

Enriching School Culture and Climate through Leadership in Collectivistic Educational Settings: Cases from Nepal and South Africa

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ABSTRACT Culture and climate are intertwined, but not the same. Anthropologically speaking, culture is related to personality, while climate is akin to attitude, relating to the psychological issue of anthropological problems. Culture and climate reflect a school's environment. A school's culture is often determined by its leadership as they work to enhance a policy system. Open-ended interviews were conducted in schools from Nepal and South Africa with the school actors. Data was analyzed through triangulations, which validated the reliability of interpretations. The findings suggest that educational leadership strategies towards managing the psychological issues arising from anthropological problems create a healthy environment. A single culture may define the uniqueness of a school. However, having one culture for shaping the climate is not necessary. Leadership approaches were limited to a few individuals rather than the entire student body, thus hampering attempts to enrich the school climate. However, school leadership does reach the entire school's professional community.

INTRODUCTION

Education and school educational settings comprise a phenomenal pathway to enhance knowledge for learners. Although education may be considered as the backbone of a country's developmental tools, it is equally important to view it as the locus of students' learning efforts. A school offers student the sanctuary of a harmonized environment within which they can cope with a school climate that enhances their motivation to study and to spend time with different actors, such as principal, teachers, non-teaching staff and students within the school's educational settings. A positive climate in schools is obtained by leadership of a quality that is capable of building the relational approaches of professional communities towards regular progress in student achievement and teachers' attitudes to fostering the educational environment (Miller 1981; Tubbs and Garner 2008). Rajbhandari (2013) states that the school organizational climate refers to an environment in which people socialize and promote the wellbeing of both the school and its employees. Thompson and Crank (2010) describe the school climate as relating to the

health of the school environment, social environmental conditions, school organization and the organizational culture.

Today's educational settings include many activities, for example, sports, drama and presentations, which generate competition amongst learners or pupils from different schools. Hoffman et al. (2009) states that a good school climate can be identified as an environment that is both healthy and supportive. Rajbhandari (2013) adds that both school culture and social aspects are the main components in creating an organizational climate. Rajbhandari and Rajbhandari (2015) states that school leadership plays a key role in nurturing a good school climate by facilitating easy interactions and collaboration among employees, thereby improving the wellness of employees and the welfare of the organization through leadership maintenance. In addition, Rajbhandari (2016a) continues to explain the importance of leadership maintenance through psychological, sociological and physiological (PSP) parameters that generate mirror effects from leadership to followership, which is an essential component for generating favorable climates and culture in educational settings.

In developed countries, formal and non-formal (vocational/technical) education is given equal importance. However, in developing countries like Nepal and South Africa, the general public has no option of technical and vocational education, but is compelled to pursue formal education for employability, despite facing significant difficulties. Although formal and non-formal education plays equally vital roles in a country's development, the return in education is slow. Moreover, students spend most of their years in school, and their growth is determined by the environmental settings during their tenure from Grade R to Grade 10. For a healthy school environment, school culture and climate play a vital role in social interactions. School culture and climate are important in enhancing teachers' motivation and their retention, whereas for students they can be vital ingredients to enhance and enrich their developing minds. Do all schools have a similar culture and climate in a collectivistic society? Why do schools require good climate and pleasant culture? What is a good climate and how can it be nurtured in school for both teachers and students, for the betterment of education and the future benefit of the country? Keiser and Schulte (2009) states that school culture and climate are created by students, teachers, families, community and the leadership of the school.

Educational climate is an important aspect where cultures are formed to differentiate one school from the other. Although learners and teachers come from different backgrounds and possess different experiences and culture, often there is a culture in school settings that reflects the school climate and environmental factors in which all the school's actors come together, especially the students who perform and highlight the learnt behavior when they are outside school. This highlights the difference between one school and another, which also enables the students to demonstrate their differences not only by the uniform they wear, but also by the behavioral attitude they demonstrate even outside school.

Culture and climate are important aspects in educational settings by which all the school's actors are brought together to perform the way school policy desires. However, a school's culture is often determined by the leaders who demonstrate their leadership by promoting or enforcing policy systems, which the different ac-

tors, such as teachers and students often follow, thus remaining mere followers. Schools have their own culture or trademark, for example, the school uniform or their blazer could be one of the fundamental hallmarks about being in one culture where children are found with similar color uniforms. Nevertheless, uniforms cannot be the only core indicator for cultural foundations. The way students behave and respect the teachers and outsiders who come to the school also indicates the cultural phenomena.

In connection with the importance of culture in educational settings, the purpose of this study is to investigate and explore the culture and climate in the schools of two countries, Nepal and South Africa. The study highlights the collectivistic cultural approaches that are seen and observed by many in developing countries. In contrast, developed countries where the individualistic culture is dominant and imply a single educational culture by bringing the special students into normal school for general education (Rajbhandari 2016b). It is challenging to say which culture is the best, the individualistic or the collectivistic. To explore the drawbacks and the strength of school cultures and climates in collectivistic educational society, the following research questions attempt to seek answers.

1. How does the leadership approach enhance school culture and climate?
2. How can culture and climate be nurtured within the school community to enhance education?

Literature Review

Collectivistic Culture in the Academic Realm

A country's culture greatly influences the school culture. Hofstede's (2011) contributions to cultural studies have highlighted the differences in individualistic and collectivistic socio-cultural paradigms. Moreover, individualistic and collectivistic society is reflected by the countries' socioeconomic growth and development. In line with this, an individualistic society can be referred to as a developed country, whereas collectivistic societies are often referred to as developing countries (Gorodnichenko and Ronald 2011). Although these two paradigms seem to be vastly different to each other, their socio-cultural aspects have a major role in formation of school cultures. Holliday (1999) and

Holliday (2016) supported this view of “small culture” by defining the cluster of cultures that exist within a country’s socioeconomic environment, which are also referred to as subcultures (Oyserman 2017) or co-cultures. However, these small cultures, co-cultures or subcultures may contribute differently to the main culture.

Even though the socio-cultural aspects of individualistic and collectivistic culture vary in multiple ways, the school culture can be greatly affected by leadership approaches. Le Clear (2005) states that leadership requires an understanding of existing culture, and that leadership itself is an expression of culture (Sergiovanni and Corbally 1984; Kuppler 2015). Therefore, leadership competences and approaches towards formation of school culture need maintenance if they are to harmonize the school climate.

Moreover, in collectivistic societies, such as, South Africa and Nepal, the traditional culture of educational system and leadership approaches has caused an unhealthy atmosphere of competition between school leaders and between schools. The consequences of this have a cause and effect relation. Firstly, from the macro perspective, developing countries desperately crave improvement in the standard of living through socioeconomic upliftment, though the consequent industrialization and environmental hazards restrict development (Tilbury et al. 2002). Secondly, from a micro socio-educational perspective, for example, affluent people are able to purchase quality education, whereas the needy general public cannot and are thus compelled to go to general public schools where quantity outweighs quality (Rajbhandari 2013).

Shaping school culture has become important for administrative leadership in both individualistic and collectivistic societies, which strive for better outcomes mostly through concrete inputs, for example, by dedicating resources to school infrastructural development alone. Surprisingly, this is more visible in developing countries. However, in the developed and individualistic society, the culture of the educational system restricts unnecessary incremental student enrolment, while evaluation is controlled through the medium of educational policies and system. Thus, free access to education is enabled by the educational policies and systems of the country. Moreover, in collectivistic cultures, frequent changes are made to improve educational systems and to enhance cultural

formation through educational reform and decentralization.

Leadership Approaches Towards Cultural Formation and Climatic Wellbeing

Although changes are implemented for cultural formation, and ethical considerations with regards to school climate are highly connected with leadership approaches and practices (Rajbhandari 2013), it is still important to determine whether the change is essential. The change implemented in schools also influences school culture and climate. Culture and social factors are a vital component in generating an organizational climate. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) (2008) states that school climate signifies attitudes of school actors in an organization. This includes the collective mood, that is, their morale, as individuals or groups in an organization. They consider that happy teachers are better teachers. However, in school educational settings, many school actors only perform academic duties, and therefore, it is not only the teachers who are happy, but also both teaching and non-teaching members, including the students, all need to experience the feeling of happiness while at school.

The NAESP argues that most people in school educational settings desire to receive intrinsic reward to experience happiness, but that most leaders fail to address this major issue by trying to replace the intrinsic motivation with extrinsic rewards to arrive at the happiness point for all. Although culture and climate overlap, they are not the same (Sergiovanni 1991; Miner 1995; Kuppler 2015). According to NAESP (2008), climate is often viewed as attitude and culture as the personality of professional communities within the school settings. According to Hoy et al. (1991) and Aneas and Sandín (2009), climate is viewed as the psychological perspective and culture is viewed as the anthropological perspective. However, in educational settings, climate plays a vital role as the leverage point to shape school culture.

School climate generates a positive atmosphere for the effective development of youth, preventing risks, such as bullying in schools, which make prevention through physical and psychological intervention necessary. Thapa et al. (2012) argues that a positive school climate promotes health as well as increasing the

achievement of learning behavior and attitude amongst the learners, and the retention of teachers.

School culture is closely associated with the implications of changes and development in educational settings. Any form of change can bring about new culture, such as a new leader in a school. This generates cultural variations, thus affecting the climate. Culture is a foundational background, carrying forward experience that one gained from previous organizations. However, changes are not easily accepted, whether they come from the school leaders or from the newly appointed member. Rajbhandari (2013) states that suitable teaching and learning activities produce cultural binding amongst and between the professional school communities. In connection to this, he further argues that the favorable climate is a hallmark of school development towards cumulative progress. Sergiovanni (1991) also points out that school leadership needs to be clear in developing the school cultural norms (Cheng et al. 2016). Strong and rigid culture can produce negative effects and does not promote a realistically healthy environment. Sergiovanni further states that extremely rigid norms might lead schools to face reality in one direction and their environment in another.

Sergiovanni proposed that a resilient culture is flexible enough to bend but not break, can stretch in a new direction but maintains integrity to strengthen the organizational climate, and can bounce back and recover its strength and spirit to maintain its identity. The flexibility of cultural formation generates a harmonious climate that involves all actors within the organizational behavioral context. This also generates the school leadership's readiness for flexibility and mobility to change within the cultural aspect, enabling integration within the organizational environment (Rajbhandari 2014), which furthermore increases human integrity and cohesiveness towards both social and academic benefits.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study applied a qualitative paradigm to explore pragmatic cultural aspects being collated amongst school communities. This qualitative methodology enabled the researchers to understand the hidden phenomena in the harmonious environment in addition to the cultural

taboos that could not be captured through another methodology.

The qualitative methodology also inspired trust between the interviewer and the interviewees. In connection with this, cases were developed from schools of two different countries. Although there are many similarities between the schools in the same countries, there are also differences. Although a collectivistic society has differences, similarities were also obtained at the common ground of educational contextual settings that involve prime members who shape the culture and climate.

Gaining Comparative Grounds

Taking all these prime factors into consideration, similarities in the collectivistic society of schools from two different countries were derived. Moreover, the differences were usually general. Furthermore, it was found that contextual variations could also impact a school's culture and climate. Sometimes these contextual variations could be applicable to one school but not to others in the same location or country, a time-bound consequence rather than a location consequence, which may remain in the short term but may have a bigger impact on the culture and climate (Rajbhandari 2013).

These contextual variations can also be out of the control of the internal school leadership and administration, and this is an external factor causing the school climate and culture to change radically. Taking this into consideration, "cultural fallacy" (Rajbhandari 2013) in cross-cultural research is an error of judgment experienced while studying the differences in two cultures. Matsumoto and Yoo (2006) interpreted this error as "ecological fallacy", and this was controlled by limiting this study within the school culture and climate of relational approaches amongst and between the school actors within the framework of the schools being studied. Comparative approaches were initiated to investigate and understand the cultural phenomena and climatic environment of relation building and construction of teams within each school's educational settings. Differences and similarities in the schools' culture and climate offered various scenarios, which were examined with a view to deciding on which contextual phenomena best suited the schools operating in a similar context.

Research Tools and Techniques

An in-depth open-ended interview was conducted to collect data in schools from Nepal and South Africa. Two schools from each country were randomly selected to investigate the case study within the catchment area of research study. The random selection of both schools and key participants enhanced the research by shortening the timeframe, which also allowed the researchers a degree of freedom to delimit the research study areas. Also, key participants were selected randomly to give freedom to the interviewees to speak freely and make their voices heard. The random selection of participants for the investigation was supported by school authorities.

The importance of this study is to give the voice of the unheard. Randomly selecting the schools also enabled the researchers to complete this research within the given time frame. The freedom to select the participants was given to the principal who knew the interviewees well, and the intention was also not to disturb the school's education by interfering with participants during the classroom sessions. Interviews were tape recorded and later translated and transcribed for validating. A few of the open-ended interview questionnaires were distributed to schools to student groups with an envelope enclosed. These interview questionnaires were later collected in a sealed envelope for ethical consideration.

Research Participants

The key respondents in this study from the schools of two nations were two principals, three vice principals, five teachers and seven students. Altogether 17 participants were interviewed. Schools were given pseudonyms like LPVV and HVoToe for South African schools, and SGM and SBS for Nepalese schools, to hide their real identity. The participants in this research are indicated as principal, vice principal, teacher 1, 2, 3... and for students 1, 2, 3... with their respective grades.

Research Analysis Procedures

The tape-recorded interviews were translated into English from Nepali. Data was precisely transcribed word by word for reliability and va-

lidity. Content analyses were carried out to evaluate the schools' culture and climate through the approach of school leadership. Specific content relating to leadership and followership domains was drawn into attention to specify the cultural and climatic dimensions through the views from both leaders and followers. The content analysis enabled the researchers to focus on the matter of how the leadership approach enhances school culture and good climate, and how culture and climate can be nurtured for educational enhancement. While the analyses were made within the context of leadership approaches towards nurturing culture and climate, data displaying and data reduction were conducted to facilitate the conclusion drawing. During the process of content analysis, the focus was on addressing the psychological issues arising from anthropological problems of the professional communities and the students within the educational environment.

The interviews were analyzed and compared to each respondent's answers to arrive at the analysis phase through data triangulation. Here the intention was not to compare the respondents but to verify the reliability of the answers concerning specific questions related to the research. The views of different respondents from institutional macro, meso and micro level enabled the data triangulation process subsequently by collecting their views of both school culture, climate and leadership approaches. This enabled the researchers to identify the nature of the settings that contributed to the climate of the schools.

Collecting data from two different countries was a difficult and time-consuming task. There was frequent correspondence with the school leaders to smooth the process of selecting interviewees and receiving their response quickly. The open-ended interviews that were distributed to schools for students in South Africa were collected and received in a sealed envelope for ethical reasons. These respondents were asked to seal the interview so that their answers were kept confidential, and accessible only to the researchers. It was made clear to all the respondents that their responses were to be used only for academic research purposes to enhance the understanding of collectivistic leadership approach in educational cultural settings of macro, meso and micro-climatic dimensions.

RESULTS

Culture and climate in educational settings can be enhanced by leadership competences that best suit the demanding contextual settings. Leadership competence is a key to successful schools, consequently enriching the school climate. Moreover, in educational settings, a group of teachers and the groups of students form separate climates. Nevertheless, these climates are often connected to the school's culture. This indicates that there may be more than one climate in a school, which is fundamentally guided by one school culture. In collectivistic societies, such as Nepal and South Africa, this formation of climate is prominent and could often lead to multiple climates in one school's culture. This is because, in a collectivistic society, race, gender, religions, languages and so forth are considered to be of prime importance, consequently leading to climatic segmentation by the students and teachers in the most feasible manner possible. However, school culture remains untouched.

Collectivistic Educational Society in Nepal and South Africa

In a collectivistic society, it is often found that groups are formed amongst the students who speak similar languages. In South Africa, students form groups of the same race and culture, especially amongst students who speak the same home language. Moreover, there is always a possibility that gender-based groups from different races will be common in co-educational settings. In Nepal, although the common spoken language is Nepali, most students have a tendency to form groups based on their tribes who speak similar languages, such as Newari, Tamang and Maitheli. In both countries, tribal culture plays a vitally important role in the formation of groups and further forming the climate that best suits their environmental and contextual settings.

South Africa and Nepal are rich and diverse in culture, having many tribal groups, religions and races speaking different languages. This has become an important aspect for school leaders to understand. To form one culture with one school language is essential to enhance and enrich the climatic environment in educational settings. It is often found that in these diverse

societies, such aspects are not easily controllable and are sometimes inevitable. Moreover, these aspects can affect school culture and climate, which can also be influenced by the leader's tribal background. Furthermore, the National Educational Department tends to integrate the diverse society under one roof in an attempt to create one similar culture. However, formations of culture and climate are a spontaneous mechanism, which is driven by both anthropological and psychological paradigms. Although these two phenomena are not similar, their integration can form one strong bond amongst and between individuals and groups.

Language is a strong mechanistic tool for integration that can enhance flexibility in a collectivistic society where many languages are spoken. In connection to this, the principal of school LPVV in South Africa mentions that:

"I appreciate the freedom of choices in our constitution but I am concerned that not learning in one's home language is disadvantages to many learners leading to them not successfully achieving outcomes."

The language spoken in schools is an anthropological issue that reflects schools' custom of forming one unique culture that segments the particular schools from each other. A school's culture entails adopting one language as the medium of teaching, for example, English, Afrikaans, Nepali or Zulu, and this reflects the school's standard. In Nepal, English as a teaching medium is favored by most. However, not all learners are capable of grasping information that is not offered in their home language, and moreover, not all teachers are sufficiently competent to offer English-medium teaching to the learners. This aspect reflects a cultural phenomenon by enabling a variety of languages for explaining in both English and home language to be used and practiced as teaching and learning mediums that should benefit the learner's achievements. In regard to this, the climatic environment of the educational settings can attract multiple diverse groups to set the trend of crossing societal barriers by not implementing only one language. In connection to this, the vice principal of HVoToe in South Africa states that adopting multiple languages in schools will help learners, but one language would contribute to reflect the school culture, for which she mentions:

"Learners should be free to be taught in a language they are comfortable with but more Afrikaans language should be implemented in the schools."

A diverse society can bring challenges into schools, especially to teachers, who manage a class with more than 45 students of diverse cultural backgrounds, whereas one language could contribute to harmonious collective society. A collectivistic society is diverse and equally challenging. In the words of the vice principal of HVoToe in South Africa, a diverse society is challenging because of the students' social background, of which she says:

"The challenges of learners are their disadvantaged background and they are unable to see their capabilities and as a result become unemployed."

There are many factors that contribute to a good climate, and climate can have multiple dimensions. The language spoken in school as a common method of communication in teaching and learning is one dimension that reflects the cultural aspect, which further contributes to shape the school climate. Although culture and climate are interconnected and sometimes overlapped, they are not the same. Moreover, culture and climate are interchangeable and intertwined within anthropology and psychology to build one big aspect of educational social lives. These anthropological issues are physical beings, whereas the psychological issues are the relational approaches involving attitudes, perceptions, leadership, emotions, values, morals and so forth. Integrating these aspects of anthropology and psychology depends to a great extent upon one's perceptions, values, morals, and emotions as regards others. These are sometimes uncontrollable once they have become visible, but can be avoided before engraving the sensory receptors. Nevertheless, control of the psychological issues of anthropological problems could be maintained and resolved by the good practice of educational leadership (Rajbhandari 2016a).

The Leadership Approach Towards Nurturing School Culture and Climate

Educational leadership approaches towards management of the psychological issues arising from anthropological problems create a healthy environment, which in turn generates a

better climate. This can be enhanced by developing good relational approaches from leader to teacher, teacher to teachers, leader to students and teacher to students, taking into account their race, religion, gender, language, age and so forth, to build one culture and social harmony within the educational settings. However, "high on relations" behavioral approaches from educational leaders could be harmful, resulting in dysfunctional organizational behavior. In connection to this, teacher 2 of SBS School in Nepal states,

"Relationship amongst and between teachers and also with the school leader is very satisfied. Our head teacher is very polite and has a democratic approach especially in building good climate within the relational aspects. However, many teachers take advantage of his behavior and have the tendency of not being accountable with the responsible task. This has resulted in poor achievement of students' performances."

Social harmony creates a better climate. However, leadership approaches need to be carefully implemented, which calls for leadership readiness for flexibility and mobility, thus enabling the educational leaders to reshape their behavior according to their followers' actions and behaviors (Rajbhandari 2014). Leadership readiness helps in understanding followers' behavior, enabling leaders to reshape behavior and bring an enabling atmosphere to educational settings. This therefore can be a mechanism for leadership approaches to generate social harmony by creating a feasible climate for all. Rajbhandari (2013) mentions that social harmony has two basic aspects. Firstly, harmonizing between individuals or organizational groups, and secondly, leadership approaches. According to him, leadership approaches towards generating social atmosphere can be long lasting; not only creating social harmony within the organizational structure but also maintaining improved organizational welfare and offering wellness to people as a whole. Leadership approaches further reduce disparities in deprived and outcast individuals and level them within the organizational settings. Teacher 1 from LPVV in South Africa supports this statement by mentioning,

"I couldn't ask for a better principal. She plays an important role, as all staff has been well trained in education by her through workshop, as she is very informed on educational

matters and our educational settings. Since 1994, the very autocratic principals faded out and most principals have transformed to become a part of a team."

Echoing the view of teacher 1 of LPVV in South Africa, a few students supported a leadership approach towards creating a socially harmonious climate in schools by saying,

"I like my principal; she is very kind and caring and takes very good care of us." (Student 1 Grade 7 of LPVV in South Africa)

"I feel that our principal is the most funniest, kind and the most sweetest principal. She is very strict but kind at the same time. She is caring and she is the most respected person in school because she respects us." (Student 2 grade 7 of LPVV in South Africa)

"I feel grateful to have a principal like her although many disagree with that statement." (Student 3 grade 7 of LPVV in South Africa)

The trend of collectivistic cultural society is to enable an organizational climate to have a tightly knotted social framework, while the behavioral pattern of relations-oriented behavior also helps to build personal relations between the school actors. The personal relations of the educational leaders were also healthier, which impacted to influence social harmony while bringing a good organizational climate into schools.

With regard to leadership relations-oriented behavior, school leadership has become successful in bringing about social harmony in the school environment, which is important for the school's future growth. In connection to this, social harmony was obtained by trusting the employees and being noble to everyone at the school. Teacher 1 of SBS School in Nepal supports this view by stating,

"He is positive and contributes in any kind of school's program. His selfless persona created a comfortable environment for all of us in the school. Moreover, the chairperson is also very interested in student's achievement for which he is always seeking for the feedback from the head teacher in every SMC meeting we conduct in the school."

Moreover, a leadership behavioral pattern that is high on relations and low in tasks contributes a high degree of social harmony and a good school climate. However, accomplishment of tasks is important and cannot be ignored. School leadership needs to build relations but

also to be focused equally on the task. Leadership effectiveness needs to remain flexible and mobile both horizontally and vertically to propel the school into success through harmonizing the climate as well as students' achievements. Leadership effectiveness plays a vital role in the growth of the school, instigating the school leadership to be visionary to drive the school to the preferred destiny taking into consideration of both human resources and the developmental aspect with the support received from the board of school directors. The principal of SGM School in Nepal supports this by saying,

"I have never been interfered from the School Management Committee (SMC) with any agenda that is put before the chairperson. Chairperson should be powerful to recognize the right and wrong, chairperson is good at decision making, in fact handling teachers is quite a difficult job for the chairperson and for the head teacher; if chairperson is powerful and is determined with the decision made by the SMC than the head teacher can act according to their instruction. This means, SMC should be strong for bringing any kinds of development in the school."

A successful leader will show complex cognitive abilities. An ability to judge the right decision will enhance and integrate their professional career, which will demonstrate a high degree of contextual intelligence combining personal interest and a high degree of contextual experiences to assimilate immediate contextual variation for the development of the school (Rajbhandari 2013). The vice principal of SGM School in Nepal illustrates:

"We organize programs in our school and of course the SMC meeting is held once a month and we also organize additional meetings if needed, in this terms school actors come together to discuss. The chairperson of the SMC does not maintain any sort of personal relations with the school staff. He has his own professional business apart from school. Generally, all the school actors know him quite well and appreciate his contributions towards the school development."

Leadership readiness enables the school leader to understand the present and past, while giving vision to leap towards the future. This is possible with progressive participation in school affairs through interactive communication, which indicates social harmony. In connection to this,

teacher 1 of SGM School in Nepal elaborates on the need for good communication in developing student achievement and bringing about a good social climate in the school:

"We require extensive interaction with the school actors and the SMC for school development purpose. This is the way we can share our thought and feeling with everybody and the communication would flow and be productive. The chairperson may not even know the entire school actors working here but he keeps close contact with those who interact with him on a regular basis."

School culture is highly influenced by school leaders. Attempts to integrate human resources through a suitable channel of communication can develop to maintain one culture in educational settings. Culture and climate are intertwined, and leadership approaches in the educational setting can have more impact on forming strong cultural foundations. Therefore, cultural formation is strongly linked to leadership behavioral patterns by either showing high on task-orientation and low in relations or high on relations and low in task or low on both or even high on both. High on task and relations is leadership's attitudinal behavior. However, high on both and low on both could be related to leadership flexibility and mobility, reflecting leadership's behavioral commitment. Leadership's readiness to maintain equilibrium between behaviors enables leadership flexibility and mobility to fit into the contextual settings, thus creating its own environmental settings.

New cultural formations in educational settings led by experienced school leaders who have spent numerous years in the school are not common. However, new cultural formation is often found when a new appointee is made in the leadership position and may demonstrate leadership attitudinal behavior to introduce a new culture. The experienced leader may have the tendency to initiate behavioral commitment and always to seek for maintaining leadership equilibrium, whilst being flexible with the relations or task-oriented behavior (Rajbhandari 2013). However, culture may remain stagnant. The vice principal of LPVV in South Africa supports this observation in a comment on the principal:

"She is understanding, helpful, sympathetic, caring and giving time and energy to build up the school."

Similarly, other schools in South Africa have the same perception of their school principal.

Both these schools in South Africa are being led by experienced principals who focus on leadership behavioral commitments, either high on task and relations or low on task and relations. In connection to this, a few students from HVoToe School in South Africa mention,

"He is a good man who respects everyone in this school and who thinks of the learners as his assets and values. He is also highly respected and he makes decisions in the best interest of learners". (Student 1 grade 12 of HVoToe in South Africa)

"He is doing a good job learning wise and discipline. He knows right and wrong and expects the best from us because he provides the best he can". (Student 2 grade 12 of HVoToe in South Africa)

"He is a good principal and is very fair and does not look for reasons to pick on children and is very understanding". (Student 3 grade 12 of HVoToe in South Africa)

"I feel good because the school is under good care and in the right conditions". (Student 1 grade 10 of HVoToe in South Africa)

Leadership is complex, and so is context. The complexity of context diverts leadership approaches into many activities. Moreover, these distractions cause leadership to focus more on issues that are externally generated. This further creates a gap between leadership and small segmented variations in the present contextual settings. Rajbhandari (2013) states that the leadership model known as the "Referee Leadership Style" entails understanding small contextual variations, reasoning the problem, and taking necessary actions, while tolerance of change and outcomes could help the leadership become effective as well as creating a consistency in school climate and culture. In connection to this, a teacher 3 of SBS in Nepal explains,

"In recent days, the essential role of the principal has become to resolve the problems caused by the external factors, such as students union and others. Solving these problems has become a top priority and it consumes a lot of time, so the principal is unable to concentrate on the academic side within the school."

Although a school may represent one culture, a different climate may divide the individuals and groups within the school. For example, climate could be formed between gender, race, religions, languages or leadership approaches. The climate could be amongst the teachers, non-

teaching staff, and the students of same grades or amongst the same level of professionals in a community. However, culture and climate could both be impacted by external forces, such as changes in educational law and regulations, social calamities, such as, the *xenophobic* demonstrations in South Africa in April and May 2015, *Fees Must Fall* demonstration in 2016 and natural calamities, such as, those recently encountered in Nepal when it was hit by multiple earthquakes, the highest recorded as 7.8 Richter, with devastating consequences for educational sectors over the nation. These natural calamities compelled the whole educational sector to shut down activities until the infrastructural conditions were inspected and rehabilitated to a point where they were ready to accommodate students. These external forces are rare, but they can have a major impact on educational settings, furthermore impacting the culture, climate and leadership approach, despite strong, effective and successful leadership that may have been demonstrated in the past.

DISCUSSION

Context is formed by school culture and social aspect. However, contextual variations can occur as a result of external forces. These external forces are strong and may initiate change in culture and climate within the school environment. Moreover, culture and climate are most affected by the imposition of new educational acts and regulations, meaning that contextual variations are more likely to be imposed on educational settings. These variations in educational contextual settings will spur educational leaders to become proactive in changing their be-

havioral approaches by understanding the immediate contextual variables. This entails educational leaders employing the “Referee Leadership Style” (Rajbhandari 2013) to apply reason to the variables and to take the necessary course of action, having tolerance of the expected desired outcomes of change. The findings suggest that a good leadership approach can create a good climate, which by harmonizing the social contextual settings (Fullan 2014) is acceptable to all community professionals and students.

The results suggest that school leadership that is high on relational approaches generates social harmony amongst school actors more than leadership that is high on tasks. The relational leadership approach generates a democratic style, which creates collaboration on all levels (Botha 2016). Though culture and climate are intertwined and inseparable (Spicer 2016), being two different phenomena, culture can be altered by a change in leadership approach. School climate is stronger, however, and may be slow to change, since it is indirectly controlled by the microclimate of student groups. Leadership has a low impact on microclimate, because culture is reflected as one unique social activity. However, climate is segmented into small variables, which contribute to the unique school culture. A microclimate is often found amongst individuals and groups speaking the same language, students and teachers belonging to the same religious groups, students of same age group and grades, or teachers teaching similar subjects and teaching the same grade. Although a variety of climates may exist in one educational setting, leadership approach may impose one culture that encompasses the whole student and professional arena (See Fig. 1.)

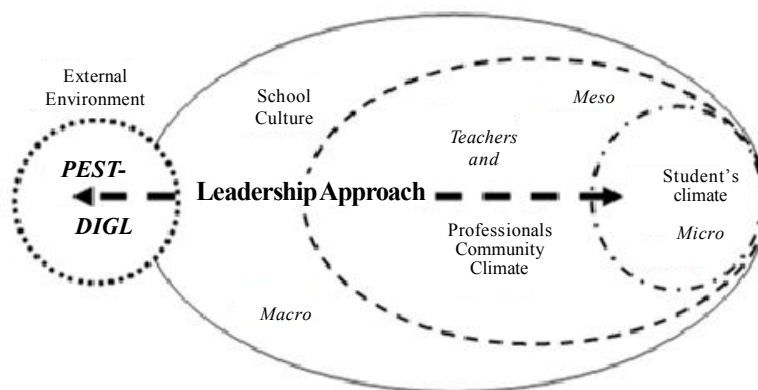


Fig. 1. Leadership approach and climate formation by groups within the school cultural foundation
Source: Author

In educational settings, a single culture may define the uniqueness of the school. However, having one culture as a prime guideline for shaping the climate is not necessary, which is illustrated in Figure 1. There might be multiple climates at various levels between the group of school actors, including the students' group, illustrated in Figure 1 as macro level, meso level and micro level. Moreover, the existence of multiple climates in one culture does not directly lead to good climate. The results suggest that amongst the groups of climate, not all were good and progressive. The findings also suggest that it is not necessarily the case that if climate between few individuals and their groups is dysfunctional then that represents the entire school climate. Moreover, climate between teachers and students or between students and students is predominantly good.

The findings suggest that, within one culture, clashes in a single climate group may stimulate disruption of the the entire climate. Moreover, a good climate between the teachers and the professional community may not always represent the climate of the entire school's cultural foundations. Variations within contextual settings are complex, and moreover, the reach of leadership approaches is accessible to only a few clusters of microclimate within the school settings, a few individual students, but not the entire student body of the educational settings. This disrupts leadership approaches to enhance and enrich the school climate as a whole institute. However, school leadership completely reaches amongst the professional community and also outside the school organization to meet with educational law and regulations imposed by the National Education Department, as illustrated in Figure 1.

It is necessary for leadership competences to become successful and effective. The results of the study suggest that remaining successful requires relational behavioral approaches (Thornton et al. 2015). However, for effectiveness, task and attitudinal leadership behaviors are essential. Implementing both these behaviors requires leadership readiness for flexibility and mobility to adapt to both the external and internal environment, which may be difficult for a leader to undertake at the same time. However, both these contexts play an important role in

cultural foundations and climate formations. Educational leaders are more inclined and dedicated towards external affairs and attempt to bring the changes into the internal environment (Rajbhandari 2016a). This generates variations, which disrupt the culture and climate in educational settings. However, bringing about change consistently supports the school culture and climate.

The results suggest that the changes brought in from the external environment for implementation in the internal environment firstly appear to impact the professional communities, especially the teaching community. This may sometimes disrupt the climate amongst the teaching community. Teachers are the school drivers and any changes made in educational law and regulations concerning the school or even students can transform the way responsibility is placed for teachers' initiations. The climate of the professional community is influenced by leadership's behavioral approaches. However, the climate of student individuals or groups is highly influenced by the teacher's role and approaches.

CONCLUSION

Although culture and climate are intertwined, both are independent. Cultural foundations reflect the school's internal environment, while climate can be stronger and rigid, resistant to change unless school leaders and professional communities have amicable agreements that are mutually beneficial. Bringing about social harmony between individuals and groups is essential for school leaders. Consequently, this brings social harmony amongst the professional community, especially the teachers who are devoted to the students' wellbeing. Though an educational setting reflects one culture, a school may have many clusters of microclimates created by individuals and groups of the professional community and students. These clusters of microclimate in organizations can impact school culture. Moreover, the stronger clusters of microclimate formation come from students, although they are seen to be one of the followers of the school culture. Therefore, leadership approaches towards the wellbeing of both students and professional communities are highly important if leadership effectiveness is to be maintained.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In educational settings, more specifically in schools, leadership roles and approaches can vary according to the student groups and the community of professionals. These clusters of groups create their own environment, which later becomes an owned climate. Therefore, each cluster of microclimates represents its own environment of bonding, building and banking. This, for example, can be a cluster of genders, race, religions, and so forth. In collectivistic society, despite the tightly knotted environment, clusters of climate are desired and expected. However, in developing countries disparities are a prime factor of segmentations. This study therefore recommends that school leaders' actions towards different clusters of microclimates need to enable leadership maintenance. Moreover, school leaders must be observant in determining the school environment. The cultural foundation is easy for the school leaders to determine, but formation of climate may be difficult because of hidden and unseen groups, which needs additional attention. In the educational setting, this can generate anthropological problems within the climate of the cluster of groups. Enriching single culture and climate can be possible by implying the multi-flex leadership behavioral style. The multi-flex behavior style of school leadership is necessary for understanding the school's environment and identifying necessary means in resolving the psychological issue of anthropological problems. The multi-flex leadership behavioral style can be enabled by implying leadership readiness and leadership maintenance to understand the environmental multi-variables, thus enriching the microclimates within the educational contextual settings.

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