

THE IMPACT OF THE SCHOOL CLIMATE ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SCHOOL FROM THE TEACHING STAFF PERSPECTIVE

Aneta Barakoska, Vera Stojanovska, Lazar Stosic

Abstract. *The school climate is a complex phenomenon that can be easily seen, but hard to quantify and define. It refers to a group of indicators, both subjective and objective indicating the overall feeling or impression that we get when entering the school. This paper elaborates the importance of the school climate for the school work improvement in order to become dynamic and effective and to tend to provide quality in education. First we present a review of several theoretical approaches regarding the definition of the term "school climate", noting the inconsistency in the use of the different concepts, the content and the research methodology in this area. Then the main research methods and procedures of collecting and processing data are presented. Regarding the advancing of the effectiveness of the educational organizations we found a correlation in terms of the impact of school climate on the primary schools effectiveness.*

Keywords: *the school climate, effectiveness, the school staff, views and attitudes, elementary education.*

Introduction

The world we live in is a world of turbulence and drastic changes in the social, economic and political life faced by people as a new set of challenges and requirements. The whole of such changes cause changes in the educational systems as well, in the internal structure of the educational organizations and in their management, as well as in the development of some new ways of creative thinking and creating structures for them to function.

Creating the "society of knowledge" according to the author Peter Drucker is one of the biggest changes which have ever occurred in the intellectual history of the mankind.

The education, knowledge and learning are the topics of the day, a center towards which every individual, company or institution gravitates and the society as a whole [1].

The modern school as part of the educational system which is consisted of numerous subsystems, changes its structure, organization and internal work. The request to create a healthy and positive school climate, as a symbiosis of numerous innovations, takes one of the central places.

The school climate is the heart and the soul of the school. It refers to the quality and features of the school life. The positive school climate encourages the development of the learning and the pupils which is necessary for a productive life in a democratic society. This climate includes norms, values and expectations to make people feel socially, emotionally and physically safe. People are engaged and respected. Pupils, teachers and parents work together and contribute to a greater achievement of the school vision. Each person contributes in the school work and takes care of the whole physical environment [2].

The main dilemma related to defining the term *school climate* is the question what this term really means and how it is defined. Obdržálek states that school climate is a socio-psychological phenomenon, which is very complex and is challenging for analysis and research [3-a].

Mareš points out that there are different variables, such as the school equipment, the leadership style, the impact of the public on the school, the teacher's commitment to the school work, the school itself and the characteristics of the pupils [3-b].

According to some sources, the school climate is defined as a school atmosphere, a school world and a school life, an emotional tone, the school ethos, culture and a school spirit and it depends on specific conditions of each school. It is conditioned by the school's environment, by place we are in, and by our ability to observe, analyze and value it.

Hoy & Miskel have defined the organizational climate as "a set of internal features which makes the schools different from each other and affects people's behavior" [4]. They argue that the climate occurs as a final product of the school groups: pupil-teacher-administration, which all together establish a balance of the organizational and individual aspects of the system.

The school climate refers to the quality and characteristics of a school life, the school atmosphere and refers to the relations between pupils and teachers as a way of life in the school. It is a compilation of the several different factors' action which make the school as it is and by which schools differ from each other [5]. It is based on the model of the pupils' experience, the parents, the school staff and school life and is reflected through norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning and organizational structure as well.

Haynes, Emmons & Comer [6] define the school climate as "a quality and content of interpersonal interactions within the school and the class community, which affects the cognitive, social and psychological development of the pupils" [6].

The most general term for the school climate is the definition to be as a sum of all the circumstances in which the educational process functions, as a network of relations existing among participants in the educational process [7]. So according to this, it is an important condition for the development and adaptation of the pupils in the school. Interactions and experiences that pupils acquire in the school

affect their later achievements getting through different life situations. In the study of the school climate, besides the other notions, it is assumed to be related to the educational goals that are aimed to be achieved, especially the pupils' achievement.

Although the school climate is considered for decades to be an important research topic, still there is not a clearly defined construct, nor are the methodological problems relating to the empirical research fully solved and determined. These gaps related to the term defining are noted by the researchers themselves.

The researches in the field of the education indicate that there is a significant link between the climate in the classroom and the contents, such as: pupils' work, behavior, achievement, social and emotional development, management styles, the teacher, the level of educational reforms and the overall quality of the school life (Fraser 1986, Freiberg 1999). Studies also show that the impact of the climate in the grades may be higher for those pupils who come from low income families and somehow discriminated groups [8].

Research Problem and Method

We tried to get the answer to this research question through an empirical research. We began the research from the following hypothesis: **the positive school climate affects the increasing of the effectiveness of the school**. We put the emphasis on the attitudes and opinions of the teachers, professional associates and directors who have been asked some questions in order to test our hypothesis. The research applied the descriptive-analytic method in order to analyze the current situation and is used for comparisons and generalization. The techniques applied in the survey are: questionnaire, scaling and content analysis. The basic structure of the sample consists of ten primary schools in the city of Skopje. The sample is representative and is composed of 10 directors, 20 pedagogues and psychologists (one pedagogue and psychologist in each school) and 140 teachers from all three cycles in the primary school.

With this sample selection we aimed to examine whether there is a difference in the attitudes and opinions of the directors, pedagogues, psychologists and teachers about the impact of the school climate on the school effectiveness, i.e. how different their answers are regarding the given questions. The data obtained from the survey are appropriately and statistically processed. The frequency, percentage and coefficient of contingency C are calculated. To test the hypothesis regarding the level of significance of differences the procedure of inferential statistics is applied and a Chi-squared test is calculated.

RESULTS

The results obtained from the conducted empirical research examining the attitudes and the **opinions of the directors, pedagogues, psychologists and teachers** will be presented according to the order of the questions in the questionnaire.

1. Attitudes and opinions of directors, pedagogues, psychologists and teachers – on how much the school climate affects the school (Table 1)

The first question, to which respondents have given their answers, was aimed to determine whether and how much the school climate affects the work accomplished in their school.

Table 1. Attitudes and opinions of the directors, pedagogues, psychologists and teachers – on how much the school climate affects the school

Responds obtained from the teaching staff	Directors		Pedagogues and psychologists		Teachers		TOTAL		
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
it affects a lot	8	80,00	14	70,00	102	72,86	124	72,94	
it affects partially	1	10,00	5	25,00	34	24,29	40	23,53	
it does not affect at all	1	10,00	1	5,00	4	2,86	6	3,53	
TOTAL	10	100	20	100	140	100	170	100	
						$\chi^2=2,41$	df=4	P>0,05	

The percentage of the respondents who opted for the first category is really significant (80% of the directors, 70% of the school pedagogues and psychologists and 72.86% of the teachers).

The smallest number of the respondents considers that the climate does not affect the work in the school (only one such response from the directors and the school pedagogues and psychologists and 2.86% from the teachers).

The answer which states that the school climate partially affects its work, was given by 10% of the school principals, 25% of the school pedagogues and psychologists and by 24,29% of the teachers.

The calculated Chi-squared test was 2.41 degrees of freedom 4, indicating that there is no statistically significant difference in the answers given by the directors, school pedagogues and psychologists and teachers on this issue.

We can notice that the three categories of respondents highly appreciate the impact of the school climate on the work of the school. Although the significance of the school climate was not discussed for very long, but in the recent decades, we can say that those who care about the quality of the school work and those directly involved in the teaching and other activities in it quite seriously understood the meaning of the school climate and its impact on the activities of the school. Only few respondents do not give significance to the climate in the school in terms of the increasing of the quality work in it.

2. Attitudes and opinions of directors, pedagogues, psychologists and teachers – on how much the school climate affects the school achievement (Table 2)

The second question explores whether positive school climate affects the increasing of the school effectiveness and is focused on how much the school climate affects the pupils' achievement.

Table 2. Attitudes and opinions of directors, pedagogues, psychologists and teachers - on how much the school climate affects the school achievement

Responds obtained from the teaching staff	Directors		Pedagogues and psychologists		Teachers		TOTAL	
	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
it affects a lot	8	80,00	18	90,00	85	60,71	111	65,29
it affects partially	1	10,00	1	5,00	48	34,29	50	29,41
it does not affect at all	1	10,00	1	5,00	7	5,00	9	5,29
TOTAL	10	100	20	100	140	100	170	100
					$\chi^2=9,56$	$df=4$	$P<0,05$	$C=0,23$

Also in this case, the biggest part of the respondents chose the answer: it influences a lot. So 90% of the school pedagogues and psychologists responded that school climate affects the pupil's achievement a lot, and 80% of directors and 60.71% of the teachers gave the same answer.

The answer that it does not affect at all was given by 10% of the directors and 5% of the school pedagogues, psychologists and teachers.

The category that states the climate partially affects the pupils' achievement was chosen by 10% of the directors, 5% of the educators and 34, 29% of the school psychologists and teachers.

The calculated Chi-squared test shows a statistically significant difference in the responses to the significance level of 0.05. The calculated coefficient of contingency ($C = 0,23$) although statistically significant, also at the level of 0.05, indicates a weak link between variables.

The three groups of respondents mostly believe that the school climate influences a lot on the achievement of the pupils. But we cannot neglect the percentage of 34,29% of the teachers who linked the pupils' achievement with the category - partially affects. We consider this percentage important because teachers are the category of respondents who are most directly related to and who monitor pupil's achievement. In fact, the calculated Chi-squared test indicates that there are statistically significant differences in the responses of the respondents regarding this issue.

3. Attitudes and opinions of directors, pedagogues, psychologists and teachers – on the claim that schools with a positive school climate achieve a higher score of the educational outcomes (Table 3).

This question is at the heart of our research and refers to the claim that schools with a positive school climate achieve a higher score of the educational outcomes.

Table 3. Attitudes and opinions of directors, pedagogues, psychologists and teachers - on the claim that schools with a positive school climate achieve a higher score of the educational outcomes

Responds obtained from the teaching staff	Directors		Pedagogues and psychologists		Teachers		TOTAL		
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
I agree	8	80,00	18	90,00	131	93,57	157	92,35	
I am not sure	1	10,00	1	5,00	3	2,14	5	2,94	
I disagree	1	10,00	1	5,00	6	4,29	8	4,71	
TOTAL	10	100	20	100	140	100	170	100	
							$\chi^2=3,14$	df=4	P>0,05

The vast percentage of directors, school pedagogues and psychologists and teachers agreed with this statement (80% of the directors, 90% of pedagogues and psychologists and 93.57% of the teachers).

A small percentage took the second option of being not sure about the statement (10% of the directors, 5% of the pedagogues and psychologists and 2.4% of the teachers). The last category of disagreement about the claim was given by 10% of the directors, 5% of the pedagogues and school psychologists and 4.29% of the teachers.

The results from the table 3 refer to the fact that in our schools there is an attitude that the existence of the positive school climate contributes to the increase of the learning outcomes.

In this sense all researches and efforts to build a positive environment and climate in our schools as much as possible are justified.

Conclusion

The analysis of the previous three questions is put into a function of testing the hypothesis according to which the positive school climate affects the effectiveness of the school.

The given results and analysis of tables 1, 2 and 3, with the highest scores given by the three groups of respondents, confirm the hypothesis with a high probability that assumed: **The positive school climate influences the effectiveness of the school.** The results of the calculated Chi-squared tests to questions from this group showed **no statistically significant difference in the responses of different groups of respondents (directors, pedagogues, psychologists and teachers).**

In this paper we aimed to emphasize the importance and connection of the positive school climate with the effectiveness of the primary schools i.e., the educational process. Regarding this, we point out the need for overcoming the traditional teaching based on ready-to-use knowledge by teachers and memorizing and reproduction of knowledge by pupils. The new requirements are overcoming the pupil's status as an object influenced by others. The pupil is transformed into a subject that perceives influence and has vice versa effect; he is the center of all events at the school. The principal and the school management team are required to be able to form a mobile, secure and dynamic environment and to lead individual and institutional resources in order to achieve new and higher goals. Such goals have the basic request and need for a different school climate and culture, climate which incorporates the tradition, modernity and future expectations.

The researches on a school climate should continue as studies of more complex and interdisciplinary character investigating the impact of different variables that have an important role in forming a positive environment in the modern schools.

References

1. Drucker, P. *Managing the Future.* - New York: Dutton, 1992.
2. National School Climate Center (NSCC), Center for Social and Emotional Education, and National Center for Learning and Citizenship at Educational Commission of States, *The School Climate Challenge*, Retrieved from: <http://www.ecs.org/html/projectsPartners/nclc/docs/schoo-climate-challenge-web.pdf>

- 3-a. Obdržálek, 2002, according to, Kantorova, J., The school climate-Theoretical principles and research from the perspective of students, teacher and parents // *Odgojne znanosti*: 2009. Vol. 11, br.1, p. 183-189.
- 3-b. Mareš, 2000, according to, Kantorova, J., The school climate-Theoretical principles and research from the perspective of students, teacher and parents // *Odgojne znanosti*: 2009. Vol. 11, br.1, p. 183-189.
4. Hoy WK & Miskel CG. Educational administration: theory, research and practice. - New York: Random House Inc., 1987 // <http://www.schoolclimate.org/climate/documents/schoolClimate-researchSummary.pdf>
5. Rus, Pintaric, Jamnik, 2007 // http://www2.arnes.si/~anthropos/anthropos/2008/3_4/07_rus.pdf
6. Haynes, N. M., Emmons, C.& Comer, J.P. School climate survey. - New Haven, CT: Yale Child Development Center, School Development Program. - 1994 // http://education.wayne.edu/wholeschooling/Journal_of_Whole_Schooling/articles/5-1%20Hoffman.pdf
7. Joksimović, S. i B. Bogunović: Nastavnici o kontekstu nastave i postignuća učenika; u R. Antonijević i D. Janjetović (ur.): TIMSS 2003 u Srbiji (270-292). - Beograd: Institut za pedagoška istraživanja, 2005.
8. Adelman, H.S. & Taylor, L. *Classroom climate* // S.W.Lee, P.A.Lowe, & E. Robinson (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of School Psychology*. Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage. Retrieved from // http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/publications/46_classroom_climate.pdf
10. Freiberg HJ ed. *School climate: measuring, improving, and sustaining healthy learning environments*. - London, Falmer Press, 1999.
11. Fraser BJ, Walberg HJ *Research on teacher-student relationships and learning environments: context, retrospect and prospect* // *International Journal of Educational Research*, 2006. - № 43. - P. 103–109.
12. Fraser B.J. *Classroom environment*. - London, Croon Helm, 1986.

Authors' Information

- Aneta Barakoska** University St. Cyril and Methodius. Skopje, Republic of Macedonia.
e-mail: aneta@fzf.ukim.edu.mk
- Vera Stojanovska** University St. Cyril and Methodius. Skopje, Republic of Macedonia.
e-mail: veras@fzf.ukim.edu.mk
- Lazar Stosic** College of professional studies educators. Aleksinac, Serbia.
e-mail: lstosic@vsvaspitacka.edu.rs