managing student behaviour both inside and outside of school; and paying tribute to outstanding students, instructors, parents, and other stakeholders. Leadership and governance are profoundly affected by the recognised competencies of school heads that were utilised in the study. One such competency is the creation of a student-centered learning environment.

2.3. School Learning Climate

School climates have been a focus of the National School Climate Center (NSCC) for the past 25 years. The NSCC defines school climates as "the quality and character of school life [27]" and lays out four components for a long-term, student-centered learning environment. Institutional climate, student involvement and safety, and pedagogical approaches are all part of this set of factors.

2.3.1. Institutional Environments

The physical setting and the institutional frameworks that make it up are two sides of the same coin that make up the School Learning Climate. Establishing and maintaining a cooperative relationship between a school and the wider community, as well as encouraging parental and community involvement in school organisations, are all important aspects of a well-ordered institutional setting [28]; [37]; [30]; [17]; [3]; [4];. The school's safety precautions and objectives, as well as the cooperative atmosphere it has fostered, can only be sustained if parents and people of the community become involved in local school councils [28]; [37]; [30]; [17]. There is a correlation between a community's ability to help pupils succeed academically and their likelihood of graduating [10].

2.3.2. Safety

It is easy to stress the significance of a physically safe school, but mental and emotional safety are just as important. Feeling comfortable at school and on the way there and back is the ideal way to think about physical safety. Whether or not kids experience bullying, victimisation, or threatening messages influences their perception of their school as a safe place to learn [31]; [7]; [9]; When we talk about creating an environment where students feel emotionally safe, we're talking about things like having clear rules, being fair, having established behaviour expectations, being able to respond to inappropriate behaviour with guidance and redirection, trust, connectivity, and whether or not teachers were responsive to students' safety concerns. These fundamental aspects of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provide an environment where students may concentrate on their studies by addressing both their physical and emotional safety.

2.3.3. Engagement

According to the National School Climate Center at Ramapo for Children [27], a strong predictor of student health and academic results is school connectedness, which includes teachers' ties to one other and their impressions of the school environment. Engagement can be defined in part by interpersonal aspects, such as having professors and classmates who are helpful, having social support, respecting diversity, and having strong leadership [18], [9], [16], [31], [26], and [27]. Because students spend so much time there, educators should take advantage of their interactions by fostering a cooperative community based on trust, open communication, mutual respect, and flexible structures [10]. There are a lot of relationships and interactions that take place in a school context, such as those between teachers and students, between students themselves, and between students and their teachers [7] [8].

At the core of classroom engagement lies the interaction between teachers and students. When teachers are attuned to their students' needs and provide positive responses, children feel safe, trust the teacher more, and are more likely to participate [33]. Students seek out their teachers for emotional support, according to research by Walker and Graham [33]. Good teachers are able to read their students' emotions and respond appropriately; they also demonstrate this by using a warm and calm instructional voice, smiling and laughing, delegating tasks and responsibilities, noticing when their students are struggling and offering help, and taking an active, interested interest in their students' social conversations [10]; [34].

3. Methodology

This study used a descriptive survey design to assess the student-centred learning climate of public elementary and secondary school administrators in the Division of Antique for School Year 2023-2024 conducted to 394 elementary and 54 secondary schools [25].

A researcher-made questionnaire checklist on Creating a Student-centered Learning Climate adopted from the domains and competency strands of the National Competency-Based Standards for School Heads (NCBSSH) as stipulated in DepEd Order No. 32, [12] was used to gather data from the respondents. An accompanying personal information sheet was also used to gather data on the respondents' characteristics.

The instrument consisted of a domain, and each domain had corresponding competency strands. In every strand were statements that focused on the competencies of the school administrators. The domain, which creates a student-centred learning climate, covers important competencies of school administrators [32]. The scores of an individual respondent in the Creating a Student-centred Learning Climate were determined by adding the numerical equivalents of the options chosen, and then the mean was computed. This study transformed the means into a numerical scale with corresponding verbal descriptions. The matrix is presented below in Table 1:

Table 1: Matrix

Weight	Response	Scale	Description	Description Code
4	I am doing it well and can lead others to do the same	3-26-4.00	Very conducive	VC
3	I am doing it, but I need to improve	2.51-3.25	Conductive	C
2	I am doing a little of this, and I need to learn more	1.76-2.50	Fairly conducive	FC
1	I am not doing it yet	1.00-1.75	Not conducive	NC

The data gathered in this research investigation were subjected to the following computer-processed statistical tests: Frequency, Mean, and Standard Deviation.

4. Results and Discussions

Pupil/student achievement is enhanced when the school culture includes pupils'/students' needs, interests, and socio-cultural background; thus, schools should be pupil/student-centred. Creating a student-centred learning climate consists of Setting High Social and Academic Expectations and Creating a School Environment focused on the learner's needs.

Some public-school administrators have manifested a conducive learning climate by setting high social and academic expectations (M=3.01) and creating school environments focused on the learner's needs (M=3.04). This suggests that school administrators believe they can facilitate, improve, and promote students' academic progress and set high expectations for students and teachers. In other words, they provide their students with a safe, positive, productive, and vibrant school-learning environment.

As Bradshaw et al. [9], Coyle et al. [31], and Konishi et al. [7] posit, students view their school as an environment that will keep them safe. It also supports the finding of Ginsberg [21], which revealed that school administrators were very high in creating and sustaining a safe, orderly, nurturing and healthy environment and in creating an engaging learning environment also; the data have been shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Creating a Student-Centered Learning Climate of Public School Administrators as an Entire Group

Creating a student-centred learning climate		Mean	SD	Description
A	Setting high social and academic expectations	3.01	0.01	Conductive
1	Benchmark school performance.	2.91	0.02	Conductive
2	Establish and model high social and academic expectations for all.	2.96	0.04	Conductive
3	Create an engaging learning environment.	2.92	0.04	Conductive
4	Participate in managing learner behaviour within the school and other school-related activities outside the school.	3.06	0.05	Conductive
5	Support the learner's desire to pursue further learning.	3.09	0.09	Conductive

6	Recognize high-performing learners, teachers, supportive parents, and other stakeholders.	3.17	0.11	Conductive
B	Creating school environments focused on the needs of the learner	3.04	0.02	Conductive
1	Create and sustain a safe, orderly, nurturing and healthy environment.	3.14	0.08	Conductive
2	Provide an environment that promotes the use of technology among learners and teachers.	2.91	0.04	Conductive
	Over-all Mean	3.03	0.02	Conductive

As to positions in Public Schools, Principals, Head Teachers, and Teacher-In-Charge/Officer-In-Charge have had a conducive learning climate, as shown by the mean score of 3.29, 2.99, and 2.69, respectively.

A closer analysis of the data, however, revealed that school principals obtained some relatively higher mean scores in both strands than head teachers and Teacher-In-Charge/Officer-In-Charge, which indicates that their learning climate is a conducive place even though they manage and supervise bigger schools. It goes to show that school administrators promote the use of technology among learners and teachers, create and sustain a safe, orderly and healthy environment, and recognize high-performing learners and teachers as well as supportive parents and other stakeholders. This finding reaffirms the multiple intelligences of Attenborough [11], the problem-based learning of and higher-order thinking by Chau [22], and Jacobs [14].

Table 3: Presents the data

Creating a student-centred learning climate		Principal			Head Teacher			TIC/OIC		
		Mean	SD	Desc.	Mean	SD	Desc.	Mean	SD	Desc.
A	Setting high social and academic expectations	3.29	0.15	VC	2.99	0.00	C	2.69	0.15	C
B	Creating school environments focused on the needs of the learner	3.10	0.06	C	3.02	0.01	C	2.98	0.01	C

Table 3 creates a Student-Centered Learning Climate for Public School Administrators to position at the school level. Regardless of school level, public school administrators regarded both competency strands as areas with a conducive learning environment, as shown by the mean of 3.07 and 3.08 and 2.98 and 3.02, respectively.

Based on the findings, it appears that administrators in elementary and secondary schools believe they are capable of establishing an educational environment that is student-centered, engaging, and sensitive to the requirements of both students and instructors in their individual schools. Walker and Graham [33] state that when teachers are sensitive to the needs of their students and create close relationships with them, students are more likely to be engaged in their learning, to trust their teachers, and to feel comfortable in their environment.

Table 4: Reflects the data

Creating a student-centred learning Climate		Elementary level			Secondary level		
		Mean	SD	Desc.	Mean	SD	Desc.
A	Setting high social and academic expectations	3.07	0.04	C	2.98	0.00	C
B	Creating school environments focused on the needs of the learner	3.08	0.05	C	3.02	0.01	C

Table 4 creates a Student-Centered Learning Climate for Public School Administrators as to School Level and School Size. Administrators of medium-sized and big schools had a conducive learning climate in both competency strands, as indicated by the mean of 3.19 and 2.63 and 3.10 and 2.73, respectively, while administrators of small schools had a very conducive learning environment in both strands, as indicated by the mean scores of 3.43 and 3.35 respectively. This finding may suggest that administrators of bigger schools tend to feel less able to create a conducive student-centred learning climate in their respective schools (Table 5).

Table 5: Creating a Student-Centered Learning Climate of Public School Administrators as to School Size

Creating a student-centred learning climate		Small			Medium			Big		
		Mean	SD	Desc.	Mean	SD	Desc.	Mean	SD	Desc.
A	Setting high social and academic expectations	3.43	0.22	VC	3.19	0.10	C	2.63	0.18	C
B	Creating school environments focused on the needs of the learner	3.35	0.18	VC	3.10	0.05	C	2.73	0.13	C

5. Conclusions

As a result of the findings that came before, the conclusions that were drawn were as follows: Public school administrators, as a whole and when grouped according to selected variables, are fairly equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to perform their functions and discharge their duties in accordance with the NCBSSH standard that was established by DepEd-NEAP. Those who are exempt from this rule are the administrators of large schools as well as the Teacher-In-Charge and Officer-In-Charge positions. As a result of the nature of their appointment, Teacher-In-Charge and Officer-In-Charge do not get either pre-service or in-service training to facilitate the administration and supervision of schools. However, because of the necessity of the service, they are designated as school administrators. As a result, they need to be familiar with the various structures that make up the organisation in order to create an environment that is learner-focused in order to provide students with meaningful and productive learning experiences.

5.1. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn, the following are recommended by the researcher:

- DepEd officials may formulate a comprehensive development plan as the basis for training programs to raise the level of competence of public school administrators, and they may institute measures to properly and religiously monitor their tasks to create a student-centred learning climate.
- Despite the nature of their assignment or designation, Teacher-In-Charge/Officer-In-Charge may be allowed to participate in all training intended for school Principals and Head Teachers to enhance their knowledge and skills as school administrator-designates.
- With the authority and responsibility attached to the Principals, management of small schools (with 1 - 4 teachers) may be under their tutelage and not with Teacher-In-Charge/Officer-In-Charge. Moreover, school administrators may cluster schools under the mother school for easy access.
- School administrators of big schools may adopt a delegation of task scheme to lessen the burden of their administrative and supervisory work.
- DepEd key officials may propose training and development programs for school administrators, which the division should consider for adoption/ implementation.

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