

# Positive School Climate – The Condition for High-quality Education

Jana Hanuliaková\*, Dáša Porubčanová†

## Abstract

The educational environment in school represents an important role in acquiring new knowledge and practising of one's skills. It is also important for the creation of social interactions and development of pupil's individuality. It includes both class and school climate, which is its qualitative index. In the following text we characterise the social and the emotional part of the school climate; in the context of secondary school students and their aggressive behaviour. We analyse secondary school pupils' statements and their evaluation of the school climate. We deal with the possible cooperation between the school and a family; as the high-quality cooperation takes part the creation of optimal school climate. It might also represent the prevention of pupils' aggression. Success rate and the ways of implementing this approach depends on an educator, or more precisely, on a teacher. He, through his personality, is a carrier of positive values, character and volitional qualities. Through them he is being able to display empathy, congruence, acceptance towards his pupil.

## Ein positives Klima in der Schule-Voraussetzung für Ausbildung hoher Qualität

### Zusammenfassung

Bildungsumgebung der Schule beeinflusst in bedeutendem Maß Erwerb der Kenntnisse, Übung der Fähigkeiten, Schaffung der sozialen Interaktionen und Entwicklung der Individualität Schülers. Sie umfasst Klassen- und Schulklima, das ein Qualitätsmerkmal ist. Im Text werden sozialer und emotioneller Bestandteil der Schulklima im Bezug auf aggressives Verhalten der Schüler an Mittelschulen charakterisiert. Aussagen der Schüler von Mittelschulen und ihre Bewertung von Schulklima werden analysiert. Wir überlegen Möglichkeiten der Kooperation der Schule mit Familie, weil die Zusammenarbeit von hoher Qualität bei Schaffung optimalen Schulklimas mitwirkt und die Prävention gegen Aggressivität seitens Schüler darstellen kann. Erfolg und Art und Weise, wie es umgesetzt wird, hat die Persönlichkeit des Pädagogen (Lehrer, Erzieher) im Griff, der Träger positiven Werte und Charakter- und Willeneigenschaften ist, welcher Empathie, Kongruenz, Akzeptanz zu seinen Schülern zeigt.

#### Keywords:

School climate  
 Students' aggression  
 Cooperation

#### Schlüsselwörter (German keywords, optional):

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## 1 Introduction

Educational environment represents condition of education process that is, in many cases, non-evaluated. There comes to intentional development of personality in educational environment of school.

\* Jana Hanuliaková 1, Dubnica Institute of Technology, Ul. Sládkovičova 533/20, 018 41 Dubnica nad Váhom  
 Corresponding author. E-mail: [hanuliakova@dti.sk](mailto:hanuliakova@dti.sk)

† Dáša Porubčanová 2, Dubnica Institute of Technology, Ul. Sládkovičova 533/20, 018 41 Dubnica nad Váhom  
 Corresponding author. E-mail: [porubcanova@dti.sk](mailto:porubcanova@dti.sk)

Process of learning is influenced by many elements that separately or in mutual conditionality co-create the character and the quality of education. Character of educational environment co-creates school environment. School environment as characterized in scientific studies (Mareš, Lašek, Grecmanová, Petlák, Ježek, Čapek and others.) is long termed psychosocial, emotional variable. It includes the quality of mutual interactions, lasts long time and has relatively stable character. Conway (2011) states, that class climate consists of many various variables that actually function together but uniquely and offers defining components of class climate to support beneficial climate for successful education such as: class as place of education, class as a place of respect, class as a safe place, class as a place of decency and tact, class as a place of students' synergy (see Geršicová, Hlásna, 2013). Meaning of monitorship and control of school climate are major parts of interactions on student-student, student- teacher, teacher-parent level. In empirical search we focus on social and emotional aspect of school and class climate and determine possibilities in cooperation of education institutions that cooperate in creating conditions of education.

## 2 Evaluating school climate by Secondary school students

Quality of school and class climate is determined by students attending particular school and class. If we want to improve conditions of education it is necessary to know how attenders themselves perceive and evaluate the climate. Main target of research is to evaluate school and class climate at secondary schools via questionnaire tool, aimed especially at social, emotional and material aspect of the school climate. For research examination we used evaluation tool that diagnoses school climate. One dimensional questionnaire allows us to find out how students perceive and evaluate school climate. Authors of the questionnaire identify with determining school climate as a demonstration of whole school surrounding ( cultural social, personal and ecological area) in perception, experience and evaluation by students, teachers parents and other people involved in school life. To understand the notion of school climate, authors of the evaluation tool "School climate" recommend to emerge from school background and observe its influence on students (Grecmanová and co. (2012)). Procession of the data given is realized through quantitative analysis ( percentage calculation, standard deviation and mode ) and qualitative descriptive statistics ( analysis, synthesis, comparison). We involved secondary school students and teachers in research. Question form return in students' group represents (r = 236)- 92%, index of perception 2,27, standard deviation from perception index 0,38. Questionnaire for teachers had return (r = 49)-82%, index of perception 1,79, standard deviation from perception index 0,23.

### 2.1 Determinants of school and class climate in empirical context

Examination tool through which we searched for respondents' answers contents items covering social, emotional and physical aspect of school climate. In evaluating single items we proceeded in sense of grouping items according to single determinants.

	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Rather agree</i>	<i>Rather disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
All of teachers have understanding for my problems	3,03%	31,31%	37,38%	28,28%
I think that teachers favor some students	17%	33%	35%	15%
Teachers keep all promises they make to us	7%	37,8%	40,52%	14,68%
Some teachers prepare students for various competitions	31,63%	41,84%	17,35%	9,18%
I think teachers respect us	6,93%	47,53%	33,66%	11,88%
All teachers request us to cooperate on lessons	13,86%	33,66%	43,56%	8,92%
I participate in various school events	4,08%	17,34%	40,82%	37,76%

I think that school events are important part of schools' life	22,55%	47,06%	23,53%	6,86%
Teachers help me in solving problems at school	12,87%	49,5%	22,78%	12,87%
I can ask teachers for help when solving my study problems	16,33%	61,22%	16,33%	6,12%
I can ask teachers for help when solving my personal problems	4,04%	19,19%	40,41%	36,36%

**Table 1:** Social determinants of school and class climate

Social element of school climate presents quality of mutual relationships, communication, values, social roles of people involved in class, satisfaction in class, cooperation, acceptance, respect, fair attitude to all students. From respondents' answers we conclude that more than a half of questioned participants ( 65%) state, that teachers do not have understanding for students' problems. An interesting fact is that exact half of questioned, evaluate teachers in sense of teachers favoring some students. It is important in pedagogy practice for teachers to perceive and accept all students equally. Preferring some students, may lead to abusing mutual relationships, lowering students' activity in education process, ignoring authorities (teachers), disrupting teams of students and none of the less negating the perception of teachers' work by parents. Within the item of teachers keeping their promises to students, almost 55% of students stated that teachers do not keep their promises. Teacher as a model for students should serve as an example in particular area. According to 73% of questioned respondents- example of cooperation, interest of one to another in forms of various competition preparations and school presentations, teachers are ones to realize all above mentioned. Mutual respect and esteem is perceived sensitively from students' point of view. 54% of them agree that teachers do respect them. Whereas humanistic theories emphasize mutual respect of teacher and student, it is not positive finding that almost half of the students do not feel respected. Mutual respect is important element of qualitative cooperation on the lesson. 47% of questioned students are aware of teachers' attempt to support cooperation. In sense of social competence development it is important that teachers appeal to students to their ability to cooperate, develop and support it. It is necessary to perform activities that demand mutual cooperation. It was shown, in questioning examination, that 78% of students is not interested in participating at school events while 70% of questioned perceive school events as an important and necessary contribution to school's life. In one hand, indifference of students in school events is shown while on another they understand it as a necessity in school's life. Teacher's task is to manage and suggest activities that would stimulate students' activity and interest to participate actively in their realization. Solving problems and conflicts either among students or between students and teachers present counterpart of social competences of teachers and students. Problems are inevitable part of school's surrounding. Students might have problems in learning, personal or relationship issues. Teacher is an element of education that based on various roles (superior, more experienced, older) may help in solving their school problems. Only 23% stated the help of the teacher in solving personal problems. Low percentage might be caused by the fact that students do not ask teachers for help. Because we realized the research in group of secondary school students, personal problems have been solved in peer groups, with friends, not with teachers.

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Rather agree</b>	<b>Rather disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
I have a school mate in school I can confide to	33,66%	35,64%	18,82%	11,88%
I can rely on all of my school mates	5%	18%	40%	37%
We respect each other with my school mates	14,43%	51,55%	23,71%	10,31%
I can admit every mistake in front of my school mates	9,09%	28,29%	42,42%	20,20%
I am afraid of some of my school mates	9,09%	5,06%	22,22%	63,63%
My school mates advise me when I need it	40,82%	42,86%	13,26%	3,06%

I am afraid of some of my teachers	27,16%	16,15%	27,07%	30,20%
I am happy to attend this school	29,59%	45,92%	17,35%	7,14%
I think our school has a good name compared to other schools around	54,54%	38,38%	3,03%	4,04%

**Table 2:** Emotional determinants of school and class climate

It is apparent from students' answers that more than 69% agree with the statement of having someone, school mate they can trust and confide to. Trust in classroom, among students is an important element participating in quality class climate. Mutual support of students in questioned classes is on very high level. 77% of students evaluate school mates as people they can rely on and ask them for help. Support of students is also connected with the help of students. We consider highly positive the fact that 83% of asked respondents expressed themselves that when they need help, advice they can turn to their school mates. Students respecting one another, acceptance, appreciation of school mate was confirmed by 66% of answers. Failure, mistake admittance in front of peers, in front of collective do not perform 62% of asked. Students do not work in the environment where they would be constructively criticized by their peers. They do not like to admit mistakes, failures in front of their class. Questions of safe school and class environment are getting into the main focus of present examining researches. We tried to find whether they felt or experienced fear from their peers. There was no evidence of worries or fear within the student- student relationship (86% of asked respondents do not experience fear from their peers) which we see as positive finding. To compare, we asked whether students feel fear from teachers. In major half, students do not fear teachers even though 43% agree with statement of fearing from some of teachers. School's image is co-created by students' answers about school. 75% of asked expressed themselves to be happy to attend their school. Also high percentage of asked- 92%, perceive their school as better, with better name compared to the other. Results stated, illustrate positive perception of school as a whole lot. It is necessary to realize that complexed evaluation of school and class climate from the point of material conditions for education process. Modern approaches to education, such as neuroscience emphasize the meaning of physical environment. Throughout distributed questionnaires we found how school life participants see physical surrounding of school and class. From the results of question examination we conclude that more than 63% of asked, do not evaluate school building they attend in good condition. Positive evaluation of school premises was shown in matters evaluating cleanness, arrangement and aesthetic visuals of place. Resuming data, it is possible to state, that half of the students evaluate school environment positively.

### 3 Cooperation of chosen institutions in climate creation

In process of cooperation of family, school and educational institutions we consider as crucial the first factor of cooperation, in unity with developing positive values in education (see Krajčová, Pasternáková, 2009). In agreement with Geršicova, Hlásna (2009) the elementary step of school should be focusing the attention on a field of building positive social class climate. Successfulness and ways how to realize them are at hands of the teacher's personality ( teacher, educator ) as a carrier of positive values, character and volitional qualities presenting empathy, congruence, acceptance to his/her pupil. Cooperation in our understanding is the result of professional choice of one who realizes it; family, school, educational institutions. Attitude to it is chosen by subject that impacts and forms object considering mutual aim, that is, creating good human being. Cooperation in a process of diagnosing aggressiveness works with **individual** (student, teacher, pedagogy person, educator) or with **a group** ( school class, educated group, parents, pedagogues). Eliminating aggressive behavior requires precise, objective, complex examination, analysis of behavior and expressions of aggressive personality. Cooperation of various educational subjects is crucial. When diagnosing aggressiveness we agree with Labašová, Porubčanová (2012), Sláviková a Pasternáková (2012) categories. They divided single approaches to several types:

- **conceptual** (as to the visions, plans and programs, what and how it is to be realized in family, school, other institutions, work places with the content of diagnosing/examining aggressiveness ),
- **projective** (aimed at planning projects of diagnoses e.g projects, testings of aggressive students', teachers' and school employees' behavior expressions ),

- **effect aimed** (maps the content of diagnosing aggression, functioning on side of diagnosing subjects of education and effects of cooperation in diagnosing educational results ).

Results of researches, by Smiková, Kopányová (2013), Kolář (2001, 2011), dealing with solving aggressive behavior show, that it is possible to eliminate aggressiveness in schools. It is crucial to have a good methodological database, many specialists that are convinced that aggression and violence present a serious problem. Applying approaches sketched, is dependent on various subjects. Programs and recommendations of mutual cooperation will not bring any results if force and imperative character of school- family relationship will not be eliminated. Határ, 2007; 2015, Hanuliaková, 2014, s. 15 a 2015 s. 7-13; Korintušová, 2014; 2015, Hasajová 2014; Petlák, 2014; Holá, , 2015 and others.) Cooperative approaches in education environment are described via particular diagnosing activities, aiming to support positive educational climate in education program. They are reflected in evaluation of education program, contribute in rising its overall quality and also upgrade effectiveness of teacher's work, improve his/her methodological approaches, educational style and further development of pedagogical competence.

### 3.1 Target of issues solved

In paper presented we state partial issues of examination study aimed to research participation and cooperation of family, school, and educational institutions in problems of eliminating and preventing secondary school students aggressiveness in 2009-2014. Most of researches realized in Slovakia on this field, e.g. Emerová, (2014), Hanuliaková (2007) and others, was targeted at analyzing status and causes of aggressiveness from the point of students themselves (case study of aggressors and victims, opinion surveys, qualitative probes etc.) Less frequently we noticed researches that would analyze pedagogical aspects of preventing and eliminating this social - pathological phenomenon <http://www.poradnavt.sk/dokumenty/zaskolactvo.pdf>.

In empirical analysis, we have decided, to evaluate condition of *reflection of recent issues status* from the aspect of students, their parents, teachers and other educators by questioning techniques. The aim was to examine *cause-and-effect relationship* between factors determining (resp. eliminating) occurrence of aggression among secondary school students by explicative research strategies. We realized the target of empirical examination by quality- quantitative analysis and follow up description of opinions of parents, secondary school teachers, educators, chosen educational institutions- family, school and other primary education institutions (secondary school campus, center of practice skills) and also external educational institutions ( follows as EEI) (leisure centers, centers of activities of interest, art schools). We were interested in opinions of respondents asked, not only in chosen areas of sources and expressions of aggressiveness but mainly for options to participate and mutually cooperate in process of its prevention. One of problems being solved headed to *evaluate the level of participative ( cooperative) activities leading to prevent and eliminate aggressiveness*.

#### Output of issues solved

Results of family, school and EEI cooperation had shown unity of opinions in all of the respondents' groups. Most of asked; educators (95%), teachers (92%) and parents (84%) consider this cooperation as necessary resp. more needed than useless. 14% of parents, 8% of teachers and 4% of educators can not evaluate the value of cooperation. Only 1% of parents and 1% of educators agreed that cooperation is useless.

	Parents			Teachers			Educators		
	Fig.	%		Fig..	%		Fig.	%	
Is useless	1	1%		0	0%		1	1%	
Rather useless than needed			2%			0%			1%
Can not tell	1	1%		0	0%		0	0%	
	14	14%		7	8%		3	4%	
Rather needed than useless			84%			92%			95%
Is needed	25	25%		18	21%		21	27%	
	59	59%		61	71%		53	68%	

**Table 4:** Value of family, school and EEI cooperation

It is written and spoken a lot about cooperation of school and family. Intention was to find out how many cases of cooperation, parents and teachers truly record.

Examples of family and school cooperation	Parents		Teachers	
	figure	%	figure	%
None	21	21%	27	31%
Yes, one	43	43%	21	24%
Yes, several	15	15%	22	26%
Yes it is many of them	4	4%	1	1%
Do not know	17	17%	15	17%

**Table 5:** Value of family, school and EEI cooperation

Parents (43 % of them), in this question, most frequently stated that they remember one particular case of cooperation of family and school on field of aggressiveness. On contrary, 21% of them stated that they do not remember any particular case of cooperation. 17% of parents do not know about about cases and 15% recalls only few cases where school and family cooperated. Only 4% of parents record many cases of mutual cooperation to solve students' aggression. 31% of teachers did not remember even one case of cooperation in aggression solving and 26% of them noted few cases of cooperation in this area. Since respondents confirmed the existence of cooperation in their answers, we searched for **forms of mutual cooperation being used**.

	Parents		Teachers	
	figure	%	figure	%
Parents-teachers association meetings	72	72%	66	77%
Professional-methodological events	8	8%	13	15%
Organizing occasional events	5	5%	13	15%
Organizing same interests activities at school	4	4%	11	13%
none	9	9%	2	2%
Other meetings organized by school	2	2%	3	3%
Do not know	3	3%	2	2%
Other forms	0	0%	2	2%

**Table 6:** Forms of family and school cooperation

Both groups of respondents ( parents and teachers) determined *the most frequent form* in preventing educational problems, the parents- teachers association meetings. 72% of parents and 77% of teachers. Teachers (15%) attempt to use professional- methodological events for mutual cooperation and the same figure (15%) stated, to prefer occasional activities. *Parents, with certain distance*, perceive cooperation through professional-methodological events (8%). *As another forms* of mutual cooperation, 13% of teachers stated of organizing same interest activities at school and after that other activities organized by school (3%). Parents with their 5% answers, expressed about organizing occasional activities and 4% of them use the way of cooperation through the same interests activities. Other forms of cooperation was stated by only 2% of teachers. At the same time they claimed to use mainly the cooperation within their citizen association of parents and teachers association. 9% of parents and 2% of teachers admitted *not to cooperate* with school. Option *do not know* was picked by 3% of parents and 2% of teachers. We asked parents and teachers to evaluate **effectiveness of mutual cooperation**. In majority of teachers positive attitude prevails. 44% of them evaluate the effectiveness of cooperation *rather positively* and 34% evaluate it *positively*. 54% of parents'

answers also consider cooperation to be positive.

	Parents			Teachers		
	figure	%		figure	%	
positive	28	28%	54%	29	34%	78%
Rather positive than negative	26	26%		38	44%	
Once so next time otherwise	31	31%		15	17%	
Rather negative than positive	10	10%	15%	3	3%	5%
negative	5	5%		1	1%	

**Table 7:** Effectiveness of family – school cooperation

Moderate attitude towards evaluating effectiveness got 31% of parents and 17% of educators. Rather negative attitude to effectiveness of cooperation got 10% of parents and 3% of teachers. Negative attitude was stated by 5% of parents and 1% of educators. Family and school cooperation in aggressiveness prevention is generally perceived positively more by teachers rather than parents. For general classification of examination we were also interested in **how effectiveness of mutual cooperation of all relevant subjects is evaluated**. Educators (84%) feel positive about effectiveness of mutual cooperation of family, school and EEI. Also their previous evaluation confirms that. Only 4% of them stated opposite opinion. 13% of educators claimed that effects of mutual cooperation might vary (once so next time otherwise)

	Parents			Teachers			Educators		
	figure	%		figure	%		figure	%	
positive	22	22%	51%	30	35%	71%	24	31%	83%
Rather positive than negative	29	29%		31	36%		41	53%	
Once so next time otherwise	21	21%		21	24%		10	13%	
Rather negative than positive	6	6%	17%	4	5%	5%	3	4%	4%
negative	11	11%		0	0%		0	0%	
Can not tell	11	11%							

**Table 8:** Effectiveness of mutual cooperation of family, school and EEI

With the certain distance (71%), teachers, evaluated positivity in effectiveness of mutual cooperation. 35% of them perceive it completely positively and 36% of teachers feel rather positive. None of the recipients feel negative about it. 5% of teachers evaluate cooperation effectiveness rather negatively. More of the teachers (24%) than educators perceive the situation variously (once so next time otherwise). 51% of parents are satisfied with effectiveness of mutual cooperation. Option of “once so next time otherwise” was chosen by 21% of them. 17% of parents feel the effectiveness of mutual cooperation most negatively amongst all of the groups. Most of respondents stand for opinion that cooperation of all of the involved in preventing aggressiveness and its solutions are necessary. Its effectiveness is evaluated less positively.

The target of this paper was to enrich and amplify theoretical elaborations of given issues through actual and complexly processed empirical research with the use of quantity-qualitative analysis and followed up by opinion description of parents, secondary school teachers, and educators of school external institutions for secondary school students on chosen themes. We clarify options of participation and mutual cooperation in educational process. We do realize however that it is not possible to generalize, considering the matter of

chosen samples, nevertheless we are sure that in process of solving and examining these themes we participated to number of interesting conclusions that may serve as an asset to improve the quality of cooperation and participation on field of eliminating aggressiveness at secondary schools.

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