

Patterns of dealing with disciplinary problems by teachers in urban and rural schools

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Introduction

This article is based on a study of in-school violence and disciplinary problems conducted in junior high schools in the Arabic sector in Israel. It is a comparative study that aimed at examining the similarities and differences between schools located in urban areas versus schools located in rural area. Findings were obtained by combined qualitative and quantitative research methods.

Most of the studies that handled classroom management were conducted by behavior specialist scholars. In this respect, Ari-Am [1999], presented three major strategies that can create in-class positive change- improving contact and communication among teachers, between teachers and pupils, and employing effective teaching methods. Since no situation has a magic solution, sometimes reality and conditions require devising special class programs that can help in overcoming issues related to students' behavior in the class.

According to Yariv A [2010] and Bar-Lev A, [2007], an important factor affecting teachers' tactics and coping modes is the educational climate, or what others call, the school climate that defines the inner quality of the organization as experienced by members of a given organization.

School climate refers to inner characteristics of the school. In other words, it is connected with the perceptions, values, norms and social conventions shared by the members of the a given organization. In this sense, the school climate refers to the inner relations and general atmosphere among members of the organization. It also refers to the measure of cooperation, mutual consideration, care and respect, the

support that teachers receive from the principal, the inner moral and the emphasis on academic achievements.

Not all teachers can cope with in-class difficulties. Therefore, a good school management must have supportive mechanism designed by clear and consistent managerial policy concerning the preventive and punitive measures.

The writer believes that the teacher must use specific strategies that will enable him to manage the class effectively. He should decide in advance about his managerial style and about his expectations from the pupils for a given year or semester. The teacher should also communicate both his rules and expectations to his class in clear authoritative mode. That is, the teacher is not just a person imparting knowledge; he must keep calm and rethink how he could manage the class in a better situation.

Abstract

This article presents various coping strategies used by teachers as class managers. It compares coping strategies used by teachers in different school types, discusses the different strategies used and the reasons and circumstance behind these different strategies.

The article presents rules and regulations, including legal punitive measures used by home teacher, school management and school district. The article also discusses the desired behavior, desired learning atmosphere, and the means available to teachers and the school management to affect the school climate and the pupil's' motivation and cooperation.

In connection to a student population, this article describes two samples of schools used in this study and explains the similarities and differences found between the two schools. Moreover, the article elaborates upon observed pupils' behaviors and teacher's responses so as to offer suggestions regarding options of possible measure that might bring about improvement of the given situation.

The article also presents the collected data and compares statistical results of various categories in both schools. It also presents findings of other studies supporting the findings of this study.

Key words: Motivation, cooperation, management, behavior, coping strategies

In order to lead pupils to change their attitude towards the school and their modes of behavior, the school and the working staff must change their attitudes towards the pupils. The system should treat the pupils as individuals by showing care, consideration and real concern for their well being. A genuine positive supportive attitude is as important to school climate as well as the academic achievements. The creation of positive attitudes encouraging the creation of educational climate could make punitive measures minimize.

To accomplish improvement in the school climate and interpersonal relations, the school administration and all the teachers must be consistent and often repeat and re-clarify the rules and the expectations of the school for the pupils in different modes. The teacher should be accessible to his pupils; he should also be patient and explain rather than give instructions.

It is true that an aggressive and overzealous teacher might unify the class against him. Therefore, it is highly recommended that as a class manager, the teacher should develop channels of communication with the class so as to be tolerant and open minded. In this manner, the teacher can use incentives and encouragement to create mutual trust and sense of order in the class.

It is important that, as an educator, the teacher should lay the foundation for personal learning in areas such as assuming responsibility, sharing, respect, and consideration of others.

Teacher's attention and positive feedback are effective incentive to pupils of all ages, while reprimands are less effective: "the teacher must be alert and selectively encourage desired behaviors. A desired behavior should be noticed by the teacher

much more than negative behavior" [Ari-Am, 1999]. The researcher observed various types of teachers' behaviors.

More often than not, when teachers responded too harshly to provocations, they lose the class. Response should be relevant and practical. It is often advisable to ignore minor offenses and continue the lesson, while in other occasions, the response must be determinative as long as the boundaries are clear to all parties and measures are consistently applied.

Analysis of the findings indicated that the teacher has to constantly improve his teaching techniques, use diverse methodology, rearrange learning order and captivate the pupils by introducing new technological teaching aids. A good teacher should use the resources available in the school, including advice from the counselor, the psychologist and the teacher coordinator if relevant.

In many cases, problems can be solved by means of team work. Sharing is always beneficial to all parties. The better the problem is dealt with, the better the school climate will become.

There are certain external variables affecting the school climate, such as weather related factors, transportation and access to external resources. These factors depend on the surrounding environment while working conditions, space and other facilities are dependent variables within the school building. There are also external factors such as resource availability and school size/amount of pupils in one facility.

These variables depend on combination of several relevant factors. The observations conducted by the writer revealed that one of the deficiencies in the educational facilities serving the Arabic sector is the size of the class and school. That is, several schools are in the Arabic community are too large. They contain several classes in each building and many of the classes comprised of at least 30 pupils. Thus the individual pupil becomes unnoticed and even the individual teacher can be overlooked.

In fact, the size of the school and the need to meet too many pupils and cover significant corridors length at one day make teaching a difficult and often unsatisfactory job. According to Bar-Oz T, [2008], one of the major factors affecting school climate is the managerial style_ the principal's adaptation of the system reforms. Insuring clarity of the rules, teacher's autonomy and introducing technological innovations will provide teachers motivation to advance.

Teachers are part of the system who find themselves obliged to cope with work norms. They have to work with the pupils and work under the pressure created by the school management. The teachers have to work under overt and latent pressures caused by the ministry system and the parameters determining the school academic evaluation. Thus, the school is required to pass a general pre-set testing and evaluation device whose parameters do not allow consideration for specific ingrained difficulties of the given institution.

Schools are service institutions centers. They must satisfy the clientele, the pupils, their parents, and the community at large, and there is no guarantee that the expectations of the system will coincide with the expectations of the local community.

Data collection and findings

The statistical results of this study, presented in [table -1], indicated a significant difference in pupils concern regarding parental involvement between pupils attending urban school and pupils attending rural school ($F(1,156) = 22.599; P < 0.05$). The result showed that urban pupils have more positive position regarding parental involvement ($M=3.21; SD = 0.797$) compared to rural pupils ($M= 2.59; SD = 0.777$). Statistical results also indicated no significant differences between genders. ($F(1,56) = 0.001; P > 0.05$). There is no interaction among variables ($F(1,56) = 0.28; P > 0.05$). Therefore, the main influencing variable is the type of the school.

Table- 1:

Average, standard deviation test F statistics and significance level of parents' involvement according to gender and school type:

| | School | Gender | | | | Test F statistics significance level Of freedom grade |
|-----------------------------|--------|---------|-------------|---------|-------------------------|---|
| | | Male | | Female | | |
| | | Average | S Deviation | Average | S Deviation | |
| Parents' involvement | Rural | 2.57 | 0.76 | 2.63 | 0.82 | (F(1,156)=22.599;P=0) |
| | Urban | 3.25 | 0.72 | 3.18 | 0.89 | |
| (F(1,156)=0.001;P=0.974) | | | | | (F(1,156)=0.28;P=0.597) | |

The writer noticed that the findings are surprising since conventional tradition and norms in the Arabic society suggested that the familiarity and kinship common in rural areas will result in more parental involvement than in urban area. It seems that the rural pupils prefer lesser parental involvement. For them, the school offers a neutral zone providing some distance from the family and allowing them a certain measure of independence, while pupils in town welcome parental involvement because they feel that they are, sometime, and detached from their family and the school bridges the gap between the generations.

As the facilities in the most urban schools are used after school as recreation centers by the surrounding community, many pupils and their siblings along with other members of the community attend clubs, special courses and other activities after the official school hours. Naturally, the pupils perceive their parents as an integral part of the community, and thus, they want them to be involved.

Evaluation of the findings

There are many studies that support the findings of this study. In this connection, the study of Adel & Ilan [2000] revealed that trust building and listening to the pupils are good methods in encouraging the pupils to listen to their teachers. According to A Yariv [1999], unnecessary repetition, unneeded instructions and the like, do not help to maintain discipline in the class. His studies indicated that efficient teachers are those who manage to keep the class interest by placing challenges, using diverse

teaching methods and providing the pupils with feedback regarding their advancement for the seek to encourage improvement and motivation.

This article confirms that pupils perceive good relations with teachers as a central factor in their academic achievement. When the teachers treat them as individuals the pupils feel much better and are more willing to cooperate. The pupils expect teachers to provide them more than just knowledge; they want teachers who care and show interest, understanding and consideration. This finding is supported by the findings of Bar-Lev [2007].

The results presented in table 2 indicated significant difference in behavioral rules and norms between rural and urban pupils. ($F(1,156) = 88.176; P < 0.05$). The results showed that pupils attending urban school have more positive behavior ($M = 3.18; SD = 0.333$) compared to pupils attending rural school. ($M = 2.52; SD = 0.505$).

No significant differences according to gender were found. ($F(1,156) = 3.992; P > 0.05$). There is no interaction between the variables. ($F(1,156) = 0.272; P > 0.05$). Thus, the main variable influencing pupils' behavior is the type of the school.

Table 2:

Average, standard deviation test F statistics and significance level of in-class behavior according to gender and school type:

| | School | Gender | | | | Test F statistics significance level of freedom grade |
|------------------------------|--------|---------|-------------|---------|-------------|---|
| | | Male | | Female | | |
| | | Average | S Deviation | Average | S Deviation | |
| In-class Behavior | Rural | 2.45 | 0.41 | 2.62 | 0.62 | $(F(1,156)=88.176;P=0)$ |
| | Urban | 3.13 | 0.34 | 3.23 | 0.33 | |
| $(F(1,156)=3.992;P=0.047)$ | | | | | | $(F(1,156)=0.272;P=0.603)$ |

The data supporting these findings was gathered by the writer. The data showed that teachers' responses in urban school are far more consistent compared to responses of teachers in rural school. The data pointed that the teachers do not hesitate to summon parents and to use legal punitive measures when needed.

On the other hand, in the rural school, a single incident may be ignored or will result in a slight verbal warning since the teacher is often a family member of the pupil and acts on behalf of the family. Repetition of the offense is resolved or dealt with in the premises without notifying the parents in most cases.

Teachers' responses depend on the school management policy. According to Bar-Lev [2007], the working relations between the school management and the teachers affect the school's climate. In this regard, the school principal should adapt his managerial style to the needs of his subordinate staff. He should work on reducing the external pressure on the teachers who resist the change in their work. Such change in working style might affect teachers' self-image. The school principal should work on strengthening teachers' self confidence that will contribute to the improvement of school climate.

The findings of this study showed that teachers in both school types are exposed to similar pressures. Most of the pressures come from the school management which thrives to meet the demands of the system. The federal evaluation system impairs the ability of the institution to advance according to its own pace and the teachers cease being educators and loose their sensitivity and considerations of pupils' feelings. This makes them function as the system's instrument in imparting knowledge and information. The teachers feel that their entire role expected from them to perform is to pass on facts and skills rather than teaching. This, in turn, and damages their production and professional self-confidence.

Teachers' dissatisfaction is clearly felt by the pupils. Teenagers tend to oppose authority. They make life difficult to anyone they perceive as weak, incompetent or incapable, especially when they all know that punitive measures available to the teachers are very limited. Therefore, rather than respect and trust their teachers lead them safely and knowingly to maturity, they often perceive them as peons in the system. Such perception often leads to disregard and disrespect. If the teachers are not systematically backed up and supported by the school management and the system, class management can become a very difficult task.

These findings are supported by the study of A Yariv [1996] who elaborates on personal conversation regarding disciplinary matters as an effective tool allowing handling behavioral problems in a way the given pupil “does not lose face”, and is not pushed to the wall. Goldberg Y, [1987] writes that usage of sensual incentives might play sometimes an important role in the acquisition of new learning habits.

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