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COUNTRY REPORT

PHILIPPINE PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

PHILIPPINES

Topic: Making Character as Bedrock of Competence, Excellence, and Distinction

Theme: “ENHANCING QUALITY EDUCATION THROUGH CULTURALIZATION WITHIN THE ASEAN COMMUNITY”

Making Character as Bedrock of Competence, Excellence, and Distinction

In the Code of Professional Ethics for Public School Teachers and Officials states that In the belief that freedom and democracy, peace and progress, and security and happiness can best be achieved and maintained with an enlightened citizenry; that to produce such citizenry the schools must efficiently perform their role of guiding the Filipino youth along the development of wholesome personality, moral character, personal efficiency democratic ways of life, useful citizenship, practical nationalism, and international goodwill; and that, for the schools to play that role, the teachers must be men and women of sound character, high ideals, broad background and profound understanding of human nature; and

In order that the teachers who are to carry out the aims and objectives of the educational system of the Philippines may be of the highest type, and that the teaching profession in this country may fully assume its rightful place among the professions that provide services fundamental to the development of the nation. Thus, the teacher as a person must live with dignity in all places at all times; place premium upon self-respect and self discipline and the principle of personal behavior in all relationships and in all situations. The state recognizes the vital role of the teachers in nation building and development through a responsible and literate citizenry; promote quality Education; proper supervision and regulation; Professionalization of the practice of the teaching proficiency.

“In our rapidly changing technological society, we run the risk of watering down our humanity turning wisdom into information, community into consumerism, politics into manipulation, and destiny into DNA. Such influences in our lives make it increasingly difficult to find nourishment for the hunger of the heart. The workplace is not exempt from these processes.”

-Anonymous

The problems that plague society are mirrored not only in the workplace. The disintegration of the family unit and corresponding erosion of value is paralleled by dysfunctional organizations.

With the above, a compelling argument is provided: Employees need a character—with values they can stand on. Without character, society and organizations will erode.

What holds the organization together? The answer lies in making character as bedrock of values in the workplace. Two of these are competence and excellence, which will redound to the organization's distinction.

Throughout history men and women have recognized that **character** is vital to achieving true success in life. In fact, John D. Rockefeller said, "The **MOST** important thing for a young man is to establish a credit – a reputation, character." R. C. Samsel said, "Character is the foundation stone upon which one must build to win respect. Just as no worthy building can be erected on a weak foundation, so no lasting reputation worthy of respect can be built on a weak character. Without character, all effort to attain dignity is superficial, and results are sure to be disappointing."

In this treatise, this writer aims to: 1). Influence the readers, who are all leaders in their own rights, to reignite individual norms and values and develop a leadership style that nurtures a character-driven work environment, and 2). Help employees gain meaning in their jobs and self-satisfaction from their work environments, which will result in increased competitiveness and effectiveness of their organizations.

The lack of emphasis on character in the workplace is wide- spread, as the Kuczmarisks, husband and wife writers observe:

"... our "societal" organizations, such as families, churches, schools, and neighborhood, need norms and values. The reason is clear-cut. Our organizations... are losing ground; they have become less competitive, less effective, and less rewarding to employee members. Individuals have an increased sense of alienation, isolation, and mistrust, with a corresponding decreased sense of self-confidence, self-worth, satisfaction, and security... Our society is clearly failing, with crime accelerating, educational systems, deteriorating, and families disintegrating on daily basis. The situation is severe..."

Why then can't work environments totally embrace character-building and adhere to a common set of values and norms in dealings, attitudes and commitments to employees? "Why shouldn't the workplace become a largely personal experience?" The Kuczmarskis ask. We all spend 40 to 50 hours each week surrounded by people with whom we have been conditioned to assume sterile, corporate and nonemotional relationships. The same writers even recall that relative to this "sterile" work environment, they have been told, "Just roll with the punches; don't express emotion; and don't rock the boat." So, the writers continue, it's no wonder that most workers become apathetic, lethargic automatons in their jobs, as they (the workers) were all basically told, "keep your mouth shut, do your job, and collect your paycheck."

While some organizations make an attempt to instill values in the workplace, it has been observed that generally, the current state of work organizations perpetuates a feeling of helplessness on the part of most and an attitude of entrapment for many. The Kuczmarskis further observe that today, many employees feel isolated, deceived, and alienated at work. – "Nothing personal, nothing emotional, and certainly nothing meaningful. They literally don't believe in their work."

The way to fix all these is putting character as the bedrock of all values needed for meaningful work and worker productivity – which come about through competence and excellence demonstrated in their areas of expertise. This collective productivity will in turn contribute to the organization's distinction.

For purposes of clarification, Figure 1 is presented below:

**CHARACTER AS BEDROCK OF COMPETENCE,
EXCELLENCE AND DISTINCTION**

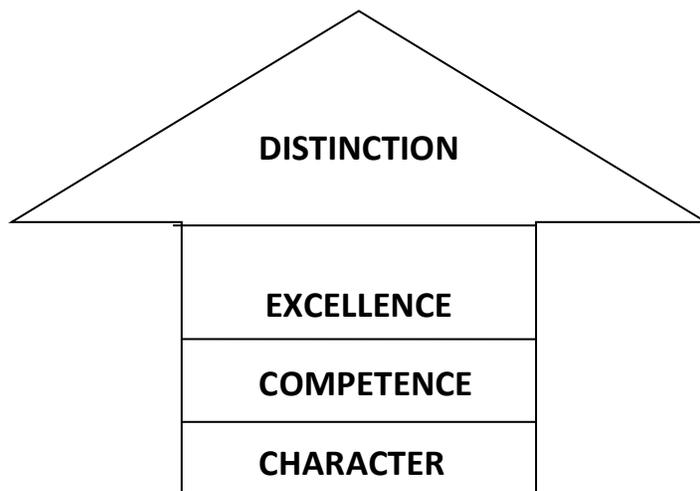


Figure 1

With character as the bedrock, competence and excellence (and other virtues) are built upon it. These layers support the topmost part, which is distinction, considered as an overall visible and admirable representation of the person, or an organization.

Empowering for Character

Though the word empowerment has been overused and sometimes misused, we are using this term just the same, to empower the people in developing authentic character. In this aspect, we are borrowing from Steven Covey's and his co-writer's suggestions to help transform our environment.

Covey et. al. offer three things which could be done to empower the workers to help transform our environment:

- A. cultivation the conditions for empowerment
- B. feasting on the lunch of champions (feedbacking)
- C. becoming a leader/servant

A. Cultivating the Conditions for Empowerment

Empowerment is not automatic. Neither can it be installed to the person the way a software is installed to a computer. Covey and his group say, it has to be grown. The more the conditions are present, the more empowered it will be.

Contrary to other manager's beliefs, we do not empower people, but by nurturing the conditions, we create the environment in which the people can empower themselves.

What then are the conditions needed to create a culture of empowerment for character?

Covey gives six:

Condition 1 – Trustworthiness

Condition 2 – Trust

Condition 3 – Win-Win Stewardship Agreements

Condition 4 – Self-Directing Individuals or Teams

Condition 5 – Aligned Structures and Systems

Condition 6 – Accountability

Let us go deeper into each of the above for details:

Condition 1 – Trustworthiness. Covey et. al. assert at the heart of empowerment is trustworthiness, which they say is a function of character and competence. Character is what we are, competence is what we can do. Both are necessary to create trustworthiness.

Relatively, Covey and his fellow writers list five virtues under character, which include:

- **Integrity** – the ability to walk your talk, a thorough integratedness of public, private and deep inner life around a balanced set of principles
- **Maturity** – the balance of courage and consideration that enables you to say what needs to be said, to give honest feedback, to address issues in a straightforward way, but with consideration and respect for the feelings, thoughts and opinions of others
- **Abundance mentality** – the paradigm that life is ever expanding, that there are an infinite number of third alternatives (in contrast to the paradigm that life is a zero sum game, that the pie is only so large and if anyone gets a piece, that means less for me)

Competence includes:

- **technical competence** – the knowledge and skill to achieve the agreed-upon results; the ability to think through problems and look for alternatives

- **conceptual competence** – the ability to see the big picture, to examine assumptions and shift perspectives
- **interdependent competence** – the ability to interact effectively with others, including the ability to listen, communicate, get to the third alternatives, create win-win agreements, and work towards synergistic solutions;
- the ability to see and operate effectively and cooperatively in complete organizations and systems.

For Covey, et al, character and competence are high leverage focus that make each of the other conditions possible.

Condition 2 – Trust.

Trust is a glue that holds everything together. It creates an environment in which all other elements – win-win stewardship agreements, self-directing individuals and teams, aligned structures and systems and accountability can flourish.

Condition 3 – Win-Win Stewardship Agreements

We may not be in formal leadership position but that doesn't mean we can't initiate stewardship agreements regarding our area of responsibility.

Condition 4 – Self-Directing Individuals and Teams

We can accept the responsibility to govern ourselves as individuals and as part of groups or teams.

Condition 5 – Aligned Structures and Systems

When structures and system are aligned, they facilitate empowerment and they create integrity or integratedness.

Condition 6 – Accountability

To be accountable is to harvest the results of what you have done-whether it has affected you and others positively or negatively. In the aspect of personal growth, accountability means, you also consider yourself accountable for developing personal excellence.

B. Feasting on the Lunch of champions (Getting Feedbacks)

Feedback has been coined by some writers as “the breakfast of champions.” But Covey calls it “the lunch of champions.”

Feedbacking is needed for self-corrections.

As soon as you receive feedback, Covey and his co-writers say, we carefully analyze it and go back to them thank those you gave it. Have a brainstorming with the person who gave the feedback and mutually make an action plan for it, if it concerns organizational change. If it is personal, consider your options if the feedback is worthwhile, then make the necessary change.

C. Becoming a Leader/Servant

The idea of servant leadership has been around for a long time but it has never really taken hold of because the conditions of empowerment have not been in place. It becomes just another nice phrase, another way of benevolent authoritarian kind of control. Eventually, it becomes cynicism.

“But when the conditions of empowerment are in place,” say Covey et. al, “servant leadership creates powerful results.”

IN SUM

Let us hope that when all these conditions are met in order to nurture a culture of character, we can safely use it as *the* bedrock of the values for the development of an employee's commitment, performance and productivity, which will redound to distinction.

Our quest for character is the hallmark of the Department of Education and we are determined to sustain it.

Lastly, let me punctuate this article with Covey's inspiring words:

"Your organization's culture is the one competitive advantage that cannot be duplicated. Technology can be copied. Information can be acquired. Capital can be bought. But the ability of your organization to collaborate effectively, to put character first, cannot be bought or transferred, or installed. A high-trust, empowered culture is *always* home-grown.

The same is true for a family, or any other group of people. A quality culture must be nourished over time. Only by acting in harmony with other correct principles, exercising patience, humility and courage, and working with your circle of influence can you transform yourself and positively influence your organization."

So long as empowerment is from the inside-out, meaning, character is made as the bedrock of competence and excellence, we would reach our dream of having personal and organizational distinction.

Some might be saying it is still a long way to go for everybody in Department of education to be "character-conscious." Let not the faint-hearted influence anyone, but rather, **let us continue to hope that we will be there, in due time. In the race towards excellence there is no finish line**

Remember, we only just begun . . .

SOURCES:

Covey, Stephen R., A. Roger Merrill and Rebecca r. Merill (1997) "First Things First," USA, Simon and Schuster:

Kuczmariski, Susan Smith and Thomas D. Kuczmariski (1997), "Values-Based Leadership," Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice Hall

RA 4670 Magna Carta for Public School Teachers

RA7836 Phil teachers Professionalism Act of 1994

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CHARACTER

"If you will think about what you ought to do for other people, your character will take care of itself. Character is a by-product, and any man who devotes himself to its cultivation in his own case will become a selfish prig."

-WOODROW WILSON (1856-1924)