

School Creative Climate: Factors Influence Fostering Creativity School

Gajathiswari Vejian¹, Nurzatulshima Kamarudin^{2*}, Suhaida Abdul Kadir³

^{1,2,3} Department of Science and Technical Education, Faculty of Educational Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400, UPM, Serdang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

ABSTRACT

Through education, creativity can be nurtured and further enhanced. Creativity is seen as an influential and important factor in school to further develop the creativity especially in the school's management as well as in the classroom teaching and learning process. As an important social factor, school creative climate can influence the teachers' motivation, attitudes, behaviours and beliefs towards their daily work routine. Therefore, this conceptual paper is focusing on the discussion about the concept of school climate and school creative climate. In relation, the organizational climate theory relevant to creativity is also included in the discussion. Through the literature reviews, the applications of school creative climate in fostering creativity are also highlighted into discussion.

Keywords: Creativity, learning environment, school climate, thinking skills

INTRODUCTION

One of the focus in the major effort of transforming the Malaysian education into highly-successful system is to prepare the nation to perform at an international level as clearly stated in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (MOE, 2013). The latest Malaysia Education Blueprint had applied the National Education Philosophy to express the nation's focus in developing a well-balanced education system as a fundamental aspiration of students. The formulated aspiration for every students are including knowledge, thinking skills, leadership skills, bilingual proficiency, ethics and spirituality and national identity (MOE, 2013).

Each student is hoped to possess a high passion to know and learn how to get a lifetime of knowledge as well as having the capability to link and build various new knowledge. Therefore, it is a must for them to master variety of cognitive skills such as critical, creative and innovative thinking, problem-solving and reasoning skills as well as the high learning ability (MOE, 2013). Dorn, Kanikeberg and Burke (2012) stated that in 21st century, creativity is very important for the future as creativity can help and lead someone to think and work creatively with others and very essential for the implementation of innovations.

According to Rhodes (1961), a creative individual has a strong relationship between human being and other environmental factors. The environmental factors involved here as stated by Riga and Chronopoulou (2012) are the creative situation, social environment, physical environment, field, culture, family and organizations. In relation to the schools climate and organization, creative environment could possibly offer the conducive situation for creative thinking to be nurtured further developed. As stated by Omenyi, Agu and Odimegwu (2009), in fostering creativity, schools have the major role in creating a challenging and supportive climate for both teachers and students. Therefore, a school programme for the creativity development should be emphasised more on the creativity supportive school climate (Omenyi et al., 2009).

* Corresponding author: nzshima@upm.edu.my
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Role of School Climate in Developing Students' Academic

Rahil and Habibah (2002) had defined environment as the stimulus that effects the individual development. Another point of view by Coon (2000), environment is defined as "*The sum of all external conditions affecting development, especially the effects of learning*". The dimensions of physical, social or psychological are all involved as context in school environment and these influences the students' behavior as well as their skills formation (Coon, 2000). While, climate is defined by Ekvall (1996) as the observed and recurring patterns of behaviours, attitudes and feelings which influence the characterization of life in an organization.

According to Hoy, Smith and Sweetland (2003), school climate is a complex and multidimensional construct that used to explain the characteristic and qualities of interactions between teachers and students at school. Another view on school climate is referred as the character and quality of school life that reflects goals, leadership practices, norms, interpersonal relationship, values, teaching, learning and organizational structures (NSCC, 2007). Adeyemi (2008) had explained that school climate as a set of unique characteristics of a school where teaching and learning situation in schools seem to be a functional atmosphere which can affect mood, motivation, creativity and productivity of both teachers and students either positively or negatively.

Another literature findings from Garbarino and Clarke (2009), they had explained that school climate is a social system that established the environments of learning. These situation occurs due to the students who came from different background and experience to be grouped together and their behaviour had to follow and depends on the rules and regulations of the school which being monitored by the teachers. Through the introduction of self-concept, the effectiveness of working capacity and the ability to build good relationships with others, particularly school climate had influenced the students' development. Therefore, school climate had an influential role on the students' personality, academic success and the school organization efficiency.

There are three dimensions of school climate as according to Loukas (2007); physical, academic and social dimension. The physical dimension including the size of the school, students-to-teachers ratio in the classroom, resource availability, the school building and classrooms appearance, organization and order of classrooms and lastly the school's safety and comfort. The social dimension of school climate refers to the employee's social organisational context in terms of teamwork, job design, leadership styles and reward system (Loukas, 2007). The social organisational context can be further described based on three levels. The first level is the entire organisation that includes organisation's culture and human resource management policies. The second level is team level includes group composition and the third level is job level that includes autonomy and supervisory support, complex and demanding jobs (Dul & Ceylan, 2011).

From the review of the literature, studies on school climate mostly found that creative climate could establish a motivating learning environment which could help teachers to perform well and help the students to have a better achievement. School climate reflects the atmosphere of the whole school that provides a conducive environment which support an effective teaching and learning activities to occur.

School Creative Climate

According to Karwowski (2011), creative climate can be comprehend as shared beliefs and opinions of the people in an organization. While Yi et al., (2008) stated that creative climate indicated peoples' perceptions and beliefs about the working environmental characteristics which shape the peoples' expectations about creative interactions and outcomes.

As for the school climate, it refers to the quality, attribute and patterns of the school life experiences which reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning and leadership practices, and organizational structures (Pickeral, Evan, Hunghes, & Hutchison, 2009). Willower and Carr (1965) had explained that school is basically an organization characterized by individuals and standard behaviour in the system within the organization. Creative climate will stimulate the people in the organization to produce new ideas, encourage for a creative idea's implementation and also will helps in growing the organization while increasing its efficiency as well (Ekvall, Waldenstrom-Lindblad, & Arvonen, 1983).

Commonly teachers spend a lot of time in the school by having many intercommunication with other colleagues, administrators, students and other school workers. Teachers' mental condition and behaviors are normally affected by the organizational climate and then will influence the students' creativity development (Yi et al., 2008). As stated by Mohsin & Yunos (2008) creative school climate comprises with the following aspects:

- a) learning is seen as an enjoyable activities to students
- b) students feel loved, valued and respected,
- c) students are taking part actively in the classroom,
- d) students are proud and feel owned of the school
- e) the teacher is as advisers, trainers and source of knowledge,
- f) students feel free to discuss their problems openly,
- g) learning strategies that promote cooperation applied and
- h) learning experience is suited to students' daily lives situation.

Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, and Herron (1996) explain that creative climate of an organization can influence the job creativity carried out in organizations. Creative organizational climate also inspire the workers to produce new ideas and support the growth of the organization as well as helps in boosting the organizational effectiveness. At the same time it will facilitate an effective implementation of creative newly generated ideas (Ekvall, 1996).

Amabile et al., (1996) also outlined few categories of influences of the creative organization climate: (a) organizational encouragement of creativity that present in the organizations, encouragements given by the supervisor and work group supports, (b) relatively high autonomy and freedom of controlling are given to workers over their own ideas and work, (c) resources that support workers to complete their work and reach to the understanding about the underlying value, (d) work pressures that contribute to a good influence as it was recognised from the intellectual site of the challenging nature of the problems and (e) organizational disadvantages such as internal conflict, inflexible management, organizational structures that lower the creativity.

Theory of School Creative Climate

According to Karwowski (2009), there are three elements in creative climate; (a) interpersonal, (b) task and (c) energetic level. Interpersonal elements outline the relation among the people at school and is represent by the overall warmth and passion among the people in the school. The task element is noted as feasible influence of the people at school on the preferred view in task understanding. The last element of energetic level is defined by the system flexibility; rigid versus dynamic character. All the three elements are highly correlated in constructing creativity where a higher interpersonal level is followed by higher level of task and sustained by good attitude.

Number of scholars had assumed that the relationship between the social organisational work climate and creativity is mediated by motivation. Amabile et al., (1996) had proven a positive correlation between creativity and intrinsic motivation. According to them, creative organisational climate raised the worker's creativity and they fell motivated to express the creative behaviour. Amabile et al., model of climate for creativity is further explained on the intrinsic motivation basis. There are few elements suggested in this model which is related to intrinsic motivation; organizational encouragement, supervisory encouragement, work group support, sufficient resources, challenging work, freedom, organizational impediments and workload pressure.

According to Ekvall (1996), climate for creativity is established on the basis of the psychological processes which includes eight dimensions. A supportive climate to creativity is indicated with challenge, freedom, idea support, debates, risk-taking, trust and openness, idea time and playfulness and humour. The definitions of the dimensions are as follow:

- a) Challenge – Challenge is the emotional crisis that members have in its daily operational routine and long-term goals of the organization.
- b) Freedom – Freedom is describe as the independence in behaviour exerted by people in the organization.
- c) Idea support – The supportive and proactive manner in which new ideas are treated.
- d) Trust and Openness – The emotional safety of professional relationships.
- e) Playfulness and Humour – The spontaneity and ease that is displayed
- f) Debates – The occurrence of encounters and clashes between viewpoints, ideas and differing experiences and knowledge.
- g) Risk Taking – The tolerance of uncertainty and ambiguity exposed in the workplace.
- h) Idea Time – The amount of time people can use for explaining new idea.

According to Cheng, Shiu, and Chuang (2012), creativity is a creative thinking capability that comprises of behaviour, ideas and the final product. The final product produced was based on the experiences, curiosity, initial knowledge, adventure, imagination, personality traits and challenges. Sharma (2011), had described creativity as a process of mental and social which associated in bringing about new ideas or concept, or new collaboration between the creative mind and the existing ideas or concepts.

There are many influential factors in fostering creativity at school such as teacher-student interactions, creative leadership, work autonomy, school management and peer-to-peer teacher encouragement (Rubenstein, Mccoach, Siegle, & Rubenstein, 2013). The school organizational climate contribute some exceptional ideas for the creativity and innovation stimulation at school level. There are: trust and supportive surroundings for fostering new ideas and changes; the readiness to challenge the established set-up; authority-free environment and attitude (Tsai, 2012). An individual needs a conducive and supportive surroundings that promotes rewarding on creative ideas and they need to know on how to responds towards the upcoming challenging environment (Sternberg, 2006).

The supportive environment for creativity need to afford a combination of; challenge, freedom, resources, convinient work-group features, supervisory encouragement and organizational support for individuals creativity (Amabile, 1996). Based on research done by Yi (2008) on creativity and culture organizations, teachers were found to be creative through the research observation. Generally, the teachers' teaching was highly influenced by the administrator through the school leadership's empowerment efforts. These efforts giving support and motivate the teachers to employ a creative way of teaching as well as guiding them towards thier professional growth. Yi (2008) also reported that peer interactions among the teachers and other collogues have a positive influence on thier teaching creativity. Some of the positive influences are creative idea generation, professional growth, brainstorming result, the importance of partnership and teaching strategy.

Selamat, Samsu, and Kamalu (2013) had stated in their research findings, organizational climate is a major factor in determining the teachers' job performance and creativity. If there is an existence of unhealthy school organizational climate, teachers in secondary school were found to be incapable of completing their given task. Another study done by Omenyi, Agu and Odimegwu (2009), had found that students' creativity could increase as influenced from the school climate. Students were found to be more stimulated to be creative by given a wider oppurtunities for them to express themselves personally.

CONCLUSION

School creative climate is pertinently significant in supporting a creative teaching and learning process. To increase the teachers creativity is merely important for both teachers themselves and the school organization as well. Creative school climate would cultivate a creative work and behaviour among the school organization members. It could also enhance teachers and students working performance that lead towards achieving the schools' objectives. In raising up the creativity level among members in an organization, social dimensions of school climate is prior to be given an extensive attention and considerations. School is a very imporant basement for the creativity to be nurtured and futher develop with good stimulation and support from the conducive and good organizational climate.

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