ABSTRACT

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professional development school in a variety of ways that included a
combination of quantitative and qualitative measures. Results were analyzed
using the eight scales of the "School Level Environment Questionnaire" (SLEQ)
as categories: Student Support, Affiliation, Professional Interest, Staff
Freedom, Participatory Decision Making, Innovation, Resource Adequacy, and
Work Pressure. In addition, the following five features of organizational
culture served as lenses through which to view emerging themes and patterns:
shared values, rites and rituals, social standards, organizational politics,
and cultural networks. Results indicate that the school's professional staff
perceived significant differences between their actual and preferred
teaching/learning environments, as measured by the eight scales of the SLEQ.
These differences are attributable to concerns staff members had regarding
organizational dimensions such as unclear communication, lack of adherence to
the school's stated mission and vision, changing expectations, and dissonance
they perceived as originating at the leadership level. (Contains 42
references and 9 tables.) (Author/DFR)

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A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL STAFF'S PERCEPTIONS

OF ACTUAL AND PREFERRED LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

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Abstract

This study assessed the teaching/learning environment of one professional development school in a variety of ways that included a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures. Results were analyzed using the eight scales of the School Level Environment Questionnaire (SLEQ) as categories: Student Support, Affiliation, Professional Interest, Staff Freedom, Participatory Decision Making, Innovation, Resource Adequacy, and Work Pressure. In addition, the following five features of organizational culture served as lenses through which to view emerging themes and patterns: shared values, rites and rituals, social standards, organizational politics, and cultural networks.

Results indicate that the school's professional staff perceived significant differences between their actual and preferred teaching/learning environments, as measured by the eight scales of the SLEQ. These differences are attributable to concerns staff members had regarding organizational dimensions such as unclear communication, lack of adherence to the school's stated mission and vision, changing expectations, and dissonance they perceived as originating at the leadership level.

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to assess the teaching/learning environment of one professional development school in a variety of ways that included a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures. The primary rationale leading this study relates to the fact that the particular school featured in the study serves as a professional development school site. Therefore, many of its teachers are actively engaged in the process of preparing and mentoring preservice teachers.

Previous studies have indicated that the perceptions and attitudes of cooperating teachers and other teachers who mentor preservice and novice teachers are influential in shaping the perceptions and attitudes of those they mentor. Consequently, this study built on the work of others who have researched the development of preservice teachers and the role which their cooperating teachers play in that development (Clark, 1988; Cochran-Smith, 1991; Ganser, 1996; Jensen & Kiley, 1997; Mason, 1997; Mayer & Goldsberry, 1993; Piland, 1992; Piland & Anglin, 1993; Weinstein, 1989), as well as on the work of those who have studied the effects of organizational environments on the productivity of individuals working within those environments (Dorman & Fraser, 1996; Fisher & Fraser, 1983; Fisher, Fraser, & Wubbels, 1993; Garfield, 1986; Jensen, 1988; Jensen, Shepston, Killmer, & Connor, 1994; Kiley & Jensen, 1998; Templeton & Jensen, 1993).

Theoretical Framework

Two major concepts--learning environments and organizational culture--served as the scaffolding that gave shape to our study. Consequently, in the following sections we provide a brief review of the literature relevant to those two areas

Learning Environments

The planning, design, and implementation of appropriate learning environments for students at all grade levels, from prekindergarten to college, is highly dependent on one professional in each classroom--the teacher. Beliefs regarding the teaching/learning process and teaching/learning

environments are developed by preservice and inservice teachers in a number of ways. Arguably, among the most influential of these variables are the learning environments which they have experienced as consumers of education (Kiley & Jensen, 1998).

However, actual classroom experiences at both the preservice and inservice levels also impact the learning environment paradigms developed by teachers. These paradigms are woven into the belief systems of teachers who are responsible throughout their careers for creating learning environments that affect, both directly and indirectly, thousands of students. Preservice and inservice teachers' perceptions of teaching/learning environments are critical to the success of both students and teachers as they enter the classrooms of today and tomorrow (Kiley & Jensen, 1998).

Haberman (1987) and LeCompte and Dworkin (1991) concluded that it is important to examine teachers' perceptions of the school level environment, because the quality of the school environment and teachers' commitment and desire for teaching are highly related. Other researchers have found that the school environment correlates with the effectiveness of schools and the professional development of teachers (Creemer, Peters, & Reynolds, 1989; Fisher & Fraser, 1991; Yarrow & Millwater, 1995). Such findings indicate that it is beneficial for both preservice and inservice teachers to be aware of their perceptions regarding learning environments in order to reflect on, evaluate, and possibly change these perceptions as they grow professionally.

Fraser (1992) stated that "if the empowerment of teachers is a serious part of the agenda, then one piece of that empowerment must be a much larger role for veteran teachers in the education of future teachers" (pp. 31-32). He suggested that today's cooperating teachers are given far too little recognition, remuneration, and power, and he recommended that the mentor (cooperating) teacher be a key player in designing and evaluating the student teacher's program. Fraser concluded that the student internship should provide opportunities for critical reflection related to pedagogy and the politics of education. It seems that development related to the

learning environment paradigm needs to be included as a part of such opportunities. Research findings analyzing teachers' perceptions of preferred and actual learning environments can serve to expand the knowledge base, as well as to provide reflective and mentoring opportunities, for both inservice and preservice teachers.

While formal instruments such as the School Level Environment Questionnaire (SLEQ) (Fisher & Fraser, 1991) offer one lens through which to view learning environments, additional measures are needed to provide different perspectives. As researchers (Cook & Reichardt, 1979; Guba & Lincoln, 1983) suggested 20 years ago, the distinction between quantitative and qualitative methods often proves unhelpful, and many times both types of methods can be utilized concurrently.

Metaphorically speaking, researchers need to visualize the concept of learning environments suspended in space, so they can view it from every angle—top to bottom—side to side. Interviews, surveys, informal observations, and their own experiences and reflections as participant-observers and external observers can inform their inquiry and augment information gleaned from SLEQ results. Several studies have indicated that the combined use of quantitative and qualitative approaches to the study of learning environments, when applied appropriately, can add to the existing learning environment knowledge base (e.g., Chen, Taylor, & Aldridge, 1998; Dellinger, Daniel, Stuhlmann, & Ellett, 1999; Dorman, J. P., 1997; Fraser, 1998; Kopacsi & Hochwald, 1998; She & Fisher, 1998; Taylor, Fraser, & Fisher, 1997; Templeton & Jensen, 1993; Templeton & Johnson, 1998).

Organizational Culture

The second key concept that serves as a theoretical framework for this study is that of organizational culture. The following discussion of organizational culture is excerpted and adapted from Teaching, Leading, and Learning: Becoming Caring Professionals (Jensen & Kiley, 2000).

Even a cursory look at the literature relating to organizational culture reveals a variety of definitions. One of the first definitions to hit the popular book market was Deal and Kennedy's (1982) *how we do things here*. Both before and since then, a variety of other definitions has appeared. However, most of those definitions share a common core which includes the transmission of shared values, beliefs, expectations, common understandings, and other symbolic systems. We view organizational culture as the basic assumptions which operate within an organization, as reflected by the behavior and the value-led outward manifestations (e.g., structure, management style, physical setting) of those unstated assumptions (Jensen, 1988). Organizations as cultures contain an emotional dimension and reflect the importance of having a sense of identification and meaning which often is derived from social groups. Culture acts as a kind of social glue that connects and holds together the organization's different parts. All members of an organization in one way or another influence its culture and subcultures (Carlson, 1996).

Features of Organizational Culture

Prerequisite to understanding and managing culture is the task of recognizing it and its outward manifestations. Consequently, in this section we identify five key features of organizational culture and some of the observable behaviors that reflect cultural components.

Shared Values.   Shared values serve as the bedrock upon which organizational cultures are built. They are the basic concepts and beliefs of an organization which provide a sense of common direction for members of the organization and guidelines for their day-to-day behavior. Values function as the heart of an organizational culture by establishing standards of achievement within the organization. The degree to which they are shared by all members of the organization determines the strength of the culture. In organizations that succeed, members identify, embrace, and act on their shared values.

Leaders of organizations with strong cultures talk openly and frequently about their shared values and beliefs and don't tolerate deviation from the organization's standards. Viewing

schools as organizations, a shared value that serves as a core component of the school's culture may be the notion that every student can learn or that every student has a contribution to make. Leaders within those schools make it a point to communicate their shared values on a consistent basis and to make them a visible component of the school's culture. Most importantly, they model the enactment of those values--that is, they walk the talk.

Rites and Rituals.   Rites and rituals are the systematic and programmed routines of an organization's daily life (e.g., meetings, play, formal recognition of exemplary work). In their mundane, day-to-day version (rituals), they show the organization's members what is expected of them. In their extravagant version (ceremonies), they provide powerful, visible examples of what the organization values. Unless organizational leaders tell people what they want them to do and how they want them to do it, they have no right to expect them to do what they want them to do. Rituals and standards define acceptable decorum and call attention to the way procedures are intended to be carried out. Strong culture organizations create rites and rituals of behavior that exercise the most visible and pervasive influence on *how we do things here.*

Social Standards.   Social standards are another facet of an organization's rituals. For example, what is acceptable practice with regard to language? Do people refer to other organization members using formal titles? Are exchanges between administrators and the rank and file encouraged or discouraged? Is it acceptable for members to engage administrators other than their direct supervisors in conversation, or is it appropriate for them to respond but not to initiate? Are side conversations tolerated at meetings? Is slang or occasional swearing tolerated at meetings? What about in the break room? Much of what goes on in organizations consists simply of people talking with one another. Consequently, setting standards for how they do this has a strong influence on culture. Variables such as public decorum, interpersonal behavior, presentation formats, reports, and procedures all have written or unwritten standards unique to particular organizational cultures.

Organizational Politics.   If organizations have cultures--and they do--then organizational politics are inevitable. Etymologists trace the origin of the English word politics to the Greek word *polis* which means an aggregate of many members. In other words, where two or more are gathered, there are politics. Aristotle saw politics as opportunities to create order from diversity while avoiding totalitarian rule, and he viewed human beings as political animals.

Politics are about power, competition, influence, and strategic negotiation. However, politics are also about culture, because within organizations politics involve the manipulation of metaphors, myths, symbols, and legends. Organizational politics focus on the interpretation of facts rather than the facts themselves (Carlson, 1996).

The adjective "dirty" has so often been used to describe politics and politicians that it has become an understood, and therefore unnecessary, descriptor. However, politics, both literally and figuratively, is not a four-letter word. In fact, political leadership and "good" politics are essential ingredients of effective, healthy organizations. Political leaders who possess a clear sense of themselves and a level of comfort with their organizations' political systems discover opportunities that they otherwise would not see. Although political behavior is no substitute for competence, effective organizational leadership does depend heavily on the acquisition of political skills. Educational leaders and change agents need to learn to appreciate--or at least to tolerate--organizational politics "...for their potential to create opportunities for involvement, for understanding sources of power and influence, and for learning how to resolve inevitable conflict" (Carlson, 1996, p. 64). After all, politics affect school cultures whether the members of those cultures choose to play or not.

Cultural Networks.   Cultural networks serve as the informal--but primary--means of communication within an organization. As such, they transmit the shared values and heroic mythology. All members of strong organizational cultures have jobs, but they also have other jobs--jobs that aren't printed on their business cards but that are important nonetheless. Storytellers, spies, priests, whisperers, secretarial sources, gossips, and cabals make up a hidden

power hierarchy within the organization, a hierarchy quite different from the published version of the organizational structure. Cultural networks connect all parts of the organization without respect for titles or positions. They not only transmit information but also interpret the significance of the information for the organization members.

Each school has its own unique heroes/heroines, gossips, storytellers, whisperers, and priests. Especially in large organizations, effectively working the cultural network is the only way to get things done and to understand what's really going on. Consequently, it's important to be familiar enough with the main players of this hidden hierarchy to recognize them and their roles.

Benefits of Studying Organizational Culture

Launching from the premise that people are an organization's greatest resource, it makes sense to employ a planned approach to utilizing that resource as effectively as possible. A strong organizational culture can serve as a powerful lever for guiding behavior and can help individuals perform better in two ways:

♦ A strong culture provides a system of informal rules that spells out how people are to behave most of the time.

♦ A strong culture enables people to feel better about what they do, so they are more likely to work harder.

Leaders must understand clearly their organizations' cultures if they plan to accomplish what they set out to do (Deal & Kennedy, 1982).

Culture Impacts Productivity.   In hopes of managing culture in a manner which increases productivity, Akin and Hopelain studied organizational culture. They defined culture as the acquired information used to interpret experience and to generate social behavior. Following their definition, from their studies they concluded that, in order to study culture, one must look at five specific areas of the organization: the types of people, teamwork, the work structure, those in charge, and management (1986). For Akin and Hopelain, in a culture of

productivity, the people identify with the work and are motivated and hard working. Autonomy and self-direction characterize the teamwork, and the work structure allows teams to organize their own work. Leaders are chosen by the group, based on their demonstrated ability to do the work. Those in charge may operate from formal authority or from functional authority. They mediate meaning for the work group and have influence upward in order to facilitate communication and support "downward."

Leaders or managers in cultures of productivity value productivity and results, rather than just activity. They facilitate an environment of trust and openness, act with reliability and dependability so others will know how to act, have high standards and expectations, and achieve results without "bossing." Finally, managers in cultures of productivity communicate the mission and learn from, as well as about, the people they lead by listening, observing, and asking questions. If, as Akin and Hopelain (1986) suggest, those in leadership positions could identify the organizational environments people prefer and the cultures that enable them to achieve greater productivity, leaders could then work to create those environments and cultures. In choosing to do so, they would be acting to maximize the quantity and quality of people's output, with the end result being increased productivity for organizations.

Culture Impacts Innovation and Change.   Studying organizational culture also can serve as a means of learning how best to introduce and implement change and can provide clues as to what strategies to employ to help the transition take place. Given the reform movement in education, schools as organizations don't have the luxury of ignoring culture. If school culture can't be ignored, it naturally follows that there is much to be gained through learning to manage it. However, prerequisite to managing culture comes the task of understanding it.

Cultural Networking and Cultural Reading.   Reading and understanding something as ambiguous and subtle as an organization's culture can be challenging. Organizational cultures aren't necessarily integrated, and different views of the organization may be held by members at

its center and periphery. Failing to accurately interpret organizational culture can lead to calamity and the inability to accomplish organizational goals (Carlson, 1996).

Individuals who want to get things done within their organizational environments find it helpful to acknowledge the existence and importance of the cultural network. They also recognize the need to become a part of the network by cultivating contacts themselves. Effective cultural networking results from treating all people with the deference and respect generally reserved for the head of the organization. All members of an organization play hidden, but potentially culturally important, roles and should be treated accordingly. Effective cultural networking also results from asking people about the history of the organization and how certain policies and characteristics came to be. Other crucial facets of reading the organizational culture include analyzing the content of what is discussed or written about and paying particular attention to anecdotes and stories that pass through the cultural network.

Methodology

For the purposes of this study, the juxtaposition of quantitative and qualitative methodologies seemed particularly appropriate. The SLEQ, which served as the quantitative measure employed in this study, is designed to assess respondents' perceptions of their preferred and actual teaching/learning environments. Paralleling the preferred and actual forms of the SLEQ is Lincoln and Guba's (1981) definition of *need* as the discrepancy between a target state and an actual state, a definition which they apply in the qualitative approach they refer to as naturalistic inquiry. The qualitative measures (e.g., informal interviews, open-ended survey, observation) used in this study allowed respondents to articulate their felt needs with regard to the teaching/learning environment. They described their visions of what the teaching/learning environment could be (target or preferred state) and contrasted those visions with their perceptions of what exists (actual state).

Data Sources

The primary data source for this study included one urban school's professional staff, a group composed almost entirely of women. Approximately one-third of the staff are African-American, two are Hispanic, and the remaining professional staff members are Caucasian.

It is important to note that, from the inception, its school district designated this school as a professional development school and, when it opened in the fall of 1993, charged it with the responsibility of leading and providing professional development activities for the district's staff. In 1995, the school entered into a formal agreement with a local university, thereby becoming one of that university's professional development school sites and increasing its responsibility for, and involvement in, the preparation of preservice teachers.

Quantitative Measures

In the first three years of the study, teachers and associate teachers responded to the actual and preferred forms of the School Level Environment Questionnaire (SLEQ) (Fisher & Fraser, 1991) as part of inservice meetings and then returned their completed questionnaires to a university representative. The SLEQ, which is based partially on Moos' (1987) research of various work environments, is designed to correspond to the three psychosocial dimensions of relationship, personal development, and system maintenance/system change. The questionnaire's Student Support and Affiliation scales measure relationship dimensions, while the Professional Interest scale measures personal development. Five scales--Staff Freedom, Participatory Decision Making, Innovation, Resource Adequacy, and Work Pressure--measure system maintenance and system change.

The SLEQ has two forms, one to assess respondents' perceptions of their preferred school level environments, and one to assess respondents' perceptions of their actual school level environments. The 56 items of each version utilize a five point response scale. For 27 items, the scale ranges from 5 for Strongly Agree to 1 for Strongly Disagree. The remaining 29 items are scored using an opposite scale, where 1 equals Strongly Agree and 5 equals Strongly Disagree.

Fisher and Fraser (1991) established the SLEQ's reliability and validity with the use of three samples drawn from Australian schools. Subsequently, cross-validation information for the SLEQ has been provided by other studies (e.g., Fisher & Fraser, 1992). Table 1 offers both a description of, and a sample item from, each of the eight SLEQ scales (Fisher & Fraser, 1991).

Qualitative Measures

In the fourth year of the study, staff members provided qualitative data that augmented and complemented the use of the SLEQ as a quantitative measure. Professional staff--including teachers, associate teachers, secretaries, support personnel, and the school's leadership team-- were invited to offer their responses to seven open-ended questions (See Table 2.). All 19 of the school's teachers and all 18 associate teachers chose to participate in the qualitative component of this study. (However, one of the teachers who participated indicated she wanted her input shared only with internal audiences. Consequently, those responses are not included in this study's results.) In addition, 9 other professional staff members responded to the seven open-ended questions. Of a total of 46 respondents, 34 responded to the seven questions in an interview format, and 12 responded to those same seven questions in a written survey format, due to a combination of time constraints and the unavailability of staff members. Informal conversations and interactions with school and district personnel also served as data sources, as did observations, anecdotal records, and reflections that resulted from on-going work with the school's staff.

Data Analyses

Quantitative Measures

Teacher and associate teachers' responses to the preferred and actual forms of the SLEQ were coded, entered into a computer file, and analyzed with the use of Statview. Descriptive statistics for each of the eight scales of both the preferred and actual forms were calculated, with omitted or invalid responses scored as 3. Paired t-tests were calculated to reveal differences in

the eight scale score means derived from the preferred and actual forms of teachers and associate teachers. Tables 3-7 profile scale means, while Table 8 profiles paired $\underline{t}$-test results.

Qualitative Measures

Respondents to the seven open-ended questions were asked to indicate their position as *teacher*, *associate teacher*, or *other support staff* and to indicate if they have been employed at the school for less than two years, two to five years, or more than five years. Their responses were then grouped accordingly, and the data were analyzed using the SLEQ's eight scales as categories: Student Support, Affiliation, Professional Interest, Staff Freedom, Participatory Decision Making, Innovation, Resource Adequacy, and Work Pressure. Emerging themes and patterns also were viewed using the following elements of organizational culture as lenses: shared values, rites and rituals, social standards, organizational politics, and cultural networks.

Guba and Lincoln (1983) proposed four criteria by which to assess naturalistic methodology: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. With respect to credibility, they suggested that prolonged engagement at a site, persistent observation, peers debriefing, triangulation, referential adequacy materials, and member checks are means of safeguarding against loss of credibility or means of continually testing for it.

In this four-year study, the first author functioned as a participant-observer who interacted with the school's professional staff on a regular basis and in a variety of roles (e.g., classroom observer, university supervisor, PDS coordinator, individual student assessor, consultant, collaborative researcher, leadership team member, student intervention team member). In fact, she has been involved with the school since its planning and inception phase in 1992.

Consequently, *credibility* was established via her *prolonged engagement at the site*, her *persistent observations*, and *member checks*, whereby she informally conducted reality checks of her perceptions and culture readings with individual staff members. Anecdotal notations recording her interactions and observations served as *referential adequacy materials* which also functioned as credibility checks. In addition, she engaged in *peers debriefing* with the second

author, who functioned as an external observer and whose direct interactions and on-site time were limited to monthly or bi-monthly site visits. Finally, with regard to credibility, a variety of data sources afforded different perspectives, and therefore allowed for *triangulation* and cross-checking of data and their interpretations.

With regard to *transferability*, the high levels of participation among possible respondents, especially on the qualitative measures, maximized the range of information collected and offered as much as possible by way of *theoretical/purposive sampling* (Guba & Lincoln, 1983). While protecting the identity of the school and its staff, the authors attempted to provide as much description and context as possible, thereby addressing Guba and Lincoln's (1983) *thick description* criterion. Providing sufficient information about a context allows readers to experience the situation vicariously and, more importantly, a thick description allows readers to make judgments about the degree to which working hypotheses or assertions from one particular context may be transferable to a similar context (Guba & Lincoln, 1983; Lincoln & Guba, 1988).

With respect to *dependability, use of overlap methods,* such as assessing the teaching/learning environment or school culture in a variety of ways, constitutes one type of triangulation, which supports reliability claims, as well as validity claims. Another way the authors established dependability was by forging an "audit trail" that consisted of accurate records of their methodological steps, decision points, raw data, and data analyses processes.

Triangulation also played a role with regard to establishing *confirmability*, or the trustworthiness of the data. In addition, the researchers conducted a *confirmability audit*, by tracing back through analysis steps to the original data to ensure that their interpretations of the data were reasonable and meaningful. Finally, confirmability was monitored by *practicing reflexivity*. That is, the first author, in her role as participant-observer, engaged in both written and oral reflection for the purpose of uncovering or discovering: underlying epistemological

assumptions, reasons for formulating the study in a particular way, implicit assumptions, and biases about the context of the problem (Guba & Lincoln, 1983).

Results

School Level Environment Questionnaire Results

In 1997, 37 teachers and associate teachers completed the preferred and actual forms of the SLEQ. First year SLEQ results (See Table 3.) indicated that teacher and associate teacher means on the preferred form of the SLEQ were significantly more favorable than their means on the actual form of all eight of the SLEQ scales. Such results suggest that teachers perceived some incongruities between their expectations for teaching/learning environments and the actual teaching/learning environments they experienced on a daily basis. Specifically, they perceived that they experienced more work pressure than they would prefer and that they would like to have more student support, more of their affiliation needs met, more sharing of professional interests, more staff freedom, more participatory decision making, more innovation, and more adequate resources.

In 1998, 40 teachers and associate teachers responded to the preferred and actual forms of the SLEQ. Second year SLEQ results (See Table 4.) revealed statistically significant mean differences on all scales except one--Staff Freedom. The 1998 mean differences for all eight scales were less than the 1997 mean differences.

In 1999, 32 teachers and associate teachers completed the preferred and actual forms of the SLEQ. Third year SLEQ results (See Table 5.) revealed a continuing pattern of significant differences between respondents' preferred teaching/learning environments and their perceptions of their actual teaching/learning environments. For all eight SLEQ scales, mean differences between the preferred and actual forms were statistically significant. As Table 6 illustrates, for five of the scale means of the preferred form (Student Support, Affiliation, Professional Interest, Participatory Decision Making, and Resource Adequacy), third year means were higher than the first and second year means. Conversely, as Table 7 illustrates, for five of the scale means of the

actual form of the SLEQ (Student Support, Staff Freedom, Participatory Decision Making,

Innovation, and Resource Adequacy), third-year means were lower than the first- and second-

year means.   On the remaining three scales of the actual form (Affiliation, Professional Interest,

and Work Pressure), third year means were almost identical to first year means. In fact, mean

differences for all eight scales were greatest in the third year and smallest in the second year (See

Table 8.).

<div align="center">Interview Results</div>

Self-Report of Satisfaction with School Culture

The last of the seven interview prompts which participants responded to stated: "On a

scale from 1 to 10 with 1 being low and 10 being high, rate your level of satisfaction with the

overall school culture at this moment in time." Table 9 profiles the means of participants'

responses.

Disaggregation by role reveals that the mean of associate teachers' responses is the

highest, at 6.56, while the other support staff's mean is lowest, at 5.14. Further disaggregation

by years of employment at the school reveals that teachers and associate teachers who have been

at the school for over five years were less satisfied with the overall school culture than those

teachers and associate teachers who have been at the school for fewer than five years.

Conversely, other support staff who have been employed at the school for less than two years

reported lower levels of satisfaction with the overall school culture than did other support staff

who have been at the school for more than two years. It should be noted that the other support

staff category included all of the school's leadership personnel who responded to the interview

prompts.

Correlation of Interview Responses with SLEQ Scales

Responses to the interview questions were reviewed, analyzed, and correlated with the

eight scales of the School Level Environment Questionnaire (SLEQ): Student Support,

Affiliation, Professional Interest, Staff Freedom, Participatory Decision Making, Innovation,

Resource Adequacy, and Work Pressure. Responses related to each of the eight SLEQ scales revealed serious concerns which support the significant differences that have been determined on each dimension of the quantitative measure. In the following sections, issues that emerged as a result of the intensive interview protocol are addressed as they relate to each of the SLEQ scales. In addition, when appropriate, strengths which respondents identified are included.

Student Support.   Respondents identified parent involvement, teaming, and dedication of the teaching staff as strengths of the school culture which provide support for students and their families. Because Valley View School has a family support coordinator and an extensive family support program, families, in addition to children, are viewed as learners and consumers of this comprehensive program. Concerns that emerged regarding family support and leadership revealed critical value differences and relationship issues, especially as related to the school principal and the family support coordinator. The following comments are representative of the concerns which respondents identified.

➢ *Children and families do not feel supported. Support comes through material things--not caring and sharing.*

➢ *The principal rarely asks parents what they want from the school; parents don't get the idea that they're an equal part of the team.*

➢ *The principal needs to be friendlier and do more with parents--participate more with families and be friendlier with families and staff.*

➢ *Parents have said that the principal and family support coordinator are not approachable when they have a concern to discuss.*

Concerns related to the staff and children center on teachers' expectations and levels of acceptance.

➢ *Some teachers expect every family to be like their family. Black and white is an issue; SES is an issue; there is some mistrust.*

➤ *We have teachers who tell the parents they should not come in the classrooms by their attitudes. They know they are not welcome.*

➤ *We have teachers who have been hired who are...not concerned about the children or parents.*

    <u>Affiliation.</u>   Some respondents reported feeling supported by the principal, supported when there were conflicts with parents, and supported more by fellow teachers in recent years. Leadership concerns that emerged focused on lack of trust, teaming, and caring.

➤ *There is no trust. I used to go to the principal, and I can't possibly do that. I do not trust the principal; there's backbiting. I like to stay in my room now.*

➤ *Our leader needs to be a people person. We are to be a model for teaming.*

➤ *The principal is trying to support us in the way that she understands, but it doesn't fit with the vision and mission of the school.*

➤ *I joined the school when hugs and love were acted out with sincerity because the leaders cared for everyone. That doesn't happen now.*

➤ *One child said, "I wish I knew who our principal is; I wish I could meet our principal."*

    Concerns related to the staff and children center on respect, differences between staff members based on roles and expectations, and issues of communication.

➤ *Respect is as low as it can get.*

➤ *Staff members don't speak to each other. There is a division between teachers and the extended care staff.*

➤ *Divisions between [lower and upper division] teachers have been driven deeper. Statements are made openly that put down the [lower division] teachers because they do not teach enough reading, math, writing, and science.*

➤ *[Upper division] teachers are not allowed to have subs to attend professional development...designed for all staff....*

➤ *The differences between teachers and associates are being stressed now, and it wasn't that way before.*

➤ *I still don't know a lot of the teachers, and they don't know me. I was never formally introduced.*

➤ *There's little or no communication between family support staff and teachers.*

Professional Interest.   Respondents reported that the professional development focus of Valley View School provides the staff with many opportunities to grow both personally and professionally. The following comments illustrate how much staff members appreciate these opportunities and how they contribute to their professionalism.

➤ *One significant strength is that the teachers can further their education by attending seminars.*

➤ *This is the first time I have worked in a school that has so much opportunity for allowing all staff to grow through many professional development activities.*

➤ *We are walking the walk for lifelong learners.*

➤ *[There is] a lot of knowledge and skill in our building.*

➤ *[There is] a lot of support for implementing new strategies and techniques.*

➤ *We have a great partnership with [the local university]. Many more wonderful things could be going on.*

On the other hand, respondents also identified a number of concerns regarding professional development and professional interests that reveal conflicts and issues that need to be addressed within the school.

➤ *Professional development is extremely difficult to attend. I always feel that I'm not doing the right thing for the children because it's my only time to work with first-graders.*

➤ *I've been feeling guilty about asking to go to conferences. The principal doesn't want to get subs and doesn't want people out of the building.*

➤ *[Upper division] teachers can't attend [professional development] if the administration doesn't want to get subs.*

➤ *We need more staff things where we're made to think--not just eat.*

➤ *Put the professional development component on equal footing with everything else; make it worth the time of the teachers.*

➤ *I would like all the staff to be included in the professional development.*

➤ *The principal needs to attend the professional development activities with her staff. For the short time that the principal comes to workshops, she is often reading the mail, writing something, or talking to someone. This does not show that she values the learning that should be taking place.*

➤ *[Upper division] teachers are told that the district-wide workshops are not going to benefit them.*

➤ *There needs to be more training for those who are just joining us. Give the new staff the training and understanding they need.*

Staff Freedom.   Respondents communicated a number of concerns regarding issues of staff freedom with some recommendations for change.

➤ *We don't have staff meetings, and when we do people don't feel comfortable speaking up because of fears of repercussion.*

➤ *If meetings are called, it is without adequate notice (10 minutes before). Sometimes the day before is not enough if there are other meetings already scheduled.*

➤ *Sometimes there are committee meetings that not all members of the committee find out about. Then they are asked why they were not there.*

➤ *The teachers are struggling with using the district curriculum in a school with a philosophy that promotes using developmentally appropriate practice and authentic assessment. Teachers are turning to more traditional methods.*

➢ *Staff members that report to the family support coordinator do not feel respected or valued by her. They report being yelled at and corrected in front of others in meetings/other places in the school. There is a lot of turnover among this group.*

➢ *I feel like I have someone working against me every step of the way in my job.*

➢ *Feels like a big risk to say what you think.*

➢ *Now my opinion is not as important.*

➢ *A lot of people don't want to stand up and speak in a big group--which I am guilty of also.*

➢ *The teachers need more open discussions and opportunities to talk to each other about instructional strategies across [grade levels] as well as within [grade levels].*

➢ *Build a curriculum and staff notebook with all sorts of information new staff NEED.*

Participatory Decision Making. Some respondents have commented that they work well together, that they are all there to do the same job, and that they are all involved by the principal in the work of the school. Concerns related to teacher ownership, family involvement, teaming, and staff selection procedures were identified as deterrents to participatory decision making.

➢ *[Our previous principal] always asked for our input--ALWAYS. Now we are TOLD, and always at the last minute.*

➢ *Ownership [needs] to be given back to the teachers--decision making, policy things that affect the school, shared governance.*

➢ *Families must have more to say in planning. WE MUST INCLUDE THEM because they are the only ones who know what their needs are! Staff must develop an attitude that empowers families.*

➢ *The parent participation has declined tremendously.*

➢ *The interview process was ignored and [individuals] not in tune with the vision and our families [have been] hired.*

➢ *The [staff] need some serious help with teaming.*

Innovation.   Respondents recognize that the district considers Valley View School an example of educational innovation.

➢ *[We offer] a curriculum and a vision that is not shared by most schools.*

➢ *[We offer] a varied and innovative curriculum [focused] on developmentally appropriate practice.*

➢ *[The] multiage [design] is very positive -- for my child it has been wonderful.*

➢ *We teach to the child and not necessarily the curriculum.*

➢ *The year-round schedule is absolutely the number one strength.*

A number of responses revealed dissonance and discontent regarding staff participation in this innovation and the change process that accompanied it.

➢ *We haven't completely gone down hill, but if something doesn't happen quickly, we will. I hear people really being dissatisfied.*

➢ *[One] thing that scares me is that I sometimes feel that when we started this program, we were going to change others and now...others are changing us.*

➢ *We should be able to do more than we're doing. We should be able to stand up now and say, "Hey, look at us." [But we can't].*

➢ *We were supposed to have broken many pairs of dimes [sic:paradigms], but now it looks as though we have been molded into shape [rather than molding others].*

➢ *Just give the school and parents the chance they started out with and let everyone be involved; we're all in this together.*

➢ *Progression to keep this school on the leading edge in education has either been put on hold or stopped.*

➢ *When I came I was all excited about being here--now I just go and listen--the fire has gone out. The climate affects you.*

➢ *If we compare to where we were a few years ago, there was a lot more going on then and more cohesion and satisfaction than there is now.*

Resource Adequacy.   Respondents provided the following comments which illustrate that some staff feel that Valley View School provides significant resource support for the children, families, and staff.

➢ *Really great about multicultural [awareness and acceptance] here.*

➢ *Having university involvement for research, teaching, technical assistance, etc. is a wonderful benefit for the center.*

➢ *The parent involvement is a real strength because it impacts student learning.*

➢ *You get a lot of resources and get to know a lot of people.*

➢ *Extended care offers a lot for the kids--Spanish, French, sign language, and keyboard lessons.*

Funding concerns and confusion regarding *how we do things* at both the district and school level have been communicated by a number of respondents. These issues seem to be central to many of the staff concerns regarding systemic change and maintenance of the innovative culture.

➢ *The district has kept us from realizing many goals because they have not given us the resources, since the beginning.*

➢ *There is confusion and conflict over whose budget is going to pay for materials and equipment.*

➢ *If you don't know how to do something, you shouldn't tell the principal. The principal's response was, "I'm so sick of people around here being so helpless and not knowing how to do things."*

➢ *Staff are struggling with the time and management issues of getting the many tasks of teaching, assessment, parent involvement, professional development, etc. completed when their reserves (supportive coworkers and leaders, hope and optimism) are depleted.*

➢ *I feel like using a stamp to mail a letter for school business is overstepping my boundaries. A negative comment comes with each request.*

➤ *We need to be sure that everyone has access to the building spaces. We do not need to let others control the space.*

➤ *Each classroom needs computers with CD-ROMs to enhance the children's learning.*

➤ *[All children] need music and art each week.*

➤ *The process of trying to get the children special services, especially speech, is very cumbersome.*

➤ *We need the planning times straightened out.*

➤ *We need time for home visits.*

➤ *When I joined the staff, the school was always full of parents. People stopped to say, "Hi" and take advantage of the resources and networking available. That doesn't happen now.*

Work Pressure.   Tension, lack of trust, and isolation have been identified as critical attributes of the school culture which are responsible for the high levels of work pressure at Valley View School.

➤ *Many of us are aware of the tension that exists in the office.*

➤ *We have teachers who don't know how to deal with the problems our children go through. Their first reaction is to drag them to the office, to get rid of them.*

➤ *I come to work sick because of the lack of trust.*

➤ *The school climate is terrible!!! I hate to have tours in. We have so much we need to work on.*

➤ *Staff morale is at an all-time low. [Staff] do not feel valued. They are feeling isolated due to lack of communication and support.*

➤ *Teachers are getting burned out trying to keep up with work sampling.*

➤ *Expectations are not always clear.*

➤ *It causes tension when people can't be open and honest.*

Correlation of Interview Responses with Features of Organizational Culture

Responses to the interview questions also were reviewed, analyzed, and correlated with five key components of organizational culture: shared values, rites and rituals, social standards (e.g., communication), organizational politics, and cultural network. In the following sections, emerging patterns that relate to these five features of organizational culture are identified and described.

Shared Values.   Many respondents are agonizing over changes in the way the mission and vision of Valley View School are being communicated and played out.

➢ *The vision was there and now it is not--where did it go? We are straddling two fences. If we are NOT like the rest of the district NOW, we're NOT doing our jobs. Before, if we were NOT like the rest of the district, we were doing our jobs.*

➢ *We continue to struggle with keeping the philosophy and overall foundation of the school alive right now.*

➢ *We're being changed by the district rather than us changing the district.*

➢ *We never had teachers from other district schools visit, as the vision was.*

➢ *The vision is not the same; it's fading; it's blurred.*

➢ *This started out as a school for parents, a school for teachers, and a school for children. The building was designed with three equal purposes; those three leaders were to have equal clout and authority. In the last year or so, that's been getting foggy, mostly because all three leaders are different. We had three dynamic people who knew how to articulate the vision, and now one leader is trying to overstep, and isn't trusting, the other two leaders.*

➢ *From the top down, there needs to be a recommitment to the vision of this school.*

➢ *The mission and vision are really the strengths--as they are written. The mission and the vision were put together with input from parents and community and really envisioned what this is all about.*

> *The vision is not understood by our principal and our leadership team--principal, parent liaison, and professional development coordinator are not on the same road toward it. Some are even heading on a road in the opposite direction.*

> *I pray that the previous principal and those involved are willing to help us by doing what it takes to move us along the road towards our vision.*

<u>Rites and Rituals.</u>   Respondents identified changes that have taken place regarding procedures and staff communication which they believe have negatively impacted the school culture.

> *We started to have [staff] meetings, but they didn't go the way they had originally been intended.*

> *Weekly staff meetings are needed.*

> *The hiring process was very rigorous. That should be in place. We need to follow that consistently.*

> *The [student intervention team] needs some ongoing training and needs to meet on a weekly basis.*

> *Parents who have participated in the past are disappointed that their role has turned to one of fundraising rather than the varied functions of the board in the past. They feel the role of the advisory board has been diminished.*

<u>Social Standards.</u>   Many respondents expressed concerns related to communication and identified negative changes in communication within their school culture.

> *Communication is worse. We do not get together as much.*

> *The communication needs to change.*

> *We need the principal to tell us [what we need to know], rather than spread it like rumors.*

> *Communication has just been terrible.*

> *Communication needs improvement. The previous principal brought us together, and we talked. The current principal says, "I put a lot in a memo so we don't have to meet."*

> *I'm not sure the issue of communication can be addressed with the [present] leadership. I*
>
>   *had hoped that the previous principal would step in, but nothing's happened.*

> *Communication has such anger in our voices.*

> *I would recommend that we open up lines of communication, which are strained.*

> *We need more clear and consistent communication.*

Organizational Politics.   Respondents also noted concerns regarding leaders at the

district and school level, as well as a need to revisit the mission and vision of the school in order

to address political issues.

> *We need somebody up above to come down and start addressing issues and to help us out;*
>
>   *someone that's in charge...for the district.*

> *At [a recent inservice], some staff member stated that people need to say "Hi" to each other,*
>
>   *and everyone cheered, but I haven't seen any changes.*

> *I'd like to see our leadership team work together more.*

> *Too much politics and sugarcoating*

> *We need a retreat situation so that we all start on the same page.*

> *I wish we could connect more with the outgoing schools [in the district] -- both directions.*

Cultural Network.   In order to interpret the data relative to the cultural network at Valley

View School, it is necessary to understand both the history and the leadership structure.

University, school district, and community members met for approximately two years to develop

the mission, vision, learning environment designs, interview process, professional development

expectations, staff selection criteria, student/family selection criteria, assessment plans, and

program evaluation design. The school was designed with a team of architects who collaborated

with the planning teams over a period of years. The leadership structure of the school was built

on the foundational concept of teaming. A triad of leaders--school director/principal,

professional development coordinator, and family support coordinator--were selected before the

school opened. In addition, a lead teacher who provides support and mentors fellow teachers functions as a member of the leadership team.

Since the opening of the school, all the key cultural network players have changed. After approximately four years of involvement in the school, the professional development coordinator resigned her position. This position was vacant for approximately two years before a new professional development coordinator was hired.

The school director/principal transitioned into a central office position within the district after approximately six years of involvement in the school. In spite of the role change, this individual continues to be involved in the school in a supervisory capacity and remains a very active and highly respected member of the community. A new school director/principal was named approximately one and a half years ago. She recently announced her retirement effective June of 2001.

Finally, the family support coordinator resigned her position approximately one year ago. This position has been assumed by another individual.

Over the past three years, as new leaders have transitioned into these three key positions, many changes have ensued regarding *how we do things here.* Staff who joined the school at its inception have experienced a dramatic shift in leadership styles and teaming expectations. There also have been recent personnel changes in other leadership positions, such as the lead teacher. As a result, respondents voiced many concerns regarding leadership during the interviews we conducted. They identified key players in the school culture and, without prompting, offered clear recommendations for change.

➤ *Family support leadership is significantly different in a negative way.*

➤ *People in the front office need to get their act together.*

➤ *First, we need a principal committed to the vision and willing to be a team player; secondly, a parent coordinator willing to do the same; thirdly, the leadership team and teachers*

working together to again strive towards breaking paradigms and working on the cutting edge.

➤ I don't want to lose the adult education teacher or her program. She is a great asset to the school.

➤ Family support needs a dynamic leader who will be nonjudgmental and accepting of all families. Parent participation is down, and many parents do not feel comfortable or welcome coming into the school, particularly the office.

➤ Family support [staff] need ongoing training and support. They also need an opportunity to connect with the teaching staff.

➤ Changes in leadership roles need to happen in order to have changes come about in the rest of the school. Trust building and relationship building are necessary. I don't have much hope that this can occur with the present leadership.

Conclusions

School Level Environment

The Student Support and Affiliation scales of the School Level Environment Questionnaire (SLEQ) measure relationship dimensions. When viewing both the quantitative and qualitative data, it becomes very clear that relationships between the principal and parents, the family support coordinator and parents, the school staff and principal, and the entire school staff are in need of serious review. Furthermore, relationships of some of the teaching staff with parents and children appear to be in need of improvement. Issues of diversity, respect, teaming, and trust must be addressed.

The Professional Interest Scale of the SLEQ measures personal development. Although there is recognition among the staff that the professional development focus of the school has positively influenced their growth, concerns have surfaced regarding the ability of all staff to participate at a level that is personally and professionally enriching and supportive. In addition, it appears that professional development is not valued by all members of the leadership team, and

this is creating a great deal of dissonance within the school culture as well as negatively impacting relationships between key leaders in the school.

The Staff Freedom, Participatory Decision Making, Innovation, Resource Adequacy, and Work Pressure scales collectively measure system maintenance and system change. Taken together, changes which have ensued in the school leadership and culture over the past three years have resulted in major divisions among the staff and parents, as well as a decline in shared understanding and satisfaction with the overall school culture.

Organizational Culture

The philosophy of Valley View School provides a framework for viewing the data within the context of the school's lifeblood--its mission and vision.

➢ *WE BELIEVE that the society we have tomorrow depends on how we nurture, educate, and challenge our children today. The love, protection, wisdom, and guidance we invest in our children today will return to us in productive, useful citizens of the future.*

➢ *WE PLEDGE to promote the principles of self-esteem; self-discipline; and respect for others, their diverse background, cultures, and family structures. We will devote our energies to building harmonious environments in our homes, schools, and communities.*

➢ *WE COMMIT to reducing barriers that prevent the joining of resources in providing the most effective services to our youth, families, and the community. A focus on the whole child will guide our actions.*

➢ *WE ENCOURAGE families, citizens, community organizations, schools, and government to work together to create a safe and positive environment for all children, to stimulate their love of learning, and to inspire them to reach their full potential.*

The shared values that provided the bedrock for this school culture have been replaced with confusion, concern, and a blurred vision. There is a sense that all members of the leadership team do not support the vision. The tension created by the shifting values is analogous to an earthquake which is shaking the foundation upon which this school was built.

The communication breakdown and changed rituals have resulted in a lack of trust and an increase in negative dispositions among the staff and parents. One significant change in the cultural component of rites and rituals relates to hiring practices. As we alluded to earlier, great care was taken in the hiring of the original leadership team. The same can be said of the hiring of all original professional staff members. Although we know of no official changes in the school's hiring policies, the hiring practices certainly have changed. Originally, efforts were made to ensure that the professional staff hired adhered to and exemplified the school's values and vision. In addition, hiring of new staff was a shared responsibility that involved school leaders and staff.

Those variables no longer operate as "givens" within Valley View's organizational culture. The result has been a blurring of the school's vision and lack of agreement and articulation regarding *how we do things here*, as illustrated by the respondent who commented: "The principal is trying to support us in the way that she understands, but it doesn't fit with the vision and mission of the school."

Doors are closing, and anger is invading relationships. The cultural network players are under a great deal of stress. The staff and parents are looking to the district--the wider political organization--to restore the vision of the school and provide them with the hope and passion that once pervaded this school culture.

The quantitative and qualitative lenses that we used to analyze Valley View's learning environment and school culture revealed significant differences between actual and preferred states and allowed us to identify key issues and concerns that offer a plausible explanation for those differences. However, our work as researchers is not yet complete. We have a professional responsibility to report our findings to an internal committee at Valley View School, and therefore have scheduled a meeting with school and district personnel for that purpose. It is our hope that the results of this study will serve as a catalyst that leads to a refocusing of Valley View's vision and a fine tuning of its mission.

Significance of the Study

So what, if anything, makes this more than a study that relates to one particular school and its situation-specific challenges and opportunities? We suggest that embedded within this four-year study lie some assertions that possess potential for generalizability to other school settings.

Assertion 1

❖ The juxtaposition of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, when applied appropriately, can greatly enhance the study of learning environments.

This is not so much an assertion as a reassertion, but one we feel bears repeating. As previously noted, distinctions between quantitative and qualitative methods often prove unhelpful. Used in tandem, quantitative methods can paint in broad strokes, while qualitative methods can paint in finer lines that offer more detail and specifics that elaborate on the patterns and differences revealed by quantitative measures.

Assertion 2

❖ The features of organizational culture offer multiple lenses through which to view learning environments and organizational change.

Mental flexibility involves looking at things from different perspectives, and certainly the study of learning environments can benefit from the use of multiple perspectives in data collection. Tools such as the SLEQ have much to offer, but they, of course, are not designed to fit every purpose. In fact, tools are not effective when they are designed for too many purposes or when they are applied inappropriately. Consequently, it makes sense to use a variety of approaches. When researchers want a close-up view of a school's culture, then the specific features of organizational cultures (e.g., shared values, rites and rituals, social standards, organizational politics, cultural network) can serve as zoom lenses that offer that close-up view. Simply put, there are benefits to studying organizational culture.

Assertion 3

❖ An organization's most important resource is its people. Therefore, leadership and hiring practices do matter.

File this assertion under the "duh" category if you like, but it seems that schools as organizations--like all organizations--occasionally forget some of the things they know about what makes organizations effective and productive. Perhaps organizations can be lulled into believing that values and norms are institutionalized and therefore not susceptible to personnel changes. This case study suggests otherwise.

Assertion 4

❖ "Where there is no vision, the people perish..." (Proverbs 29:18a).

Dramatic effect aside, this assertion was the first to come to mind as we began reviewing the qualitative data this study produced. Metaphorically, many of Valley View's staff members are experiencing a slow death, as they watch their school's now blurred vision slowly fade from view. We believe this assertion generalizes to many other organizations where there is no communication or unclear communication regarding *what we do here, how we do things here,* and/or *why we do what we do.* A clear, credible, and compelling mission and vision can offer meaning and a sense of direction to even the most overworked and underpaid members of an organizational culture.

Table 1
Scale description and sample item for each scale in the SLEQ

Scale name	Scale description	Sample item
Student support	There is good rapport between teachers and students, and students behave in a responsible, self-disciplined manner.	Most students are helpful and cooperative to teachers. (+)
Affiliation	Teachers can obtain assistance, advice, and encouragement, and are made to feed accepted by colleagues.	I feel accepted by other teachers. (+)
Professional interest	Teachers discuss professional matters, show interesting their work, and seek further professional development.	Teachers avoid talking with each other about teaching learning. (-)
Staff freedom	Teachers are free of set rules, guidelines, and procedures, and of supervision to ensure rule compliance.	I'm not expected to conform to a particular teaching style. (+)
Participatory decision making	Teachers have the opportunity to participate in decision making.	I have to refer even small matters to a senior member of staff for a Final answer. (-)
Innovation	The school is in favor of planned change, experimentation, classroom openness, and individualization.	Teachers are encouraged to be innovative in this school. (+)
Resource adequacy	Support personnel, facilities, finance, equipment, and resources are suitable and adequate.	The supply of equipment and resources is inadequate. (-)
Work pressure	The extent to which work pressure dominates the school environment.	Teachers have to work long hours to complete all their work. (+)

(Based on Fisher & Fraser, 1991). Items marked with (+) are scored 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively for the responses Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Items designed (-) are scored in the reverse manner. Omitted or invalid responses are scored 3.
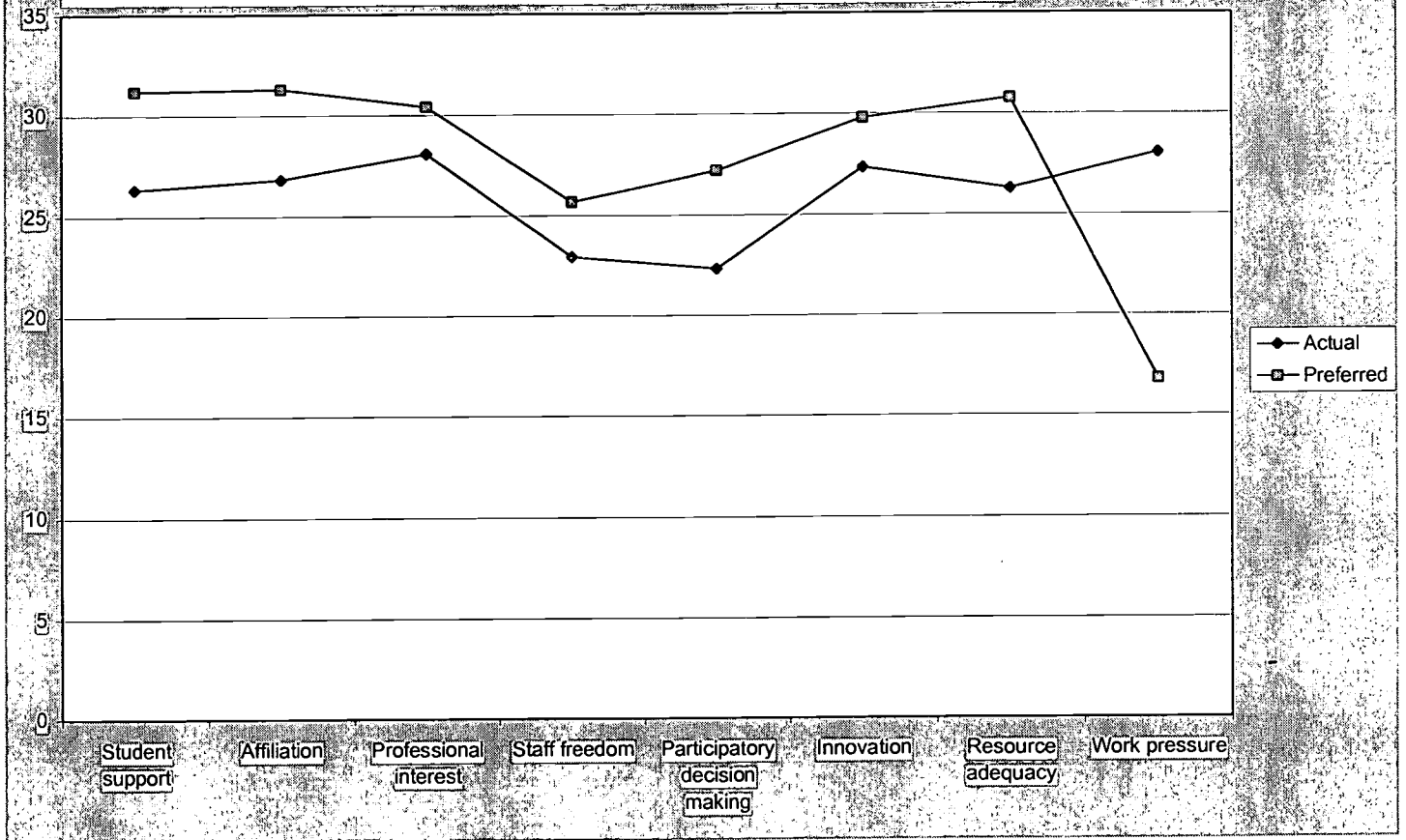
Table 2
Interview questions

1. What two attributes would you identify as significant strengths of Valley View School? Why do you see these as strengths?

2. Compared to the way Valley View School functioned when you joined the staff/school, how do you think the school is progressing? Is the school functioning better or worse than when you became a member of the school? Why?

3. What changes, if any, would you recommend? Why?

    Prompt by asking for further details/examples related to the following:

    - Curriculum
    - Assessment
    - Professional development/resources
    - Teaming
    - School climate
    - Communication
    - Leadership/Administrative Team
    - Family Support

4. How supported do you feel as a member of the school? Do you feel more or less supported than when you joined the staff/school?

5. How supported do your children and families feel as members of the school? Overall, do you think the children and families feel more or less supported than they did previously? Why?

6. Identify two goals or activities you would recommend to enhance the functioning of Valley View School. How realistic is it that these goals/activities could be developed in the next year?

7. On a scale from 1 to 10 with 1 being low and 10 being high, rate your level of satisfaction with the overall school culture at this moment in time.

Table 3
1997 Scale means of SLEQ actual and preferred forms

Table 4

1998 Scale means of SLEQ actual and preferred forms

Chart showing scale means with Actual and Preferred lines across categories: Student support, Affiliation, Professional interest, Staff freedom, Participatory decision making, Innovation, Resource adequacy, Work pressure. Y-axis from 0 to 35.

Table 5
1999 Scale means of SLEQ actual and preferred forms

Legend:
- Actual
- Preferred

X-axis categories: Student support, Affiliation, Professional interest, Staff freedom, Participatory decision making, Innovation, Resource adequacy, Work pressure
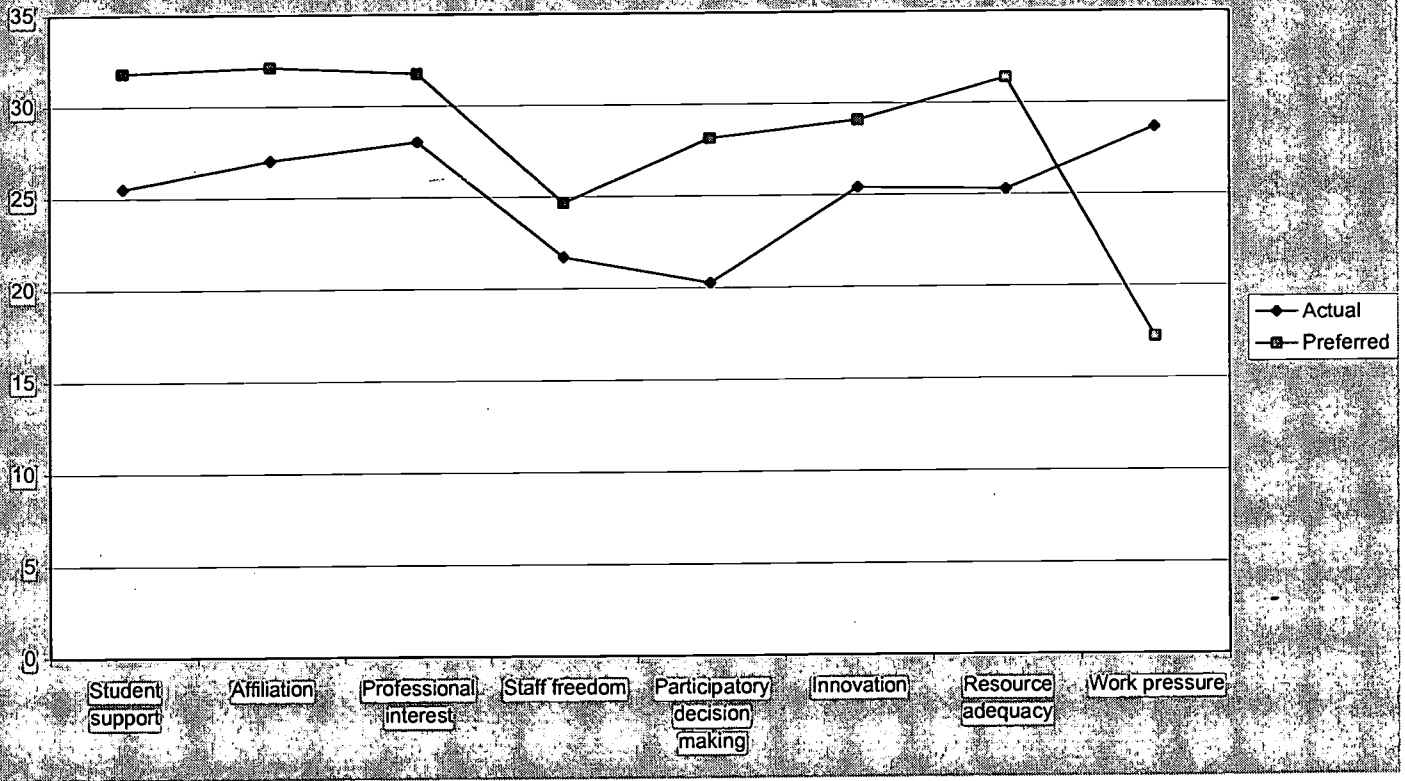
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Table 6

Scale means of SLEQ preferred form 1997, 1998, and 1999

Student support	Affiliation	Professional interest	Staff freedom	Participatory decision making	Innovation	Resource adequacy	Work pressure

Legend:
- 1997
- 1998
- 1999

Table 7
Scale means of SLEQ actual form 1997, 1998, and 1999

Legend: ◆ 1997, ▣ 1998, △ 1999

X-axis categories: Student support, Affiliation, Professional interest, Staff freedom, Participatory decision making, Innovation, Resource adequacy, Work pressure

Table 8
SLEQ paired t-test results - 1997, 1998, and 1999

Student support scale

Year	Mean Diff	Df	t-value	P-value
1997	4.865	36	5.537	<.0001
1998	3.075	39	3.750	.0006
1999	6.312	31	9.010	<.0001

Affiliation scale

Year	Mean Diff	Df	t-value	P-value
1997	4.486	36	6.166	<.0001
1998	2.150	39	3.180	.0029
1999	5.094	31	7.916	<.0001

Professional interest scale

Year	Mean Diff	Df	t-value	P-value
1997	2.324	36	3.801	.0005
1998	1.525	39	3.211	.0027
1999	3.719	31	5.236	<.0001

Staff freedom scale

Year	Mean Diff	Df	t-value	P-value
1997	2.676	36	3.772	.0006
1998	.675	39	1.201	.2370*
1999	2.938	31	3.903	.0005

* Statistically insignificant

Table 8 continued
SLEQ paired t-test results - 1997, 1998, and 1999

Participatory decision making scale

Year	Mean Diff	Df	t-value	P-value
1997	4.865	36	6.222	<.0001
1998	3.825	39	6.564	<.0001
1999	7.875	31	7.028	<.0001

Innovation scale

Year	Mean Diff	Df	t-value	P-value
1997	2.459	36	4.384	<.0001
1998	1.900	39	3.587	.0009
1999	3.688	31	5.050	<.0001

Resource adequacy scale

Year	Mean Diff	Df	t-value	P-value
1997	4.486	36	4.930	<.0001
1998	2.075	39	3.118	.0034
1999	6.094	31	6.851	<.0001

Work pressure scale

Year	Mean Diff	Df	t-value	P-value
1997	-11.270	36	-12.395	<.0001
1998	-9.700	39	-10.380	<.0001
1999	-11.438	31	-12.076	<.0001

Table 9

Mean level of satisfaction with the overall school culture by role and years of service

Using a scale of 1 to 10 with one being low and 10 being high, teachers, associate teachers, and support staff rated their overall satisfaction with the school culture. Results are as follows:

GROUP	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	MEAN LEVEL OF SATISFACTION
Teachers Overall	18	6.30
Teachers employed less than 2 years	4	6.00
Teachers employed 2 to 5 years	6	6.25
Teachers employed over 5 years	8	5.87
Associate Teachers Overall	18	6.56
Associates employed less than 2 years	4	7.50
Associates employed 2 to 5 years	4	7.25
Associates employed over 5 years	10	6.00
Support Staff Overall	6	5.14
Support staff employed less than 2 years	3	3.33
Support staff employed 2 to 5 years	1	5.00
Support staff employed over 5 years	2	6.00
All respondents	42	6.22

[These means are based on the ratings supplied by 42 of the total number of 45 respondents.]

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