Journal of Modern Education Review, ISSN 2155-7993, USA
April 2013, Volume 3, No. 4, pp. 289–301

http://www.academicstar.us

The Relation of Classroom Climate to Learning

Thomas Babalis

((Department of Primary Education, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece)

Abstract: The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship of the cooperative learning, competitive learning and individual learning with school climate characteristics and the differences observed among Primary and Secondary school students regarding the specific learning types. Nine hundred sixty-seven (967) students voluntarily participated in the present research (488 boys, 479 girls). The results of the present study showed that the school climate differs between Primary and Secondary school.

Key words: classroom climate, school transition, support

1. Introduction

It is widely acceptable that a child should have and continuously develop his/her ability to interact with the others in an effective and socially acceptable way so that his/her smooth adaptation to school environment is achieved and his/her relationships with others are moulded. According to Gardner (1983, 1993), this ability is called “interpersonal intelligence” and through its development, children are helped in watching and monitoring their feelings and behaviour. Consequently, when school success is mentioned, not only the development of cognitive skills is referred to, but also the moulding of friendships, the development of the skills to interact in groups and the realization of one’s self and behaviour.

These social and emotional qualities can be attained and optimized not only in a non-malfunctioning family environment, but also in a supportive school framework, where adults project healthy modes of behaviour and strategies. School should provide children not only with academic knowledge, but also with the appropriate training so that they are able to reach self-realization, work in groups, solve problems and communicate effectively in order to reach success. Moreover, school should adequately prepare children to become knowledge resources, knowledge users and socially reliable citizens (Moos, 1979; Anderson, 1982; Bronfenbrenner, 1989, 2005; Fraser & Walberg, 1991; Pianta, 1999; Xohellis, 2005; Matsagouras & Voulgaris, 2006; Babalis, Galanaki & Stavrou, 2007; Babalis, 2011).

For the development of these skills, school climate is of paramount importance, which, according to Emmons, Comer and Haynes (1996), has been defined as the quality and frequency of the interactions between adults and students. A sensitive and supportive school climate, which is steadily promoted by sensitive adults, can equip students with a lot of the pertinent protective factors that are conducive to their success, can cultivate their sense of belonging and promote adaptation; while at the same time it can alleviate any negative conditions in the family environment.

Thomas Babalis, Assistant Professor at the Department of Primary Education, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens; research areas: school effectiveness, school climate, classroom climate, parental involvement, single-parent families and social exclusion, innovation and creativity. E-mail: tbabalis@primedu.uoa.gr.

2. Review of the Literature

One of the most outstanding conclusions that Johnson, Maruyama, Johnson, Nelson and Skon (1981) have reached, based on a review of more than 122 studies on the relation of the effectiveness of cooperative learning to the competitive and individual effort, is that cooperation-always combined with the prevailing climate — is much more effective as far as the improvement of learning-progress and children's adaptation to school are concerned compared to interpersonal competition and individual effort. In a post research analysis, Wang, Haertel and Walberg (1997) found out that learning is influenced by the school climate as much as the students' abilities and that one of its most important parameters is the interpersonal relationships of the members of the school environment. Mooy and De Vries (1993) claim that a good school climate, which is characterized by a series of behavioral rules and penalties, accomplishes teachers' and students' dedication and commitment to school, aiming at reaching higher student results. However, not only a good climate is needed for the realization of any positive outcomes, but proper teaching as well.

Moreover, research carried out on school and classroom climate has shown that the positive interpersonal relationships and the better learning opportunities for students of all demographic environments can increase success levels and decrease anti-social behaviour (McEvoy & Welker, 2000).

A relevant research review has shown that school climate can influence many sectors and people in schools. For example, a positive school climate has been closely related to fewer learning, behavioural and emotional problems in students (Kuperminc, Leadbeater, Emmons & Blatt, 1997). Teachers and students are of the opinion that their positive relationship constitutes an important factor of school environment (Wubbels & Levy, 1993). Support plays an undisputed role not only in the relationship between teachers and students, but also in the relationship among students themselves (Babalis et al., 2007). According to relevant studies, the perceived social support from the teacher and the classmates is positively linked to the motivation and school adaptation of children aged 10–13 years old (Wentzel, 1994; Vedder, Boekaerts & Seegers, 2005). Accordingly, the perceived school and social-personal support from the teacher positively predicts the sixth-grade primary school students' interest in school and class as well as the pursuing of goals related to social responsibility (Wentzel, 1998). Furthermore, in several studies conducted by Harter (1996), Ireson and Hallam (2005) and Babalis et al. (2007), the support, which derives from the classmates and the teacher, is positively related to the self-esteem of the students attending the sixth grade of Primary school and the first and second grade of Junior High school.

Additionally, the thorough study of the research findings has brought us to the conclusion that the high support from the teacher and the classmates is positively linked to classroom cooperation (Johnson & Johnson, 1983; Johnson, Johnson & Anderson, 1983; Johnson, Johnson, Buckman & Richards, 1985; Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1994). The changes that students go through during their transition from one school level to another determine their further progress. A new school can intimidate students and this may result in negatively influencing their beliefs on school climate and their learning results.

Therefore, research has shown that the provision of students with a positive and supportive environment is of outmost importance for their smooth and easy transition to a new school (Freiberg, 1998; Nickolls & Gardner, 1999; Hargreaves & Galton, 2002). In early adolescence, as students claim, the emphasis that is put on competition and a different handling according to different abilities are related to their low self-esteem (Roeser & Eccles, 1998). On the other hand, the feeling of alienation and discomfort in early adolescence is decreased in those classes where group work and discussion are promoted and the high frequency of group work is positively

related to the social support offered by the teacher and the classmates (Natvig, Albrektsen & Qvarnstron, 2003). Group-work teaching methods in combination with a positive conception of school environment are related to intensive interaction, effective communication, greater interest in learning, lower levels of anger, less peer rejection, more trust to others, greater self-esteem, less fear for failure, less school anxiety, less dependence on adults and greater pride of their accomplishments (Johnson et al., 1981; Metz, 1984; Battistich, Hawkins & Lam, 1987; Stipek, Feiler, Daniels & Milburn, 1995; De Lisi & Goldbeck, 1999; Johnson & Johnson, 2004).

As Creemers and Reezigt (1999) claim in the model they developed regarding the influence the climate factors have on educational effectiveness, school should seek for results on the cognitive level, as children attend school so that they are able to learn things they cannot get elsewhere. Such a fact does not imply that the emotional results are of no importance. Schools hope, for example, that students will achieve adequate self-respect and positive learning attitudes. Schools wish their students attained social skills. Emotional results are of outmost importance not only because they are necessary but mostly because they are considered to positively influence learning results.

It has been found that a positive school climate can bring about positive educational and psychological results to students and school staff. Accordingly, a negative climate can obstruct optimal learning and progress (Manning & Saddlemire, 1996; Kuperminc et al., 1997; Freiberg, 1998; Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Kuperminc, Leadbeater & Blatt, 2001). According to Freiberg (1998), the interaction of various school climate factors with classroom climate can result in the forming of a framework, which allows all members of school community to achieve optimal teaching and learning conditions. Manning and Saddlemire (1996) claim that the constituents of school climate, including trust, respect, mutual obligation and interest in others' welfare, can strongly influence the interpersonal relationships of teachers and students and the academic and total school progress. Provided that the school climate is positive, an enriched environment for both personal growth and academic success can be accomplished (Marshall, 2004).

To conclude with, due to an abundance of academic learning experiences, which reinforce children's need to achieve social and emotional sufficiency so that they are successful in school and life in general and since the increasing academic challenges make children have more self-confidence and show higher levels of self-control, it is apparent that all these are reinforced in a positive and forceful school climate. In addition, it is worth mentioning that in the past decades, an increase of the scientific interest in the importance of the school climate for a child's development, adaptation and learning has been observed.

3. Methodology

3.1 Aims and Objectives of the Research

The present research took into account the research findings in the field of education and school environment in general, the theoretical considerations of previous studies, the theory suggestions and the need for the practical implementation of those results in school environment. The research was carried out aiming at studying the relationship of the learning types (cooperative learning, competitive learning, individualistic learning) with particular characteristics of school climate and the differences observed among Primary and Secondary school students regarding the specific learning types. More specifically, the following were researched:

(1) The differences regarding the learning types (competitive learning, individualistic learning, cooperative learning) between Primary and Secondary school students.

(2) The relation and the potential prediction of the learning types, based on the characteristics of school and class climate.

The **basic research questions** were the following:

(1) What is the differentiation rate between the Primary and the Secondary school students regarding the competitive, the individualistic and the cooperative type of learning?

(2) Which are the important predictors of the individualistic, competitive and cooperative type of learning?

(3) What is the relation of teacher and student educational support, of the interdependence of goals and resources, of the social support and cohesion to learning types (individualistic, competitive, cooperative)?

The carrying out of the research, the examining of the aim and the research questions were under the following **limitations**:

(1) The present research did not examine all grades of Primary and Secondary school.

(2) The method of longitudinal research was not used in the present research. Instead, the method of cross-sectional research was used, aiming at examining the differences between Primary and Secondary school.

(3) The school climate was examined based on the students' self-reports, while the teachers' opinions were not measured.

(4) Self-report questionnaires were used so that the psychological variables were researched.

(5) The nomothetic method was used for the analysis of the results, without elements of idiographic approach.

(6) The number of the examined variables is semantically, theoretically and psychometrically limited.

3.2 The Participants

Nine hundred sixty-seven (967) students took part in the present research, four hundred eighty-eight (488) of which were boys and four hundred seventy-nine (479) were girls. The average student age was 12.36 years old (SD = 1.24), while their age varied from eleven (11) to sixteen (16). Out of the total student number, four hundred ninety-six (496) were Primary school students (166 fifth grade students and 330 sixth grade students) and four hundred seventy-one (471) were Secondary school students (293 first grade students and 178 second grade students). Six hundred fifty (650) students came from an urban area, one hundred twenty six (126) from semi-urban area and one hundred ninety one (191) from a rural area.

3.3 Materials and Method

The students completed the **Classroom Life Measure** (Johnson & Johnson, 1983; Johnson et al., 1985; Babalis et al., 2007; Galanaki, 2005). The Classroom Life Measure scale consists of ninety (90) questions that comprise sixteen (16) factors. The specific factors evaluate various characteristics and dimensions of school environment, including the classroom framework and the school in general. Out of the sixteen (16) Scale factors, twelve (12) factors were used for the purposes of the present study. In particular, the following factors of Classroom Life Measure were examined:

(1) Teacher academic support

(2) Teacher personal support

(3) Student academic support

(4) Student personal support

(5) Goal interdependence

(6) Resource interdependence

(7) Extrinsic motivation-Social support
(8) Academic self-esteem
(9) Cohesion
(10) Individualistic learning
(11) Competitive learning
(12) Cooperation

The questionnaire was based on a 5-point Likert rating scale (1 = not at all, 5 = always).

3.4 Administration Procedure-Data Collection

The administration of the Classroom Life Measure took place during the students' syllabus in classroom, under the guidance of two researchers, who provided the necessary clarifications that were conducive to the best and full understanding of the Classroom Life Measure items. The questionnaire completion time was about forty (40) minutes.

The method of multiple analyses of variance (MANOVA) was used, so that the research aims are under scrutiny. In particular, the differences in the ways of learning in the Classroom Life Measure were examined between the Primary and the Secondary school students. Moreover, there was a Bonferroni adjustment (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2006). The standard multiple regression analysis was used for the measurement of the predictive ability of the school climate variables in the three learning types (cooperative learning, competitive learning, individualistic learning).

4. Results

4.1 Internal Consistency-Factor Reliability of the Research Measurement Tools

The Classroom Life Measure factors were examined, aiming at checking their reliability rate (Cronbach alpha Cronbach, 1951). All the factors showed acceptable internal consistency. The reliability indicator Cronbach *a* varied from .51 to .84. Some subscales showed a reliability or alpha value less than the recommended .70 (Nunnally, 1978). Given the small number of items forming the factors, the internal validity observed can be marginally accepted (Hair, Anderson, Tatham & Black, 1998; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Table 1 Internal Consistency Indices of the Classroom Life Measure Factors

	Cronbach α
Teacher academic support	.77
Teacher personal support	.73
Student academic support	.67
Student personal support	.78
Goal interdependence	.51
Resource interdependence	.60
Extrinsic motivation-Social support	.74
Academic self-esteem	.63
Cohesion	.81
Individual learning	.52
Competitive learning	.65
Cooperation	.84

4.2 Comparisons between the Primary and the Secondary School Students

The univariate and multivariate data analysis, which was carried out prior to the main statistical analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2006), revealed that the variables under scrutiny showed low rates on skewness and kurtosis. The low rates of the Mahalanobis distance showed the absence of multivariate outliers among the independent variables ($p < .001$). The co-variation equality was acceptable on a univariate level (Levene's test, F_{max} ratio values), while the variation and co variation homogeneity was not violated on multivariate level (Box's *M* test) (Field, 2005; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2006).

The results of multiple analysis of variance revealed the existence of statistically significant differences between the Primary and the Secondary school students regarding the learning types (Wilks' Lamda = .965, $F_{1,838} = 3.372$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = 0.012$) (Table 2). In particular, statistically significant differences were revealed regarding the individualistic learning ($F_{1,836} = 4.437$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2_p = 0.016$) and the competitive learning ($F_{1,836} = 4.389$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2_p = 0.016$), while statistically significant differences ($F_{1,836} = 2.363$, *ns*, $\eta^2_p = 0.008$) were not revealed regarding the cooperative learning factor between the Primary and the Secondary school students.

Table 2 Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) of the Classroom Life Measure Factors of the Four Different Student Grades

	5th grade Primary school *M* (*SD*)	6th grade Primary school *M* (*SD*)	1st grade Secondary school *M* (*SD*)	2nd grade Secondary school *M* (*SD*)
Cooperative learning	3.85 (0.77)	3.87 (0.79)	3.77 (0.76)	3.68 (0.79)
Individual learning	2.55 (0.78)	2.34 (0.73)	2.41 (0.70)	2.27 (0.66)
Competitive learning	2.96 (0.93)	2.72 (0.93)	2.71 (1.00)	2.57 (0.94)

4.3 Regression Analysis: Learning Type Prediction

For the prediction of the learning types (cooperative learning, competitive learning, individualistic learning), as these were measured based on the Classroom Life Measure scale, the method of standard multiple regression analysis was used, which was chosen so that the prediction rate was researched and the interpretation of the dependent variable was achieved (cooperative learning, competitive learning, individualistic learning) from the independent variables (Cohen, Cohen, West & Aiken, 2003; Tabachnick & Fidelle, 2006). In Tables 3, 4 and 5, the regression analysis results are shown and more specifically, the unstandardized regression coefficients **B**, the standard error *SE B*, the standardized regression coefficients β, the *t*-values and the *p* level of the independent variables (ibid).

The results of the multiple regression analysis revealed statistically significant predictors for the factor *cooperative learning*. The percentage of the interpreted variation was (R^2) .415 (R = .644), which is considered to be statistically significant (adjusted $R^2 = .408$, $F_{change} = 60.644$, *df* 9,769, $p < .001$) (Table 3).

Table 3 Standard Multiple Regression Analysis in the Variable "Cooperative Learning"

Variables	B	SE B	β	t
Teacher academic support	.054	.036	.061	1.506
Teacher personal support	.006	.032	.007	.175
Student academic support	.120	.148	.148	4.182***
Goal interdependence	.131	.029	.154	4.559***
Resource interdependence	.324	.033	.306	9.673***
Extrinsic motivation-Social support	-.072	.023	-.092	-3.100**
Cohesion	.190	.033	.203	5.800***
Academic self-esteem	.001	.032	.009	.298

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

The results of the standard multiple regression analysis showed statistically significant predictors regarding the factor *personal learning*. The interpreted regression percentage (R^2) was. 124 (R = .124), which is considered to be statistically significant (adjusted R^2 = .113, F_{change} = 11.592, *df* 9,738, p < .001) (Table 4).

Table 4 Standard Multiple Regression Analysis in the Variable "Individualistic Learning"

Variables	B	SE B	B	t
Teacher academic support	.057	.043	.048	1.335
Teacher personal support	.070	.038	.095	1.845
Student academic support	-.053	.035	-.068	-1.524
Student personal support	-.010	.036	-.013	-.286
Goal interdependence	.051	.034	.064	1.519
Resource interdependence	-.089	.040	-.089	-2.238*
Extrinsic motivation-Social support	.219	.028	.294	7.917***
Cohesion	-.118	.040	-.131	-2.990**
Academic self-esteem	.088	.039	.086	2.281*

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

The results of the standard multiple regression analysis showed statistically significant predictors for the factor competitive learning. The interpreted regression percentage (R^2) was .382 (R = .146), which is considered to be statistically significant (adjusted R^2 = .136, F_{change} = 14.502, *df* 9,763, p < .001) (Table 5).

Table 5 Standard Multiple Regression Analysis in the Variable "Competitive Learning"

Variables	B	SE B	B	t
Teacher academic support	.073	.054	.066	1.345
Teacher personal support	.063	.049	.064	1.287
Student academic support	-.047	.044	-.047	-1.087
Student personal support	-.017	.045	-.017	-.384
Goal interdependence	-.056	.044	-.052	-1.272
Resource interdependence	.158	.051	.119	3.067**
Extrinsic motivation-Social support	.302	.035	.311	8.630***
Cohesion	-.161	.050	-.137	-3.217***
Academic self-esteem	.234	.049	.175	4.748***

* p < .05, *** p < .001

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The results showed statistically significant differences between the Primary (fifth & sixth grade) and the Secondary school students (first & second grade), regarding the learning types (competitive, individualistic). More specifically, the Primary school students showed higher values regarding the factors of individualistic and competitive learning compared to the Secondary school students, revealing thus the fact that the Primary school classroom shows more intense characteristics regarding the personal and competitive learning. In particular, the post-hoc analyses showed that there are no differences among the Primary school (fifth & sixth grade) students and among the Secondary school students (first & second grade), but between the Primary and the Secondary school students. The aforementioned data put emphasis on the fact that the learning mode and rate differs between Primary and Secondary school, an element which should be taken into serious consideration at the students' transition from Primary to Secondary school, while at the same time emphasizes the fact that not only classroom climate but also the demands and the support received change when students transit to the new school

environment. The findings of two other studies were similar (Nicholls & Gardner, 1999; Hargreaves & Galton, 2002).

The results of the standard multiple regression analysis showed that the students' personal support comprised a significant predictor of the cooperative learning, revealing that the support provided among the students can be conducive to the improvement or the increase of cooperation among students, while the teacher support does not seem any conducive at all, regardless the form it might take, and the classmates' school support as well. In other words, the cultivation of interpersonal relationships and the development of friendships among the classmates can be conducive to the increase of cooperation in the educational environment. These expected outcomes are consistent with those concluded by the writers of the questionnaire of Classroom Life Measure (Johnson & Johnson, 1983; Johnson et al., 1985; Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Moreover, the way the teaching process is structured can be conducive to the increase of cooperation, as this was revealed from the strong predictive power of the factors of the interdependence of goals and the resources among students. This is evident of the fact that group work among students is demanded, so that the teaching goals are achieved and their school project is completed, which is conducive to a cooperation increase in classroom (Garton & Pratt, 2001; Rogoff, Turkonis & Barlett, 2001). Furthermore, the existence of a sense of cohesion in classroom helps the increase of cooperation among students, while on the other hand, it seems that in a classroom, where there is cooperation, the student seeks less for the external incitement and the social support from the school or/and the wider social environment, as such a thing is fulfilled in the framework of the classroom, which emphasizes the importance of the cooperative school climate, since it can play a pivotal and wider role of support and incitement to the student.

In the case of individualistic learning, the modes of support (school and personal support) by the teacher and the classmates did not constitute important predictors, revealing, thus, that classrooms can be featured by the characteristics of personal learning, which to an extent is independent of the type and the support rate the student receives. However, it seems that when a classroom is characterized by individual learning, the interdependence of the resources used by students for their project completion is limited, while at the same time, the specific classroom is characterized by a limited cohesion in the relationships among students. Finally, the results showed that the more intense individual learning was, the more intense the student tendency is to seek for external motivation and social support in order to cope with the demands the school environment poses on him/her. By studying the results of the standard multiple regression analysis regarding the factors of cooperative and individualistic learning and making associations among them, it is revealed that in an environment of cooperation, classroom functions in an inciting and supportive way towards students, a fact that is not evident in a classroom that is moulded by the characteristics of individual learning. The aforementioned findings are consistent with the recent international bibliography (Samaha & De Lisi, 2000; Underwood, Underwood & Wood, 2000; Druyan, 2001).

In the case of competitive learning, the school and personal support by the teacher and the classmates did not comprise significant predictors, revealing that they are not related to the appearance of characteristics pointing towards the appearance of competitive learning in the classroom framework.

However, it is worth mentioning that even though the ways the classmates offered support did not comprise significant predictors, it seems that when a classroom is moulded by the characteristics of competitive learning, there is no school support among classmates (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). At the same time, as is the fact with individualistic learning, the cohesion rate among students is particularly limited in classrooms where there is competitive learning among students. Moreover, the pursue for social support and incitement was particularly

intense in a competitive learning environment and more specifically, at a higher rate than the competitive learning, which calls at a more intense rate for the support and encouragement from the wider school environment, as in a classroom characterized by competition, students are urged to feel litigated or/and threatened for their school abilities, which is probable to influence the wider feeling of adequacy the student experiences in the school and the wider social environment.

The results of the present study can be added to the relevant ones in the international bibliography, where the enforcement of an environment of cooperation in classroom and the creation of a positive and supportive school climate is considered to be necessary (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Garton & Pratt, 2001; Fawcett & Garton, 2005). Cooperation and support characterize a school environment of high quality and this is the reason why various programmes have been suggested and implemented internationally in the past for the improvement of the school climate (Emmons, Comer & Haynes, 1996), where the school is projected as a caring community (Solomon, Watson, Battistich, Schaps & Delucchi, 1996; Batttistich, Solomon, Watson & Schaps, 1997) and the teacher-student relationship is improved (Pianta, 1999).

Furthermore, it is pertinent that the most important factors conducive to a positive school climate should be reinforced, such as, the adult education, the good relationships among peers and the provision of support to both students and their families, so that their healthy social, emotional and academic development is maintained (Elias, Zins, Weissberg, 1997; Pasi, 2001; Zins, Weissberg, Wang & Walberg, 2004).

Haynes and Emmons (1997) studied school climate and its influence on students and claimed that a positive school climate should be accessible to adults, who can provide children with care and support; it should provide opportunities for creative communication with adults, who can help children overcome their anxiety and problems, who are willing to provide them with personal guidance and advice regarding academic issues and can have an active and stable contact with the children's families.

Moreover, carefully planned and constructive social activities that bring children together should be carried out, along with cooperative learning experiences in classrooms, so that a socially and emotionally sensitive school climate is created (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Also, respect among students should be cultivated and in particular, respect and acceptance of those who have weaknesses and peculiarities. Additionally, the provision of organized support to children and their families on the part of the school can be particularly conducive to a positive school environment, so that they face everyday life challenges successfully. It is evident that communication and cooperation between school and family is of pivotal importance (Tomlinson, 1991; Comer, Haynes, Joyner & Ben-Arie, 1996; Epstein, 2001; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Davis-Kean & Eccles, 2005). Finally, the use of violence-prevention and conflict-resolution curricula, the adult intervention, the prevention of acts of bullying (Peterson & Skiba, 2001), the promotion of fundamental more values in children (Marshall, 2004) and the provision of a safe environment for both staff and students (Harris & Lowery, 2002) should all be considered to be plausible interventions aiming at the improvement of school climate.

If school aims at the multifaceted and spherical development of the child, the efforts of the academic community should be intensified, not only for the reinforcement and improvement of the knowledge provided but also for the child's socialization and emotional maturity (Fuipiano & Haynes, 2001; Cohen, 2001; Zins et al., 2004). Hence, the teacher should be able to discern students' weaknesses and learning difficulties at an early stage and to design and implement ways of coping with these problems and provide support. In special cases, specially trained staff or services should take charge of the situation (Comer, 1998; Haynes, 1998). Also, it is important that the teacher pays the same amount of attention not only to the academic skills and knowledge provided, but also to

the development of the child's social skills and emotional maturity. For this reason, he/she should provide students with various practical learning experiences and at the same time plan opportunities with which students will be able to show off their strong points in the classroom on a daily basis, while being improved in any weaknesses they might have and acquiring new beliefs. Moreover, the teacher is responsible of both encouraging parenting involvement in school life and offering support to people or small groups in order to help them release their anxiety and have a better relation to the things going on in classroom and in school in general (Epstein, 1992; Georgiou, 1999; Epstein, Sanders & Simon, 2002; Georgiou, 2007). Furthermore, the teacher is obliged to provide students with cooperative learning experiences with their peers in groups and create a school climate, where risk-taking is promoted and encouraged and children's errors are treated as opportunities for personal growth.

Judging from all the above, it is evident that the teacher plays a very important role in the molding of school climate and this is the reason why his/her in-service training and support should be lasting and ongoing. The teacher should not be abandoned or feel alone in his/her efforts. The state should and must support and train its teachers, so that they are able to fulfill their difficult role.

References

Anderson C. S. (1982). "The search for school climate: A review of the research", *Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 52, No. 3, pp. 368–420.

Babalis T. (2011). *School Pedagogy: Life in School Classrooms*, Athens: Diadrassi. (in Greek)

Babalis T., Galanaki H. and Stavrou N. A. (2007). "School classroom life: Relations among support, cooperation and school self-respect", *Sciences of Education*, Vol. 2, pp. 35–50.

Battistich V., Hawkins S. and Lam K. (1987). "What do we want teaching materials for?", in: R. Rossner & R. Bolitho (Eds.), *Currents in Language Teaching*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Battistich V., Solomon D., Watson M. and Schaps E. (1997). "Caring school communities", *Educational Psychologist*, Vol. 32, pp. 137–151.

Bronfenbrenner U. (1989). "Ecological systems theory", *Annals of Child Development*, Vol. 6, pp. 187–249.

Bronfenbrenner U. (2005). *Making Human Beings Human*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Christenson S. L. D. and Sheridan S. M. (2001). *Schools and Families: Creating Essential Connections for Learning*, New York: The Guilford Press.

Cohen S. (2001). "Social and emotional education: Core concepts and practices", in: J. Cohen, (Eds.), *Caring Classrooms/Intelligent Schools: The Social Emotional Education of Young Children*, London: Teachers College Press, pp. 3–29.

Cohen J., Cohen P., West S. G. and Aiken L. S. (2003). *Applied Multiple Regression/Correlation Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences* (3rd ed.), Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum.

Comer J. P. (1998). *Waiting for A Miracle: Schools Cannot Solve All of Our Problems but We Can*, New York: Free Press.

Comer J. P., Haynes, N. M., Joyner E. T. and Ben-Arie M. (1996). *Rallying the Whole Village: The Comer Process for Reforming Education*, New York: Teachers College Press.

Creemers B. P. M. and Reezigt G. J. (1999). "The role of school and classroom climate in Elementary school learning environments", in: H. J. Freiberg (Ed.), *School Climate: Measuring, Improving and Sustaining Healthy Learning Environments*, London and New York: Routledge, pp. 30–47.

Cronbach L. J. (1951). "Coefficient alpha and the internal structure of tests", *Psychometrika*, Vol. 16, pp. 297–334.

Davis-Kean P. and Eccels J. (2005). "Influences and challenges to better parent-school collaborations", in: E. Patrikakou, R. Weissberg, S. Reeding & H. Walberg (Eds.), *School-Family Partnerships for Children's Success*, New York: Teachers College Press, pp. 57–73.

De Lisi R. and Goldbeck S. L. (1999). "Implications of Piagetian theory for peer learning", in: A. M. O'Donnell & A. King (Eds.), *Cognitive Perspectives on Peer Teaching*, New Jersey: Erlbaum Press.

Druyan S. (2001). "A comparison of four types of cognitive conflict and their effect on cognitive development", *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, Vol. 3, pp. 226–236.

Elias M. J., Zins J. E. and Weissberg R. P. (1997). *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators*, Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Emmons C. L., Comer J. P. and Haynes N. M. (1996). "Translating theory into practice: Comer's theory of school reform", in: J. D. Comer, N. M. Haynes, E. Joyner & M. Ben-Avie (Eds.), *Rallying the Whole Village*, New York: Teachers College Press, pp. 27–41.

Epstein J. (1992). "School and family partnerships", in: M. Alkin (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Educational Research* (6th ed.), New York: MacMillan, pp. 1139–1151.

Epstein J. (2001). *School, Family and Community Partnerships: Preparing Educators and Improving Schools*, Colorado: Westview Press.

Epstein J. L., Sanders M. G. and Simon B. S. (2002). *School, Family and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action*, London: Sage Publications.

Fawcett L. M. and Gatron A. F. (2005). "The effect of peer collaboration on children's problem solving", *British Journal of Education Psychology*, Vol. 75, No. 2, pp. 157–169.

Field A. (2005). *Discovering Statistics Using SPSS* (2nd ed.), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Freiberg H. D. (1998). "Measuring school climate: Let me count the ways", *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 56, No. 2, pp. 22–26.

Fraser B. F. and Walberg H. J. (1991). *Educational Environments: Evaluation, Antecedents and Consequences*, London: Pergamon.

Fuipiano J. E. and Haynes N. M. (2001). "School climate and social and emotional development in the young child", in: J. P. Comer (Ed.), *Caring Classrooms/Intelligent Schools: The Social Emotional Education of Young Children*, New York: Teachers College Press.

Galanaki H. (2005). "A questionnaire on life in school classroom: A Greek adaptation", unpublished manuscript, Department of Special Education and Psychology, Faculty of Primary Education: University of Athens. (in Greek)

Gardner H. (1983). *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, New York: Basic Books.

Gardner H. (1993). *The Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice*, New York: Basic Books.

Garton A. E. and Pratt C. (2001). "Peer assistance in children's problem solving", *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 19, pp. 307–318.

Georgiou S. (1999). "Parental attributions as predictors of involvement and influences of achievement", *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol. 69, No. 3, pp. 409–422.

Georgiou S. (2007). "School as a system", in: S. Georgiou (Ed.), *Of Child and of School*, Athens: Atrapos, pp. 36–42. (in Greek)

Hair J. F., Anderson R. E., Tatham R. L. and Black W. C. (1998). *Multivariate Data Analysis: Upper Saddle River*, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Hargreaves L. and Galton M. (2002). *Transfer from the Primary Classroom*, London: Routledge.

Harris S. L. and Skiba R. (2001). "Creating school climates that prevent school violence", *The Clearing House*, Vol. 74, No. 3, pp. 155–163.

Harris S. L. and Lowery S. (2002). "A view from the classroom", *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 59, No. 8, pp. 64–65.

Hatrer S. (1996). "Teacher and classmate influence on scholastic motivation, self-esteem and level of voice in adolescents", in: J. Juvonen & K. Wentzel (Eds.), *Social Motivation: Understanding Children's School Adjustment*, New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 11–42.

Haynes N. M. (1998). "Creating safe and caring school communities: Comer school development program schools", *Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 65, pp. 308–314.

Haynes N. M. and Emmons C. L. (1997). *The School Climate Scales: Students, Parents and Staff Versions*, New Haven: Yale Child Study Center.

Ireson J. and Hallam S. (2005). "Pupils' liking for school: Ability grouping, self-concept and perceptions of teaching", *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol. 75, No. 2, pp. 296–311.

Johnson D. W. and Johnson A. M. (1993). "Validity of the quality of school life scale: A primary and second-order factor analysis", *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, Vol. 53, No. 1, pp. 145–153.

Johnson D. W. and Johnson R. T. (1983). "Social interdependence and perceived academic and personal support in the classroom", *Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 120, pp. 77–82.

Johnson D. W. and Johnson R. T. (1999). *Learning Together and Alone: Cooperative, Competitive and Individualistic Learning*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Johnson D. W. and Johnson R. T. (2004). "The three Cs of promoting social and emotional learning", in: J. E. Weissberg, M. C. Wang & H. J. Walberg (Eds.), *Building Academic Success on Social and Emotional Learning*, New York: Teachers College Press.

Johnson D. W., Johnson R. T. and Anderson D. (1983). "Social interdependence and classroom climate", *Journal of Psychology*, No. 114, pp. 135–142.

Johnson D. W., Johnson R. T., Buckman L. A. and Richards P. S. (1985). "The effect of prolonged implementation of cooperative learning on social support within the classroom", *Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 119, pp. 405–411.

Johnson D. W., Johnson R. T. and Holubec E. J. (1994). *Cooperative Learning in the Classroom*, Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Johnson D. W., Maruyama G., Johnson R. T., Nelson D. and Skon L. (1981). "Effects of cooperative, competitive and individualistic goal structures on achievement: A meta-analysis", *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 89, pp. 47–62.

Kuperminc G. P., Leadbeater B. J. and Blatt S. J. (2001). "School social climate and individual differences in vulnerability to psychopathology among school students", *Journal of School Psychology*, Vol. 39, No. 2, pp. 141–159.

Kuperminc G. R., Leadbeater B. J., Emmons C. and Blatt S. I. (1997). "Perceived school climate and difficulties in the social adjustment of middle school students", *Applied Developmental Science*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 76–88.

Manning M. L. and Saddlemire R. (1996). "Developing a sense of community in secondary schools", National Association of Secondary School Principals, NASSP Bulletin, Vol. 80, No. 584, pp. 41–48.

Marshall M. L. (2004). "Examining school climate: Defining factors and educational influences", available online at: http://education.gsu.edu./schoolsafety.

Matsagouras I. and Voulgaris S. (2006). "The psychological climate of school classroom in Greek Primary schools", in: A. Trilianos (Ed.), *Acknowledgement: In honour of Professor T. G. Exarchakos*, Athens: National & Kapodistrian University of Athens, pp. 315–343. (in greek)

McEvoy A. and Welker R. (2000). "Antisocial behavior, academic failure and social climate: A critical review", *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 130–140.

Metz, M. H. (1984). "Sources of constructive social relationships in an urban magnet school", *American Journal of Education*, Vol. 9, pp. 202–245.

Moos R. H. (1979). *Evaluating Educational Environments*, San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Rass.

Mooy T. and De Vries G. (1993). "Pesten up school: Bullying in schools", *Vernieuwing*, Vol. 52, No. 10, pp. 37–39.

Natvig G. K., Albrektsen G. and Qrarnstron U. (2003). "Methods of teaching and class participation in relation to perceived social support and stress: Modifiable factors for improving health and wellbeing among students", *Educational Psychology*, Vol. 23, pp. 261–274.

Nickolls G. and Gardner J. (1999). *Pupils in Transition: Moving between Key Stages*, London: Routledge.

Nunnally J. C. (1978). *Psychometric Theory*, New York: McGraw-Hill.

Nunnally J. C. and Bernstein I. H. (1994). *Psychometric Theory*, New York, McGraw-Hill.

Pasi R. J. (2001). *Higher Expectations: Promoting Social Emotional Learning and Academic Achievement in Your School*, New York: Teachers College Press.

Peterson S. L. and Skiba R. (2001). "Creating school climates that prevent school violence", *The Clearing House*, Vol. 74, No. 3, pp. 155–163.

Pianta R. L. (1999). *Enhancing Relationships between Children and Teachers*, Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Roeser R. W. and Eccles J. S. (1998). "Adolescents' perceptions in middle school: Relation to longitudinal changes in academic and psychological adjustment", *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, Vol. 8, pp. 123–158.

Rogoff B., Turkanis C. G. and Barlett L. (2001). *Learning Together: Children and Adults in A School Community*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Samaha N. V. and De Lisi R. (2000). "Peer collaboration on a nonverbal reasoning task by urban minority systems", *Journal of Experimental Education*, Vol. 69, No. 1, pp. 5–14.

Solomon D., Watson M. S., Battistich V., Schaps E. and Delucchi K. (1996). "Creating classrooms that students experience as communities", *American Journal of Community Psychology*, Vol. 24, pp. 719–748.

Stipek D. J., Feiler R., Daniels D. H. and Milburn S. (1995). "Effects of different instructional approaches on young children's achievement and motivation", *Child Development*, Vol. 66, pp. 209–233.

Tabachnick B. G. and Fidell L. S. (2006). *Using Multivariate Statistics* (5th ed.), New York: Pearson Education.

Tomlinson S. (1991). *Teachers and Parents: Home-School Partnerships*, London: Institute for Public Policy Research.

Underwood J., Underwood G. and Wood D. (2000). "When does gender matter? Interactions during computer-based problem solving", *Learning and Instruction*, Vol. 10, No. 5, pp. 447–462.

Vedder P., Boekaerts M. and Seegers G. (2005). "Perceived social support and well-being in school: The role of students' ethnicity", *Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 120, pp. 77–82.

Wang M. C., Haertel G. D. and Walberg H. J. (1997). "Learning influences", in: H. J. Walberg & G. D. Haertel (Eds.), *Psychology and Educational Practice*, Berkeley, CA: McCuthan, pp. 199–211.

Wentzel K. R. (1994). "Relations of social goal pursuit to social acceptance, classroom behavior and perceived social support", *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol. 86, pp. 173–182.

Wentzel K. R. (1998). "Social relationships and motivation in middle school: The role of parents, teachers and peers", *Journal of Educational Psychology*, Vol. 90, pp. 202–209.

Xohellis P. (2005). *School Pedagogy*, Thessaloniki: Kiriakidis. (in Greek)

Zins J. E., Weissberg R. P., Wang M. C. and Walberg H. J. (2004). *Building Academic Success on Social and Emotional Learning: What Does the Research Say*? New York: Teachers College Press.