

Revisiting School Culture In The Context Of Higher Education

Tang Chenlong

Abstract

The constant changes in educational institutions in response to pedagogical innovations necessarily advance the need to reassess and redefine the cultural fabric within academic settings. Thus, this study explored on school culture and its dimensions employing descriptive research that assessed on administrators', teachers', students', and alumni's assessment on collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, unity of purpose, collegial support, and learning partnerships. Results show that all dimensions are assessed as high with collegial support having the highest category mean, followed by unity of purpose and learning partnerships. Professional development, teacher collaboration, and collaborative leadership are also assessed as high, but with slightly lower mean scores. The findings generally imply a strong and positive school culture that promotes collaboration, professional growth, and a shared sense of purpose among all stakeholders. The high ratings in collegial support indicate that there is a strong sense of support and camaraderie among staff members, which can contribute to a positive working environment and improved student outcomes. The emphasis on unity of purpose and learning partnerships suggests that there is a shared vision and a focus on continuous learning and improvement within the school community. The slightly lower mean scores for professional development, teacher collaboration, and collaborative leadership implies that these dimensions remain important aspects of school culture, but they may need some improvement or further attention to optimize their contribution for a stronger school culture.

Keywords Collaborative leadership, learning partnerships, professional development, school culture, teacher collaboration,

INTRODUCTION

Culture is a dynamic idea that changes all the time depending on a variety of factors. All healthy cultures share many characteristics such as acknowledgment, communication, expression, equity, and accountability, even though some people may respect a more traditional culture and others may prefer something more contemporary and enjoyable (Wang, 2021).

A culture may be found ¹in any workplace, but it is particularly prevalent in educational institutions such as schools. Culture may be a far-reaching concept that might be difficult to construe but understanding this difficulty, however, may be useful when striving to learn more profoundly and in a new way about the nature of education in schools and the nature of daily life (Erickson, 1987; 2016). Developing self-directed learners through strengthening lifelong learning skills is the ultimate aim of education. Schools must change from being knowledge-transfer institutions to learning organizations in order to accomplish this goal.

In the dynamic landscape of higher education, the significance of school culture cannot be overstated. As educational institutions continue to evolve in response to societal changes, technological advancements, and pedagogical innovations, the need to reassess and redefine the cultural fabric within academic settings becomes increasingly imperative. This imperative of revisiting school culture becomes paramount in ensuring a conducive learning environment, promoting student success, and maximizing institutional potential. Thus, it prompts an exploration on the intricacies of school culture within the realm of higher education, with the aim of unraveling its multifaceted dimensions such as but not limited to collaborative

Faculty, Guangzhou Institute of Science and Technology Guangzhou City, Guannghou Province, China.

leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, unity of purpose, collegial support, and learning partnerships and discerning its profound impact on various facets of academic life.

The concept of school culture encompasses a complex interplay of values, beliefs, norms, traditions, and practices that shape the ethos of an educational institution. The significance of school culture in higher education is underscored by its impact on various facets of academic life, including student success and institutional potential. This culture, which serves as the glue of academic life, is crucial for interpreting and propelling the institution forward. It can be transformed through collaborative efforts, such as school-university partnerships, and is influenced by factors like leadership, values, and organizational dynamics. The influence of school context, ethos, and culture on teacher career-stage learning further highlights the importance of a conducive learning environment (Furner & McCulla, 2019; Tierney, 2008; Gün & Caglayan, 2013).

While numerous studies have investigated school culture in primary and secondary education, the dynamics at play in higher education settings demand a distinct examination. The transition from secondary to higher education marks a pivotal juncture in a student's academic journey, posing unique challenges and opportunities. Moreover, the diverse array of academic disciplines, institutional types, and student demographics in higher education introduces a rich tapestry of perspectives, requiring a comprehensive understanding of how school culture manifests in this context. Despite the complexity of the concept, the study of school culture in higher education offers multiple tools for understanding what happens inside schools (Petlák, 2019).

Aliazas & Elisa (2021) argue that a well-cultured learning institution, such as the school, can be stakeholders' primary support in light of the difficulties they experience because it can greatly help them with their demands and tasks, particularly in times of crisis. In such a situation, it is imperative that the school and all of its staff—from the head of school to the instructors and support staff—play a mediating role with the peaceful and inspiring environment that they each individually and collectively produce.

In essence, this exploration into the intricacies of school culture in the context of higher education serves as a timely and critical inquiry. By shedding light on the underlying factors that shape the academic experience through an exploration on cultural dimensions, this research endeavors to inform and inspire positive changes that can enhance the overall quality of higher education institutions, ultimately fostering an environment conducive to academic excellence, collaboration, and continuous improvement.

While there is limited research specific to school culture in the context of higher education, there are some potential challenges that may be present in view of observations. One challenge is the lack of active participation and involvement from all stakeholders, including students, teachers, administrators, and parents. Also, as the higher education institution is located in a culturally diverse community, it is important for school practices to be in harmony with the cultural context. In addition, there is limited understanding of inclusive reforms that consider the characteristics of the school's culture which are necessary for sustainability. Similarly, there is limited autonomy and external constraints that can impact school culture in the context of higher education. In all these challenges, there is a need to explore school culture underscoring on key dimensions that shape and promote a positive school culture toward an inclusive and sustainable academic environment in institutions of higher learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

School Culture Defined

Culture is all about the adults in the school building; culture and its correlation to academic excellence is about the relationship between the principal (and other administrators) and teachers. It is their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that create the normative glue (Clark, 2019). For Serpa (2016), an organization's culture can be defined as, "the way things are done around here" referring to "the pattern of beliefs, values, and learned ways of coping with experiences that have developed over the course of an organization's history, which tends to be manifested in its material arrangement and in the behaviors of its members". Whereas, Gruenert and Whitaker (2015) defined school culture as the "social indoctrination of unwritten rules that

people learn as they try to fit in a particular group". Culture provides a school its identity and image: its brand. School culture provides the school and its members with an identity. School culture defines what it means to be normal. The members learn the normal routines and rituals of the organization.

Ouly-Uhl (2020) shared that "the school culture dictates, in no uncertain terms, the way we do things around here". Culture is how the members of an organization act in situations and is influenced by their values and beliefs. A school's culture can become evident in how its teachers act during meetings and day-to-day proceedings. The culture can convey to its members what and who they ought to celebrate, ignore, or anticipate happening in the organization. This brings about the concept of organizational culture which centers on a school's values and beliefs and how they shape its members. The members refer to the school's staff and how they shape the organization. Sun (2008) stated, "a successful organization should have strong cultures that can attract, hold, and reward people for performing roles and achieving goals, whereas strong cultures are usually characterized by dedication and co-operation in the service of common values" (Caruso, 2017).

Odor (2018) noted that organizational culture has four main themes. The first main theme is culture is a learned entity and is characterized as, "the way we do things around here" or "the way we think about things around here". In this first theme, culture is used to show how its members behave and interact with one another. The second theme of culture is it is viewed as a belief system. An organization's beliefs guide its members' daily beliefs. The organization's beliefs develop into rules that guide everyday life. The third theme of culture is that it can be viewed as "mental programming." The final theme about culture is that it can be viewed as a strategy for developing change. In emphasis, school culture and its importance were not recognized until the 1930s. To gain more insight into an organization, one must examine the school's culture because it can offer more insight into the organization's beliefs. A school's climate can change from day to day, but a school's culture is developed over time (Ismail et al., 2022).

The culture of a school is represented in the school's written and unwritten mission and vision. Every school has both versions, and each version affects how the school and its members function. The purpose of a mission tells the staff and students why they are there and is reflected in their beliefs and behaviors. A school's vision is an idea of what it hopes to eventually become (Melesse & Molla, 2018). On a further note, while a school may have a culture, not all schools have a shared vision. The culture tells of the current state and the direction it is going. School leaders should have a clear vision in order for a change in culture to occur. A vision works best when a school can build upon past successes rather than past failures. By recognizing the current culture, the staff might be more receptive to a change in the current one (Mincu, 2022).

A significant factor related to assessing a school culture is examining a school's language. Every school has its own language and humor, distinguishing insiders from outsiders in the culture. Each group of teachers has its own set of language and acronyms used to communicate. The language used and the jokes laughed at let others know that they have been accepted by the group and also mean they have been accepted in the culture. Every school culture has its own set of routines, rituals, and ceremonies. The "routines are those things people do every day to ensure that the school is efficiently run, by contrast, the rituals are stylized public expressions of our values and beliefs". The norms of a school are the "unwritten rules that maintain coherence within a group, and they often trump the written rules". New members can fit into an existing group by learning its norms. Norms reflect what the school values. Schools looking to improve must recognize that "norms can make or break new initiatives, new employees, or new leaders" (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2017). Norms help its members know their role in the organization. The roles its members play in the organization keep its members from stepping out of their role. Cultures also have certain symbols such as words, gestures, pictures, or objects that are only recognized by its members. A culture has stories which they tell to transfer information from person to person. The stories are shared to support the culture's belief systems. After a period, the stories told might lose their truth. Leaders can share and create stories that could be used to "give life to a vision; others use them to share what has happened in the past and what they hope for in the future and are essentially the culture's handbook" (Lister, 2021).

Cultures have heroes who possess certain characteristics that the organization members value. Heroes are the subject of the stories that the organization members should look to for appropriate behaviors in the culture. Cultures also have villains who are those who will do anything that “does not align with the values and beliefs of the organization” (McKenna, 2018). In addition, cultures have values that the organization members believe in. Values are learned over time which lead to their systems of beliefs which are “learned responses to threats made on the institution that influence how people think”. An organization’s values are reflected in their behaviors. A change in behavior could contribute to a change in culture if it remains constant over a period (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018).

The above literature review explores the concept of organizational culture in the context of schools. It emphasizes the importance of culture in shaping the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of school staff and its impact on academic excellence. The review defines organizational culture as the pattern of beliefs, values, and learned ways of coping with experiences that have developed over time. It highlights that a successful organization should have strong cultures characterized by dedication and cooperation in the service of common values. Similarly, it discusses the themes of organizational culture, including its role as a learned entity, belief system, mental programming, and strategy for change. It emphasizes that school culture is developed over time and provides the school and its members with an identity and norms. The review further explores the role of mission and vision statements in shaping school culture and the importance of a shared vision for driving cultural change. It also discusses the role of language, rituals, ceremonies, norms, symbols, stories, heroes, villains, and values in shaping and maintaining school culture. In sum, the above literature review highlights the significance of organizational culture in schools and its influence on the beliefs and behaviors of stakeholders.

School Culture Dimensions

Collaborative Leadership

As a facet of school culture, collaborative leadership has been repeatedly emphasized in the research literature for its significance and advantages. Assisting in the attainment of shared objectives and cultivating an environment that embraces innovation and ongoing enhancement is the essence of collaborative leadership (Permata et al., 2022). This leadership style is characterized by an emphasis on trust-building, power-sharing, and personnel development. The efficacy of institutions, instructors, students, and employees has been observed to benefit from collaborative leadership. (Mora-Ruano et al., 2019). A multitude of studies have demonstrated a direct correlation between collaborative leadership in educational institutions and enhanced academic performance and well-being of students. The importance of fostering a culture of collaboration in educational institutions was acknowledged in one study. Successfully implementing change in pursuit of the institution's objectives while mitigating potential conflicts are attributes of principals who establish a collaborative culture (Yokota, 2021).

Additionally, empirical studies have demonstrated that collaborative leadership improves not only the overall academic achievement of an institution but also the confidence and competence of its faculty and staff. Employees and faculty are motivated and empowered to make significant contributions to the school community when they are encouraged to demonstrate leadership through their areas of expertise and when collaborative work environments are fostered (Choi, 2023). In line with this, research has demonstrated that collaborative leadership increases teacher self-efficacy and school achievement. A substantial correlation was also identified between collaborative leadership and teachers' self-efficacy by Arbabi and Mehdinezhad (2016), who discovered a direct relationship between transformational leadership and collective teacher efficacy. Additional research by Lu (2015) demonstrated that fostering a culture of learning and establishing collaborative structures can effectively augment the empowerment of educators. The importance of instructional leadership in fostering teacher collaboration and collective efficacy, which ultimately benefits student learning, was emphasized by Goddard et al. (2015) in their citation in Torres (2019). The

significance of collaborative leadership in cultivating a positive school climate and empowering educators is emphasized by the collective findings of these studies.

A collaborative teaching culture also appears to have a positive effect on academic achievement, according to additional research. The academic achievement and learning of students are enhanced when instructors engage in collaborative dialogue regarding these matters and implement measures to further improve student learning and performance (Thuy, 2018). Furthermore, empirical evidence supports the notion that teacher collaboration is a critical element in enhancing academic performance. (García-Martínez et al., 2021) Several variables, including leadership, interpersonal dynamics, and time and space constraints, impact this collaborative effort, which entails deliberating on teaching and learning and implementing measures to improve student learning. Establishing a climate of trust and a shared vision for the school are additional imperative tasks that school leaders must diligently pursue (Wullschleger et al. 2023). Although teacher collaboration has the potential to yield positive results, attaining the intended results can present a formidable obstacle (Weddle, 2020).

Additionally, an inclusive and democratic school environment is fostered through collaborative leadership. By granting all stakeholders a voice and recognizing their contributions, it fosters a sense of collective accountability and decision-making. According to Piotrowsky (2016), educational institutions that cultivate an inclusive atmosphere and place a democratic emphasis on student learning are more inclined to have collaborative school cultures.

Teacher Collaboration

Literature highlights the following findings on teacher collaboration as a dimension of school culture. Scholzberger and Schiepe-Tiska (2022) classify the impacts of teacher collaboration into three distinct tiers: organizational, student, and teacher. The effects of teacher collaboration on students appear to be diverse, according to research. Academic achievement and enhanced attendance are two student outcomes that have been linked in a number of studies to instructor collaboration. For example, research conducted by Wanjiru et al. (2022) revealed that student suspension rates were diminished through teacher collaboration. Conversely, counterarguments against teacher collaboration and student outcomes have been documented in a number of studies. As illustrated, heightened collaboration may result in inconsistent curriculum implementation and instruction, which may have a detrimental impact on student learning, according to some research. Although student outcomes may differ depending on the teacher collaborates, the advantages for both the teachers and the organization at large remain constant. (Mieliwocki & Fatheree, 2019) Teacher collaboration can increase the confidence and capacity for innovation of faculty members.

Moreover, empirical evidence suggests that teacher collaboration yields favorable outcomes for educators and learners alike, potentially fostering faculty self-assurance and facilitating innovative thinking (Weddle, 2020).

Nevertheless, there exists a range of opinions regarding the efficacy of collaboration, as certain research articles (2021) imply that not all collaborations result in favorable consequences. Lesson planning and classroom visits are examples of collaborative activities that have been shown to be especially beneficial in terms of both frequency and nature (Reeves et al., 2017). Although there are some discrepancies in this regard, the majority of educators consider collaboration to be advantageous, specifically in terms of enhancing their pedagogical skills and student management (Vasconcelos, 2021). Teachers are able to test new ideas and offer more assistance to incoming teachers because of the access to a vast array of teaching methods and materials that this collaborative culture ensures. In general, the research outcomes relate to both positive and negative effects of teacher collaboration as a facet of school culture (Holzberger & Schiepe-Tiska, 2022).

Professional Development

One key finding is that professional development enhances the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of teachers, which in turn improves teaching practices and student outcomes (Abella, 2018). Several studies have shown that simply exposing teachers to new concepts or practices through professional development has little to no impact. Instead, effective professional development

is characterized by structured learning that leads to changes in teacher practices and improvements in student learning outcomes (Abellán, 2023).

Another important aspect of effective professional development is the inclusion of active learning strategies. Active learning strategies engage teachers in hands-on experiences, allowing them to apply new knowledge and skills in their own classrooms. This active involvement promotes a deeper understanding and integration of the material, leading to more meaningful and sustained changes in teaching practices (Sims & Fletcher-Wood, 2021). Collaboration among teachers is another vital component of effective professional development. Research has shown that when teachers have opportunities to collaborate and learn from one another, they are more likely to develop a growth mindset and be open to trying new strategies and approaches in their classrooms. Furthermore, collaboration encourages the sharing of ideas, resources, and best practices, leading to a more collective and collaborative culture within the school (Stewart, 2023). In addition, effective professional development should also include coaching support. Coaching support provides individualized guidance and feedback to teachers, helping them reflect on their teaching practices and make targeted improvements. Furthermore, coaching support allows for personalized and ongoing professional development, which is essential for sustaining changes in teaching practices over time (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Research indicates that professional development programs should be structured, incorporate active learning strategies, support collaboration among teachers, and include coaching support in order to be effective in improving teacher knowledge, attitudes, and skills, as well as student outcomes (Maier & Niebuhr, 2021). Furthermore, the duration of professional development programs is also an important consideration. Research suggests that professional development should be sustained in duration, allowing for ongoing learning and support (Canaran & Mirici, 2019).

Unity of Purpose

Unity of purpose is a crucial dimension of culture research, as it plays a significant role in shaping organizational behavior and performance. Organizational culture, as a multidimensional construct, includes the shared beliefs, values, norms, and practices that guide the behavior of individuals within an organization. When there is unity of purpose within an organization, it means that all members are aligned and working towards a common goal. This shared sense of purpose fosters a strong sense of identity and commitment among members, encouraging them to prioritize the organization's objectives over personal gain. It is this commitment to the organization's purpose that brings persistence and stability to the system, promoting consistency and coherence in organizational behavior (Warrick, 2017).

Furthermore, the unity of purpose within an organization acts as a factor of control. It helps to regulate and guide the behavior of individuals, ensuring that their actions are in line with the organization's goals and values. Research findings have shown that unity of purpose within an organization has several positive effects. Firstly, unity of purpose promotes effective change management. Teachers can effectively act as change agents or managers of change when there is a positive culture, characterized by shared vision and unity of purpose. This cohesion allows for smoother implementation of new initiatives and strategies, as individuals are more likely to embrace and support the changes when they are aligned with the organization's purpose (Jonyo et al., 2018).

Moreover, unity of purpose also enhances employee engagement. When individuals feel a strong sense of purpose and are aligned with the company's mission and operational goals, they become more proactive and passionate in their work. This increased engagement translates into higher levels of job satisfaction, commitment, and overall performance (Bradley, 2018). In addition, research has consistently shown that a strong sense of purpose and alignment with company goals can significantly impact job satisfaction, commitment, and performance. This is particularly evident in the positive relationship between employee engagement and job satisfaction, the link between job enrichment and employee commitment, and the association of work engagement with employee performance (Vorina, 2017; Cesário, 2017). These findings underscore the importance of creating a work environment that fosters passion and proactive behavior, ultimately leading to improved organizational outcomes.

Collegial Support

Collegial support pertains to the cooperative endeavors and supportive relationships that exist among peers in an educational environment. An increasing body of educational research has focused on this aspect of school culture due to its association with numerous positive outcomes, including increased teacher learning, innovation, and student achievement. It is disclosed that in order to facilitate a successful school restructuring process, it is critical to have a strong collegial relationship, be trustworthy, have a supportive nature, and maintain an inquiry-based approach (Yuet, 2017). Also, a multitude of advantages associated with teacher collegiality have been documented, providing further support for the notion that schools require a more robust collegial culture (Widhy et al., 2022). In addition to student achievement, conduct, and attitude, these advantages encompass enhancements in teacher professionalism and professional development, school quality, and organizational efficiency (Mapfumo & Chitsiko, 2018). The establishment of a collegial environment in educational institutions has been repeatedly underscored in scholarly works due to its positive influence on student outcomes and significant progress. The establishment of a collegial environment in educational institutions has been consistently underscored in scholarly works due to its positive impact on student outcomes and significant progress (Mohan et al., 2017).

Consistently, research confirms the positive effects of collegiality in institutions. An essential element of collegial support is the educators' dedication to their profession. The significance of lecturer professional commitment in shaping and determining the accomplishment of organizational and professional objectives has been recognized (Yusnita et al., 2020). Educators who are devoted to their vocation exhibit a profound sense of devotion towards the academic development and progress of their pupils, in addition to the institution's holistic enhancement. They participate actively in collaborative endeavors alongside their peers, exchange optimal methodologies, and offer assistance and direction to one another. Such a degree of dedication cultivates a constructive and unified academic environment, wherein instructors collaborate harmoniously to accomplish shared objectives and perpetually enhance their pedagogy. They participate in action research projects, attend seminars and conferences, and engage in reflective practices, among other professional development activities. By engaging in these collaborative endeavors, educators enhance their individual competencies and understanding, ultimately leading to improved academic achievements for students (Schleifer et al., 2017). Trust and support, alongside professional dedication, are fundamental components of collegial support. A climate of collaboration and mutual respect is fostered among educators who have faith in and provide assistance to one another. They engage in proactive sharing of resources, ideas, and feedback, devoid of apprehension regarding criticism or rivalry. This fosters a collegial environment in which educators are able to depend on each other for assistance, direction, and collaborative decision-making (Hauge, 2019).

Learning Partnerships

Research findings on learning partnerships as a dimension of school culture reveal several key insights. These insights demonstrate the positive impact of learning partnerships on student success in academic, social, behavioral, and emotional spheres (Moraru & Voicu, 2019). One important finding is the substantial benefits of collaboration between schools and the various stakeholders involved in education. This includes school networks and partnerships among local schools, academic advisors from universities, involvement from the private sector for funding and knowledge sharing, and the support of families and the community (Gross et al., 2015). Collaboration within these partnerships has been shown to enhance educational quality development, improve student achievement, and facilitate ongoing professional and instructional development for teachers (Mora-Ruano et al., 2019). Collaborative work creates a trusting school climate, fosters a sense of collegiality, and promotes commitment among teachers. When teachers engage in collaborative partnerships, they have the opportunity to share their knowledge and expertise, exchange ideas, and learn from one another. This leads to increased innovation, improved instructional practices, and ultimately, better student outcomes (Kelly & Cherkowski, 2015).

Moreover, research suggests that a collaborative teaching culture positively impacts school achievement (Thuy, 2018). Teachers who engage in collaborative partnerships are more

likely to communicate effectively about teaching and learning, leading to actions that improve student learning and achievement. Similarly, learning partnerships provide a supportive environment for students to engage in collaborative learning. They promote a constructivist learning approach and encourage students to work together towards mastering goals (Hayden et al, 2021). When schools foster a collaborative culture that supports teaching and learning, not only do students benefit from improved academic outcomes, but the school as a whole also experiences an increase in faculty members' confidence, innovation expansion, and improved methods and materials availability (Pulimeno et al., 2020).

Furthermore, García-Martínez (2021) opined that learning partnerships through a collaborative school culture, characterized by respect, inclusivity, and trust, is crucial for student success and faculty confidence. This culture can be fostered through comprehensive school reform, high-quality professional development, and effective leadership. However, challenges such as teacher reluctance and lack of engagement need to be addressed. Despite these challenges, collaboration can build teacher trust and expertise, enabling schools to implement changes in instruction with greater ease and comfort (Sutton & Shouse, 2016).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed descriptive research as it described school culture through an investigation on its dimensions along collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, unity of purpose, collegial support, and learning partnerships. The participants in this study include school administrators, faculty members, students, and alumni randomly selected through Slovin's formula. Moreover, the study used the questionnaire method in gathering information from the participants. For the instrumentation, the study adopted Miller's 35-item survey instrument (2018) used in his study *School Culture Survey Constructs and Student Achievement Relationships in Title I K-8 Schools*. The survey items are distributed for each dimension of school culture namely collaborative leadership (11 items), teacher collaboration (6 items), professional development (5 items), unity of purpose (5 items), collegial support (4 items), and learning partnerships (4 items). Finally, a 4-point Likert scale ranging from Very High (4) to Low (1) was used to interpret the mean for the description of the school culture.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 displays the participants' assessment on school culture in terms of collaborative leadership. The category mean of 3.04 indicates that administrators, faculty, students, and alumni assess the school culture in terms of collaborative leadership as high. The results imply that the school has a positive environment where leaders value teachers' ideas and trust their professional judgments. Teachers are involved in the decision-making process and are encouraged to share ideas. Leaders also facilitate collaboration among teachers and keep them informed on current issues in the school. Additionally, the school supports risk-taking and innovation in teaching, rewards teachers for trying out new ideas, and protects their teaching and planning time. Moreover, the finding generally suggests that the school has a strong and supportive leadership that values and empowers its teachers. This positive environment fosters collaboration, innovation, and professional growth among the teachers. It further suggests that the school's approach to decision-making, communication, and recognition of teachers' efforts is effective in creating a positive and productive teaching and learning environment.

The findings are consistent with studies underscoring the pivotal role of leadership in creating a positive and productive teaching environment. Aris (2021) emphasized the importance of teacher leadership in improving school administration and student performance. Also, Morris et al (2019) stressed the need for a supportive and transparent school culture, specifically noting the impact of leadership style on staff morale and wellbeing. In addition, Harris (2022) advocates for a shared or distributed model of leadership, emphasizing the importance of building positive relationships and empowering others to lead.

Table 1. Participants' Assessment on School Culture in terms of Collaborative Leadership.

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
------------	------	----------------

1. Leaders value teachers' ideas.	3.01	High
2. Leaders in this school trust the professional judgments of teachers.	3.04	High
3. Leaders in this school trust the professional judgments of teachers.	3.04	High
4. Teachers are involved in the decision-making process.	3.04	High
5. Leaders in our school facilitate teachers working together.	3.09	High
6. Teachers are kept informed on current issues in the school.	3.03	High
7. Policies or decisions I participate in are taken seriously.	2.98	High
8. Teachers are rewarded for trying out new ideas and techniques.	3.08	High
9. Leaders support risk-taking and innovation in teaching.	3.02	High
10. Managers protect teaching and planning time.	3.06	High
11. Teachers are encouraged to share ideas.	3.06	High
Category Mean	3.04	High

Table 2 exhibits the participants' assessment on school culture in terms of teacher collaboration. The category mean of 3.06 indicates that participants assess the school culture in terms of teacher collaboration as high. The findings imply that the participants, including administrators, faculty, students, and alumni, perceive a positive school culture in terms of teacher collaboration. This is supported by the participants' assessment of various factors such as opportunities for dialogue and planning, time spent planning together, observing each other's teaching, knowledge of what other teachers is teaching, development and evaluation of plans and projects together, and the ability to openly express and discuss disagreements in teaching practice. Furthermore, the finding generally implies a strong culture of teacher collaboration within the school which highlights the importance of fostering a collaborative environment in schools, as it can lead to improved teaching practices, shared knowledge, and open discussions about teaching methods.

In view of the above finding, García-Martínez (2021) Postholm (2016) and Weddle et al (2020) all profess that a strong culture of teacher collaboration in schools is crucial for improved teaching practices, shared knowledge, and open discussions about teaching methods. This collaboration is influenced by factors such as leadership, interpersonal dynamics, and time and space availability. Planning and collaboration are also closely linked, with collaborative practices being important for teacher development and school improvement. Moreover, successful collaboration is underpinned by personal qualities, mutual trust, and respect for knowledge.

Table 2. Participants' Assessment on School Culture in terms of Teacher Collaboration.

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. Teachers have opportunities for dialogue and planning across grades and disciplines.	3.06	High
2. Teachers spend a lot of time planning together.	3.04	High
3. Teachers spend time observing each other's teaching.	3.08	High
4. Teachers usually know what other teachers are teaching.	3.04	High
5. Teachers develop and evaluate plans and projects together.	3.09	High
6. Disagreements in teaching practice can be openly expressed and discussed.	3.07	High
Category Mean	3.06	High

Table 3 shows the participants' assessment on school culture in terms of professional development. The category mean of 3.10 indicates that participants assess the school culture in terms of professional development as high. The finding implies that teachers in the school use professional networks to access information and resources for classroom instruction, regularly seek inspiration from workshops, colleagues, and conferences, value professional

development, keep an up-to-date knowledge base on the learning process, and value school improvement. Furthermore, the finding suggests that the participants generally have a positive assessment of the school culture in terms of professional development. They value professional development, actively seek inspiration and resources from various sources, and prioritize staying updated on the learning process. Additionally, they value school improvement, indicating a commitment to continuous growth and development.

Consistent with the above finding, research consistently shows that participants in school cultures have a positive assessment of professional development, valuing it highly and actively seeking inspiration and resources. They prioritize staying updated on the learning process and are committed to continuous growth and development (Carpenter, 2015). This is particularly true in schools with cultures that stimulate professional development, where principals play a key role in shaping the culture (Engels, 2008; Muhsin et al., 2020). Lastly, Lee & Li (2015) highlight the role of school leaders, particularly principals, in shaping a positive school culture and encouraging professional development.

Table 3. Participants' Assessment on School Culture in terms of Professional Development.

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. Teachers use professional networks to access information and resources for classroom instruction.	3.12	High
2. Teachers regularly seek inspiration from workshops, colleagues, and conferences.	3.06	High
3. Professional development is valued by teachers.	3.11	High
4. Teachers keep an up-to-date knowledge base on the learning process.	3.11	High
5. Teachers value school improvement.	3.10	High
Category Mean	3.10	High

Table 4 presents the participants' assessment on school culture in terms of unity of purpose. The category mean of 3.12 indicates that participants assess the school culture in terms of unity of purpose as high. The high assessment of school culture in terms of unity of purpose suggests that the participants believe that teachers support the school's mission, have a clear sense of direction provided by the mission, understand the mission, and that the mission statement reflects the values of the community. Additionally, the participants believe that teaching performance aligns with the school's mission. Overall, the finding implies that the participants have a positive perception of the school culture and believe that there is a strong unity of purpose.

The finding is aligned with research on school culture highlighting the importance of a unified purpose, with teachers playing a key role in motivating and challenging students (Tus, 2020). This is supported by the strong correlation between school culture and instructional practices (Hongboontri & Keawkhong, 2014).

Table 4. Participants' Assessment on School Culture in terms of Unity of Purpose.

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. Teachers support the mission of the school.	3.13	High
2. The school mission provides teachers with a clear sense of direction.	3.12	High
3. Teachers understand the mission of the school.	3.12	High
4. The school's mission statement reflects the values of the community.	3.10	High
5. Teaching performance reflects the school's mission.	3.11	High
Category Mean	3.12	High

Table 5 reflects the participants' assessment on school culture in terms of collegial support. The category mean of 3.14 indicates that participants assess the school culture in terms of

collegial support as high. The high assessment suggests that participants perceive a positive school culture in terms of collegial support as shown in the participants' agreement that teachers trust each other, are willing to help when there is a problem, value each other's ideas, and work cooperatively in small groups. The finding generally implies that participants perceive a high level of collegial support in the school culture built on trust, willingness, valuing, and cooperation.

In line with the above finding, several studies have explored the factors that contribute to a positive school culture, particularly in terms of collegial support. García-Martínez et al (2021) highlight the importance of teacher-to-teacher interactions and collaboration in creating a supportive environment. Also, Strom et al (2019) underscore the significance of peer support and cooperation in enhancing the learning experience. These findings collectively suggest that a positive school culture is characterized by strong collegial support, trust, and cooperation among teachers.

Table 5. Participants' Assessment on School Culture in terms of Collegial Support.

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. Teachers trust each other.	3.12	High
2. Teachers are willing to help whenever there is a problem.	3.18	High
3. The teacher's ideas are valued by other teachers.	3.14	High
4. Teachers work cooperatively in small groups.	3.13	High
Category Mean	3.14	High

Table 6 exhibits the participants' assessment on school culture in terms of learning partnerships. The category mean of 3.12 indicates that participants assessed the school culture in terms of learning partnerships as high. The high assessment suggests that there is a positive relationship between teachers and parents, with common expectations for student performance. It also indicates that parents trust the professional judgment of teachers and that there is frequent communication between teachers and parents regarding student performance. Additionally, the result suggests that students in this school typically take responsibility for their academic work by paying attention in class and completing their homework.

The above finding is consistent with Benner et al (2021) who found in their study a positive relationship between teachers and parents, with shared expectations for student performance. This is supported by frequent communication between teachers and parents regarding student performance. Students in this school typically take responsibility for their academic work by paying attention in class and completing their homework. This makes the quality of the student-teacher relationship as crucial, with students' social self-concept beliefs and the value they place on the relationship influencing their academic achievement.

Table 6. Participants' Assessment on School Culture in terms of Learning Partnerships.

Indicators	Mean	Interpretation
1. Teachers and parents have common expectations for student performance.	3.14	High
2. Parents trust the teacher's professional judgment.	3.12	High
3. Teachers and parents often communicate about student performance.	3.07	High
4. Students usually take responsibility for their academic work, for example, they pay attention in class and complete their homework.	3.12	High
Category Mean	3.12	High

Table 7 presents the summary on participants' assessment on school culture along dimensions of collaborative leadership, teacher collaboration, professional development, unity of purpose, collegial support, and learning partnerships. The over-all category mean of 3.10 indicates a high school culture as assessed by participants including administrators, teachers, alumni, and students. As shown in the table, all six (6) dimensions are assessed as high with

collegial support having the highest category mean, followed by unity of purpose and learning partnerships. Professional development, teacher collaboration, and collaborative leadership are also assessed as high, but with slightly lower mean scores. The findings generally imply a strong and positive school culture that promotes collaboration, professional growth, and a shared sense of purpose among all stakeholders. The high ratings in collegial support indicate that there is a strong sense of support and camaraderie among staff members, which can contribute to a positive working environment and improved student outcomes. The emphasis on unity of purpose and learning partnerships suggests that there is a shared vision and a focus on continuous learning and improvement within the school community. The slightly lower mean scores for professional development, teacher collaboration, and collaborative leadership implies that these dimensions remain important aspects of school culture, but they may need some improvement or further attention to optimize their contribution for a stronger school culture.

In view of the above findings, studies have explored the dimensions of collaboration and support in educational settings. Lerang et al (2021) highlight the importance of collegial support and its impact on teaching improvement and job satisfaction. Dunbar et al (2018) extend this discussion to teamwork and collaboration among students, with a focus on the development of these skills and their impact on academic performance. Also, Lane et al (2019) offer a framework for evaluating support for learning in higher education, which includes dimensions such as connectedness, mindsets, and academic capabilities.

Table 7. Summary of Participants' Assessment on School Culture.

Dimensions	Category Mean	Interpretation
Collaborative leadership	3.04	High
Teacher collaboration	3.06	High
Professional development	3.10	High
Unity of Purpose	3.12	High
Collegial support	3.14	High
Learning partnerships	3.12	High
Over-all Category Mean	3.10	High

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results and discussion of the study, it is concluded that in the context of higher education, the institution of higher learning has a positive culture supported by the findings which suggest a strong and positive school culture that promotes collaboration, professional growth, and a shared sense of purpose among all stakeholders. The high ratings in collegial support indicate a strong sense of support and camaraderie among staff members, while the emphasis on unity of purpose and learning partnerships suggests a shared vision and a focus on continuous learning and improvement. However, there is room for improvement in the dimensions of professional development, teacher collaboration, and collaborative leadership, which may require further attention to optimize their contribution to a stronger school culture. This has significant implication to the emphasis that academic institutions need to advance specifically in highlighting on the importance of a positive school culture in fostering a conducive learning environment and improving student outcomes. To this end, administrators are encouraged to sustain collaborative leadership, maintain and enhance teacher collaboration, invest in professional development opportunities for staff members, foster unity of purpose, continue to provide collegial support to staff members, and strengthen learning partnerships within the school culture.

REFERENCES

1. Abelein, S. (2013, October 25). How to build a connection between school culture and student achievement. Retrieved from <https://www.catapultlearning.com/connection-school-culture-studentachievement/>

2. Aliazas, V. M., & Elisa, N. (2021). Work Culture and Learning Organization Practices in Promoting Work Productivity among Public Elementary School Teachers. *International Journal of Educational Management and Development Studies*, 2(3), 39-60.
3. Arbabi, A., & Mehdinezhad, V. (2016). School principals' collaborative leadership style and relation it to teachers' self-efficacy. *International Journal of Research Studies in Education*, 5(3), 3-12.
4. Aris, R.F. (2021). Teacher leadership: A literature review.
5. Benner, A.D., Fernandez, C.C., Hou, Y., & Gonzalez, C.S. (2021). Parent and teacher educational expectations and adolescents' academic performance: Mechanisms of influence. *Journal of community psychology*.
6. Bradley, A. (2018). Leadership strategies for enhancing employee engagement (Doctoral dissertation, Walden University).
7. Canaran, Ö., & Mirici, İ. H. (2019). An overview of the recent views and practices in teacher professional development. *Eğitimde Kuram ve Uygulama*, 15(4), 350-362.
8. Carpenter, R.L., & Fitzmaurice, C. (2019). Assessment and Faculty Support: Fostering Collegial Community to Strengthen Professional Practice. *The Journal of General Education*, 67, 108 - 90.
9. Caruso, S. J. (2017). A foundation for understanding knowledge sharing: Organizational culture, informal workplace learning, performance support, and knowledge management. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research*, 10(1), 45.
10. Choi, S. (2023). Distributed Leadership Promotes Teacher Self-Efficacy in Multicultural Classrooms Through School Capacity Building: A Multilevel SEM Approach Using US Teaching and Learning International Survey. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 59(4), 811-844.
11. Clark, J. T. (2019). The impact of school culture upon an educational institution.
12. Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, C., Barron, B., & Osher, D. (2020). Implications for educational practice of the science of learning and development. *Applied developmental science*, 24(2), 97-140.
13. Dunbar, R.L., Dingel, M.J., Dame, L.F., Winchip, J.E., & Petzold, A.M. (2018). Student social self-efficacy, leadership status, and academic performance in collaborative learning environments. *Studies in Higher Education*, 43, 1507 - 1523.
14. Furner, C.P., & McCulla, N. (2019). An exploration of the influence of school context, ethos and culture on teacher career-stage professional learning. *Professional Development in Education*, 45, 505 - 519.
15. García-Martínez, I., Montenegro-Rueda, M., Molina-Fernández, E., & Fernández-Batanero, J.M. (2021). Mapping teacher collaboration for school success. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 32, 631 - 649.
16. Goddard, R., Goddard, Y., Sook Kim, E., & Miller, R. (2015). A theoretical and empirical analysis of the roles of instructional leadership, teacher collaboration, and collective efficacy beliefs in support of student learning. *American journal of education*, 121(4), 501-530.
17. Gross, J., Haines, S. J., Hill, C., Francis, G. L., Blue-Banning, M., & Turnbull, A. P. (2015). Strong School-Community Partnerships in Inclusive Schools Are" Part of the Fabric of the School... We Count on Them". *School Community Journal*, 25(2), 9-34.
18. Gruenert, S., & Whitaker, T. (2015). School culture rewired: How to define, assess, and transform it. Alexandria, VA: ASCD. Gruenert, S., & Whitaker, T. (2017). School culture recharged: Strategies to energize your staff and culture. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
19. Gün, B., & Caglayan, E. (2013). Implications from the Diagnosis of a School Culture at a Higher Education Institution. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry*, 4, 47-59.
20. Harris, A. (2022). Effective Leadership in Schools Facing Challenging Contexts. *School Leadership & Management*, 22, 15 - 26.
21. Hauge, K. (2019). Teachers' collective professional development in school: A review study. *Cogent Education*, 6(1), 1619223.
22. Hayden, C. L., Carrico, C., Ginn, C. C., Felber, A., & Smith, S. (2021). Social Constructivism in Learning: Peer Teaching & Learning.
23. Holzberger, D., & Schiepe-Tiska, A. (2022). Is the School Context associated with Instructional Quality? The Effects of School Composition, Principals, Teacher Collaboration, and School Climate.
24. Hongboontri, C., & Keawkhong, N. (2014). School Culture: Teachers' Beliefs, Behaviors, and Instructional Practices. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 39, 5.
25. Ismail, M., KHATĪBĪ, A., & Azam, S. F. (2022). Impact of school culture on school effectiveness in government schools in Maldives. *Participatory Educational Research*, 9(2), 261-279.
26. Jonyo, B. O., Ouma, C., & Mosoti, Z. (2018). The Effect of Mission and Vision on Organizational Performanc? within Private Universities in Kenya. *European Journal of Educational Sciences*, 5(2), 15-33.

27. Kelly, J., & Cherkowski, S. (2015). Collaboration, collegiality, and collective reflection: A case study of professional development for teachers. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, (169).
28. Lane, M., Moore, A.J., Hooper, L., Menzies, V.J., Cooper, B., Shaw, N., & Rueckert, C. (2019). Dimensions of student success: a framework for defining and evaluating support for learning in higher education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 38, 954 - 968.
29. Lee, H., & Li, M. (2015). Principal Leadership and Its Link to the Development of a School's Teacher Culture and Teaching Effectiveness: A Case Study of an Award-Winning Teaching Team at an Elementary School. *International Journal of Education*, 10.
30. Lerang, M.S., Ertesvåg, S.K., & Virtanen, T.E. (2021). Patterns of teachers' instructional support quality and the association with job satisfaction and collegial collaboration. *Educational Psychology*, 41, 1300 - 1318.
31. Lister, C. (2021). Cultural Wellbeing Index: A dynamic cultural analytics process for measuring and managing organizational inclusion as an antecedent condition of employee wellbeing and innovation capacity. *Journal of Organizational Psychology*, 21(4).
32. Liu, P. (2021). Principals' Transformational School Leadership and Collective Teacher Efficacy in Chinese Urban Upper Secondary Schools. *International Studies in Educational Administration (Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration & Management (CCEAM))*, 49(2).
33. McKenna, C. (2018). *School Culture for Change: An Ethnography of a Progressive K-8 Charter School*. Prescott College.
34. Melesse, S., & Molla, S. (2018). The contribution of school culture to students' academic achievement: The case of secondary and preparatory schools of Assosa zone, Benshangul Gumuz regional state, Ethiopia. *Istraživanja u pedagogiji*, 8(2), 190-203.
35. Mieliwocki, R., & Fatheree, J. (2019). *Adventures in teacher leadership: Pathways, strategies, and inspiration for every teacher*. ASCD.
36. Mincu, M. (2022). Why is school leadership key to transforming education? Structural and cultural assumptions for quality education in diverse contexts. *Prospects*, 52(3-4), 231-242.
37. Mohan, P. P., Lingam, G. I., & Chand, D. D. (2017). Teachers' perceptions of the impact of professional development on learning and teaching in a developing nation. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 42(11), 18-33.
38. Mora-Ruano, J. G., Heine, J. H., & Gebhardt, M. (2019, August). Does teacher collaboration improve student achievement? Analysis of the German PISA 2012 sample. In *Frontiers in Education (Vol. 4, p. 85)*. Frontiers Media SA.
39. Moraru, M., & Voicu, C. S. (2019). Educational and Pastoral Counseling. Axiological and Praxiological Concerns. *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov. Series VII: Social Sciences• Law*, 29-36.
40. Morris, J.E., Lummis, G.W., Lock, G., Ferguson, C., Hill, S., & Nykiel, A. (2019). The role of leadership in establishing a positive staff culture in a secondary school. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 48, 802 - 820.
41. Muhsin, M., Indartono, S., & Astuti, S.I. (2020). The Role of School Culture in Teacher Professionalism Improvement. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Progressive Education (ICOPE 2019)*.
42. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2018). *Addressing the social and cultural norms that underlie the acceptance of violence: proceedings of a workshop—in brief*.
43. Odor, H. O. (2018). A literature review on organizational learning and learning organizations. *International Journal of Economics & Management Sciences*, 7(1), 1-6.
44. Ouly-Uhl, M. (2020). *What Conditions Do Middle School Administrators Believe Must Be in Place to Create and Sustain a Successful Bullying Prevention Program in a Middle School?*. Temple University.
45. Permata, A. C. V., Narimo, S., & Nurkhin, A. (2022, December). Innovative Collaborative Learning Leadership to Build School Academic Culture During the Covid-19 Pandemic. In *7th Progressive and Fun Education International Conference (PROFUNEDU 2022)* (pp. 139-152). Atlantis Press.
46. Petlák, E. (2019). School culture and the related issues. *AD ALTA: Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*.
47. Piotrowsky, M.j. (2016). *The impact of leadership on school culture and student achievement* (Doctoral dissertation, Clemson University).
48. Postholm, M.B. (2016). Collaboration between teacher educators and schools to enhance development. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 39, 452 - 470.
49. Pulimeno, M., Piscitelli, P., Colazzo, S., Colao, A., & Miani, A. (2020). School as ideal setting to promote health and wellbeing among young people. *Health promotion perspectives*, 10(4), 316.

50. Reeves, P.M., Pun, W.H., & Chung, K.S. (2017). Influence of teacher collaboration on job satisfaction and student achievement. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 67, 227-236.
51. Schleifer, D., Rinehart, C., & Yanisch, T. (2017). *Teacher Collaboration in Perspective: A Guide to Research*. Public Agenda.
52. Serpa, S. (2016). An overview of the concept of organisational culture. *International business management*, 10(1), 51-61.
53. Sims, S., & Fletcher-Wood, H. (2021). Identifying the characteristics of effective teacher professional development: a critical review. *School effectiveness and school improvement*, 32(1), 47-63.
54. Stewart, S. A. (2023). *A Comparison of Effective Principal Leadership Behaviors According to Teachers in Priority and Non-Priority Schools* (Doctoral dissertation, Freed-Hardeman University).
55. Strom, P.S., Hendon, K.L., Strom, R.D., & Wang, C. (2019). How Peers Support and Inhibit Learning in the Classroom: Assessment of High School Students in Collaborative Groups. *School Community Journal*, 29, 183-202.
56. Sun, S. (2008, December). Organizational culture and its themes. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 3(12), 137-141. Retrieved from www.ccsenet.org/journal.html
57. Sutton, P.S., & Shouse, A. (2016). Building a Culture of Collaboration in Schools: Collaboration Builds Teacher Trust and Expertise and Enables Schools to Implement Changes in Instruction with Greater Ease and Comfort. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 97, 69.
58. Thuy, L B. (2018, December 31). Building a supportive teaching culture to increase teaching effectiveness. <https://10.32508/stdjelm.v2i2.514>
59. Tierney, W.G. (2008). *The Impact of Culture on Organizational Decision-Making*.
60. Torres, D. G. (2019). Distributed leadership, professional collaboration, and teachers' job satisfaction in US schools. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 79, 111-123.
61. Tus, J. (2020). An assessment of the school culture and its impact on the academic performance of the students.
62. Vasconcelos, S. C. P. D. (2021). *Induction and teacher collaboration in international schools* (Doctoral dissertation).
63. Wanjiru, N. E. M., Evangeline, G., & Dorothy, K. (2022). Relationship between academic qualification implementation and performance of public secondary schools in embu county. *EPR International Journal of Economics, Business and Management Studies (EBMS)*, 9(9), 51-60.
64. Wang, X., Zhou, C., Yang, Q., & Dong, Y. (2021). *Teacher Leadership in the Context of Chinese Education* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri-Saint Louis).
65. Warrick, D. D. (2017). What leaders need to know about organizational culture. *Business Horizons*, 60(3), 395-404.
66. Weddle, H., Lockton, M., & Datnow, A. (2020). *Teacher Collaboration in School Improvement*. Education.
67. Widhy, S., Yuliantoro, H., Anwar, M. Z., & Maharani, A. (2022). The Influence of Organizational Culture and Compensation on Organizational Commitment with Job Satisfaction as Mediation. *The Management Journal of Binaniaga*, 6(2), 165-190.
68. Yokota, H. (2021). School leadership development practices in Japan. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 1-30.
69. Yuet, FKC (2017). Leadership competencies and commitment to change: the mediating effect of developmental leadership behavior. *Management Research Journal*, 6, 99-111.
70. Yusnita, N., Sunaryo, W., & Notosudjono, D. (2020). Professional Commitment–Organizational Mechanisms, Individual Characteristics and Individual Mechanisms. *Zeszyty Naukowe Politechniki Częstochoskiej. Zarządzanie*, 40, 67-83.