

ADAPTATION OF SCHOOL CULTURE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

JIMMY M. ROMASANTA¹, EMMANUELLE M. BARRAGO², RITCHIE B. AGARAO³, MARIEMER JOY A. MEDINA⁴, MICHELLE M. MUTYA⁵, KADEEM KERT Z. ENRIQUEZ⁶

¹jimmy.romasanta001@deped.gov.ph, ²emmanuelle.barrago@deped.gov.ph, ³ritchie.agarao002@deped.gov.ph,

⁴mariemer.media@deped.gov.ph, ⁵michelle.mutya001@deped.gov.ph, ⁶kadeemkert.enriquez@deped.gov.ph

¹Tiguion National High School, Schools Division Office of Marinduque, DepEd

²School Governance and Operations Division, Schools Division Office of San Pedro City, DepEd

³Southville IV Elementary School, Schools Division Office of Sta. Rosa City, DepEd

⁴Southville IV Elementary School, Schools Division Office of Sta. Rosa City, DepEd

⁵Curriculum Implementation Division, Schools Division Office of Marinduque, DepEd

⁶Sta. Catalina National High School, Schools Division Office of Quezon, DepEd

Abstract

This study aims to explore the lived experiences of school heads in their adaptation to school culture. For this purpose, the answers have been sought to be found in the following questions. (1) What is your perception of school culture? (2) How do school heads describe their experiences in adapting to school culture? (3) How do school heads describe their experiences after adapting to school culture? (4) How does the school culture adapted change the school heads perception? This study employed a qualitative research design that phenomenologically investigated the perception of school heads on school culture. (Bliss, L. 2016) stated that phenomenology deals with the lived experiences to gain deeper insights into how people understand a phenomenon.

This study followed the said research design because it intended to elucidate the experiences of school heads in immersing themselves to the culture of their school and how this school culture changed their perspectives as school leaders. The participants in this study were identified through a convenience sampling method since they were selected based on their accessibility and willingness to participate. This was also done to ensure that various perspectives and experiences of school leaders will be gathered despite the limited time spent by the researchers. The key findings of the study are as follows: On Perception of School Culture. The school heads perception follows Shiens basic assumption of culture where culture are seen as unwritten rules that often drive behavior, perception, thought and feeling. Thematic responses of their perception were school culture was a (a) consequence of ones experiences background and of the diversity in the environment (b) the school environment itself (c) factor that influences the school environment and change (d) as a reflection of a school atmosphere of way of thinking, behavior towards school, teachers and SH and of the practices, belief, and attitude toward learning delivery of teaching personnel, learners, parents, and community sectors involved in any educational institution and (f) the existing norms, values and beliefs of the school. On experiences during adaption of school culture. Three identified themes regarding their relevant experiences are (a) techniques used by the school heads to adapt to the school culture, (b) effects of adapting to the school culture, and (c) challenges they experienced while adapting to the culture of the school. The major themes are supported by sub topics exemplifying and characterizing the techniques, effects and challenges as experienced and narrated by the school heads. Experienced after adapting to the school culture. School heads adapted both outward and inward changes. The inward changes are seen as changes within the school heads themselves as they try to adapt to the school culture. The outward changes were seen from the perspectives of the teachers, students and parents and from the perspectives of the school environment. In conclusion, principals experience inward changes i.e self-growth and self-realization and changed perceptions about school culture as they tackle the role of Cultural Change Principals. Likewise, schools experience simultaneously outward changes as seen from the perspectives of the teachers, students and parents and from the perspectives of the school environment. In the study, adaption to school culture was seen as a factor that influences schools transformation as the process transforms both the change agent and targets of change. The challenges experienced by the principals and the techniques and approaches they instituted as coping mechanisms that mediated the impact of challenges on school culture adaptation resulting to a more positive and collective school culture.

Keywords: *Perception, Adaptation, School Culture*

INTRODUCTION

School culture has built up over time as people work together, play together, fight together, cry together, and laugh together. The notion of school culture is far from new. In 1932, educational sociologist Willard Waller (1932) argued that every school has its own culture, with a set of rituals and folkways and a moral code that shapes behavior and relationships. It is critically important for school heads to know and understand the history of the school. Culture includes all products, institutions, customs and traditions, attitudes, and behaviors emerging as a result of the relations and interactions shared among people living in a society; in other words, culture consists of all beliefs and purposes (Başaran, 1994).

In the Philippines, both elementary and high school principals share administrative and supervisory duties with division superintendents and district supervisors. Decentralizing power and responsibilities has empowered school principals. This is logical because principals, as the leaders of their schools, are most familiar with their needs, issues, and progress. Recently, there's been a focus on improving school management systems and giving more authority to school leaders. Much research has demonstrated that the quality of education depends primarily on the way schools are managed (Taylor et al., 2004), more than on the abundance of available resources (Wilson, 2005), and that the capacity of schools to improve teaching and learning is strongly influenced by the quality of power provided by the school heads (Sun et al., 2007).

It's important to see how school principals lead their schools because it greatly affects how well the schools run. Empowerment is key to ensuring school safety, orderliness, parent involvement, and proper teaching. In the area studied, it was observed that empowerment for principals was either broadly applied or influenced by politics. Many principals faced challenges in deciding how much authority they should have. Because of this, this research looked into how empowered principals bring about systematic changes in managing schools and their staff, including resources. This study aims to understand the views of education authorities in the Philippines who believe that empowered principals will play a more active role in improving schools based on their circumstances.

School leaders have the power to create a new culture or recreate an existing culture into a positive school culture. School heads are responsible for forming an excellent culture in school by creating a common vision, placing importance on cooperation and common participation in the administration, and having effective communications with the people working at the school (Koker and Yeniceri, 2013). Moreover, school heads shall be competent, committed, and accountable in providing access in quality education for all (DepEd Order No. 22, s. 2010, the National Competency-Based Standard for School heads, NCBHS).

The researchers would like to study and understand the lived experiences of the school heads to encourage and motivate aspiring principals to pursue their dreams as school leaders.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

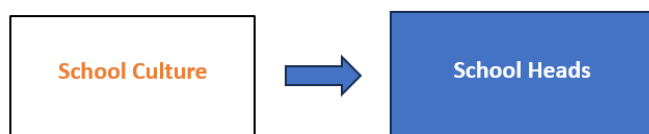
This study aims to explore the lived experiences of school heads in their adaptation to school culture. For this purpose, the answers have been sought to be found in the following questions.

1. What is your perception of school culture?
2. How do school heads describe their experiences in adapting to school culture?
3. How do school heads describe their experiences after adapting to school culture?
4. How does the school culture adapted change the school head's perception?

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

The central concept of this study is the adaptation of school culture by school heads. Key variables include:

- The perceptions of school culture adaptation by school heads.



MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design that phenomenologically investigated the perception of school heads on school culture. (Bliss, L. 2016) stated that phenomenology deals with the lived experiences to gain deeper insights into how people understand a phenomenon. This study followed the said research design because it intended to elucidate the experiences of school heads in immersing themselves to the culture of their school and how this school culture changed their perspectives as school leaders.

The participants in this study were identified through a convenience sampling method since they were selected based on their accessibility and willingness to participate. This was also done to ensure that various perspectives and experiences of school leaders will be gathered despite the limited time spent by the researchers.

The researchers used open-ended questionnaires and interview as tools to collect the views of the respondents. Questionnaires were sent electronically and follow-up interviews were also done online and face-to-face to allow participants to provide in-depth answers in which the researchers extrapolated a large amount of data. The researchers included the following questions in their questionnaires:

1. What is your perception on school culture?
2. What were your relevant experiences in adapting to school culture? Kindly narrate.
3. What were your experiences after adapting to school culture?
4. How does the school culture adapted change your perception?

Thematic analysis was conducted to analyze the gathered data. In thematic analysis, data will be coded into themes and subthemes which will be organized to a coherent narrative. (Muhammad Hassan 2024) In this type of analysis, the following steps will be conducted by the researchers: 1. Familiarization 2. Coding 3. Generating themes 4. Reviewing themes 5. Defining and naming themes 6. writing up.

This qualitative study also employed the technique of triangulation to ensure its validity and consistency. Perspectives from different moderators in different localities were gathered. This technique refers to the use of multiple data sources to develop a comprehensive analysis of a phenomenon (Carter, et.al, 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The central concept of this study was the adaptation of school culture by school heads. Key variable included was the perceptions of school culture adaptation by school heads. It intended to elucidate the experiences of school heads in immersing themselves to the culture of their school and how this school culture changed their perspectives as school leaders.

This study employed phenomenological descriptive methodologies using thematic analysis to investigate the perception of school heads on school culture, and their experiences before and after the adaption. It also employed the technique of triangulation through follow-through questions as the data were gathered from multiple sources using open-ended questionnaire to ensure the validity and consistency of the analysis.

The following research questions pivoted the interview process and guided the coding process and identification of common themes. Follow through questions evolved from the main responses and are also presented.

1. What is your perception on school culture?
2. What were your relevant experiences in adapting to school culture? Kindly narrate.
3. What were your experiences after adapting to school culture?
4. How does the school culture adapted change your perception?

Follow-through questions were also borne from the actual interview. There were:

1. Specify the opportunities and challenges you encountered while adapting to school culture.
2. How did you address the challenges you have encountered while adapting to school culture? Kindly cite specific instances
3. What are the key lessons you have learned from your experience in adapting to school culture?

Responses to the interviews were transcribed and checked line by line for accuracy by the researcher. These were then coded using open coding to identify emergent themes. After which these codes were used to identify and connect common themes that emerged during the process of open coding. Results of the data analysis were utilized to address the research questions associated with this study.

PRIMARY QUESTIONS

Research Question 1: What is your perception on school culture?

Interview Findings. All ten (10) principals perceived school culture as basic assumptions of culture following Shein's Level of Organizational Culture. Basic assumptions view culture are unwritten rules that often drive behavior, perception, thought and feeling. If valued these assumptions might be whispered between colleagues or just innately known amongst the population. They are often shaped by the decisions of leadership in the past, the passing over of new ideas and the beliefs and principles of decision makers.

P₁ perceived school culture as "may vary widely depending on individual experiences, backgrounds, and the specific environment, some norms may be applicable to a certain school but not among others"

P₂: on the other hand, perceived school culture as "the overall environment that reflects the beliefs, relationships, attitudes, perception and rules of school members."

P₃ regarded school culture as “deeply rooted in its significance in shaping the overall environment and experiences within the school”

P₄ viewed that “school culture shows the values, traditions and the overall atmosphere of the teaching and learning process”

P₅ believed that “school culture is one of the important considerations in planning and implementing programs and projects to ensure its effectiveness and success”.

P₆ on the other hand opined that “all schools differ in culture. These maybe because of the diverse cultural, religious, values and attitudes of the learners, teachers, parents, and the community itself”.

P₇ said that it “is the shared beliefs, values, and norms that influence teachers, learners and stakeholders way of thinking, behavior towards school, teachers and SH”.

P₈ opined that “school culture refers to the practices, belief, and attitude toward learning delivery of teaching personnel, learners, parents, and community sectors involved in any educational institution”.

P₉ stated that “school culture encompasses the values, norms, beliefs, behaviors, and relationships within a school community. A positive school culture fosters a sense of belonging, respect, collaboration, and support among students, teachers, staff, and parents. It promotes a safe and inclusive environment where everyone feels valued and empowered to learn and grow”.

Lastly, P₁₀ averred that school culture is “the existing norms, values and beliefs”

Table 1 presents the list of common categories or themes of the responses of the school heads on their perceptions of school culture.

THEMES	P ₁	P ₂	P ₃	P ₄	P ₅	P ₆	P ₇	P ₈	P ₉	P ₁₀
School culture is the consequence of one's experiences background and diverse environment	✓					✓				
School culture is the environment itself		✓							✓	
School culture is the factor										
➤ that influences the school environment			✓							✓
➤ of change					✓					
School culture is a reflection of:										
➤ a school atmosphere				✓						
➤ way of thinking, behavior towards school, teachers and SH						✓				
➤ the practices, belief, and attitude toward learning delivery of all those involved in any educational institution								✓		
School culture is the existing norms, values and beliefs of the school										✓

Summary of the Findings.

Summing up the responses, it can be deduced that the respondents has varying points of view and perceptions of school culture. School culture was construed as –

- consequence of one's experiences background and of the diversity in the environment
- the school environment itself;
- a factor that influences the school environment and change;
- as a reflection of a school atmosphere; of way of thinking, behavior towards school, teachers and SH; and of the practices, belief, and attitude toward learning delivery of teaching personnel, learners, parents, and community sectors involved in any educational institution; and
- the existing norms, values and beliefs of the school.

At a time during the interview, school culture was unconsciously equated to school climate (P₉). While school culture and school climate are different, these two terms are most often conceived as the same and are used interchangeably. To clarify, climate of a school is the overall attitude of the people within while culture, on the other hand, is more about the ideologies and beliefs that make the school an effective learning institution.

Research Question 2: What were your relevant experiences in adapting to school culture? Kindly narrate

Everything that occurs in a school speaks of its culture and principals have the responsibility to visualize and communicate this culture effectively. Even though there has been little attention on how principals manage their inherited school cultures; shaping the culture of a school is the most stressful challenge of principals (Medford and Brown , 2022). The

present study reveals the principals experiences in adapting and changing some aspects of culture in the schools they are assigned that is hoped to lead schools toward positive transformation.

Interview Findings. It can be deduced from the responses that the principals have different experiences from and approaches to adapting to the culture of their school-of-assignment. Initial approaches includes learning about the school's core values through observation and strengthening their relationship with school actors through fellowship and keeping their sense of humor. Their experiences led to different insights and ways of adapting to the school culture.

P₁ narrated that "I love the saying or motto (a sort of) from the Great Chinese Philosopher Confucius, 'If you are in Rome do what the Romans do', that is why I can easily adapt to a new work place and including the school culture"

P₂ stated that "understanding that school culture plays a very important role in education and has a significant impact on relationships and interactions between teachers, learners and parents."

P₃ said that she "*had to adapt my leadership style and approach to fit to the 'new' school culture*" when she was assigned to a school with a different culture focusing on holistic development, creativity, and innovation compared to her old assignment where the focus is on academic excellence and a highly competitive environment.

P₄ narrated that "first thing I did as school head is to observe on the practices of internal and external stakeholders. It was a great help in making adjustments in decision making to suit the culture of the school. Adapting the culture brings harmonious relationship among stakeholders of the school."

P₅ related that "being aware and knowledgeable of the school culture helps me come up into more realistic and relevant actions and solutions specifically when dealing some problems and conflicts arises in the school."

P₆ described that "My first year of experience as a school leader was not easy because I was assigned to a school located in other town or district. I really had no idea of the kind of people does the community have in that particular school, I don't even know the teaching personnel. It was so challenging because it tested my *interpersonal skills* specifically to the parents, barangay officials, co-school heads, teachers and learners. In short, I do not have any or enough background about them. Really, it tested my '*pakikisama*'. I started knowing them, *establish rapport through observation* and getting a chance to *communicate* with them. I tried to *adjust myself* with what they have been practicing or doing for a month or more. Since the school has a great number of teachers I ensure that I can *visit* them in class, or even talk to them during their free time. **And so, I was able to adapt to school culture through open communication and transparency from my words and actions.** I follow the adage '*ang pagsasama ng tapat ay pagsasama ng maluwa*'- I tell what I feel, I tell what I like and does not like during faculty meeting. Being *accommodating and responsive to the needs* of the learners, teachers, parents and stakeholders help me a lot to really adapt myself to school culture. *Inclusivity* is another factor that helped me become adaptable to the environment.

As a result, I had a fruitful stay in that school despite differing with school culture."

P₇ related the following: "I have observed that there's a strong camaraderie among teachers. However, they are in factions. Parents and stakeholders on the other hand, are very supportive yet some have showed skeptical views on school support particularly on the aspect of trust and transparency. Learners showed behaviors that are learned at home and how teachers managed them. They are creative and talented, however most lack independence, responsibility and resilience. It's my 4th school assignment and such challenge is not new to me."

P₈ described that "The school demographic profile affects the school culture. Age, gender, teaching practices and usual support of stakeholders are important considerations to assure the effective operation of school. It is important to gain their support to carry out the school programs, projects, and activities. Proper consultation, management, transparency, recognition are ways to nourish the relationship of the school constituents. In any instance, it is important to celebrate achievements to ascertain the strong foundation of the organization."

P₉ replied that "Adapting to school culture often involves understanding and navigating the unwritten rules, norms, and expectations of the school community. For students, this might mean observing how their peers interact, participating in extracurricular activities to find like-minded individuals, and seeking guidance from teachers or counselors if they encounter challenges".

"Teachers and staff members may adapt to school culture by collaborating with colleagues, understanding the values and priorities of the school leadership, and actively participating in professional development opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge".

"Parents can adapt to school culture by building positive relationships with teachers and administrators, volunteering their time and resources to support school activities, and advocating for their children's needs while also respecting the policies and procedures of the school".

“Overall, adapting to school culture is about finding a balance between respecting the existing norms and values of the community while also contributing positively and authentically to its growth and development.”

P₁₀ answered that “every school has unique existing norms, values and beliefs. Some colleagues are active others are passive”.

Table 2 presents the list of common categories or themes of the responses of the school heads’ relevant *experiences in adapting to school culture*

Thematic Insights While Adapting to School Culture	P ₁	P ₂	P ₃	P ₄	P ₅	P ₆	P ₇	P ₈	P ₉	P ₁₀
I. TECHNIQUES USED BY SCHOOL HEADS TO ADAPT TO CULTURE:										
1. Get along with everyone ('pakikisama')	✓									
2. Know, understand, and be familiar with existing culture in order to:										
a. effect good relationship		✓								
b. come up with more realistic and relevant actions and solutions to conflicts					✓					
a. to find like-minded individuals who are interacting together and participating in extracurricular activities									✓	
3. Adapt school culture through										
a. Open communication to freely convey thoughts and ideas to each other						✓				
b. Being accommodating and responsive to the needs of the learners, teachers, parents and stakeholders						✓				
c. Being inclusive helped become adaptable to the environment						✓				
d. By parents building positive relationships with teachers and administrators, volunteering their time and resources to support school activities, and advocating for their children's needs while also respecting the policies and procedures of the school.									✓	
e. By understanding and navigating through unwritten rules, norms, and expectations of the school community									✓	
a. By collaborating with teacher-colleagues, understanding the values and priorities of the school leadership, and actively participating in professional development opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge.									✓	
f. Gain support of stakeholders through										
o Consultation							✓			
o Management,							✓			
o Freely share thoughts and opinions honestly and respectfully (Transparency)							✓			
o Recognition to nourish the relationship							✓			
o Celebrate achievements to ascertain a strong foundation for the organization							✓			
o Seeking guidance from teachers or counselors if they encounter challenges.									✓	
EFFECTS OF ADAPTING TO THE CULTURE										
1. Change in leadership style and approach to fit the new school culture			✓							
2. Adjustments were done in decision making to suit the culture of the school				✓						
3. Brought harmonious relationships among stakeholders of the school.				✓						
CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED WHILE ADAPTING TO CULTURE										
1. Tested interpersonal skills							✓			
2. Skepticism and mistrusts of some parents regarding school projects							✓			
3. Misbehavior, lack independence, irresponsibility and pliancy of some students							✓			

Summary of the Findings. Three major themes regarding relevant experiences in adapting to school culture came up from the narratives of the school heads. These are – (a) techniques used by the school heads to adapt to the school culture, (b) effects of adapting to the school culture, and (c) challenges they experienced while adapting to the culture of the school. The major themes are supported by sub topics exemplifying and characterizing the techniques, effects and challenges as experienced and narrated by the school heads.

The above theme corroborates findings and write-ups by educational leaders elsewhere. These includes techniques in adapting to school culture i.e. assessing current culture, communicate your vision and values, building trust and collaboration, celebrating diversity and inclusion, encouraging innovation and creativity and monitor and evaluate your progress. The narratives also showed multi-dimensional effects of adapting to school culture similar to accepted notions such as change in management and leadership styles, improvements in inter- and intrapersonal skills of both leaders and teachers, strengthening relationships that may positively transform schools and learning. The findings also indicated the school leaders experienced challenges that impacted their ability to manage the school and leadership skills in order to institute changes that were needed for ensuring improvements in teaching and learning.

Research Question 3: What were your experiences after adapting to school culture?

Every principal faces similar challenges when faced with changing the “way we have always done things here” – when there are attempts to change school culture. School leaders will face similar forms of resistance, skepticism, and challenges. However, they prevail amidst these and successfully bring transformation into the school.

Corollary to this, one must bear in mind that in any organizational change efforts, organizational change is inseparable from individual change (Boaz and Fox, 2013). There are changes that are outward (i.e. change of culture in the people and transformation in the workplace) as well as inward (i.e changes in the change agents as well). Simply put, principals as they adapt to school culture and fill the role of change agents also experience fundamental changes in themselves, too. School transformation becomes easier given this scenario.

Interview Findings. In the present study, the aforementioned views are evident as the following narratives give evidences of inward changes among the school heads as they adapt to the school culture at the same time outward changes are happening to school’s stakeholders or after school culture evolved:

P₁ said that “I can manage to go along with them as I bring my own strategy to come up with a new one”.

P₂ related that “We build a good relationship with educator learners and parents and continuous learning growth”.

P₃ narrated that “After adapting to the school culture, I experienced a sense of belonging and unity within the school community. I observed that the school culture had a significant impact on the behavior, attitudes, and values of the students, teachers, and parents. I noticed that the school culture fostered a positive learning environment, where students felt supported and encouraged to excel academically and socially”.

“I also observed that the school culture was a reflection of the values and beliefs of the school leaders, teachers, and parents. I noticed that the school culture was shaped by the attitudes and behaviors of the stakeholders, and that it was crucial to maintain a positive and collaborative culture. I made a conscious effort to communicate effectively with all stakeholders, to build strong relationships, and to foster a sense of community”.

P₄ stated that “Communication and coordination to both internal and external stakeholders became easier. Support of external stakeholders on school PPAs increased after adapting to school culture”.

P₅ “noticed that when school culture was adapted, she became more effective, efficient, and realistic. Still, in every decision I make, I ensure that those are always in the children's best interest”.

P₆ narrated that “after adapting to school culture, leading and managing school became easier. Challenges or bottlenecks were addressed through collaboration and teamwork among internal and external stakeholders”.

P₇ recounted that “As SH, I showed respect for their group, acknowledged their unique beliefs, behavior, characteristics, strengths and weaknesses. Acknowledging the beliefs, behavior, values, and norms of teachers, learners, and stakeholders gave me their understanding, trust and confidence.”

P₈ told the interviewers that “by considering and embracing the school culture, plans were easily carried out in terms of the implementation of school PPAs. Proper management of the personnel behavior was exhibited as everything was in order. Threats were converted to opportunities. Likewise, many accomplishments were attained because barriers between internal and external stakeholders were removed. Moreover, proper dissemination of relevant information was observed, and pupils' progress was consistently reported to parents. In this regard, all issues and concerns were properly addressed, and a strong partnership was built”.

P₉ averred that for students, adapting to school culture leads to forming strong friendships, being more engaged in learning, and achieving academic success. They also developed valuable life skills such as teamwork, communication, and resilience”.

“Teachers and staff who adapt well to the school culture find greater job satisfaction, collaboration opportunities with colleagues, and professional growth. They also experienced a sense of pride in contributing to a positive learning environment for students.”

Parents who adapt to school culture built meaningful relationships with teachers and administrators, feel more involved in their children's education, and have a greater sense of trust in the school community.

Table 3 presents the list of common categories or themes of the responses of the school heads' on their *experiences after adapting to school culture*

Thematic Insights After Adapting to School Culture	P ₁	P ₂	P ₃	P ₄	P ₅	P ₆	P ₇	P ₈	P ₉	P ₁₀
INWARD CHANGES										
<i>School Head Perspective</i>										
o Change in own strategies	✓									
o more effective, efficient and realistic decisions- making					✓					
o Change in own behavior and perceptions							✓			
OUTWARD CHANGES										
<i>Teachers, Students and Other Stakeholders Perspective</i>										
o Meaningful relationships and stronger partnerships built		✓						✓	✓	
o Feeling of:										
✓ Unity			✓							
✓ Support			✓							
✓ understanding, trust and confidence						✓				
o Developed valuable life skills such as teamwork, communication, and resilience for students									✓	
o Greater job satisfaction, collaboration opportunities with colleagues, and professional growth of teachers									✓	
o more involvement in children's education by parents									✓	
o Academic excellence			✓							
<i>School Environment Perspective</i>										
o Greater sense of trust within the school community.									✓	
o Increased support on PPAs				✓				✓		
o Easier communication and coordination and dissemination of info and reports to parents				✓				✓		
o Values and beliefs were reflected on school culture			✓							
o School culture was shaped by the attitudes and behaviors of the stakeholders			✓							
o Social change including personnel behavior			✓					✓		
o School are easier to lead and manage						✓				
o Observed impact on culture			✓							
o Positive learning environment			✓							
o Challenges, bottlenecks, barriers and threats were addressed through collaboration and teamwork and converted to opportunities						✓		✓		
o Works /assignments accomplished								✓		
o Policies were followed and observed								✓		

Summary of Findings. From the findings, it could be inferred that school heads had experienced change after adapting to the school culture. These changes were both outward and inward. The inward changes are seen as changes within the school heads themselves as they try to adapt to the culture of the school where they were assigned. The outward changes were seen on the other hand from the perspectives of the teachers, students and parents; and from the perspectives of the school environment. Again in this latter, school environment can be interpreted as school climate as defined beforehand.

The experience of P₃ can be assumed as the most significant learning as she found out that “it is essential to maintain a positive and collaborative culture in school”. It is also evident that after adaption of school culture the school environment becomes more cooperative. Following Organizational Behavior and Management by Ivancevich and Matteson (2005) as cited by San Miguel and Pascual (2021) regarding dimensions of culture aspects – the culture of the school on collectivism was experienced after its adaption. Collectivism belongs to the first dimension of culture aspect i.e. individualism-collectivism. In

this dimension, the culture of an organization may either be promoting self-growth and individual advancement contributing to the whole, or group effort and togetherness in meeting the objectives.

Research Question 4: How does the school culture adapted change your perception?

Fullan (2002) wrote that a key to a large-scale sustainable education reform are effective leaders who “catalyzes commitment to a compelling vision and higher performance standards” with corresponding results. He calls this kind of school leaders as ‘Cultural Change Principals’. Cultural Change Principals recognizes that improvement is more of a function of *learning to do the right thing in the setting where you work*. Learning in context or learning at work is more specific, situational and social and develops shared and collective knowledge and commitments. It establishes conditions conducive to continual development, including opportunities to learn from others on the job, the daily fostering of current and future leaders, the selective retentions of good ideas and best practices, and the explicit monitoring of performance.

Interview Findings. The development of cultural change principals passes through several stages of the cultural adaptation process – anticipation, honeymoon phase, cultural shock phase, adjustment phase and lastly adaptation phase. In this last phase there is already a feeling of calm with the new life and development of more constructive attitudes (<https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/resources/life/cultural>). Along with learning ‘new culture’ in context or at work is also change in perceptions of the adaptor (inward changes). In this study changes in perception of principals after they have adapted to the culture of their “new” place of assignments are chronicled:

P₁ stated that “it can really broaden your perspective and gain knowledge on how management must be in schools with varying work culture”.

P₂ averred that adaption “changed the perception of learners’ life experiences and developed theirs’ teachers’ and parents’ cultural awareness”.

P₃ narrated that adaption has significantly changed her perceptions in several ways: (1) “gained a deeper appreciation for the importance of a positive and supportive school culture in fostering academic success and promoting student well-being; (2) understood that a school’s culture is not just about the physical environment or the rules and regulations, but it is about the shared values, beliefs, and practices of the entire school community”.

She further said that “adapting to the school culture has been a transformative experience for me as a school head. (4) It has challenged me to rethink my assumptions, (5) to listen more carefully, and (6) to engage more deeply with the school community. It has also (7) reinforced my belief in the power of a positive and supportive school culture to foster academic success, promote student well-being, and build a strong and vibrant school community”.

P₄ on the other hand averred that she has become “open to changes if it would mean improvement on school management. I thought before that managing school is on the shoulder of SH but now I learned that it is better if responsibilities are shared among stakeholders.”

P₅ answered that “my perception in the delivery of quality education remains whatever happens. However if I know that considering school culture would be of great help, I will consider such but of course I will ensure that it will not compromise on the attainment of the DepEd mission and vision at large.”

P₆ related that “having deeper knowledge about the school culture changed my old perception that ‘I might not be able to lead and manage a school’. Having been adapted to school culture gave me more opportunities to accomplish the target goals. Diversity of school culture can be turned into positive perception depending on how one look at it.”

P₇ professed that “as I adapted the school culture, a strong desire to introduce change on the negative culture and upholding the positive one drive me to make a difference. Setting the bar to a higher standard with them in one and common belief will show more of gems they have that will help in the attainment of the school vision and mission.”

P₈ said that “being flexible in all means helped a lot to gain more achievements. It enables me to easily build connections and engage community sectors”.

P₉ concurred that “adapting to school culture profoundly altered my perception of the educational environment. As individuals integrate into the fabric of the school community, they begin to grasp the nuances of its values, norms, and social dynamics. This immersion fosters a sense of belonging, where students, teachers, and parents alike feel connected and valued within the community. Through participation in school activities, collaboration with peers, and engagement with school leadership, individuals develop a deeper understanding of diversity and inclusivity. They appreciate the richness of perspectives and experiences that contribute to the vibrant tapestry of the school culture. Moreover, adapting to the shared values of respect, collaboration, and academic excellence enhances one’s perception of the school as a place of learning and growth. Positive relationships forged within the school community further solidify this perception, fostering a sense of trust, support, and mutual respect among its members. Ultimately, adapting to school culture transforms perception from that of an outsider to an integral part of a dynamic and thriving educational ecosystem.”

P₁₀ believed that she learned about “broader horizon about leadership.”

Table 4 presents the list of common categories or themes of the responses of the school heads on their change *of perception after having adapted to the school culture*

Themes of Responses on Change of Perceptions	P ₁	P ₂	P ₃	P ₄	P ₅	P ₆	P ₇	P ₈	P ₉	P ₁₀
I. CHANGE IN ATTITUDE										
o learned to listen more carefully			✓							
o to engage more deeply with the school community			✓							
o became open to changes if it would mean improvement on school management.				✓						
o gained a deeper appreciation of the importance of a positive and supportive school culture in fostering academic success and promoting student well-being			✓				✓			
o Became flexible enabled me to easily build connections and engage community sectors								✓		
o has been a transformative experience for me as a school head			✓							
II. CHANGE IN MINDSET										
o changed the perception of learners' life experiences and developed theirs' teachers' and parents' cultural awareness		✓								
o broaden perspective	✓									
o reinforced my belief in the power of a positive and supportive school culture to foster academic success, promote student well-being, and build a strong and vibrant school community".			✓							
o understood that a school's culture is not just about the physical environment or the rules and regulations, but it is about the shared values, beliefs, and practices of the entire school community			✓							
o I thought before that managing school is on the shoulder of SH but now i learned that it is better if responsibilities are shared among stakeholders				✓						
o Diversity of school culture can be turned into positive perception depending on how one look at it."						✓				
o gave me more opportunities to accomplish the target goals						✓				
o considering school culture would be of great help					✓					
o culture profoundly altered my perception of the educational environment									✓	
o reinforced my belief in the power of a positive and supportive school culture			✓							
o learned broader horizon about leadership										✓
o adapting to school culture profoundly altered my perception of the educational environment									✓	
III. CHANGE IN NORMS										
o Becoming flexible in all means helped a lot to gain more achievements. It enables me to easily build connections and engage community sectors								✓		
o gained knowledge on how management must be	✓									
o Setting the bar to a higher standard with them in one and common belief will show more of gems they have that will help in the attainment of the school vision and mission							✓			

Summary of Findings. From the data it was realized that inward changes happened as the principals adapt to the school culture. Particularly, their own perceptions of school culture were changed simultaneously along with outward changes brought about by the process of school transformation. Redding and Corbett (2018) wrote that culture shift requires changes in mindsets, norms, and attitudes and is as difficult and uncertain as it is essential.

Mindsets are established set of attitudes of a person or group concerning culture, values, philosophy, frame of mind, outlook, and disposition. Conti (2022) wrote that a change mindset is the belief that it's possible to change, that we can improve our lives by making different choices. It's about being open to new ideas and new ways of doing things

Attitude is the way of thinking or feeling about someone or something, typically one that is reflected in a person's behavior. Garrison (2020) posited that changing your attitude is learning a new habit.

Norm on the other hand are rules or standards of behaviour shared by members of a social group. Norms are formal and informal rules that influence our behavior in different contexts and that there are different types of norms. *Moral norms* describe what people feel is the morally right thing to do, *transformative norms* describe changes a community of people are starting to make, and *descriptive norms* describe how the majority of people in a group act (UNHCR Innovation Service, 2020).

The responses of the principals interviewed followed the aforementioned precepts and were categorized in three themes – change of attitude, change in mindset and change in norms as shown in the table above

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In summary, the key findings of the study are as follows:

On Perception of School Culture. The school heads perception follows Shien's basic assumption of culture where culture are seen as unwritten rules that often drive behavior, perception, thought and feeling. Thematic responses of their perception were school culture was a (a) consequence of one's experiences background and of the diversity in the environment; (b) the school environment itself; (c) factor that influences the school environment and change; (d) as a reflection of a school atmosphere; of way of thinking, behavior towards school, teachers and SH; and of the practices, belief, and attitude toward learning delivery of teaching personnel, learners, parents, and community sectors involved in any educational institution; and (f) the existing norms, values and beliefs of the school.

On experiences during adaption of school culture. Three identified themes regarding their relevant experiences are (a) techniques used by the school heads to adapt to the school culture, (b) effects of adapting to the school culture, and (c) challenges they experienced while adapting to the culture of the school. The major themes are supported by sub topics exemplifying and characterizing the techniques, effects and challenges as experienced and narrated by the school heads.

Experienced after adapting to the school culture. School heads adapted both outward and inward changes. The inward changes are seen as changes within the school heads themselves as they try to adapt to the school culture. The outward changes were seen from the perspectives of the teachers, students and parents; and from the perspectives of the school environment.

Outward changes after adaption of school culture is evolution of a culture of collectivism. Collectivism belongs to the first dimension of culture aspect i.e. individualism-collectivism. In this dimension, the culture of an organization have promoting self-growth and individual advancement contributing to the whole, or group effort and togetherness in meeting the objectives.

On changes of perceptions after adaption of school culture. Inward changes happened as the principals adapt to the school culture. Three thematic changes were recorded - changes in mindsets, changes in norms, and changes in attitudes of the principals.

In conclusion, principals experience inward changes i.e self-growth and self-realization and changed perceptions about school culture as they tackle the role of Cultural Change Principals. Likewise, schools experience simultaneously outward changes as seen from the perspectives of the teachers, students and parents; and from the perspectives of the school environment. In the study, adaption to school culture was seen as a factor that influences schools' transformation as the process transforms both the change agent and targets of change. The challenges experienced by the principals and the techniques and approaches they instituted as coping mechanisms that mediated the impact of challenges on school culture adaptation resulting to a more positive and collective school culture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions made, these are the recommendations:

The impact of school culture was seen as a factor of positive change for both the agents and target of change. It is essential in creating and maintaining positive culture that tremendously influence the overall success of the teaching-learning environment.

There is no fit-all-recipe for improve school culture, because it is localized and a consequence of local influences. As such, it is recommended that collaborative efforts be infused into the planning and implementation and management of any school development programs.

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