A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS SCHOOL CLIMATE AND THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY AT A PRIVATE SCHOOL, MYANMAR

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Abstract: This study investigated the relationship between school climate and the professional learning community at Our Inspiration Academic Center private boarding school, Myanmar. The research was quantitative and correlational in design and used the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ) and the Professional Learning Community Assessment Questionnaire. Means and Standard Deviation, and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient were used to analyze the data for testing the hypothesis. The 55 respondents, all full-time teachers from Our Inspiration Academic Center private boarding school, completed the questionnaire. This study found that teachers' perceptions of school climate and professional learning community were high, and there was no significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of school climate and professional learning community at Our Inspiration Academic Center private boarding school, Myanmar. The result of Pearson correlation coefficient for the r-value was .039 with a significance value of .775 The findings of this study showed that teachers should have to respect, share ideas among colleagues and actively involved in collaborative teaching and learning processes, cooperative work ethic to become the school as open climate and implement the school as PLC.

Keywords: School climate; Professional learning community; Teachers' perceptions.

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Introduction

Continuous learning is one of the most crucial factors affecting teacher quality in schools. Professional learning communities support the current learning process, can build up the live action of teachers' collaboration between school community members to improve the quality of learning school organization and school life within the school (Pruitt & Robert, 2014). It was developing schools where every aspect of the community supports learning and provides help to everyone who meets the school to contribute to the learning community. It is an important concept. "Learning is not an add on to the role of teaching professional; it is a habitual activity where the group learns how to learn together continuously" (Hord, 2009, p 40).

A professional learning community is a group of educators who meet regularly, sharing knowledge and skills, and work collaboratively and harmoniously to improve teaching skills and the performance of students (DuFour, DuFour & Eaker, 2006). According to Speire (2011), for the last 20 years, educators have been promoting professional learning communities on an international level as a solution to improving K-12 academic achievement. In brief, the professional learning community focuses on quality teaching that results in students' successful learning. Quality teaching strengthened and increased through continuous professional learning, and professional learning community setting promotes adult learning.

School climate is one of the most vital aspects which an enormous influence on the students' learning process (Aldridge, Fraser, Fozdar, Ala' I & Earnest, 2015). Besides, Freiberg (1999) also described the school climate as the soul and heart of a school. Being the pivotal point, it loves the school community members and leads it forward. Due to the excellent quality school, each one feels supported about their worth, dignity, and importance. Such continuous helping creates a sense of belonging among the members. Moreover, school climate refers to the quality and character of school life (National School Climate Center, 2007). It is an essential factor what a school succeeds with its students. Also, it is the characteristic that differs from other organizations, which has an impact on people's interaction in an organization too.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were as follows:
1. To identify teachers' perceptions towards school climate at Our Inspiration Academic Center private boarding school, Myanmar.
2. To identify teachers' perceptions towards professional learning community at Our Inspiration Academic Center private boarding school, Myanmar.

3. To determine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of school climate and professional learning community at Our Inspiration Academic Center private boarding school, Myanmar.

Literature Review
2.1 School Climate
Today, in Myanmar, there has been an increasing interest in school climate. Since the ministry of education and UNICEF have focused on school climate in order to improve school strategy that supports all community members such as students, parents or guardians, and teachers, staff members in school, as well as principals and others (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009). They all need to work altogether, feel safe learning, to get engagement with each other in their school. Nowadays, researchers and educators have increasingly admitted or aware of the importance of school climate. To improve the climate in the school, this is an attainable and school improvement strategy that encourages good relationships, school dropout prevention, and school connectedness (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). According to the National Climate Council (2007), the school climate directly reflects the school environment, such as the relationship of each personality, values, that depends on the people who have got an experience of school life. On the other hand, the school which has a positive climate that supports people feeling such as socially, emotionally, physically safe. Nevertheless, educators emphasize the benefits and satisfaction of learning.

2.2 School Climate Theory
Hoy and Tarter (1997) mentioned that there are three dimensions of the capacity of principals, which are *supportive, directive, and restrictive*. they are defined as follows:

For this study, *supportive principal behaviors* defined as a primary concern for teachers through listening and being open to suggestions of teachers. Praise is genuine and frequent, while criticism is constructive. The *supportive principal's behavior* reflects a fundamental concern for teachers and is characterized as a principal who listens, is open to teacher suggestions, praises genuinely and frequently, and provides constructive criticism. The supportive principals respect their staffs' professional competence and exhibit both a personal and professional interest. Supportive principals respect the professional competence of each member of their staff and exhibit personal and professional interest (Hoy and Tarter, 1997).

For this study, *directive principal behaviors* defined as rigid, involving close supervision with the principal maintaining close and constant control overall

teacher and school activities, down to the smallest detail. *The directive principal's behavior* is rigid and insists on close supervision. Principals characterized as directive maintain constant control over all teacher and school activities. The *restrictive principal's behavior* is burdensome, hindering teachers, rather than facilitating their work. Excessive paperwork, committee requirements, and routine duties are examples of *restrictive principal behaviors*.

According to Hoy and Tarter (1997), another three dimensions of the capacity of teachers are *collegial, committed, and disengaged* that are defined as follows: For this study, *collegial teacher behavior* defined as they can accept support openly from interactions among teachers. They have mutual respect, enthusiasm for their professional competence of their colleagues (Hoy and Tarter, 1997). *Committed Teacher Behaviors* defined as reflecting a robust and cohesive network of social support among the faculty where teachers know each other well and provide strong support for each other. For this study, *disengaged teacher behaviors* were defined as a lack of meaning and focus on professional activities. Disengaged teachers simply put in the time, are nonproductive in group efforts or team building, are critical of their colleagues and the organization, and have no common goal orientation.

Collegial teacher behavior shows that open-minded, respectful, and helpful to another through personally and professionally. *Behavior committed* influenced by teachers' work to provide students success. On the contrary, the behavior of the teacher, which is *disengaged*, represents both lacking foci on professional activities and colleagues' acceptance. (Hoy & Tarter, 1997).

Moreover, *supportive, restrictive, and directive* principal behaviors identified as openness in teacher behaviors, which means to interactions, respectful, open-minded, enlightened that leads to students: success and collegial relationship. (Hoy & Tarter, 1997). Besides, school represents an open climate that has a capacity towards all school staff members who were interested in their work, with trust, respect, and cooperation with each other within the school environment (Hoy, 1990). Thus, positive interactions will become within both students and teachers by the principal.

2.3 Concept of professional learning communities
According to Hord (2009), the professional learning community centers on the quality of teaching that strengthens and increases through continuous learning. Dufour (2004) noted plc to focus on more learning rather than teaching through collaboration and accountability within school. Plc also focuses on critically examine practices to improve students' outcomes. Hord, Roussin &

Sommers (2012) said that creation and support are the foundational understanding of the purpose of plc.

Dufour (2004) said that plc also operates under the assumption that the key to improving learning for students. The essence of plc is a focus on and commitment to the learning of each student. To improve student learning, the members of plc create and guided by a clear vision to help all students learn successfully. He also mentioned that school as plc is composed of collaborative teams whose members work interdependently and mutually accountable to achieve common goals.

The main point of PLC is to value teachers' successful results in their life skills and to teach at the school environment, to improve students' learning also changing and improving instructional practices such as collaboration outside classrooms (DuFour, 2004; Sleegers, Denbork, Verbiest, Moolennar, & Daly, 2013). There is an interrelation between leaders and the strength of the school community by supporting social capital which promotes trust and builds teachers' professional corporation (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2012).

2.4 Hord's Five Dimensions of the Professional Learning Community
Supportive and Shared Leadership
According to Hord's work (1997b), continuous learning is one of the school characteristics, promotes the school culture, which is vital for supportive and shared leadership in schools. Leaders' authority and the whole staff's boost action is needed to promote culture and to develop as a community (Hord, 1997b.p2). According to Hipp and Huffman (2008), all the school community members should be participated and involved in sharing ideas, school administrator's authority, which offers into decision making by fostering and promoting leadership among staff (p.4). Power, authority, and decision making are shared and encouraged by the principal. It may be a difficult challenge for the principal because the sharing of power and authority may be strict not only for the principal but also for the school staff as well as Hargreaves and Fink (2006) noted that "the principal is not made irrelevant by positively distributed leadership that professional learning community represents" (p.127). Administrators and teachers have openly discussed instructions problems and identify the problems as well as explore the solution together.

Shared Values and Vision. Kruse, Louis, and Bryk (1995) said that shared values are characteristics of PLC. It agrees with all staff members about school mission, values, and norms that are shaped by their behaviors as professionals. Little (1990) pointed out that teachers' shared vision is an issue of a school

community, and it becomes the accountability for standards-based instruction and assessment. Moreover, shared ideas are a vehicle for teachers that is provided by learning community model.

Senge (1990) also said that a shared vision seems like a collective experience. It is foreknowledge act after dull conformity as well as the picture of an image. On the other hand, it is the set of guiding rules of an organization that fosters the organization into action towards a common goal. For instance, school vision serves to guide the stakeholders' ideas and sense to get the school goals (Blankenstein, 2004).

Collective Learning and Application. According to Hord (1997), this dimension focus on all levels of school staff members works collaboratively. In this process, all staff involved in the learning community is vital for school, and the learning focuses on more practical teaching and learning. Because thriving learning communities build a shared knowledge base, and this knowledge contributes to enhancing possibilities for the community vision.

Collective learning is the creativity in which what happened in school staffs according to their work, studies, and action plan, solving problems collectively in order to improve students learning (Hord, 1997a). Working collectively together is also to improve learning opportunities, that can apply to solve problems in their work.

Shared Personal Practice. One of the dimensions of shared personal practice is illustrated by visiting teachers teaching each other throughout their classroom. Hord(1997a) also mentioned that teachers' classroom behaviors are to review, give some feedback, and observe the classroom from other teachers. It helps develop an individual and the whole community.

The shared personal practice also focuses on the review of teachers' practices and instructional behaviors by colleagues. According to Wignall (1992), the principal should support to develop a good relationship among teachers. Thus, teachers can get trust, respect among colleagues. On the other hand, Brath (2006) said that all staff would be involved in making collegial decisions. Moreover, students' results or students' outcomes are the critical factors when teachers and administrators work as PLC (Lee, Smith and Croninger,1995).

Supportive Conditions. There are two conditions: structural and supportive conditions that support the development of a professional learning community (Hord, 1997a). The first one is the structural condition, which focuses on the

school size, development of communication structures within school community members.

The other structural conditions emphasize personal and relationships that can promote collegial relationships such as trust, respect among colleagues. Therefore, they are ready to accept feedback and to establish rules by their beliefs and positive development of care relationships within the community. Continual learning is one of the essential conditions that represent in supportive conditions and supported by the climate of school structure and relationship such as trust, respect within the school community to create a professional learning community (Hipp, Stoll, Bolam, Wallace, McMahan, Thomas and Huffman, 2003).

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of this study. The variable on the left side shows the school climate using Organizational climate description questionnaire. The other variable shows the professional learning community using five variables based on the Professional learning community assessment questionnaire.
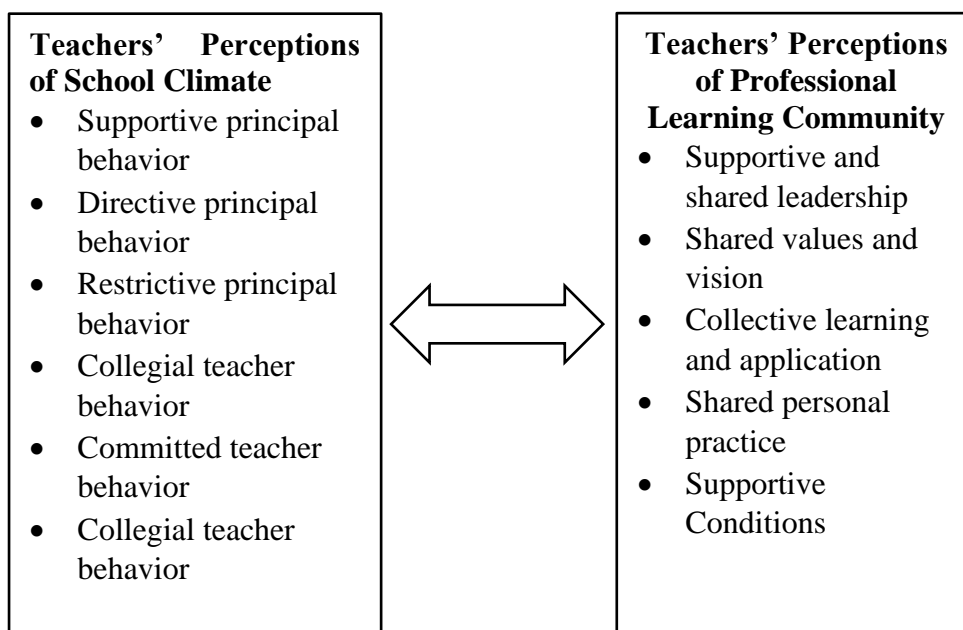

Teachers' Perceptions of School Climate
- Supportive principal behavior
- Directive principal behavior
- Restrictive principal behavior
- Collegial teacher behavior
- Committed teacher behavior
- Collegial teacher behavior

Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Learning Community
- Supportive and shared leadership
- Shared values and vision
- Collective learning and application
- Shared personal practice
- Supportive Conditions

Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework*

Method

This research utilized a quantitative research design and is a correlational study. The study used the Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ) that was initially developed by Hoy and Tarter (1997) and the professional learning community assessment questionnaire based on the study of Speire (2011).

For the collected data, means and standard deviations data analysis was used to identify teachers' perceptions towards school climate and professional learning community. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was utilized to determine the relationship between teachers' perception of school climate and professional learning community. The population of this study was all 55 full-time teachers at the school in the academic year of 2019-2020.

As the study was conducted in Myanmar, the researcher translated the questionnaire from English to Myanmar to help the participants to have a deeper understanding of the provided questionnaires. The translated questionnaire in Myanmar was carefully checked by three experts who possess a strong background in translation from English to Myanmar language. The survey was separated into two parts.

As for two parts of questionnaires were adopted from previous researchers, the details of each part were explained as follows:

Part (I) questions were on teachers' perceptions towards school climate consisting of 24 items under six dimensions of survey questions developed by Hoy and Tarter (1997), which was based on the organizational climate description questionnaire (OCDQ). The reliability of these questionnaires Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient on School Climate by Hoy and Tarter (1997) was .90, which is regarded as reliable. Thus, the survey is sufficient for use in this study.

Part (II) questions were on teachers' perceptions towards professional learning community. In this study, the researcher used a professional learning community assessment as a major instrument based on the study of Speire (2011). The reliability of these questionnaires Cronbach's alpha Coefficient on the five dimensions of the professional learning community reached .89. Therefore, the questionnaires of this study were regarded as highly reliable. Thus, this survey is sufficient for use in this study.

Meanwhile, the researcher also did a Cronbach alpha reliability analysis using statistical analysis software. The table below shows the Cronbach's alpha value of the current research.

Table (1): *Current Cronbach's Alpha Values of the Instrument*

	Instrument	Cronbach's Alpha	Items Number
Part I	Organizational climate description questionnaire (OCDQ)	.771	24
Part II	Professional learning community assessment questionnaire	.773	33

As shown in the table (1), the reliability of the organizational climate description questionnaires was respectively .771, and professional learning community assessment questionnaire was at .773. Therefore, it could be drawn into that these questionnaires were regarded as reliable.

Findings
Research Objective One

The research objective one is to identify teachers' perceptions towards school climate at Our Inspiration Academic Center private boarding school, Myanmar. The participants' perceptions were evaluated on a 5-point scale comprised of 24 questions. For the objective one, teachers were requested to give their view based on five variables: supportive principal behavior, directive principal behavior, restrictive principal behavior, collegial teacher behavior, committed teacher behavior, disengaged teacher behavior.

Table 2. *Mean and Standard Deviations of School Climate (n=55)*

No	School Climate	*M*	*SD*	Interpretation
1	Supportive Principal Behavior	3.61	1.19	High
2	Directive Principal Behavior	3.91	1.12	High
3	Restrictive Principal Behavior	2.92	1.09	Moderate
4	Collegial Teacher Behavior	4.03	1.04	High
5	Committed Teacher Behavior	4.30	0.87	High
6	Disengaged Teacher Behavior	2.30	1.01	Low
	Total	3.51	1.05	High

Table 2 compiles the results of teachers' perception of school climate. Overall, the total mean score of the Teachers' Perceptions of School Climate was 3.51, in the range of 3.51- 4.50, which were interpreted as high according to data interpretation criteria, which means that teachers' perceptions towards school climate were high. Out of six dimensions, ranked from highest to the lowest mean scores were *Committed Teacher Behavior* got the highest mean score 4.30, *Collegial Teacher Behavior* was regarded as 4.03, *Directive Principal behavior* was regarded as 3.91, *Supportive Principal Behavior* was regarded

as 3.61, *Restrictive Principal Behavior* was regarded as 2.91. In contrast, *Disengaged Teacher Behavior* got the lowest mean score at 2.30.

Finding for Research Objective Two
The research objective two is to identify teachers' perceptions towards professional learning community at Our Inspiration Academic Center private boarding school, Myanmar. The participants' perceptions were evaluated on a 5-point scale comprised of 33 questions. For the objective two, teachers were requested to give their view based on five variables: supportive and shared leadership, shared values and vision, collective learning and application, shared personal practice, supportive conditions (relationships and structures).

Table 3. *Mean and Standard Deviations of Professional Learning Community (n=55)*

No	Professional Learning Community	*M*	*SD*	Interpretation
1	Supportive and Shared Leadership	4.52	0.45	Very High
2	Shared Values and Vision	4.37	0.57	High
3	Collective Learning and Application	4.46	0.59	High
4	Shared Personal Practice	4.54	0.54	Very High
5	Supportive Conditions (Relationships and Structures)	4.56	0.53	Very High
	Total	4.49	0.53	High

Table 3 compiles the results of teachers' perception of school climate. Overall, the total mean scores of Teachers' Perceptions towards Professional Learning Community was (4.49), in the range of 3.51- 4.50, were interpreted as high according to data interpretation criteria, which meant the Teachers' Perceptions towards Professional Learning Community were high. Out of five dimensions ranked from the highest to the lowest mean score were *Supportive Conditions: Relationships and Structures* 4.56, *Shared Personal Practice* 4.54, *Shared and Supportive Leadership* 4.52, *Collective Learning and Application* 4.46, and whereas Shared *Values and Vision* got the lowest mean score 4.37.

Finding for Research Objective Three
The research objective three is to determine the relationship between teachers' perception of school climate and professional learning community at Our Inspiration Academic Center private boarding school, Myanmar. A statistical software program was used to analyze the data according to the nominated variables. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to analyze the relationship between school climate and professional learning

community at this school. The results of the Pearson Product Correlation are shown in the table below.

Table 4. *Result of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (n= 55)*

		Professional learning community	Conclusion
Teachers' perceptions of school climate	Person Correlation Coefficient	.039[**]	There is no significant relationship
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.775	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 demonstrates the Pearson correlation results of the third research objective. As a result of this finding, the significance value was 0.775, which is greater than .05. Hence, the result of the Pearson correlation indicated that there was no significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of school climate and professional learning community in Our Inspiration Academic Center private boarding school, Myanmar, with significance value was .775.

Discussion
The total mean scores of Teachers' Perceptions towards School Climate in our inspiration academic center private school, Myanmar was high. This indicated that teachers' perceptions towards school climate in Our Inspiration Academic Center private boarding school got the highest mean score in the component of committed teacher behavior (4.43) and got the lowest mean score in the area of disengaged teacher behavior (2.30). For this result, some of the teachers are not good listeners among their colleagues and cannot accept the other teachers' advice. Thus, teachers need to build a collegial relationship with each other and accept the ideas or suggestions from other teachers. School administrators or principals should be aware of this situation and also create a more open and healthy school environment, provide proper training to develop teachers' professional leadership skills among teachers. According to the study of Seinn (2013), she discovered that principal supportive could create an open school climate that can generate better relationships between teachers, principals as well as teachers among their colleagues. It can develop to become a better student performance.

The total mean scores of Teachers' Perceptions towards Professional Learning Community in Our Inspiration Academic Center private boarding school, Myanmar, was high. This result indicated that the teachers' perceptions

towards professional learning community in our inspiration academic center private boarding school were relatively good. The research findings showed that teachers had high perceptions in the findings of the shared and supportive leadership, collective learning and application, shared personal practices had very high perceptions in supportive conditions (4.56), the lowest mean score (4.37) occurred on the item of shared values and vision in school that could mean some of the teachers did not share a sense of values among staff at the process of teachers' collaboration and also did not meet the guidelines of decisions in teaching and learning related to a professional learning community. Moreover, the researcher believed that the teachers prefer to focus on students learning and making sure all the students pass the exams rather than focus on shared values and vision. According to the research findings mentioned above, the researcher assumed that some of the teachers who have a substantial share of supportive relationships among themselves and staff found the school atmosphere is to be a pleasant and clean place to work.

In this study, the researcher used the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient to determine the relationship between teachers' perceptions towards school climate and professional learning community in Our Inspiration Academic Center private boarding school, Myanmar. The result of this research showed that there is no significant relationship between teachers' perceptions towards school climate and professional learning community in Our Inspiration Academic Center private boarding school, Myanmar. The possible reason could be that the researcher used less population in this study. Besides, effective teacher professional development training should be provided to share teachers' ideas of instructional practices, and this school should provide more time to engage actively involved in teachers' collaboration to achieve the desired goal.

Htu (2016) study showed that there was no significant relationship between a professional learning community and their demographic factors. The reason for this study is that although teachers have training experiences and teaching experiences, there is no concrete guideline available in this school to implement professional learning community objectives. He indicated that the principal leadership style is uncomfortable for teachers in this school because teachers look to the principal for vision, values, and beliefs, and other decisions making. He thought that teachers had received support from an administrator or principal if the school had a professional learning community. The previous study of Shubhada (2009) also indicated that the principal should be adjusted; their leadership style depends on the current situation. This adjustment would appear teachers who are more committed to their job. Thus, the school would become to improve students' academic achievement.

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