

CHAPTER THREE

ORGANISATIONAL CLIMATE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic society in which today's organisations exist, the question of whether change will occur is no longer relevant. Instead the issue now is how do managers cope with the inevitable barrage of changes that control them daily in attempting to keep their organisations viable and current. The social and human costs of change, if recognised, can largely be avoided by thoughtful management effort. The focus of this chapter is on clarifying the concept of organisational climate and to highlight the fact that "the human problems associated with change remain much the same even though our understanding of them have advanced." The social and human costs of change, if recognised, can largely be avoided by thoughtful management effort (Lawrence, 1999: 79).

3.2 AN ORGANISATION

The first step in determining the organisational climate of a school, is to ascertain whether a school can be defined as an organisation. If a school can be described as an organisation, the concept of organisational climate will apply and so will the exploration of its organisational climate. Armstrong as quoted in Brink, (1996:14) argues that most managers describe their organisation in terms of its structure. A structure in this sense involves giving orders to members of the organisation using a

single chain of command running from the top to the bottom of an organisation; reporting to one supervisor; and task differentiation according to different specialisations so as to focus expert knowledge and ensure that tasks are done efficiently. The latter refers to the responsibility which individuals have for performing certain tasks and the requisite authority for fulfilling these responsibilities.

Two types of organizations are distinguished in organizational theory; namely formal and informal organizations. The difference between the two is a feature of the degree to which they are structured.

- A formal organization “is deliberately planned or created, and concerned with the planned co-ordination of the activities of a number of people for the achievement of some common, explicit purpose or goal, through division of labour and function, and through a hierarchy of authority and leadership” (OBT402, 1996: 6).
- The informal organization arises from the interaction of people working towards a goal, and for the development of groups with their own relationships and norms of behaviour, unlike those defined within a formal structure. The informal organization is more flexible, and loosely structured, with membership often spontaneous and in varying degrees of involvement (OBT402, 1996: 7).

The organisation of the school can be described with reference to the following characteristics:

1. Population: the pupils, the teachers and the non-teaching staff.

2. Territory: the school campus with the complex of buildings, playgrounds and gardens.
3. A structure of authority with the headmaster at the top and the general workers at the lowest level.
4. A network of patterned social relationships: and a sense of belonging together manifested in competition with other schools.

The formal organisation of the school is the official structure which has been deliberately created by the school and agencies superior to it, for example, the Ministry of Education (Datta, 1992: 83). A school also has some informal characteristics where stakeholders act spontaneously and leadership and expertise dynamics change regularly, and membership is one of the basis of a common interest.

3.3 ORGANISATIONAL CLIMATE

The organisational climate plays an important part in the organisation design. The organisational climate is the general atmosphere that exists in a school (OWB700, 2000: 38). The type of structure that will lead to the successful implementation of change, will depend on the current culture of the organisation. Tagiuri and Litwin (in Denison, 1990: 25) see organisational climate as follows:

“It is experienced by its members, influences their behaviour, and can be described in terms of the values of a particular set of characteristics (or attitudes) of the organisation”.

Frieberg (1998: 22) defines school climate as follows:

“The elements that make up school climate are complex, ranging from the quality of interactions in the school to the ones outside the school, from the physical structure of the building to the physical comfort levels of the individuals and how safe they feel”.

Gonder and Hymes (1994:11) defines climate as follows:

“Climate is a term that refers to the atmosphere in a school. It consists of attitudes shared by members of subgroups, such as students, faculty, staff and by the school population as a whole. Climate affects morale, productivity, and satisfaction of persons involved in an organisation. Climate is generally considered to be positive or negative”.

But the clearest and most detailed definition of organisational climate, is ,that of Moran and Volkwein (1992:20) which states that:

“Organisational climate is a relatively enduring characteristic of an organisation which distinguishes it from other organisations and,

- (a) embodies members’ collective perceptions about their organisation with respect to such dimensions as trust, cohesiveness, support, recognition, innovation, and fairness;
- (b) is produced by member interaction;
- (c) serves as a basis for interpreting the situation;
- (d) reflects the prevalent norms, values and attitudes of the organisation’s culture;
- and
- (e) acts as a source of influence for shaping behaviour.

Organisational climate has an effect on individual people's perception of their environment, which implies that this perception would influence the individual's positive or negative regard for their working environment. To facilitate a clear understanding of organisational- climate, the organisational culture also has to be investigated.

3.4 ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

An organisation develops a particular culture over time. According to Gonder and Hymes, culture represents the group members' shared understanding of how things ought to be. Schein quoted in Gonder (1994: 13) states that "the term culture should be reserved for the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organisation, that operate unconsciously and that define in a basic "taken-for-granted" fashion an organisation's views of itself and its environment". The influence of culture on behaviour is not a one way process, but behaviour also influences culture. Culture, furthermore, influences not only what people do, but also their communication, feelings, thoughts and their justification of their actions (Gonder, 1994: 13).

The school culture determines the effectiveness of the school outcomes and improvement to the degree of dynamism. The following matrix depicts the four dimensions of school culture:

Process	Outcomes		
	Ineffective	↔ Effective	
↑ ↓	Dynamic	‘Wandering’	‘Moving’
	Static	‘Stuck’	‘Promenading’

Table 3.1 (Four Expressions of School Culture: Adapted from Gultig, 1999:55)

- **Stuck schools**-These are often failing schools where conditions are poor; teaching is an isolated activity; there is a sense of mediocrity and powerlessness; expectations from all around are low; and external conditions are blamed for the situation. In the case of traditionally Black schools, the concept of culture is regarded as something that cannot be changed (OWB700, 2000: 49-50).
- **Wandering schools**- are committed to development at the expense of maintenance. In this type of school movement is going on but there is lack of agreement about purpose.
- **Promenading schools**-seem to be living on its past achievements. It has stable staff who are currently reluctant to change. They are satisfied and pleased with things as they are and can see no reason to change.
- **Moving schools**-are regarded as the ideal type of “active” schools, which has achieved a healthy blend of change and stability as well as balanced development and maintenance. The school adapts its structure in line with its culture and traditions.

School cultures are formed by a combination of the above dimensions and will be found in the actions and beliefs that are usually taken for granted – the way things are

done. There seems to be an impression that there is no clear distinction between organisational climate and organisational culture. This impression has led to protracted discussions among theorists regarding the similarities in and differences between the two concepts.

3.5 CULTURE / CLIMATE DEBATE

One major difference between climate and culture is their timetable. Climate reflects what is happening today; culture embodies the values, beliefs and norms a school staff and community have developed over a long period of time (Gonder, 1994:11). For those whose emphasis is more anthropological, culture concerns the network of social practices. It is threaded through all social practices, and is the sum of their inter-relationships. Culture is also sociologically orientated, it merely reflects the configuration of the material basis and the social relations of production. It is forged out of the struggle for survival with nature and between people (Cross, 1992: 177-178).

One can also view culture as the vehicle through which social relations within a group are structured and shaped as well as the way this is experienced, understood and interpreted.

By contrast, Coetzee as quoted in Brink (1996:17), sees climate as the members' perceptions of, and attitudes towards happenings in the organisation. It is the "temperature" prevailing among the members of the organisation, within a given time frame, as well as "...how things are here and how they are perceived...". Climate is observed by measuring the employees' perceptions of, for example, management, structures, tasks, management styles, rewards, conflict, warmth, support and

collaboration among colleagues. It is seen as changeable, shorter term and relatively easy to change. The change in climate is affected by changes in physical phenomena, e.g. management style structures, task reward systems, communication and decision-making processes.

An analysis of the literature on organisational culture and climate implies that the concepts cannot be regarded as mutually exclusive. They influence each other. The following table shows the relationship between the organisational culture and climate.

<p style="text-align: center;">Organisational Culture</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The situation</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Organisational Climate</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The perception</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Set of values, convictions, ceremonies and norms ▪ Reflects the communication symbols, management style and behaviour of people involved ▪ And which is evident in the management philosophy and goals of the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The perception of those involved regarding ▪ Quality of school culture ▪ Which can be evaluated by means of questionnaires and interviews

Table 3.2 (Organisational culture and organisational climate: Adapted from Mentz,1990: 86).

For the purposes of this study, the concept of organisational climate is utilised. The concept subsumes culture and focuses on the set of attitudes the employees have

towards issues such as remuneration, benefits, supervision, leadership and job satisfaction.

3.6 CHARACTERISTICS OF CULTURE IN A SCHOOL

The changes that many organisations are forced to make in an ever-changing school environment, are often so fundamental that they involve transforming an organisation's culture. Every organisation has a particular culture, which is almost like a personality. Just as an individual's personality determines his behaviour, shared values and beliefs form the foundation of a particular culture that influences the actions and activities in that organisation (Smit et al, 1999: 268). Organisational cultures contain the following characteristics:

- Ethos, the spirit and attitude of people in an organisation, forms the basis of their behaviour. It contributes to the effectiveness of the organisational culture. The image of the specific school will determine the trust of the community.
- Norms and values are standards of behaviour in a group of people. The academic culture of the school could attract or repel learners to the school.
- The philosophy of a school displays the true meaning of that which comprises the school. It guides the dominant approach to teaching and learning in a particular school, e.g. teacher-centred or learner-based.
- Feelings display the overall atmosphere conveyed in the school by, for example, the way in which educators interact with learners and stakeholders.

The most important thing about school culture is that it should build and facilitate the relationships and behaviours that enable the school to do its work. School cultures are

formed by a combination of the above dimensions and will be found in the actions and beliefs that are usually taken for granted – the way things are done. There seems to be an impression that there is no clear distinction between organisational climate and organisational culture. This impression has led to protracted discussions among theorists regarding the similarities in and differences between the two concepts.

3.7 CHANGE IN THE ORGANISATIONAL CLIMATE OF SCHOOLS

Change by its very nature, is unsettling to people. Those who have studied, both successful and failed reforms, have found that the key to success is first addressing those factors that influence the organisations climate and culture. If the personal concerns of the people who must implement change are not considered, those on the front lines may go through the motions without making meaningful changes in their behaviour and attitudes. (Gonder,1994: 105). The efforts to reform and restructure in this country, is one of fits and starts. Some schools have been very successful in embracing change. Other efforts have been met with passive resistance, or outright opposition. To ensure successful change, school leaders must take into consideration both the climate and culture of the school. The process of change will be met by a more receptive staff, if those involved, feel they are valued members of the family whose opinions are important.

3.8 INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

Within the organisation managers are involved in public relations which aim at maintaining good relations within and outside the organisation. In order to create a

positive climate, a manager should be able to communicate, understand people's behaviour and motivate groups as well as individuals (Smit et al, 1999: 19).

Values, perceptions, attitudes, and personality are all important components of individual behaviour. However, no one lives in a vacuum. People interact with other people. In fact, this is how we develop values, perceptions, attitudes, and, to a large degree, personality. (Hodgetts, R.M. 1990: 95). One of the most basic problems of organisational life is that two or more people view a goal or a problem differently, but each person assumes that the other sees it just as s/he does. Differences in perceptions, are recognised as obstacles present in most schools and these affect interpersonal relations. Two persons with contradictory expectations of each other can experience continuous underlying conflicts. These conflicts may result in low productivity on the part of a worker or student. School managers need to be very sensitive regarding values based on individualism and collectivism, in order to avoid conflict (Smit et al, 1999: 360).

In most schools there is an increasing understanding of and respect for the necessity for differences between groups. More managerial effort is being applied to bridge the gaps in understanding. While the conflicts between specialised groups are probably as intense now as ever, they are more frequently seen as task-related, that is, natural outgrowths of different jobs, skills and approaches- rather than as redundant and related only to personality differences (Lawrence, 1991:79).

3.9 CONFLICT

Broken interpersonal relations result in conflict. The implementation of changes are hardly ever a problem free process of adaptation as well as resistance to change. Positive relations in a school environment result in the willingness of all involvement to address differences and to manage conflicts constructively.

Conflict is a situation or state between at least two interdependent parties, which is characterised by perceived differences that the parties evaluate as alive. This often results in negative emotional states and behaviour intended to control other parties in the interaction. (Katz, 1994:viii). Any organisation consisting of two or more people will, from time to time experience conflicts caused by friction especially in times of transformation. Conflict energises people, whether for good or for ill. Conflicts at work can stimulate creative problem solving, increase job commitment, and prompt organisational change. (Anderson, 1996:vii).

Getting a handle on conflict requires taking a look at both the issues and the way people respond to them. It helps to understand some of the factors that can motivate "good" people to engage in destructive behaviours towards themselves or others. The individual roots of conflict spring from our need for balance, our tendency to mirror behaviour, and our need to release psychic energy (Anderson, 1996:10).

3.10 TYPES OF CONFLICT

There are different types of conflicts that relate mainly to where the conflict is situated and the parties or persons involved.

- Intrapersonal conflict occurs within the person because the person has difficulty accepting changes in education. Usually intrapersonal conflict is unavoidable when there is conflict on values (OWB700, 2000: 147).
- Interpersonal conflict usually involves two people or several persons. At the interpersonal level, individual members of the organisation may have incompatible views regarding change, leading to conflict (Smit et al, 1999: 346).
- Intragroup conflict takes place when there are conflicting views within the same group. In the traditionally Black schools, educators are divided into different organisations or unions. When issues of change arise in the school, educators take sides based in part on their group memberships (Zuelke and Willerman, 1992:5).
- Intergroup conflict occurs between different groups, in the school, e.g. different departments might be competing for scarce resources. This type of conflict could be detrimental to the functioning of the school, especially if the conflict is between the management team of the school and the governing body (Zuelke and Willerman, 1992: 6-7).
- Intra-organisational conflict takes place within the same organisation. This is not a personality conflict but rather a difference of opinion regarding the management of the new changes in education (Zuelke and Willerman, 1992: 7).

3.11 COMMUNICATION

Communication plays a vital role in shaping both climate and culture. If there is to be success in any planned change, school leaders must mobilise all channels of communication-verbal, non verbal, symbolic and written-to transmit messages that will inform, inspire and persuade students, staff and the community. Employees generally have three communication needs. They want to know:

- ❖ Where the organisation is heading.
- ❖ How it will get there.
- ❖ What it all means to them (Gonder, 1994: 113).

Employees understand that their individual well being and their very futures are tied closely to the overall success of the organisation. As members of the enterprise, they want to know generally what the plan is, what strategy has been worked out to make that plan work, and how hard they will have to fight to do what actually has been charted for the organisation (Gonder, 1994: 113-117).

The success of managers depends primarily, on their ability to communicate to all the people for whom they are responsible, what they need to do and the importance of doing it. It involves the acceptance of change, the commitment to the community, and the creation of the where without which the future if the nation and the provision of jobs depends. Failure to get the message across is costly. If you do not succeed, people will find it difficult to accept the need for change.(Armstrong, 1991:103)

The more and the faster you are trying to change, the more openness you will need. It is interesting that if breakdown of communication is cited as the most common reason

for divorce, it is also the most common reason for the failure of the implementation of change programmes in organisations. Information is power to the people (Clarke, 1994: 158). In this study we look at a vital element of our change process: spreading change and gaining widespread involvement across the organisation. Even though openness is purported to be a key value, managers don't understand what it means or how to do it. They deliberately withhold information not realising that inadequate or unclear communications stimulate conflict (OWB700, 2000: 150). They face dilemmas like:

- ❖ Do I communicate change top-down or bottom up?
- ❖ Does consultation mean abdication?
- ❖ Do I withhold information and do they also have the power to refuse to do what I want?
- ❖ Shall I announce change or live with the uncertainty of letting people know that I haven't got all the answers? (Clarke, 1994: 158).

For effective communication to take place, simply conveying information is not enough. Several critical steps must take place. It is also important that all parties recognise that a multitude of potential barriers may hinder or obstruct the communication process. Anything that has a negative impact on the quality, speed or accuracy of communication should, if possible, be corrected or done differently (Clarke, 1994: 154).

3.12 MOTIVATION

Motivating and leading subordinates would be impossible without some form of communication. Motivation plays a decisive role in the formation of organisational climate. Worth as quoted by Brink (1996:29) emphasizes just how important this factor is. Personal, peer and managerial motivation were found to be the critical elements for the outcome of a teacher- training programme. Teamwork was another factor seen as vital for motivation and resultant positive perception of organisational climate.

The motivation process comprises the following interdependent elements:

- **Need**-In any organisation there is a need to belong or to form friendships.
- **Motive**-An individual's needs motivate him to take action that he believes will satisfy his needs.
- **Behaviour**-The individual's needs will lead to a specific behaviour.
- **Consequence** –The consequence of the behaviour may be positive or negative.
- **Satisfaction/dissatisfaction**-The consequence of the behaviour could lead to satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

This process can also be applied in an organisation and in the work situation because work is one of the ways in which individuals satisfy their needs (Smit et al, 1999: 306).

3.13 FAILINGS IN EDUCATION

According to the Minister of Education, Asmal, K. (1999:4), in spite of some positive changes taking place, we still have some troubling features in our education system.

“Rampant inequality of access to educational opportunities of satisfactory standard. In particular, poor people in all communities, of whom an overwhelming majority are Blacks, continue to attend decrepit schools, too often without telephones, libraries or laboratories. This often leads to low morale in the teaching force, failures in governance and management, and the poor quality of learning in much of the schools”.

Low teacher morale and failures in governance and management leads to poor teaching and learning. This in turn will affect the school climate as well as the relationship between the school and other stakeholders.

“Low teacher morale in Black communities is a result of different incidences like: uncertainty and distress of rationalisation and redeployment. Even though the causes and incidences may be different in different schools, teachers’ expectations of stability and job security have been long in coming”.

Being redeployed affect educators negatively, therefore impacting negatively on the school climate because relationships become strained. Affected educators tend to blame the manager, suspecting ill feelings towards them, for their redeployment. This causes tension between the affected educators and the management resulting slacking of their work performance. No single individual can be blamed because the problem is widespread.

“The serious crisis of leadership, governance, management and administration in Black schools is another disturbing feature. Such failures have a drastic effect. They open wide gates of corruption, fraud and indiscipline. In the end they undermine good

teaching and learning, which depend on peace, order, stability and professional challenge. The situation is worsened if governing authorities are ineffective, collude with management at the expense of other parties or if they allow themselves to be subverted by factionalism.

Poor quality of learning is a great concern in our education system. Overwhelmingly, poor learning is associated with poverty, bad or absent facilities, under-prepared teachers, lack of learning resources and a serious lack of purpose and discipline in many schools. In such circumstances essential roles cannot be fulfilled and essential roles and interests of institutions are neglected”.

It is part of the role of management to create the right school climate. The role of management is to create a positive climate so that the process of teaching and learning becomes a model of how responsible people behave in a school organisation (DoE, 2000: 10).

3.14 CONCLUSION

The concept of organisational climate is functional and mainly so in terms of the basis for interpretation that it presents. The basis therefore provides guidelines for addressing the issues affecting the way that employees experience organisational climate. This in turn results in exhibiting the relation between the work environment and the work-related attitudes and behaviours of employees. The concept of organisational climate, and all that it implies, may make it possible to identify certain factors as motivators in the organisation.

The next chapter will undertake an analysis and interpretation of the empirical data. Some aspects of the data flowing from the statistical analysis will be examined, tabulated and interpreted.