

## SCHOOL CLIMATE AS A FUNDAMENTAL AXIS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE QUALITY EDUCATION



**Gloria Mayerly Ruíz Valenzuela**  
UMECIT University, Panama  
gloriaruiz@umecit.edu.pa  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1430-756X>

Reception date:21/09/2021

Revision date:10/10/2021

DOI: 10.37594/dialogus.v1i8.524

Acceptance date:01/11/2021

### ABSTRACT

It is increasingly important to pay attention to the factors that influence the improvement of educational quality, in fact, this aspect is framed within Colombian educational policies. Faced with this, in this essay educational quality is related to the school climate, understood as the state of the generalized perception possessed by the actors that make up the entire educational community within a complex process of social and cultural interaction. To face this relationship, school management is located as a process of active and constructive school participation, where the idea of educational community is highlighted, allowing to focus on important constitutive elements within said management such as coexistence, pedagogy for peace, the role of the teacher and the student, in addition to the teaching and learning processes that focus on the sociocultural context. In effect, the improvement of educational quality from the bases of the school climate is, therefore, conditioned to the recognition both of the different possibilities that educational institutions have within their sociocultural environment and of respect for the maturation processes, interpersonal relationship and action and strengthening plans to be taken collectively.

**Keywords:** Educational quality, school climate, coexistence, peace, education, educational community, school management.

### INTRODUCTION

The practice of education in educational institutions can be considered a complex process, especially because it depends on intrinsic factors such as administrative management, availability of resources or classroom coverage, as well as extrinsic factors such as the

sociocultural context surrounding the school or regional educational policies. In effect, to focus on educational quality is to focus on a multitude of aspects that make up a praxis that is not only adequate, but also has the potential for constant improvement.

In this order of ideas, the aim is to offer an intersubjective look at an organizational aspect that is key within the exercise of education: school climate, defined as the generalized perception held by educational actors: managers, teachers, students, workers and parents, about the development and functioning of institutional practice (Bryk et al., 2010). For Sandoval (2014) the generalized conception within the concept of school climate is not limited to the relationship between these actors, but incorporates the forms of interaction between the different strata that make up the entire educational community, so it is a collective construction and is the responsibility of those involved in the educational process.

### **SCHOOL CLIMATE IN EDUCATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICE**

Although school climate is a fundamental aspect within the full institutional functioning, only until the seventies has it been a concept under study by organizational psychology and education. In fact, authors such as Weber (1971) were the first to identify and reference a possible list of organizational factors inherent to schools that served as differentiators of quality: strong leadership of the school principal and positive atmosphere among teachers.

Thus, the school climate involves a compendium of administrative, pedagogical, formative, managerial and human actions that are conducive to the consolidation of a successful educational exercise. In this regard, Pedro (2010) emphasizes that the institutional environment is fundamental for the successful performance of teachers and for the achievement of student learning; in addition, it is considered important to consolidate teaching teams that work as a group and feel identified with the institution where they work.

It is important to take into account that the idea that the optimal school climate is only evident in private schools or schools with high income of economic resources usually prevails, however, are there not successful educational models in educational institutions located in less favored contexts? López et al. (2018) reaffirms the fact that schools in challenging or vulnerable contexts that obtain good results have a satisfactory school climate for all school actors that make life in them. This climate is in a very high percentage, the result of the leadership exercised by principals.

In this order of ideas, it is not the socio-economic stratum or the availability of technical or technological resources that defines an adequate school climate in educational institutions, but rather it is necessary to focus on actions that support good interpersonal relationships among the actors that make up the educational community. Thus, López et al. (2018) recognize that, from the role of teachers, an optimal school climate is ratified when these actors feel recognized and valued in school spaces, when there is tranquility, harmony and good communication, which allows the emergence of a sense of belonging towards the institution. Additionally, these authors argue that a good school climate is achieved when teachers work with autonomy and clear rules, as well as an evident construction of spaces for the generation of articulations towards good coexistence with a strong institutional leadership of principals at the institutional level, who are respected by teachers who trust their management and their ability to solve problems. Finally, in studies such as those of López et al. (2018) it is clarified that although aspects such as the state of the infrastructure of the institutions do not usually receive the best rating by teachers, this factor does not seem to influence the school climate, likewise, although teamwork is taken into consideration by almost 70% of teachers, 30% indicate that it is only sometimes achieved with the educational community.

In fact, according to De Sousa Santos (2010), when optimal educational work environments are created, the importance of the teacher's role and the satisfaction they have from different aspects of their work, which are not necessarily economic, are valued in a dialogic way, and this will be reflected and will have a favorable and direct impact on the quality of the teaching and learning processes with students.

Faced with this scenario, an intersubjective view of the school climate from the teacher's role compromises the fact that as actors responsible for the praxis inside the classroom, there is a clear correspondence between their labor welfare and the institutional educational quality. However, by highlighting the student role, there is also a clear correspondence between their perception of the context and the educational reality with the overall results in terms of academic performance, collaborative work, school coexistence or active participation (Aristimuno & Parodi, 2017), elements, which, undoubtedly, are part of the set of factors that improve the quality in the exercise of education.

In other words, in order to understand the elements that affect educational quality

from the school climate factor, it is important to consider all the roles that make up the educational community equally, since they are articulated as functionally necessary gears for the comprehensive development of the educational service (Gvirtz et al., 2011).

It is therefore necessary to emphasize that a correct accompaniment of the student implies continuous inquiry about the concept that each student has about their environment and educational horizon, supporting the ideas that result from active listening to the students, that is, using the student role to detect nonconformities, violent situations, cases of bullying, successful projects, alternative management routes, etc., is also to focus on the school climate and how to influence the possible improvement of educational quality (Conejo & Redondo, 2001).

Undoubtedly, the implementation of strategies for the assessment of school climate in institutions by all the actors that make up the educational community is a necessary operation to strengthen the educational exercise, in fact, Trevino et al. (2012) argues that “the climate of human relations that prevails in schools is one of the variables that most influences student learning in Latin America” (p. 5).

Although strengthening interpersonal relationships and coexistence summarizes a large part of what makes up school climate, it is worth arguing that this concept goes far beyond these definitions. Indeed, Román (2008) in his report on “School effectiveness and associated factors in Latin America and the Caribbean” highlights organizational and institutional relationship factors as aspects associated with school effectiveness, within the construct of educational quality. Similarly, exogenous factors such as the role of the family are useful to keep in mind within the relationship between school climate and educational quality. For example, according to Dominguez (2008), education functions as a complex process that begins with the family and then the school, and both parties are required to achieve full educational and staff development, Thus, within the teaching exercise there is an implicit recognition of how to invade or go through a whole set of knowledge provided to students on a daily basis, in order to reevaluate, correct, enhance or discard them. Therefore, the construction of education in the 21st century tends to become more complex as it approaches each sphere in which not only the educator, but also the learner and his or her context are involved.

Thus, when referring to the socio-educational context as an element that affects the school climate, it is necessary to highlight culture as a response to the interaction of different human groups throughout the history of mankind, taking into account that societies have been changing to become more complex as man develops more effective methods to transform nature and also to subsist and reproduce both biologically and socially (Candamil & Grajales, 1998). Consequently, it is convenient to recognize that human life takes place in two scenarios: the natural and the cultural. Thus, it can be stated that culture is everything that is not nature. As a social legacy, culture is the product of learning; culture is the education of human nature (Candamil & Grajales, 1998).

Therefore, to educate by paying attention to the socio-educational context is to bet on an education with a humanistic and socio-cultural outlook. From this approach, beyond instruction, institutions have been adapting to an environment that teaches for citizenship and healthy coexistence (Bogoya and Santana, 2013). Therefore, the effect of its conditions, development and social and cultural progress is favored through the promotion of participation, cohesion and an environment of peace (Garces, 2020), thus, it has begun to advocate for the implementation of innovative projects that promote in educational institutions an optimal school climate as a space suitable for living and practicing democracy and healthy coexistence from the culture of the peoples. Consequently, the educational exercise within the social spheres constitutes a serious example of the behavior assumed by schools today, taking into account that there is a set of knowledge that is neither provided by families nor configured by the current mercantilist competition. This knowledge constitutes the idiosyncrasy of peoples and forges the common character of populations. We speak, then, of culture as an inherent element in family and school pedagogy.

Inevitably, educational practice is constituted from all the features that shape the individual's behavior. Consequently, it can be concluded that the social factor modifies the way of developing teaching and learning processes, enabling to pursue, many times, strategies that place students in better socio-economic spheres and with greater skills of competence for life; On the other hand, the family factor is installed as a complementary element in the work of the teacher of the XXI century, enabling him/her to design strategies in order to keep students away from ignorance, but taking advantage of and respecting the daily knowledge of the students; Finally, the cultural factor is imposed as a guideline for the teacher's training praxis, making him/her discern between what is good and bad to teach or the ways in which

he/she should do it.

### **SCHOOL MANAGEMENT AS AN ACTIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE PROCESS**

Certainly, with the conformation of educational institutions much more closely linked to their sociocultural context, spaces of healthy coexistence and good school climate are advocated, however, in order to bet on the improvement of educational quality it is necessary, additionally, to focus on a structural and internal element of each school: school management. In this regard, Quintana (2018) defends that when school management is denoted as the instance that makes clear a course of administrative or pedagogical actions in the institution, one may run the risk that in setting such procedures the exercise of reflection about these actions or management routes is omitted. Thus, although the procedures facilitate clear routes for institutional work, they may also prevent the exploration of new ways of doing things, leading to routine and, therefore, to a normative model.

That is why Quintana (2018) is aware that school management should be seen as participation for improvement, in other words, in the field of expectations it can be alluded to the demand for spaces and forms of participation that dignify the different educational actors through the recognition of their voice, their needs, their interests and opinions. This fact is directly related to the school climate, especially because the construction of spaces for dialogue and meeting of ideas seems to be an unequivocal principle of schools with more adequate work environments (Mena and Valdés, 2008).

It is worth recognizing, according to Quintana (2018) that providing institutions with an optimal school management requires relevant participation, not an apparent one, that is, it is advocated for an authentic participation that seeks to dignify the capacity to be and do in society, from within each school. This capacity is not only recognized in itself, but also in the other; this is why the teacher usually expresses as a claim the fact that, as well as students, parents should orient their idea of participation in expressing constructive ideas and opinions that enrich the educational work, therefore, there is the expectation of participation as a possibility to grow and learn, thus, authors such as Sennett (2009) state that people can learn about themselves through the things they produce and participate in a work that is done with others and for all.

### **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND ITS INSTITUTIONAL IMPROVEMENT**

Up to this point, it is clear that school management, as an administrative and pedagogical guideline, is a fundamental axis for the relationship between school climate and educational quality; however, it is worth focusing on the latter concept as a broader gear. In this way, quality is even established as a principle within the Colombian constitutional order, in fact, “it corresponds to the State to regulate and exercise the supreme inspection and surveillance of education in order to ensure its quality, the fulfillment of its purposes and the best moral, intellectual and physical training of students” (Congress of the Republic of Colombia, 1991).

Faced with the above, quality is a type of judgment in which a value is given to the satisfaction of a need, an expectation or a desire, in fact, these judgments can be configured with respect to objects or representations of the world (Quintana, 2018). Thus, the main objective that, circumstantially, is given to school management is the search for educational quality; however, for Namo de Mello (2013) not emphasizing these two concepts and their way of relating to the educational reality of each institution within the pedagogical foundation leads to dynamics and practices to pretend supposed improvements that end up hurting the maturation processes possessed by the schools that do stand out and rigorously put into consideration both expectations and needs.

Consequently, for Quintana (2018) the improvement of educational quality is, therefore, conditioned to the recognition of both the different possibilities that educational institutions have within their socio-cultural environment and the respect for the maturation processes and action and strengthening plans that they must take collectively; in this way, each school can focus on the different actions that it can do and, accordingly, provide itself with the maturity that gradually allows it to drag those limits. In this way, culture is inherent to the behavior assumed within the educational and institutional practice (Valencia, Canon and Molina, 2012). Indeed, this factor is “manifested in the instruments and objects product of work, in the set of basic ideas for judging the world and man’s place in it, in religion, language, in ethical, economic and political principles, in social institutions and in all those things created by man and that constitute his environment.” (Candamil & Grajales, 1998).

Within the study of the strengthening of educational quality based on school climate, it is impossible to leave aside the role assumed by pedagogical praxis within each school. Garces (2020) reaffirms the fact that, in practice, each school is responsible for educating for life in social, environmental and cultural harmony. That is, on the one hand, the focus would

be on the ability to deal with conflicts while, on the other hand, cultural negotiation scenarios would be experienced. Consequently, for Bogoya and Santana (2013, p.26), students in the classroom, in the first instance, must develop a series of cognitive capacities, such as “learning for individuation, learning from what is different, learning for transformative action, learning to learn, learning from conflict, learning to change in the midst of change or learning to empower themselves by producing knowledge”.

Based on this pedagogical perspective, the student, as a subject who constructs knowledge, acquires cognitive competencies both in the democratic life of the school and in his or her learning in the educating city (Saenz, 2007). Thus, the instructional and experiential processes experienced in each educational institution must be complemented with a series of programs, strategies and actions developed in the educational environment. With this, according to Huertas (2016), it is expected that students experience the conditions for the construction of citizen culture offered by the educating city or environment and articulate them with school scenarios and knowledge, within a permanent pedagogy of citizenship and positive school climate.

Certainly, the necessary framework for an optimal school climate from the pedagogical practice implies an education for the formation of integral human beings. Thus, for Garces (2020) an education for peace is relevant, where peaceful coexistence must be achieved with a cultural change promoted from the school as a transforming axis, thus, in contexts such as the Colombian one, where it has suffered decades of war and internal conflict, the transition from a culture of violent resolution of cultural, social and political conflicts must go through not only the coexistence of knowledge, representations, values and opinions in the school curriculum, but also through the constitution of different habits and customs in relation to peaceful coexistence.

From this perspective, it is stated that education designed for quality and school climate is an educational exercise that implies knowing oneself from citizenship and healthy coexistence, axes that are based on the promotion of different scenarios of subjective otherness, either from teaching or from the school experience (Muñoz et al., 2014). In response to the above, Garces (2020) argues that it is the school’s duty, mainly, to encourage in the subjective discourses, the notions of civic duty, as well as the appropriation of cultural diversity. Likewise, it is relevant to create and promote learning scenarios and intercultural



and differential dialogue, which allow the adequate recognition of the cultural and subjective other, therefore, it is essential to recognize the intercultural and civic difference based on coexistence and agreements that build reflective dialogue among all the subjects that make up the educational community.

It is noteworthy that, currently, there are indications that reflect that the school climate promotes learning, the capacity for cooperative work in schools, the socio-affective well-being of the actors in the educational process, performance and school effectiveness (Bryk et al., 2010; Trevino et al., 2012), however, for Garces (2020) within the educational quality, it is necessary that this education in coexistence be built to overcome the perspectives that seek to omit, deny or even eliminate social conflict, as part of the current reality. Thus, for the author, it is necessary to include positive conflict and devise new pedagogical strategies, from the managerial and teaching role, for the reconstruction of the social fabric and coexistence with the other as a diverse subject.

In this way, it is worthwhile to “Design curricula and democratic school and out-of-school environments that allow us to build together, from peaceful coexistence and participation in human affairs, a peaceful and just society” (Garces, 2020, p.15).

## CONCLUSIONS

In order to relate school climate to educational quality, it is necessary not only to assume education as a complex system and process, but also to assume that it is linked to deep social interactions within a cultural base that continuously builds community. Thus, school climate is developed as a key element for understanding the ways in which students, teachers, principals, parents and workers in general work and strive on a daily basis.

In short, it is clear that the maintenance of intangible wealth: harmony, collaborative work, interpersonal relationships, leadership of managers, transparency in processes and humanity in treatment, within schools is key to the construction of successful teaching and learning processes that impact directly on the improvement of educational quality.

Certainly, it is necessary to implement pedagogical strategies that promote healthy coexistence and civic culture, as fundamental parts for the strengthening of an education designed for a good school climate, in this way, acting under more humanistic pedagogical mechanisms results in much more responsible educational communities and with better ways

to resolve conflicts.

Finally, there is the challenge of putting into action a participative and active school management, as well as a training in integral citizen coexistence and pedagogy for peace, in this way, improving the quality of education based on good school climate, is to face the capacity of each institution to understand its institutional and pedagogical reality, as well as the interpretation of its needs and expectations. Therefore, school management is the element that, beyond offering a path, has as its purpose the agreement of different ideas regarding the improvement plans built collectively, promoting the recognition of the possibilities of positive transformation that each institution has within its social and cultural context.

### **REFERENCIAS BIBLIOGRÁFICAS**

- Aristimuño, A., & Parodi, J. P. (2017). Un Caso Real de Combate al Fracaso en la Educación Pública: Una Cuestión de Acompañamiento, Liderazgo y Cultura Organizacional. REICE. Revista Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación, 15(4), 141-157.
- Bogoya, N. y Santana C. (2013). Hacia una pedagogía para la ciudadanía. Revista Infancias Imágenes, 5(1), 24-27.
- Bryk, A., Bender Sebring, P., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S., & Easton, J. (2010). Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Candamil, P. E., & Grajales, S. G. (1998). Familia, sociedad y cultura como determinantes del individuo. Curso comportamiento humano. Universidad del Valle.
- Casassus, J. (2000). Problemas de la gestión educativa en América Latina (la tensión entre los paradigmas de tipo A y el tipo B). Unesco
- Conejo; R. & Redondo, J. (2001). El clima escolar percibido por los alumnos de enseñanza media. Una investigación en algunos liceos de la Región Metropolitana. Última Década. 9(15), 11-52.
- Congreso de la República. (1991). Constitución Política de Colombia, Artículo Sexto.
- Corrales, A., Quijano, N., & Góngora, E. (2017). Empatía, comunicación asertiva y seguimiento de normas. Un programa para desarrollar habilidades para la vida. Enseñanza e Investigación en Psicología, 22(1), 58-65.

- De Sousa Santos, (2010). *Descolonizar el saber, reinventar el poder*. Montevideo: Ediciones Trilce
- Domínguez, M. S. (2008). *La Educación, cosa de dos: la escuela y la familia*. Temas para la Educación.
- Garcés, V. (2020). Alfabetizar en convivencia y ciudadanía. Una revisión documental de la educación ciudadana para la resolución de la violencia y el conflicto sociocultural. *Sophia*, 16(1),4-18. ISSN: 1794-8932.
- Gvirtz, S., Zacarias, I., & Abregú, V. (2011). *Construir una buena escuela: Herramientas para el director*. Buenos Aires: Aique.
- Huertas, O. (2016). Incidencia de la educación desde un paradigma complejo en la formación de ciudadanos/as. *Revista Ciudad Paz-ando*, 8(2), 125-139.
- López, M. & Loaiza, K. (2017). Bases para una educación exitosa en provincias con alto porcentaje de pobreza. *Cuadernos del CENDES*, 34(96), 87-107.
- López, M; Efstathios, S.; Herrera, M; Apolo, D. (2018). Clima escolar y desempeño docente: un caso de éxito. *Aproximaciones a escuelas públicas de la provincia de Carchi-Ecuador*. *Revista ESPACIOS*. 39 (35). ISSN 0798 1015
- Mena, M. & Valdés, A. (2008). *Clima social escolar*. Documento Valores UC. Santiago: Escuela de Psicología, Universidad Católica. [página web]. Recuperado de: [http://ww2.educarchile.cl/UserFiles/P0001/File/clima\\_social\\_escolar.pdf](http://ww2.educarchile.cl/UserFiles/P0001/File/clima_social_escolar.pdf).
- Muñoz, P., Gamboa, A. y Urbina, J. (2014). Deberes ciudadanos y diversidad cultural: comprensión de los discursos de estudiantes y docentes desde la alteridad y la subjetividad. *Revista Infancias*, 13(2), 23-32.
- Murillo, F.J. (Coord.) (2007). *Investigación Iberoamericana sobre Eficacia Escolar*. Bogotá: Convenio Andrés Bello.
- Namó de Mello, G. (2013). *Nuevas propuestas para la gestión educativa*. Biblioteca para la actualización del maestro.
- Pedró, F. (2010). Incentivos salariales y resultados escolares. *Cuadernos de Pedagogía*, (399), 14-15.
- Quintana, Y. (2018). Calidad educativa y gestión escolar: una relación dinámica. *Educación y Educadores*, 21 (2) ISSN: 0123-1294
- Román, M. (2008). *Investigación latinoamericana sobre la escuela eficaz*. En *Eficacia escolar y factores asociados en América Latina y el Caribe*. Santiago de Chile: UNESCO y LLECE.
- Sandoval, M. (2014). *Convivencia y clima escolar: claves de la gestión del*

conocimiento. *Última Década*, (41), 153-178.

- Sennett, R. (2009). *El artesano*. Barcelona: Anagrama
- Treviño, E., Valdés, H., Castro, M., Costilla, R., Pardo, C., & Donoso, F. (2012). *Factores asociados al logro cognitivo de los estudiantes en América Latina y el Caribe*. Santiago de Chile: UNESCO.
- Valencia, G., Cañón, L y Molina, C. (2012). Educación cívica y civilidad: una tensión más allá de los términos. *Revista Pedagogía y Saberes*, (30), 81-90.
- Weber, G. (1971). *Inner-city children can be taught to read: Four successful schools*. Washington, DC: Council for Basic Education.