THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL CLIMATE IN PROCESS OF INCLUSION

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The definitions of school climate vary, most connect it to the quality and character of school life, reflecting the norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching, learning, leadership practices, and organizational structures. Positive school climate foster development of students and learning necessary for a productive, contributing, and satisfying life in a society. When a school climate is healthy, people feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe. They are engaged and respected; students, families, and educators work together to develop and contribute to a shared school vision. School climate impact willingness of students to get involved, how they feel, their contribution, their sense of self and other people. The type of school climate do not determine only student and teachers alone, but also school stuff, parents and school partners. If the process of inclusion should be effective, school climate may reflect such characteristics as mutual respect, equity, dignity, justice, honesty and safety. This paper focuses on the presentation of the results of research of school climate using CFK School Climate Profile (Fox), on sample of 37 secondary schools. We discuss the possibilities to evaluating and improving school climate through special interventions that was inspired by implementations of the principles of Individual Psychology in process of school inclusion. One of such programs is programming COPE – Creating Optimal Personal Experiences, that we introduce in the paper. We hope that process of school inclusion can be successful only by creating positive school climate in our school. This paper could be good inspiration for pedagogue in creating positive climate.

Keywords: inclusion, inclusive education, school climate,
Theoretical background of school climate in the context of inclusive education

We start the contribution by one of our experiences with children:
„I couldn´t go to Adela´s birthday party. “
„Why not?“
„Well, you know, the other schoolmates tell me, it is so boring to be with her. Adela is not normal girl, she is so stupid, and they tell me. “
„You really believe, she is? “
„No, sometime, we have together good time, even if she has diagnoses of dyspraxia, but you know, going to her party is for me so risky, I can lose my position in the class. “
„And what do you think, how she would fell, if nobody come to her party. “
„I don´t care, it´s up to her. “

It is the only one of the experiences from school environment that deal with the phenomenon of social exclusion that is opposite of social inclusion. The aim of the contribution is to:
• introduce the strategy of inclusive education,
• emphasis social climate as one of crucial domains of inclusive process,
• presentation of the results of the research of school climate in Slovak´s schools
• Introducing intervention program for Creating Optimal Personal Experiences (COPE) for teens.

The meaning of the Inclusion, inclusive education

Inclusion is a sense of belonging, it is one´s experience to feel respected, valued for who you are; feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so than you can do your best work (Miller & Katz, 2002).

“Inclusive education is defined as a strategy of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners by increasing participation in learning and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children” (UNESCO, 2005).

„Inclusive education is neither short-term nor developed in isolation; rather it is an approach that is integral to a total system review and reform, comprises a systematic increase in participation and improved quality of education, and involves all social segments such as family, school, and community systems. Furthermore, research has documented that many of the techniques used to help children with disabilities to become more effective learners are effective at improving learning of other children as well. The three components of inclusive education are: access, quality, and community participation (i.e., parents, schools, communities, civil society). In the context of inclusive education, the initial barrier for children with special needs is access, the actuality of attending mainstream schools. Quality implies enabled appropriate learning by children with disability along with individual assessment.
which can encompass behavioural and social as well as academic benchmarks. Community participation is the third important ‘leg’ of inclusive education to provide the supportive inclusive environment needed for children with disability to thrive and take their place equally in society” (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2009).

In the context of inclusive education the quality of school and classroom climate is one of the important determinants of successful process of school inclusion.

School Climate as determinant of inclusive process

The vast majority of researchers and scholars suggest that school climate, essentially, reflects subjective experience in school (Cohen, 2006). “A review of research, practitioner and scholarly writings suggests that there are more essential dimensions that color and shape our subjective experience in schools” (Cohen, 2006; Freiberg, 1999). A review of the literature conducted by staff at the Yale Child Study Center yielded a list of 15 components that characterize school climate. The ingredients of a healthy, supportive school climate include:

✓ Achievement motivation: students at the school believe they can learn and are willing to learn.
✓ Collaborative decision making: parents, students, and staff are actively involved in the decisions affecting the school.
✓ Equity and fairness: students are treated equally regardless of ethnicity, gender, and disability.
✓ General school climate: there is a positive quality of all interactions and feelings of trust and respect within the school community.
✓ Order and discipline: students display appropriate behaviour in the school setting.
✓ Parent involvement: parents participate frequently in school activities.
✓ School-community relations: the community is supportive and involved in the life of the school.
✓ Dedication to student learning: teachers actively motivate students to learn.
✓ Staff expectations: staff expects that students will succeed in school and in life.
✓ Leadership: the principal effectively guides the direction of the school, including creating a positive climate.
✓ School building: the physical appearance of the school building reflects respect for the school and community.
✓ Sharing of resources: all students have equal opportunity to participate in school activities, materials, and equipment.
✓ Caring and sensitivity: the principal shows consideration for the students, parents, and school staff.
✓ Student interpersonal relations: there is a high level of caring, respect, and trust among students in the school.
✓ Student-teacher relations: there is a high level of caring, respect and trust between students and teachers in the school.

We can consider about positive school climate in case that all students feel valued, secure, wanted, accepted and comfortable in school environment.
where they can interact with other people. A positive school climate affects everyone associated with the school – students, staff, parents, and the community. It is the belief system or culture that underlies the day-to-day operation of a school. But in everyday situations in many school climate is not positive, but negative. The symptoms of climate problems are (Howard, Howell & Brainard, 1987):

- High student absenteeism
- High frequency of student discipline problem
- Passive students
- Weak student government
- Vandalism
- Poor school spirit
- Poor community image of school
- High student dropout rate
- Large number of underachieving students
- Low staff morale
- Faculty apathy etc.

As we can see the quality of climate is multifactorial determined and it is very important for teachers on the one hand to know the symptoms of positive but on the other hand also the symptoms of negative school climate. Whereas the formation of climate is a dynamic process teachers can use the knowledge about it to optimize the climate in cases it is possible.

The research design and the objectives

Based on the theoretical background that we have presented in a short form, National Institute of Certified Educational Measurement in Bratislava in the activity 4.1 The Indicators of Educational Quality in EFS project Evaluation of Educational Quality in January and February 2012 starts the realization of research that had the goal to investigate students’ perception of school climate.

The sample

In nationally representative sample of 38 high-schools were tested 2672 students in second grade (50.1% male, 49.9% female), aged 16 years. There were more type of school, majority of respondents (n=2436) were from public school, the second group were respondents from church schools (n=182) and the third group consist of respondents from private school (n=52).

Figure 1. Type of schools
The research methodology

In our research we used method of Fox (1973) called Profile of school climate that measures perception of students in this general factors:
1. Growth – each student is developing academically, socially, physically in skill and knowledge.
2. Respect- students see themselves as persons of worth, their ideas are respected, school is a place where individuals have self-esteem, are considerate and appreciate other, the atmosphere of mutual respect prevails.
3. Trust- having confidence that others can be counted on to do what they say they will do, they have integrity.
4. High morale- in school with high morale, people feel good about what is happening, they are willing to perform assigned task, they are confident and cheerful. Self-discipline is the mode. A defeatist at attitude does not exist.
5. Cohesiveness- this quality is manifested by a person´s attraction to the school, people feel a sense of belonging to the school, they want to stay with it and exert their influence on it in collaboration with others.
6. Input – not everyone can be involved in making the important decision in school programs, but every person wants the opportunity to contribute ideas and know they have been considered.
7. School renewal – the school is self-renewing, it is growing, developing and changing, in such school stuff is confident to their ability to change and improve.
8. Caring – individuals in the school feel that some other person or persons are concerned about them, people are interested in each other.

The data that have been collected through this questionnaire were quantitative analysed through statistical programme SPPS.

The results of measure of school climate

The result of our measurement of school climate presented in table 1. show that there are some risk factors of school climate such as input, growth and trust. On the other hand the factors such as respect, caring and cohesiveness achieve the highest values. In addition the correlation analyse reveal the positive correlation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The factors</th>
<th>Number of items</th>
<th>Max. score</th>
<th>Real score</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>respect</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>74,87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trust</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13,7</td>
<td><strong>68,44</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relationship to school</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14,6</td>
<td>72,88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>input</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
<td><strong>65,16</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>growth</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13,6</td>
<td><strong>68,00</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>cohesiveness</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>school renewal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14,5</td>
<td>72,65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caring</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14,8</td>
<td>74,00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition the correlation analyse reveal the positive correlation (sig .0001) between the factors:

- cohesion and trust (r = .333), input (r = .323), growth (r = .336)
- trust and respect (r = .368), relationship to school (r = .415), renewal (r = .404)
- relationship to school and cohesion (r = .406), renewal (r = .406)
- caring and respect (r = .303), trust (r = .402), relationship to school (r = .435), input (r = .411), growth (r = .362), cohesion (r = .418), renewal (r = .456)

From the results of the research is clear, that the way how students perceived school social climate is very important and they are very sensitive on interpersonal relationship in general. The results of the research indicate the areas where education process should be improved.

What could be done so that students feel their input in educational process, so that they could feel their own growth and trust toward the teachers and toward the schools in general? Obviously there are many ways how to reach this goal, but we can discuss one of them and it is the intervention programme called COPE. Let me introduce it.

The introduction of programme COPE for Teens (Creating Optimal Personal Experiences, McLeod & Panasiuk, 2000). It is a program specifically designed for young people, it provides them with a deeper understanding of themselves by concentrating on such issues as developing self-respect, effective communication skills, and building healthy relationships.

The program can be used in process of primary, secondary or tertiary prevention in school environment. It consists of six independent modules. Each session last 2.5-3 hours, once or twice a month. It is very important to train social skills first with lector in model situation, then implement these skills into real life situation and afterwards analyze them in next session with lector and the other participants..

1. Module: Why do we behave this way? The goal of the session is to recognize the mechanism of own behaviour, to know own needs and the way of their satisfaction. Very important is to recognize the goal of own behaviour according to Dreikurs such as: attention getting, power and control, revenge and helplessness and inadequacy

2. Module: Self-esteem and respect of other. The goal of the session is to know the relationship between self-esteem and the respect of the others, to know the ways how can be improve perception of self and others

3. Module: Effective communication. The goal is to acquire new communication technics, which can be used in optimal interpersonal interactions

4. Module: Problem solving. The goal is to teach participant to solve the problems constructively

5. Module: How to manage with stress and anger. The goal is to present and use effective methods of coping with stress and anger

6. Module: Creating healthy interpersonal relationships. The goal is to acquire the interpersonal skills needed in healthy human relationships

We recommend implementation of the program COPE in school environment for the purpose of minimization social exclusion and ostracism of potential victim of school bulling and for the optimization of school climate, to enhance of cohesion and relationships of the students.
Conclusion

Our discussion about inclusive process we would conclude by proposal to deal with process of inclusive education. We mentioned implementation of intervention programme but we see very important also pregradual and post gradual preparation of teachers during their study at the universities. We recommend enriching students’ knowledge in areas of dynamic of formation group cohesion, to diagnose symptoms of positive and negative climate and the most of all to prepare the student correctly reacting and resolving problems of climate.

References