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SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

Abstract. *The object of the article is the analysis of school reality and its components understood as school climate and culture. These notions have been the subject of research in Poland and worldwide since the 1908s and 1980s and show their importance for the educational process. Another significant dimension of these parameters related to school functioning is the fact that positive climate and good school culture constitute factors protecting against risky behaviours of children and adolescents.*

Key words: *school climate, school climate, school management, protecting factors.*

Problem definition

Nowadays we have a chance to see how the reality around us is changing with the speed that one can find surprising and astonishing. These transformations are visible in a number of areas, beginning from social and family life and ending with leisure time spending technique and ways. Moreover, school, all more school, is not free from dynamic changes. One can formulate a thesis that modern teachers while working experience another school than the one they used to attend as pupils. It concerns technical solutions as well as, which seems even more important, it is connected with a new type of interactions between the school and parents, between teachers and students as well as among school employees themselves. It gives rise to new challenges and tasks to school employees, looking for new solutions which are time consuming and demanding.

The teachers of contemporary school, if they want to create a good and effective school, must take into account a number of variables and conditions, which several years ago were beyond school interest or did not have a decisive effect on school work effectiveness. Such categories include the climate and organisational culture of school. During the times of transformations these two notions denote how students, teachers and parents feel in the environment they create, but also they show to what extent school helps students in their development and acquisition of knowledge and to what extent it disturbs.

The definitions of these two parameters are often indeterminate and are used intuitively. Moreover, clear distinction between these two terms is not always understandable and possible^{7; 15}. It seems however that the notion of organisational school culture concerns objective reality that can be measured in an understandable

⁷ Okulicz-Kozaryn K. Klimat i kultura szkoły a zachowania problemowe uczniów / K. Okulicz-Kozaryn // Studia edukacyjne. — 2013. — № 29. — P. 83.

¹⁵ Woynarowska-Soldan M. Klimat społeczny szkoły – koncepcje i czynniki warunkujące / M. Woynarowska-Soldan // Remedium. — 2007. — № 4. — P. 22–23.

way, whereas school climate denotes some subjective perception of reality of the educational institution by students and school employees. What are the parameters of the former and the latter phenomena then?

1. School culture

In subject literature this notion is understood as some set of most crucial, in the group's opinion, assumptions and beliefs. These standards provide frames to school life, they become a binding factor and have significance how school members are dressed, what they talk about, how they cooperate with one another, how teachers approach their work, their students, do they look for support and where. The above rights are acquired in the process of integration. In other words, this is the result of the experience acquired so far in coping with problems. These beliefs are considered most important in school organism, therefore they are transferred to new group members as standards of thinking and problem solving⁸. These views have been rooted to such an extent that if any group members behaves in a different way he or she will be called to order. What can be added to this statement is that school culture is a type of objective glasses through which the members of school community view themselves and the world externally.

These assumptions are referred to as «theories of action» which can be expressed by the statement «That is how we do it here»¹².

There are a few elements of school culture and they include: values, objectives, standards and behaviour standards, beliefs and ways of thinking as well as assumptions characteristics for a given school community as well as material and symbolic products^{7; 8; 9; 10}.

Elements of school culture	Forms of presence in school reality:
Desirable values, standards, objectives and behaviour standards that result from the process of cooperation of teachers and students in decision making process regarding school, competition, not showing problem behaviours, consequences for exceeding rules, participation in patriotic events etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School standards in relation to employees and students as to social norms including appropriateness of clothing, being allowed or not being allowed to wear jewellery. • Expectations what kind of language is used by teachers and students; in what way members of school community address each other; whether there is eliminating distance or stiffening behaviours. • Indicating what kind of student performance is desirable and expected, whether students are

⁸ Okulicz-Kozaryn K. Klimat i kultura szkoły a zdrowie psychiczne uczniów i nauczycieli / K. Okulicz-Kozaryn. — Warszawa, 2014. — P. 15.

¹² Smith R. A Theory of Action Perspective on Faculty Development, To Improve the Academy [електронний ресурс] / R. Smith. — 1983. — № 45. — P. 49–62. —

Режим доступу :<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1044&context=podimproveacad> (access on 11.06.2016)

⁷ Okulicz-Kozaryn K. Klimat i kultura szkoły a zachowania problemowe uczniów / K. Okulicz-Kozaryn // Studia edukacyjne. — 2013. — № 29. — P. 83.

⁹ Ostaszewski K. Kultura szkoły a zachowania ryzykowne dzieci i młodzieży / K. Ostaszewski // Edukacja. — 2014. — № 1. — P. 15.

¹⁰ Ostaszewski K. Pojęcie klimatu szkoły w badaniach zachowań ryzykownych młodzieży / K. Ostaszewski // Edukacja. — 2012. — № 4. — P. 22–38.

	supposed to take part in competitions and subject competitions and with result. What is the expected performance level of students during external tests
Basic beliefs, ways of thinking and adopted ideologies. The so-called «hidden syllabuses», unrealised assumptions, programmes, views. These ideologies are indisputable, are obvious and have a decisive impact on school structure organisation and on the values adopted there. They have a tremendous impact and constitute a basis to determine which values are important at school, what teaching and education objectives are formulated by teachers, what kind of norms to be evaluated and expected as regards student behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convictions about parents' role and place at school and in upbringing children, expected relations between teachers and parents, who provides education – is it family and school acting jointly or is it the family that provides upbringing and school – education. • Another important assumption is whether teachers know better than their pupils in what way children acquire knowledge, what motivates them to work. • Further questions revealing basic beliefs, ways of thinking and adopted ideologies – are children are divided into clever (intelligent) and not clever, good and bad, the ones who cause problems and those who do not cause them
Material and symbolic products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School building and facilities include building architecture, the internal design of rooms and atmosphere, • The appearance of students and teaching staff, do they wear uniforms, what is their style, do teachers have to comply with dress code as well. • Organisational structure of school, school operation history, symbolism and rituals. • Preserved behaviour patterns and the number of people connected to school as well as their sociodemographic characteristics

The analysis of school culture notion shows that the basic tasks of the principal and school managers in order to create good organisational culture of the school is primarily their concern about the transparency of norms and standards of conduct so that anybody present in school organism was aware what their responsibilities and rights are so that they knew the answer to the question «What actions are carried out here?» Another important task for the management as regards creating school culture is conscious shaping of material culture beginning from the building appearance and ending with rituals, ways of celebrating etc. typical and characteristic for a given school.

2. School climate

It is difficult to find a uniform definition for this notion in literature. In the course of research it was demonstrated that school climate has three planes of understanding. It means that by this notion school environment can be described in three perspectives. First of all by the characteristics of the emotional level and educational atmosphere, by relating educational norms and values as well as by the

description of subjective reception of school reality by students⁶. Moreover, school climate is designed as a result of subjective experience of individuals⁶, a few of its dimensions being also mentioned^{7, 6}:

Dimensions of school climate:	Climate manifestations in school reality:
<p>Teacher – student relationship, a positive dimension of the above elements is students’ sense of belonging to school⁸, which is expressed by their readiness to attend school, by positive attitude to it, by the desire to be contribute to creating this place⁴</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the attitude of teachers to their students: do they trust them and accept them, in what way do they show this? Do teachers provide space to students to make joint decisions about important matters both for the entire school as well for the class? Do students have places in school organisation for which they are responsible? What is the restrictiveness level of control and disciplinary actions? And if such actions are implemented: are they focussed more on punishing or making the students aware of the consequences of their incorrect conduct? • What do we have more at school: punishments or rewards. What is significant here is to what extent do teachers reduce difficult behaviours by praising and rewards for positive attitudes and how much their work is based on stigmatising breaking school rules? What is the level of negative actions by teachers and of their aggressive behaviour? • Another dimension of this element is there is person at school (teacher, guidance counsellor, psychologist or a person from the teaching staff) to whom students can talk about their problems and queries. • What are relations between students, to what extent do students integrate and to what extent do they experience rejection, isolation, rivalry and competition? • To what extent are students ready to support others and cooperate with others? What in meant here is whether students form cliques which compete with one another or whether they have a sense of belonging and are open to other students. Moreover, what is important here is being prone to conflicts and aggression level

⁶ Kulesza M. Klimat szkoły a zachowania przemocowe uczniów w świetle wybranych badań empirycznych / M. Kulesza // *Seminare*. — 2007. — № 24. — P. 262.

⁷ Okulicz-Kozaryn K. Klimat i kultura szkoły a zachowania problemowe uczniów / K. Okulicz-Kozaryn // *Studia edukacyjne*. — 2013. — №. 29. — P. 84.

⁸ Okulicz-Kozaryn K. Klimat i kultura szkoły a zdrowie psychiczne uczniów i nauczycieli / K. Okulicz-Kozaryn. — Warszawa, 2014. — P. 2–3.

⁴ Komendant-Brodowska A. Przemoc w szkole. Raport z badań 2011 [електронний ресурс] / A. Komendant-Brodowska, A. Giza-Poleszczuk, A. Baczko-Dombi. — Режим доступу : https://panoptykon.org/sites/default/files/sbp2-_szkoly_ost_wersjapdf.pdf (access on 10.06.2016)

<p>Cooperation level among teachers and its quality</p> <p>This dimension affects the relations of employees with students and their parents. Because teachers, the same as parents, have a power of modelling children's behaviours¹⁴. It is for that reason that the quality of relations among the teaching staff is so important, involving mutual trust and kindness, readiness to help, conviction of possibility of receiving support, solving problems together</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do teachers cooperate among themselves, what kind of relations do they form? • Another parameter is aggression level among teachers, is it low or high? Another factor is the readiness to use force in conflict situations in a team. The more aggression and more use of power play among teachers, the more aggression and power play among students
<p>Characteristics of the educational process i.e. transparent rules and norms and encouraging and creating environment to achieve success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do teachers design student developing process, what is the teaching quality, is there individual approach to students, are teachers ready to help achieve success or only to enforce results? • Do students know the rules obligatory at school, do they experience enforcing these rules, are teachers just (impartial) in relation to difficult behaviours and in relation to student achievements? • How are teaching units designed, is it primarily expository teaching or do students have a chance to search for information? • What are evaluation tools? • Do teachers stigmatise students who do not comply with norms and requirements? Do they communicate to students that they can manage or do they assume beforehand who is capable of what? Do they try to reach an agreement with them?
<p>Participation of parents in the school life, their place at school, teacher – parent relationship; parent – teacher relationship</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is parents place at school? Do they have their space in order to meet and talk? How do they feel at school? Do parents know each other? • What kind of relationship is between parents and teachers? Is it partnership or indifference or hostility?¹³

Creating positive school climate poses before the principal the task of conscious shaping of cooperation with the teaching and non teaching staff with students and parents as well as opting for cooperation rather than competition. It is

¹⁴ Szymańska J. Programy profilaktyczne. Podstawy profesjonalnej psychoprofilaktyki / J. Szymańska. — Warszawa, 2012. — P. 49–52.

¹³ Smykowska S. Współpraca szkoły z rodziną w zaspokajaniu potrzeb rozwojowych dzieci z lekkim upośledzeniem umysłowym – działania stosowane i postulowane / S Smykowska. — Kraków, 2008. — P. 14–32.

possible that the principal in search of management style turns to the *empowerment* concept, which is referred to as the management style based on trust¹. Empowerment described as giving power is a multi-stage process of transferring right to control action and making decisions to employees. It involves primarily reinforcing independence and autonomy and eliciting enthusiasm and involvement out of employees. Reinforcement is possible provided employees discern that their ideas, solutions, decisions have an impact on the organisation and are appreciated⁵.

To sum up the analysis of the notions of school climate and culture it can be said that that they depend on each other and they condition each other, in other words, organisational culture affects school climate and is the «binding agent» for the unity of school organism, whereas climate denotes psychological reality which stems out of perception of school communities of processes taking place in it⁷. Both school climate and organisational culture are of significant importance protecting against problem behaviours of children and adolescents, which is demonstrated by numerous research studies both in Poland and worldwide^{9; 7; 2}.

The protecting factors resulting from good organisational culture and positive climate of school as demonstrated by research studies include:

- Teachers' attitude towards students its characteristic feature being care and involvement in understanding the teaching contents and recognition by school the importance of educational achievements.
- Relations both within the teaching staff as well as in the teachers – students dimension characterised by respect and trust. Moreover, aiming by teachers at mastering the teaching contents by children and disapproval of antisocial behaviours increase in adolescents a sense of belonging to school and improve self-esteem.
- Clearly defined social norms and their strict enforcement give sense of safety and they decrease a violence risk.
- Noticing positive characteristics of students and positive behaviours diminish the violence risk and increase the sense of belonging and self-esteem.
- Teacher involvement and care for students as well as the involvement of the entire school community in the teaching progress.
- Provision of support to students offered by school, involvement of older students to provide support to younger ones.
- School objectives, values and priorities focussed on development, cooperation and readiness to take care of others.

¹ Blanchard K. Empowerment. Odkryj ukrytą moc swoich pracowników / K. Blanchard. — Warszawa, 2012.

⁵ Krawczyk-Bryłka B. Empowerment – strategia zarządzania oparta na zaufaniu / B. Krawczyk-Bryłka // Zarządzanie i finanse. — 2012. — № 1. — P. 314.

⁷ Okulicz-Kozaryn K. Klimat i kultura szkoły a zachowania problemowe uczniów / K. Okulicz-Kozaryn // Studia edukacyjne. — 2013. — № 29. — P. 84.

⁹ Ostaszewski K. Kultura szkoły a zachowania ryzykowne dzieci i młodzieży / K. Ostaszewski // Edukacja. — 2014. — № 1. — P. 14–24.

² Bobrowski K. Znaczenie kultury i klimatu szkoły dla wyników nauczania oraz spostrzeganego przez nauczycieli nasilenia zachowań problemowych wśród uczniów / K. Bobrowski [i inni] // Edukacja. — 2012. — № 4. — P. 39–41.

- Transparent norms and rules in relation to socially unacceptable behaviours, consequence and uniformity in their application.
- Co-decision making by students about school and class within the prescribed frames.
- Teachers as behaviour patterns.
- Good teacher-parent relationship, meetings and information exchange, cooperation¹⁶.

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¹⁶ Wyżlic M. Klimat i kultura szkoły jako czynniki chroniące wobec zachowań ryzykownych, w: Zachowania ryzykowne, diagnoza, profilaktyka, terapia ; Ed. B. Parysiewicz, K. Komsta-Tokarzewska, M. Wyżlic. — Lublin, 2015. — P. 85.

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