

CORRECTIVE INTERVENTIONS ON SCHOOL GROUPS

Anca Olga Andronic

Assoc. Prof., PhD, "Spiru Haret" University

Abstract: In the current psychopedagogical assistance system the focus is on individual counseling activities and less on interventions that target educational groups. This approach can be explained primarily by the fact that access to psychological services is usually made in the individual manner, but also by a lack of concern regarding the dynamics of school groups from decision makers. Although the media constantly reports about negative phenomena generated or maintained in school groups, therefore knowledge of the dynamics and corrective interventions (subject of this article) are made rather reactive than in a preventive manner.

Keywords: education, small group, cohesion, competition, group climate.

1. Particularities of the class-group

The class-group has specific characteristics and its own system of interaction. This specificity appears to be obvious when making comparisons between different school groups (classes): in a school, with the same team of professionals, with identical materials conditions and a unitary curriculum, the school results may be very different. In common language, we hear about "good" or "bad" school classes (groups), about "optimal" or "conflictual" school climate without in fact the process of knowing and helping them to appeal to the knowledge of group dynamics.

With the development of research in the field of group dynamics in the psycho-sociology of educational process the idea that the teacher-student interaction is not the only interaction impacting students' cognitive progress became more present (Neculau and Boncu 1999, 235-236): "Social psychology studies have highlighted the huge importance of the emotional climate

of the informal group for attending school and the efficient interaction between students for the learning process”.

In the traditional pedagogy, interaction and cooperation between pupils were regarded with reluctance, unlike contemporary pedagogy that fosters and promotes them. Currently, it starts from the idea that in many cases, the group mediates the student-teacher relationship.

Significant for this change of perspective is the definition of group-class proposed by Adrian Neculau (1995, 257) "The class of students is a specifically working group composed of a number of members equal between them (students), and an animator (teacher), whose relationships are governed formally by the type of task and operating rules. "

The importance of studying the classroom of students in terms of a social group derives from its importance in the life of every child of school age, due to some specific psychosocial characteristics of the class group:

- it is a group with a high stability, manifested over the years. There are a lot of cases where its composition is almost the same for the primary and secondary education;
- it possesses all the characteristics of the primary group offering plenty of potential for interactions face to face (Andronic and Andronic, 2006, 74)

As a social group, the class performs the following functions (Neculau and Boncu, 1999, 236):

- Social integration: the class of students has a great contribution in the process of socialization; a good integration within it provides the individual with psychological comfort;
- Security: is a favorable environment perceived as secure, the students being able to manifest;
- Regulating the relations within the group: the group through various reactions, has the power to sanction the behaviors of its members;
- Regulating intra-individual relationships - which lead to the construction of self-identity from the perspective of group membership.

2. Psychosocial phenomenon within school groups

In the psycho-sociological literature, approaching the phenomena that occur within school groups is not only of theoretical interest, but it is also a pragmatic necessity: there is an unquestionable social stake on how school groups meet their educational objectives and achieving the objectives of education is directly dependent on the proper functioning of the school groups. We will be presenting three such phenomena: homogeneity vs. heterogeneity in class composition; competition and cooperation in school groups and school climate.

Homogeneity vs. heterogeneity in class composition. In the school group there is a tendency towards homogeneity, due primarily to the equal status of its members, but also to other socio-demographic factors (distribution of the origin families in the same area, ethnic or religious similarities, etc.)

The option for forming homogenous or heterogeneous classes in terms of learning skills has important psychological, educational or social consequences, measurable in terms of school success or failure or teacher and teaching efficiency.

The ethical or legal aspects are not at all negligible: the trend toward homogeneity implies the exclusion of students with different learning potential from the beginning (hence negating the possibility of integrated education) and to emphasize heterogeneity may be an obstacle in carrying out teaching activities by teachers who do not have the support of a psychologist.

Although research has not led to definitive results regarding the choice between and heterogeneity, some trends can be outlined: " Homogeneity seems to favor good grades, although, as we can ascertain, some authors will say that the interaction of good students with less good ones will bring benefits to both groups. In what concerns the interaction of students, both formal and informally, heterogeneous classes are decidedly more effective "(Neculau and Boncu, 1999, 240).

Cooperation and competition in the classroom: although the importance of positive affective relationship between students is always mentioned, the school environment has in general a competitive organization. There is a heated argument between the advocates of competition and those of cooperation as desirable educational practices in schools.

The tendency toward competition among students is due, at least partially, to the fact that grading is done by reporting to the group (reporting to all other group members) and not individualized (by reference to individual performance).

Up to a point, competition has some beneficial motivational effect in terms of learning, but it can easily be associated with some side effects that can lead to conflict or even manifestations of aggression among group members.

In learning under circumstances of cooperation some more varied forms of interaction may manifest, where the teacher not only manifests his traditional role (of "absolute owner" of the information), but also of a facilitator and a consultant. In this regard, there have been developed a series of teaching methods, which aim to eliminate the negative aspects induced by competition manifested among students.

Emil Păun (1999, 115) defined climate as " The intellectual and moral atmosphere that reigns in a group, the whole collective perceptions and emotional states existing within the organization." The same author noted that in relation to social groups the term moral is synonymous with the term climate, but the two terms are not interchangeable, "while climate refers exclusively to collective realities (groups, organizations), the term moral may be a descriptor for the individual as well. Thus, we can talk about a group climate, but not the climate of an individual ".

The climate is the subjective dimension of the organization, being a latent variable, difficult to identify in the behaviors of individuals. However, climate is a powerful mobilizing factor (or demobilizing) of employees of an organization (school).

School climate is influenced by several factors (Păun, 1999, 117-119):

1. Structural: how the members are grouped and interact in order to achieve the objectives of school organization (human size and composition of the school have an important impact);
2. Tools: conditions and means of achieving organizational goals (physical environment, material conditions, intra-community relations, etc.);

3. Socio-affective and motivational, of which the most significant concerns the affective contamination of interpersonal relationships (in the sense of accepting, rejecting or indifference) and manifestation of some subgroups.

The director (manager) has the main role in managing the climate of schools. While in theory it is unanimously recognized the importance of psychosocial knowledge in substantiating the decision, the practice of school organizations does not reveal this and also there are a lot of cases of "managing" the climate based on the known political principle formulated by Macchiavelli "Divide et impera" ("Divide and conquer! ").

3. Group-class and socialization

Socialization refers traditionally to childhood and adolescence, including subjects as acquisition of skills, values and basic rules.

In the current social situation, such an approach is incorrect due to frequent changes which are subject individuals, the trajectory of life is no longer linear, as in the past, but assuming a restructuring permanent learning and conditioning social which was subjected to individual prior.

Therefore, socialization is currently conceived as a process that takes place throughout life, entries successive new social positions are the result of processes of socialization (where cultural contexts - original and assimilated - are in a great measure different) often accompanied by desocialising (out of a particular status-role complex, waiving the conditions attached to it).

Socialization process begins with a smile as social response in the newborn and ends with the last aspects of existence.

Socialization is a process with universal manifestation, but there are important differences, given cultural factors (inter- and intraculturale) due to social class, gender differences (gender socialization) to which the individual belongs to numerous historical differences.

All these differences are reflected in different contents socializing agents that are acquired using the courts and socializing.

These factors of socialization differ from case to case, but are invoked in all cases, four main categories (Rotariu Iluț, 1996):

1. The first (chronologically) and the most important source consists of people who take care of that person in the first years of life (usually biological parents). In the first years of life, quantity and especially the quality of interaction with these people (verbal and nonverbal components) is a strong potential source of child development. The children gradually internalized socialized content provided by parents.

2. Groups of similarity (equivalence) - "peer groups" - gives the child, adolescent and then adult, a number of relations with equals (as opposed to those within the family that, no matter how democratic they are, they an inevitable dose of hierarchy).

These groups help to structure a whole range of behavior (reaction and adaptation to authority, attraction to members of the opposite sex, etc.), replacing parents for short and medium-term choosing options in life (such as leisure, clothing, etc.). Parents are still the reference for long-term orientation options (such as those relating to education and career).

3. School (various forms of formal education) has, at present, a large part of the formal aspects of socialization (there are extensive professionalized forms of education, from pre-school to post-graduate level) by socializing content they offer and through relationships with teachers (who can take special forms, such as mentoring).

4. The media have the power to capture and channel public opinion and to impose its political priorities and social ("agenda-setting" function of the media), to modify the way they represent the world those subject to media messages.

The social environment densest in terms of interpersonal actions namely the group is the space in which the most effective socialization occurs. As such, the group is the most important social factor, providing individual security and opportunities for affirmation.

Whether individual action takes place in a group or outside it, it is reported to the group. Social learning process involved individual to assume changes in personality structure, changes in the group who "invites" him (offering her in this model) and to validate socially by paying positions in the community (through the role status).

Within the group, learning how to achieve social status is dynamic role.

Ralph Linton (1936) defined status (from an anthropological point of view) as "individual's place in society," described as a collection of rights and duties, with a kind of legal and institutional designating therefore economic position and professional individual.

In current psychosocial approaches status is defined as:

- the position of the individual in a social group (associated with the set of their own individual expectations of this position);
- in relation to the distribution of prestige within the group (by meeting here and limiting sense, denoting a high social position of a given individual);
- in relation to the distribution of rights, obligations, power or authority in the frame of the group.

The status is determined by a number of criteria and standardization that community accepts and considers that defining social position.

Any reference to the status of the occupant can not disregard personal manner updating the status (status in action) called social role.

Individual behavior in a social context appears as being organized in entwining of two aspects: the quantitative (status) and one qualitative - role (as a personal way, creatively fulfilling the requirements of a specific status).

Currently, one can not speak of a role singular, but by a set of roles in the interaction, the role is a fusion of elements related to individual and collective (social) merger that gives quality to the role, ensuring a adaptation is its owner.

The role and status can not be conceived than concurrently by a continuous reporting of the two words. It is impossible to design a status itself without relate him to a whole range of people who satisfy him or meet him. Similarly, we can not talk about a role in the absence of any reference to individuals trying concretely to fulfill a designated position.

Role – status dynamic expressed in each individual case, a means of personal affirmation and growth in qualitative sense of personality, being at the same time a number of ways of reporting interpersonal and relationship between people.

"In modern psycho-sociology speaks of the existence of two types of theories about social roles: a) structural role theory, based on a static vision of the person and social structure; b) interactional role theory, which emphasizes the social processes, not social structures; as such, the role no longer appears as something given, but as something which constructs, changes and develops even in the implementation of the act. "(Chelcea, Iluț 2003, 319).

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