

Utilization of the Unfreeze, Change, and Freeze Model to Enhance the Organizational Culture in Public Schools

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Abstract — All organizations, educational or otherwise, develop a culture that guides its members in their beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors when performing their tasks. Public Schools are educational organizations funded by local or national governments to offer general education opportunities to children. To manage a public school in the rapidly changing world requires a well-managed organizational culture. When stakeholders are committed, to observe the culture, they can easily understand and adapt to the changes hence the efficiency and effectiveness of the school are ensured. This paper shows how utilization of the Unfreeze, Change, and Freeze Change Management Model is deemed useful for school administrators to enhance the development of organizational culture even during the new Normal.

Keywords — *Lewin's Change Model, Educational Environment, School Administrators, Action Research, School Leadership, School Cultural*

I. Introduction

Organizational culture shapes the beliefs, attitudes and behaviors of the stakeholders including the students attaining the expected organizational outcomes. Public schools are educational organizations supported financially by the local and national government to offer general education opportunities to as many children as possible. Upgrading the organizational culture of the public schools by applying certain organizational development model leads to provision of quality education. To manage a public school in the rapidly changing world requires a well-managed organizational culture. When stakeholders are committed, to observe the culture, they can easily understand and adapt to the changes hence the efficiency and effectiveness of the school is ensured. This paper shows how utilization of the Unfreeze, Change and Freeze Change Management Model is deemed useful for school administrators to enhance the development of organizational culture even during the new Normal.

Nature, Challenges & Gaps in the Cultural Perspective of Public Schools

Public schools are educational institutions that are supported by local, state, and/or federal governments that provide basic education to as many children as possible from kindergarten to grade 12 (Learn.org, 2013-2020). Public schools are found in all countries, however, there are distinct differences in terms of structures and educational programs.

An example is the Philippine Public School system which has significantly transformed its educational landscape through the "Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013," which has been fully implemented. This ratified educational program places the Kindergarten Education Act of 2012 into its full implementation and added two more years in high school. To be globally competitive, education takes thirteen mandatory years to complete the basic education system, hence, the kindergarten to Grade 12 Basic Education Curriculum. The Department of Education (DepEd) regulates and supervises basic education in public schools.

However, despite being regulated and supervised by a government body, school systems can still vary greatly (Sah, et.al., 2018) because of the existing culture within. Furthermore, public schools seem to implement certain rituals and procedures that commonly participate in the formation of the school's culture (Hinde, 2015) in the aspects of quality leadership and administration, teachers' dedication, and students' drive to study (Sah, et.al., 2018). Every school function is shaped and influenced by the purposeful formation and transmission of beliefs, associations, values, attitudes, and printed and unprinted directions. More specific topics like student's physical and psychological safety, the degree to which a school embraces and celebrates racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural heterogeneity, and the orderliness of physical or digital classrooms and public venues are also included in the school culture (Alkhadra et al., 2022). However, research on culture in the context of the school organization is scarce, especially in basic education. Therefore, deconstructing the components of culture could be challenging especially in a school organization in the new normal situation.

Challenges in the Culture of Public Educational Institutions

In an organization, culture is a powerful force that affects leaders, followers, and teams. Culture, according to Schein (2017), is defined as the values, conventions, and rules of conduct that regulate the organizational lifecycle. In this case, culture is made up of two parts: (1) values that guide the organization's mission and purpose, and (2) structure that dictates how culture emerges. These characteristics of culture are so important that they influence an organization's views, values, assumptions, and behavioral conventions. Culture generates shared beliefs and values which are subsequently communicated and reinforced via a variety of methods, resulting in stakeholders' perceptions, understanding, attitudes, behaviors, and actions (Abdurakhmanova et. al, 2022). In this regard, the culture of an institution establishes the framework for all the institution's internal practices, habits, and procedures. There is no specific culture-based template that fulfills the demands of all companies, especially among public schools, because organizations and their situational experiences differ substantially.

Succinctly, the culture of a school, as expressed in its values, mission, and goals, can foster an atmosphere in which professional instructors, employees, and other stakeholders feel free to voice their thoughts and ideas (Page, Arya, and Boysen, 2019), especially in the areas of mastering a trade, group learning, and establishing a common vision (Hall & Hord, 2015).

Challenges in Translation

Because culture and language appear to be inextricably linked, translation must take both into account. The difficulty in cultural translation arises from differences in the collection of lexemes and meanings between languages, dialects, and jargon, as well as across cultures or ways of expressing one's identity and living style. Translators may notice a word in organizational jargon, habits, or practices that expresses a concept that is completely unknown in an abstract or concrete idea (Chahrour, 2018). These culturally specific concepts seem to be universal, however, they are no specific manner to interpret them. Every language has its unique understanding based on how its people think, live, and even where they live, making it challenging for professionals to cope with them. According to researchers, the cultural context is too unclear because it represents a society's worldview, ideas, emotions, and values. As a result, it includes several key elements that will aid in the gathering of information needed to interpret the message and enable stakeholders to convey the organization's culture quickly and successfully.

Cultural Obligation

Culture transcends all aspects of the organization as it influences the employee's work, chain of command, method of communication, and services rendered. As a result of the systems' design for stability, the staff is forced to react to external/internal changes. However, the difficulty in cultural obligation seems to be manifested in the various operational layers of the organization which slows down and reduces communication effectiveness. This may result in the fact that employees may take ample time to solve and/or keep repeating, wasting time and resources since only leaders in the organization declare the move on how the organization should perform the work. This challenge increases the likelihood of the organization to focus more on failure than on success (Tedla, 2016).

Individualism

Because of the complex mix of beliefs, values, and expectations that affect how organizations conduct business, culture must be acquired and shared in businesses. The normative glue that holds the entire organization together is known as organizational culture. The perception of organizational culture establishes a foundation for differentiation and determination that may exist amongst organizations (Tedla, 2016) because of stakeholders' individualism. Individualism refers to the extent to which people can cause conflicts between organizational and personal interests. This challenge on the organization's culture is observed when the stakeholders' effectiveness to perform a task is reduced due to the centrally established source of authority. In line with this, structures and systems create problems by dividing its stakeholders and as a result, they create self-interest in the organization which prevents them to adapt to change. Individualism presents an intense detachment of the stakeholders from the purposes of the organization.

Gaps in the Culture of Public Schools

The school culture may lead to integral inequalities in society, as well as in the school environment (Ghosh, 2018). Apparently, these integral inequalities that prevail within the school organization seem to have the potential impact on students and teachers, especially those in public schools. Specifically, socioeconomic backgrounds may bear a significant underpinning on the culture of a public school. These cultural foundations in public schools can have a variety of negative outcomes, including discrimination against people who are members of minority groups or who are regarded to be economically disadvantaged by society (Ghosh, 2018).

Opposingly, culture increases the degree of equality among distinct groups when exposed to individual differences thus the group begins to learn and accept one another (Ghosh, 2018). The social attitudes and behavior as displayed by members of the organization is difficult to alter because of its deep entrenchment in social values, beliefs systems, habits, and practices. In this regard, the gaps observed in the culture of the public schools are organizational unsolidity, disengaged organizational culture, and acceptance of the social and administrative change. First, to initiate the solution to organizational unsolidity, continual action to align and modify its culture based on the new and changing landscapes must be introduced in the public school community to eventually unify the mindset of all members of the organization. Second, to address the gap in disengaged organizational culture, allow the old organizational practices to be altered to accommodate new cultural changes that are incorporated by a new set of situations (Davis, 2017). Lastly, the gap in acceptance of social and administrative change, provides collaborative action for stakeholders to understand the value of the vision, mission, and goals towards the modifications in the organizational culture to make it adept to challenges to resolve ineffectiveness, inefficiency, individualism, cultural obligation, and misinterpretation on the overall cultural translations.

II. Methodology

Research Design

The study was conducted between January to February 2021 in all Public Schools in SDO Pasay, Philippines. The study made use of a descriptive research design thru the survey research method to acquire first-hand knowledge among the school principals on their leadership and their influence on the organizational culture through the application of the Unfreeze, Change, and Freeze Model during the pandemic.

This descriptive research is a purposive process of gathering, analyzing, classifying, and tabulating data about prevailing conditions, practices, processes, trends, and cause-effect relationships and then making adequate and accurate interpretations of such data with or without or sometimes minimal aid of statistical methods. Also, this method ascertains prevailing conditions of facts in a group under study that gives either qualitative or quantitative, or both, descriptions of the general characteristics of the group as results (McCombes, 2022).

Participants and Data Collection

This study had a total respondent of 112 which comprise the principals, assistant principals, and chosen department heads who were respondents of this study. Additionally, 58 officers of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) served as part of the stakeholders of this study.

In this study, purposive sampling was used in this study. Respondents were School Principals, Department Heads, and selected PTA Officers because they have firsthand knowledge of the modifications to the culture of the school organization.

The quantitative data were acquired via a Google form survey, and the qualitative data were gathered from inputs provided by stakeholders and school administrators who were considering the cultural transformation of the school. The additional qualitative information came from the focus group discussion with members of the school's governance team.

Data Analysis

This study made use of the One-sample t-test, the mean, and the standard deviation to analyze the quantitative data gathered. that were presented using tabular methods.

III. Results and Discussion

Computed T-test Result of the Pretest and Posttest Application of the Unfreeze, Change and Freeze Model

Phases	Mean	Standard Deviation	df	Computed T-Value
Pre-Application	16.74	8.68	16	10.91
Post Application	86.91	5.45	16	21.86

The table shows that using the t-test of the difference between means of correlated data, the t-test computed a value of 10.91 for the pre-application and 21.86 for the post-application is more than the 0.05 level of significance. The result shows that the application of the unfreeze, change, and freeze model enhanced the organizational culture among public schools.

In organizations, change can come in the form of a new fundamental component that continuously evolves and improves (Azziz, et. al., 2016). The transformation is described by Kurt Lewin's unfreeze, change, and freeze management model, as the melting of a block-shaped chunk of ice and re-freezing into a different-shaped block. His three phases are: unfreeze, change, and

freeze. Many changes management scholars regard Lewin's three-step process as the foundation prototype for change in an organization.

The transition of an organization from its current condition to its desired future state is explained by this organizational transformation model. Since the future of the transformation is uncertain and may be influenced by the stakeholders' values, surviving capacities, and competencies, organization members must support change and oppose the status quo. Kurt Lewin's Model of Change comprises: (a) establishing the need for change, (b) moving toward the new, desired level of activity, and (c) impacting or solidifying the new behavior is vital to the organization's success (Cummings, Bridgman & Brown, 2016).

According to Lewin (1951), the unfreeze stage refers to the process of dissolving patterns, assumptions, or accepted status quo to eliminate the uncooperative component of a change process, as defined by Aziz, et al (2017) and Burke (2008). It entails treating inactivity as well as unlearning the current mindset. It also entails overcoming people's initial resistance to change. This is the first stage in preparing oneself to accept the change that is occurring. At this stage, the motivated attempt to change catalyzes the intent to negotiate forward to the change point. On the organizational level, the feeling of needing to make new adjustments or replace existing practices becomes quite clear. Individuals gradually comprehend that change is required and necessary, allowing them to progress to the next level.

This first stage refers to the organization's sense of urgency in the setting of the New Normal, to urge all members to return to work and adhere to the minimum health standards established by the Inter-Agency Task Force or IATF, a government special group charged with managing the COVID-19 epidemic in the Philippines. Few organizations had plans in place to address such a scenario, and even the Department of Education was moved to implement unprecedented actions. Most employees in schools throughout the country had to adjust to working from home almost instantly, dealing with learners, being out of school, and other drastic changes. Therefore, the organizations instantly modified their culture as leaders applied the transition from the face-to-face scheme of interaction to the remote format of interaction, also, public school administrators express the urgency to unfreeze the traditional forms of learning, teaching, and training deliveries to modify work environments in to limit possible virus outbreaks.

The real transformation happens in the second stage. This is a classic stage of misconception and transition when people are unsure about the shift and what will happen next. When an impacted organization works toward the desired transformation, this stage happens, resulting in an impact on the role, value, attitude, and structure of the organization to attain its goals. During this phase, the organization's leaders must concentrate on clear communication with subordinates about the reasons for change and the procedures required to achieve it.

The organization's second stage begins with the formation of a guiding alliance. The entire DepEd's public schools are commissioned to a more critical stance to create a guide for alliance

and a vision to change. An alliance is a group of diverse people at varying levels within the organization. The particular utilization of the change model in this context means that the more diverse members who are working in the organization, the less likely the department's needs, be untouched or unsettled. Therefore, this stage connotes that there is a need to form the right size of a guide for the alliance to ensure better plans and programs would suit this health crisis.

After the new change has been successfully absorbed and stabilized, the third stage, refreeze, occurs, resulting in a new organizational culture. Getting to this point normally takes a long time. Concisely, the changes in the organization are moving from a repetitive motion to constant change and then back to a steady system where the organization's culture is being changed (Alharbi et al., 2022). This essentially means that the adoption of a new mindset of change becomes the usual, and therefore the individual's comfort levels return to normal.

In the context of the New Normal, this third stage means that the organization installs communication and concretizes the implementation of the vision. This refers to the instance whereby the established vision is disseminated to the organization, thus despite serious resistance, all members of the organization through constant communication, understand how and why the implementation of change is occurring. This change has a significant overturn of the organizational culture in all the public schools.

Computed T-test Result on the Effects of the Model in the Public School Culture

	Mean	Standard Deviation	t computed value Both at α 0.05 & α 0.01	t critical value	p computed value Both at α 0.05 & α 0.01
Freeze Phase	85.56	23.51	8.5375 (Data Analysis App)	2.31 α	p=.00000272644 (Data Analysis App)
Unfreeze Phase	25.00	9.35		0.05	
N=112			7.5695 (PHStat App)	3.36 α	p=.00000648806 (PHStat App)

The obtained value of $t=8.5375$ (data analysis app) and $t=7.5695$ (PHStat app) which is higher than the critical value of t which is 2.31 and 3.36 at $\alpha=0.05$ and $\alpha=0.01$ respectively proved the significant difference between the two sets of data. This was supported by the obtained value of $p=.00000272644$ using data analysis and $p=.00000648806$ using PHStat that manifested strong evidence that there is a significant difference with application of the freeze to unfreeze phase of the model.

In the stage of unfreezing or developing the sense of urgency for the new facility in the context of teaching and learning, new modalities to employ, and new training and development schemes to utilize, the public school administrators, the change catalyst must create an effort to prepare and assess the stakeholders' cultural perspectives to recognize that change is important and

urgent, especially during a pandemic. In the aspect of organizational culture, the unfreeze stage connotes that clear and concise information dissemination should be provided by school administrators to ensure that members of the organization are well-instructed on the urgency to execute changes. This stage processes the organizational solidity, ethics, beliefs, and values that distinguish the appropriate behavior thus relinquishing the tradition, practice, and culture of the public school organization.

The second stage, the actual change, integrates the change model with the components of the organizational culture, namely: accountability, leadership, and decisiveness. The underlying principles associated with the level of stakeholder empowerment are influenced by the school organization's social culture and structure.

In addition, the change model installs new facilities or learning spaces which involves the programming and concept design stages. This initiative may also include procedural plans, restructuring, staffing changes, and other operational changes that arise from creating new facilities or the rehabilitation of existing facilities.

Because it is the final stage of the change implementation, the freezing step may be difficult. At this point, the applied new change in an organization has been successfully stabilized.

Implication of the Model for Enhancement of the Organizational Culture

Organizational culture can be manifested in leadership behaviors, communication styles, internal and external interactions of all stakeholders. The enhancement of organizational culture can best be described as persuasive, learner-focused, creative, exciting, principled, research & technologically oriented, process-driven, classified, employee-friendly, and adventuresome through the implementation of Lewin's Unfreeze, Change and Unfreeze Method.

According to the concept, the intensity of priority indicates how quickly a business recognizes the need to make the best option, innovate service delivery, and use distant means of education delivery. The changes in the levels of the utilization of the model imply consequent effects on the level of urgency, guiding alliance, and contextualized established vision as it moves towards the delivery of educational projects and programs at a reasonable pace.

Amidst the pandemic, the public school culture is expected to promote high urgency on the implementation of changes and modifications to address the fast-paced demands of the technological, independent, and tactical learners of the 21st century.

IV. Conclusion

An organization's philosophy, beliefs, values, attitudes, actions, and practices are all part of its culture. It refers to the moral and ethical standards that have been established and are regarded valid within an institution (Kumar, 2016). Organizational culture can vary for a variety of reasons, which is why it is important to study the culture of an institution. Such causes could include the following: organizational unsolidity, disengaged organizational culture and acceptance of social and administrative change brought about by a crisis. The implementation of Lewin's Change Model in the public school organizational culture utilizing the organization's sense of urgency to advise all its members to return to work, the organization's creation of the guide for alliance and established vision and organization's installation of the communication channels for the actual implementation of the vision enhancing the delivery of the basic education learning continuity projects programs and unprecedentedly smoothen the traditional culture to embrace changes brought forth by the New Normal.

School leaders are enjoined to apply the Unfreeze, Change, and Freeze Model of Lewin to improve the school culture to address the challenges of the New Normal. Future researchers are invited to use qualitative research designs to describe the impacts of its implementation on leadership style, elements of the organization, and the culture of the organization, and to assess the satisfaction of the subordinates and the learners.

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