Characteristics of the School Climate in Boyacá- Colombia:
A Key Perspective to Transform the Institutional Reality

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Abstract

Different investigations show the way in which school climate affects different development and learning processes, at a bio-psycho-social and emotional level. Aspects such as school coexistence, the organization in the classroom, different types of conflict and school violence are part of a complex network of interactions that define spaces where children and young people, teachers in different contexts and cultures exist in the formal environment and institutional school. The evident tensions associated with individual and collective realities end up nuanced the so-called climates, some of them positive in that they generate the deployment of the capacities of those who make up generating affirmative dynamics in which there are explicit and implicit mechanisms for managing situations, others, characterized by being climates in which, on the contrary, significantly increase conflict situations. The paper seeks to identify, in the case of the Central Zone region of Boyacá-Colombia and based on research, the main dimensions that condition the school climate, as well as innovative practices that make school climates allow for collective growth and development, allowing respectful relationships and the experience of values that permeate the institutions. On the other hand, it is expected that from the results the experience can be shared with other researchers in the field to contrast experiences and promote work networks and international cooperation.

Keywords: *School climate in Colombia, Bullying, School relationships.*

Introduction

Considering the importance, the necessity and the appropriateness of the School Climate topic, from the year 2014 the Fundación Universitaria Juan de Castellanos started a series of research processes on students' perception of the school climate, which results have been published in different resources such as the Faculty's Research Bulletins. Thus, in a progressive way, a theoretical and statistical corpus has been made up, from which reliable and contextualized information about the School Climate can be obtained. These products and others give a theoretical foundation to the research line of the Faculty: "Education, Context and Culture". Based on these research processes, this topic is currently being tackled in the Central Zone of Boyacá.

Regarding the department of Boyacá, according to the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) in 2005, the department of Boyacá showed an incidence rate of 56.1% (704,731 people), which is problematic for the population' s perception of well-being and especially because it shows a high percentage of lack in the variables of school achievement, work in formal employment and school backwardness. This verifies that education is one of the main points of citizenship training for the development of relevant well-being for the region, making it possible to observe how education institutions in the department are developing and living, and if this problematic requires an education based on differentiated conditions, characteristics and needs.

Therefore, the target population of the research process which has been advancing is made up of the Educational Institutions of the central province of the Department of Boyacá, which according to information taken from the Secretary of Education of that same department by 2015 are: Tunja (48), Cómbita (21), Cucaita (7), Chivatá (8), Chíquiza (16), Motavita (10), Oicatá (7), Samacá (24), Siachoque (15), Sora (9), Soracá (11), Sotaquirá (20), Toca (16), Tuta (18). These Educational Institutions have approximately 59,933 children and young people from the preschool, primary and secondary segments; from them the process has been developing with the last two segments, since in this life period children and young people are structuring their personality, individuality, and social skills from and for the school context, which allows them to have a higher sense of belonging to this activity.

Bearing in mind the above, the main approaches that will be developed in this paper from the theoretical advances based on the research process are: What is the school climate about? What are the dimensions that condition the school climate? This will make it possible for Institutions to project innovative, contextualized and transforming practices according to their needs.

Development

- What's the school climate about?

Educators began explicitly focusing on the climate more than 100 years ago in Brooklyn, New York (Perry, 1908). In the 1950s, educational researchers started studying systematically how broader systemic or school practices interacted with instruction and person-to-person relationships [1].

The school climate is understood as a construct that relates to cultural and organizational aspects and characteristics within an educational institution. In this regard, the school climate is referred to as the way in which the school is lived by the educational community" [9] (p.5).

Some other authors point out what is central to the School Climate of an institution is the perception that subjects have about the interpersonal relationships that they establish in the school context (at the classroom or educational center) and the context or setting in which these institutions operate [2].

Likewise, there are positions that, in referring to the school climate, resort to the biological metaphor of the educational center as a living organism: "A school does not belong to the organic in the biological sense, but it does have the qualities of a living organism in the cultural and organizational sense" [4]. On the other hand, there are visions that integrate the school climate with the civic, the emotional, equally related to organizational, management and structural aspects. It refers to the perception regarding the way in which interpersonal relations are established among the different members of educational communities in school contexts. [8] (p.20).

Finally, in this conceptual approach to the school climate, it is necessary to bear in mind that this construct is considered one of the most important indicators within the educational context. In this regard, UNESCO [10] mentions that in the report of factors associated with educational achievement, in the Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Study (SRCES), it was found that the school climate is the variable that most consistently preceded learning.

- What are the dimensions that condition the school climate?

Below are indicated some of the aspects (dimensions and indicators) that are considered relevant, since they are related to the achievement of the school climate, or on the contrary, with the appearance of alterations and problems, focusing exclusively on those referring to the school context; on how many of these dimensions and indicators are articulated and defined it will depend on the quality of relationships and the School Climate in Educational Institutions.

VARIABLE	DIMENSIONS	INDICATORS
SCHOOL CLIMATE	RELATIONSHIPS AND INTERACTIONS	RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STUDENTS
		RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STUDENTS AND TEACHERS
		CLIMATE OF JUSTICE AND EQUITABLE STUDENTS' TREATMENT
		CLIMATE FOR LEARNING
		SECURITY CLIMATE
		CLIMATE OF BELONGING
	MANAGEMENT OF THE SCHOOL CLIMATE	IMPLEMENTATION AND CLARITY OF RULES OR STANDARDS
		SUPERVISION
		EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES
		SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS IN DIFFICULTY
		SCHOOL - FAMILY
		TIME DEDICATED TO TEACHING
		PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES
		MOTIVATION OF TEACHERS
		BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT IN CLASS
	EXPRESSIONS OF THE COEXISTENCE	PHYSICAL EXPRESSION
		VERBAL EXPRESSION
		RELATIONAL EXPRESSION
		INSTRUMENTAL EXPRESSION
		SCHOOL BULLYING
		UNADAPTABILITY BEHAVIORS
		SECURITY LEVEL IN AND AROUND THE SCHOOL

Table 1. Operationalization Matrix School Climate Variable. Source: Anderson Rodríguez [8], taken from: Libro Clima escolar, una experiencia desde el municipio el Socorro - Santander, page 29.

- *Dimension relationships and interactions*

As expressed by the Italian sociologist Donati: "at the beginning is the relationship", since the configuration of personal identity is generated precisely when one enters into a relationship with the other. Donati's theory understands and explains reality from a "relational logic" [3]. In other words, it must tend to go beyond the limits of individualism and methodological holism, by adopting a relational perspective. [3]

Therefore, what is intended to determine in this dimension is the quality, warmth, respect or difficulties that occur in the relations and interactions between teacher-student, student - teacher, student - student. In this same dimension, it is analyzed the perceived equity between the managers and the way students are treated in the school. This is delimited through a recognition of the legitimacy and equity of the rules; the right application of the rules or equitable school assessments.

It delimits the students' perception about the act of learning, the interest and motivation towards learning, and the perception of the importance that the teacher gives to the success as a student is obtained.

- *Dimension Management of coexistence*

Learning in school coexistence is the basis of citizen training and is a fundamental factor in the comprehensive training of students, hence the relevance of managing and diagnosing it appropriately in order to strengthen training in this field.

In this regard, to manage school coexistence is a challenge for educational communities, which must combine a variety of interests and ways of expressing themselves with the common purpose proposed in the Institutional Educational Project. From here comes the importance of tackling the implementation and clarity of the rules, since both inside and outside the classroom, they must be clear, known, with a formative sense, adjusted to the right, to the needs of the context and to those that are specific to each Educational Institution.

Nowadays, the pedagogical relationship and the teaching-learning process is associated with two-way and reciprocal interaction between teacher and student, but also between the student body and each other [6]. Each group has its own life in such a way that there is an interpersonal climate that will make it possible or difficult to achieve educational objectives; hence the need to analyze pedagogical practices from the students' perception in the context of the classroom (the class), the essential setting of the teaching-learning process. The academic expectations are not only of teachers over students but also of the institution itself over teachers and the parents over the institution. Definitively, influence the expectations of the family, the community, public policy and what from these policies were intended.

- Dimension expressions of the coexistence

The references to the aggressions and violence in the school context, which are repeated in the media and in the teachers' and parents' comments, make it necessary to consider the expressions of coexistence.

School coexistence sums up the ideal of life in common among people who form part of the educational community, based on the desire to live together in a sustainable and desirable way despite the diversity of origins [5]. Learning to live together is a process that must be integrated and cultivated every day in all school settings [7].

Phenomena such as constant aggressiveness in language, confrontations between members of different parts of the institution, the structure of internal or external groups such as movements of urban subcultures and groups whose behavior borders on aggressiveness and situations of harassment and aggression against the weakest and the most vulnerable make up a challenge for teachers, administrators, and managers of educational institutions.

Conclusions

The study of school climate in the central area of Boyacá is part of the project Instituciones Educativas Vivas "Living Educational Institutions": Human Ecology and Well-being in the Central Province of the Department of Boyacá of the Faculty of Education, Humanities and Arts of the Fundación Universitaria Juan de Castellanos. Bearing in mind that the school is open to the positive and the negative, this research is a contribution towards the construction of a theoretical framework that we are rediscovering around the school climate.

In accordance with this vision, the work carried out by the Fundación Universitaria Juan de Castellanos shows that the term School Climate is polysemic. The meaning it adopts is dynamic and changeable, depending on multiple factors. For this reason, it acquires special relevance the reflection on what the School Climate is and which dimensions are covered by this term. In order to explain with higher precision, the scope and the nuances of the phenomena related to the school climate and which are experienced in schools, we have established dimensions which are currently being diagnosed and analyzed in the different municipalities of the central area of the department of Boyacá.
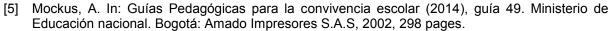
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