Examination of school climate and classroom climate within the Arab schools'
framework in the Bedouin sector in Israel
Analysis of the Meitzav (measures of efficiency and growth in schools) findings, of
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1. Defining the Concept of 'Climate' in Relation to School

The schools in Israel, deal with manifold problems related to school climate, this in addition to an intense need to decrease violence and discipline problems among the students and cope with wearing and overload among teachers and staff. Numerous researches that were conducted in the Israeli education system describe substantial difficulties of the school staff in addressing discipline issues, preventing violence toward students and teachers, and many conflicts were depicted as well in the relationship between the school staff and the parents, all these create a tense classroom climate that obstruct the learning process [1].

In the circular of the Director General of the Ministry of Education [2], the prevalence of the violence phenomenon in schools connected directly with variables regarding school climate, and it was claimed (section 1.1) that "the climate in the educational institute… is a central factor that influences on creating an environment that does not call nor enables violence within the education institute. Creating a climate in the educational institute means creating opportunity for the students to continuously experience social values and internalizing them and experiment with social skills.

Climate is a broad concept that includes various dimensions and it is called by researchers "classroom climate" as well or "classroom environment", when referring to the classroom in which the teaching and learning processes take place and to the participating elements that affect these processes and their outcomes [3, pp 307-327]. And the class is actually the physical and social surrounding in which the child stays and experiments with different experiences for many years. In the frame of the class social processes and activities of interaction are created, affected by various variables, such as the physical environment characteristics, the population characteristics of the students

and the teachers as well as organizational characteristics. These variables affect the unique characteristics of the class, such as norms, positions toward learning, democracy, performing chores, help, cooperation, interpersonal expectations, cohesiveness, and patterns of interpersonal communication.

In every class, patterns of behaviors that characterize it are created. These patterns of behavior affect the nature of the interaction activity. The occurrence of this circular process, influenced by the personal baggage of each participant in the process of the interaction activity. In the process of interaction activity in the class, perceptions and positions towards the happenings are being formed. These perceptions consist as a source for new knowledge, that becomes a part of the personal baggage of the participants and as such it affects the interaction activity of the individual with the educational environment. What implied from this process, is that on the one, the climate can be considered as a product of the interaction activity taking place in the educational environment, and on the other, the climate can be considered as a part of the participants' characteristics and how they perceive the things occurring in the class – a perception that influences their behavior and the interaction activity between them and the environment. Classroom climate is also important to the development of the student as a citizen in the society. A classroom with a positive social climate might develop a personality compatible to life in a democratic society, personality with initiative, responsibility, social involvement, Ability to stand up for rights, ability to make decisions, and an internal control center [4, pp 51-80].

The classroom climate constructed by 4 elements that are:

a) *Openness: open classroom climate characterized by behavioral and intellectual openness of the students and the teacher. Supportive classroom climate characterized by the teacher's support of the students and the students' support of their classmates in a social-emotional level and in a cognitive level as well [5, pp 3-7].*

b) *Support: a supportive climate is perceived as encouraging, involving, accepting, helping and sharing. It has nurture, belonging, cohesion and closeness. All class members feel themselves as parts of the social frame [6, pp 29-40].*

c) *Equality: a climate of equality is characterized by an equal attitude of the teacher toward every student, as well as by an equal attitude of the students toward each of their members in the classroom [5, pp 3-7].*

d) *Order and procedure: there is a clear system of rules known to all students and teachers. This climate has clear and well-known targets that allow a planned activity for their implementation [7].*

The various researches note that when "classroom climate" is investigated, two main approaches are being referred:

1) *An approach that sees the teacher as the main source of influence in the classroom and he sets the interactions in the class and the atmosphere in it [7].*

2) *An approach that focuses on the perception of the students and the teacher regarding what occurs in the classroom [7].*

The research literature notes that classroom climate measured today by the subjective perception of the students. This is because that the feelings of the students and their perception of their surroundings are what that affect their behavior and the interactive relationship in the class. According to researches, there are substantial positive correlators between classroom climate and educational achievements: in a "good" climate, students of low socioeconomic background can reach better school achievements than students of high socioeconomic background who learn in classes in which the climate is "not good" [8, pp 5-18]. According to studies, positive climate rises the students' self-esteem and advance their school performances. Classes with a climate of competitive hostility and alienation causes anxiety and discomfort and does not enable the educational development of many students. Classes with mutual support among the students and between the students and the teacher allow the development of self-esteem, provide security, reassure, nurture personal responsibility and willingness to be involved and a sense of belongness. From one research held in Israel regarding classroom intervention for improvement of classroom climate, found that there is a rise in the level of involvement and group cohesion in the classroom following an intervention that focuses on group processes in the class, that include discussions and activities for increasing the awareness to group processes [9, pp 491-525].

One of the basic claims in classroom climate, assumes that the environment has an influence over the population behavior, thus there is a warm and supportive environment, versus a rigid and critical environment. The interest in researching the school's surroundings and its influences on the students' behavior began already in the 70's, as noted by the researcher Moos: "the class is an educational-social organization, which creates classroom, educational and existing 'climates'". There is a variation in the social climate of the classrooms, thus the factors affecting the creation of the classroom-social climate can be investigated systematically." "classroom climate is present in interactions with a wide range of phenomena, that might contribute to the students' personal development, to affect their self-image, their self-confidence and their positions toward the field of knowledge. Getzels and Talen see every class as a 'work group' that its primary goal is study. According to their model, 'climate' develops by the teacher's style of performance, that is, the way in which the teacher balances the demands and personal requirements of the class, personal needs, expectations and classroom climate, are in constant interaction, in order to predict the group behavior and the learning products." Other researchers, such as Walberg and Anderson claimed that every class has its own character, the fruit of interaction between three dimensions: the institutional dimension, the classroom dimension and the individual's dimension [11, pp 79-118].

The social climate and the educational climate are actually composed from variables connected to the social environment in which they exist and operates. These variables refer to behavior, attitudes and conceptions of the teaching staff and the students' population in relation to learning at school and the interaction between the individuals in it. The students' lives at the school affected substantially by the educational climate as well as the social climate they are in. Hence, the school should set for itself a goal of creating the optimal social and educational climate, in which there is an educational, pleasant and supportive environment, that develops social skills and allow opportunities to versatile experiments [29, pp 120-140], while committing to the integration of all students in the learning process, including students with special needs, with learning disabilities or difficulties some school subjects [12, page 161-175].

One of the most influential social environments for children and teenagers is the school environment. Since children and teenagers are at school in a substantial part of the time,

and in the school climate and in the class the experience the social and educational experiences that consists a base for their self-image and social function, the creation of positive climate has a great importance to the positive development of the child [4, pp 51-80]. The school climate consists a source for learning values and norms accepted by a wide range of cultures along with the instilling of certain values and norms that makes the population section and the culture the child belongs to, unique. Values such as maintaining cleanliness, obedience and discipline, punctuality, competitiveness, achievement and success are only some of the values imparted by the school in parallel to information transfer and education acquirement and child education. The atmosphere of the educational frame influences social relations, learning and educational achievements. Through management and the relationship between teachers and children the school affects to a great extant on the social relationships within the school and the educational achievements of its children [4, pp 51-80].

The school climate includes several characteristics: (1) style of leadership. (2) the level of freedom, independence, the autonomy given to the staff, which means a low degree of restrictions in their work. (3) the degree of significance those practicing with teaching give to their role and that it is perceived as valuable by their surrounding – prestige. Furthermore, does the organization encourages, support and accept creativity, originality, initiatives and diverse ways of instruction. (4) the quality of the relations and cooperation between the staff members in the organization, coherence, collegiality which expressed by dialogue and exchanging opinions, by support and aid even in the personal aspect, by exchange and routine sharing learning contents and work, as well as taking joint responsibility. (5) the level of pressure, tension and load felt by the teachers in the organization, a sense of lack of time to meet the demands. It is important to emphasize that there are interactions between the different elements. Thus, a positive school climate encouraging and bettering the doing and the quality of the entire system [32, 100-125].

Next to the general school climate, the classroom climate is of high importance. Each class works as a distinct social unit, with system of norms, psychological atmosphere, functioning relationships and unique behavioral expectations. Since the class is an independent study unit, the climate it obtains can have a significant effect on the educational and personal growth of the child [4, pp 51-80]. The classroom climate

composed by interpersonal relations, the teaching style and the classroom organization, the relations between the teachers and the children in it as well as by the emotional fabric created in the class. It was found that the classroom climate affects the child's behavior and his personality formation, on his self-perception and on the development of his self-image [14, pp 321-326].

Positive classroom climate is a climate that instills in children a sense of belonging, advances their school achievements and even raises their self-image. This climate is created, among others, in classes in which the individual's advantages are emphasized rather than his disadvantages, the norms are flexible and changeable, and the children feel liked have an impact on what happens in the classroom [4, pp 51-80]. Studies detect two main elements of the classroom climate, the educational element and the social element. The educational element focuses on variables of positions, beliefs and expectations, related to the teaching processes, achievements and appreciation. The social climate is composed by various aspects of the interpersonal relations, and among them, the questions if whether the relationships in the classroom are cooperative or competitive, are there rejected children, what are the shared expectations regarding the behavior of the group members, and what are the communication patterns between the children in the class [4, pp 51-80].

Studies that examined the connection between school achievements of children and their subjective perception of the classroom climate, it was found that the children with the high school achievements has positive attitudes toward the class, and they incline to describe the classroom climate as more positive. In addition, a connection was found between positive climate and creativity and higher self-image [15, pp 743-755]. Studies conducted in recent years, found that an improvement in the classroom climate, improves school achievements and thus contributes to increasing the interest and the motivation in the learning process [16, pp 106-120]. Additionally, it was found that positive educational climate prevents violence. Moreover, when children perceive the classroom climate positively, there is a rise in their level of scholastic motivation expressed by goal-oriented behavior as well [17, pp 331-349].

   2. Peer Group Climate

The peer group, it means boys and girls of the same age of the individual that grow with him in shared frames. This group is considered as the second most important socializing factor after the family. The time the child spent with his peer group allows him to learn how to create social bonds, to cooperate with others of the same age, and be a part in interactive and equal relations [8]. Another role played by the peer group is strengthening values and beliefs of the child, for instance, reinforcing norms of behavior in accordance to gender roles. The peer group effect in the different stages of development of a person grows as the child shows more independence and separateness in his relationship with his parents and family. In preschool age the peer group starts to be a ratio group by which the child examines his behavior and place in the social world. This process gathering momentum and climaxes in puberty in which the peer group is at the center of the teenager's social world [19, pp 1-26]. According to the group's social codes the teenager chooses his clothes, manner of speech, how he behaves, his worldview and more. After puberty, there is a decrease in the importance of the peer group, and the adult, though still influenced by his peer group, it is to a lesser extent than in the age of puberty [20].

The peer group has an important role in giving mental and social support to the teenager, especially in times of distress and crisis. Various researchers emphasized how the support from this group is important to the individual. Caplan (1974), for example, noted that social support means a connection between individuals, or between individuals and groups, that is meant to improve adaptive skills when treating a short-term crisis, life transitions, long-term challenges and stress. Social support is also defined as an interpersonal relationship that protects the person in different situations in life [21, 50-52]. The common denominator of these definitions is the importance of the connection and the interaction with the other in order to cope with different situations in life, and specifically during the process of puberty that might be filled with crises and transitions. While support from the family was found as mostly related to higher academic self-perception, support from the peer group, was found connected to higher social self-perception [22, 393-412].

We can find in the literature two main approaches that address to the way in which the social support of the peer group may help the individual overcome challenges in life. The first, is the Direct Effect approach, which claims that social support affects directly on the mental and physical sense of health of the individual and on his adaptation to different life situations [23]. The second is the Indirect Effect approach, according to which, the importance of the social support stems from that it has an effect on the negative outcomes derived from explosion to stressful life events by creating a psychological barrier between the negative life events and their negative results. This means that the social support is efficient in times of high pressure, and in the absence of such pressures, the social support does not entail a meaningful positive effect [24, pp 4-17]. This approach is consistent with various studies which showed that social networks are a very meaningful mediating factor in the connection between violent events or chronic stressors and adaptation among teenagers.

The peer group climate, and specifically the social support it provides was found in different studies as contributing to increase resilience of adolescents in stressful situations, mostly by providing coping strategies, enhancing the sense of self-worth and strengthening the sense of control in the environment [25, pp 357-366]. Furthermore, it was found that strong and active social networks contribute to a higher mental well-being and thus enhance the individual's mental strength. The social support actually aid in that it increases the sense of trust and confidence of the individual in the continuation of the emotional relations and his sense of control over the situation [21]. This support is especially important for teenagers who their worldview yet to be formed, since sometimes their positions strengthen via identification with the people of the peer group or important adults in their social world [26, pp 40-54]. Researches showed that relations with the peer group, specifically in the frame of cooperative learning, contributes positively to the school achievements in comparison to situations of competitive learning or private learning in the elementary school [27].

In the article of [28] regarding power relations at the school: teachers>students>discipline, emphasizes that in the two recent decades the issue of the discipline is at the top of the increasing public concern, due to the climate in the education system, its function and results. The issue of discipline as a promoter of

educational climate is a legitimate target of a school that attempts to teach its students. However, the discipline is translated, sometimes, in terms of power and control rather than education. In the daily-use the term discipline became a synonym for classroom management concept. Teachers have an important role in all the interactions of power relation in society, both as objects and as subjects of power activation. In his book, Discipline and Punish, Michel Foucault noted that it is very hard to see the quality of the disciplinary power, it works quickly and efficiently, and it is nearly invisible. Foucault points out three main differences between the sovereign power (as that of a king in an absolute regime) and the disciplinary power that consists the favorable and more common form of power in the modern society:

1. *Disciplinary power is dispersed rather than concentrated, it is created by social interactions occurring in every place in the social space, it also affects each person.;*
2. *Sovereign power is exposed to the critical eye and thus invites the resistance; this is not true regarding the disciplinary power which is barely detectable, enters everywhere and therefore, every creation of resistance is so difficult;*
3. *Sovereign power touches only in a relatively small part of the individual's life – in contrast, the disciplinary power actually affects the entire private and public life of the individual living in the society.*

A teacher in class enjoys not only from disciplinary power but also from remains of the sovereign power. The latter is that which inflicts resistance and is easy to resist, but the power that affects much more is the disciplinary power that works covertly through the entire school system and the curriculum of knowledge. Numerous programs of reforms in the field of education are oriented to streamline the school management, to an improved supervision and an orderly report. However, in contrary to the "common sense" the good learning is actually tending to be chaotic and not normative, hence, reforms take us to disguised suppression of the teachers' initiative and to perpetuate normative mediocrity. Attempts to increased supervision push and force the teachers to stick to the curriculum. Inserting unified strict standards makes the entire class conduct to be constructed around the preparation to the tests of the education office, which takes the creative atmosphere and the intellectual work out of the class. In schools that the tension

between the educational dimension and the supervising dimension is broken in favor of the supervision and efficiency mechanism, teachers feel themselves as threatened professionally, disappointed and stop using their entire pedagogic ability. The efforts to achieve normative, normalized, standard excellency that is managed from above, fail themselves. But the complexity of power relations in the school is even greater. Foucault does not address explicitly to this, however, as it has been noted, schools, in addition to being the social centrals of the normalization and activating the "advanced" disciplinary power remain as attributes of the sovereign power – that which embodies by the image of the authoritative teacher in the class. This power that is felt directly by the students often leads to resistance. Thus, schools become places prone to trouble and to disturbances of discipline [28].

In relation to the programs of intervention, there is a wide diversity of programs for behavioral intervention with students in the school, this in order to improve the educational climate at the school [29, pp 32-44]. Choosing an appropriate intervention program and its implementation within the class, takes in-depth familiarity with the characteristics of the students, the teachers and the school. This in order to understand the patterns existing in the relationship between the students, the teachers and the parents, to understand the desired patterns within the school and build a program designed to minimize the gap between the current patterns and the desired patterns. Intervention that leads to change is a complex process. The change can stem from the wish and the active attempt of the teachers and the students to redesign the reality of their life at the school, in order to improve their lifestyle and adapt the environment to their needs.

    4. The findings of the Meitzav (School Efficiency and Growth Indices) as a Reflection of the School Climate in the Arab-Bedouin Sector

In the report data on climate and pedagogical environment -, Meitzav (School Efficiency and Growth Indices) in the frame of Arabic-speaking schools (in the Arab, Bedouin and Druze sectors – south) of 2011. This report presents a general update of the climate and pedagogical environment in Israel in Arabic-speaking schools in the school year of 2011, as it is perceived and reported by students and teachers. The findings brought by the questionnaires passed during January-March 2011 to 62,589 students in 5th-9th grades in

Arabic-speaking schools (92% response) and by 4,037 phone interviews with educators and teachers in Arabic-speaking schools teaching Meitzav subjects to 1st-9th grades (81% response). In addition, in 2011 climate and pedagogical environment questionnaires were passed in the second time for a representative sample of 2,618 Arabic-speaking students in 10th-11th grades (87% response). In overall, questionnaires were filled and phone interviews were held with students and teachers from 208 Arabic-speaking elementary schools and from 118 middle-schools that participated in the external Meitzav tests, as well as students from 111 Arabic - speaking high schools. The questionnaires and surveys were developed by the National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation in Education (RAMA). Climate and pedagogical environment questionnaires engage in a series of topics [30, pp 3-7].

The findings regarding the general positive feeling toward the school, show that 76% of 5th-6th grades students, 69% of 7th-9th grades students and 65% of 10th-11th grades students report on a general positive feeling toward the school. In relation to the teachers' content from school, it was found that 65% of the teachers who teach in elementary schools and middle-schools report satisfaction with their work in the school. With the increase in the student age cohorts, a significant decline was reported in the volume of reports about involvement in violent events (in average 17% of 5th – 6th grades students report on involvement in violent events, in comparison to 13% of 7th-9th grades students and 9% of 10th-11th grades students). In data of climate and pedagogical environment report in the Bedouin sector in the – Meitzav, disturbing findings were revealed, thus emerged a higher rate of students in schools from the Bedouin sector in the south, in comparison to their friends in schools from the Arab sector and from the Druze sector, the reports are about involvement in violent events and the absence of sense of protection in the school. In parallel, students from the Bedouin sector report in a higher rate than their peers in the Arab sector and from the Druze sector, on a proper behavior of students in the class. A lower rate of students in schools of the Bedouin sector in the south report positive relation between the students and their classmates, in comparison to their peers from the Arab sector and from the Druze sector. A higher rate of students from schools in the Druze sector report on a general positive feeling toward the school, on relations of closeness and care between the teachers and the students, on fairness and

mutual respect between the teachers and the students, on positive relations between the students and their classmates, and on the teachers' high expectations from their students, in comparison to their peers in schools of the Arab sector and Bedouin sector in the south. It was found that a higher rate of teachers from the Druze sector in elementary school and middle school report on content from their school, on use of differential teaching and providing assessment and learning factors feedback to students (middle school only) in comparison to their peers from the Arabic sector and the Bedouin sector in the south [30, pp 3-7].

A comparison between the years 2007-2011 in the Bedouin sector in the south shows a significant improvement in most parameters. Thus, between 2007 and 2011 a substantial decrease was noted concerning the absence of feeling protected (among 5th-6th and 7th-9th grades students). Among 10th-11th grades students a significant increase has been noted in reports regarding absence of feeling protected. A similar image was also noted in relation to involvement in violent events (a substantial decrease among 5th-6th and 7th-9th grades students and a significant increase among 10th-11th grades students). Between 2007 and 2011 there was a significant increase in the reports among 5th-6th and 7th-9th grades students concerning the general positive feeling toward the school, on relations of closeness and care between the teachers and the students, on fairness and mutual respect between the teachers and the students, on positive relations between the students and their classmates, on proper behavior of the students in the classroom, the teachers' expectations from their students and belief in their abilities and receiving assessment and learning factors feedback from the teachers. A comparison between the teachers' reports throughout the years reveals as well a substantial improvement in most parameters. There was a significant increase in the teachers' content (among teachers in elementary school and middle school), in differential teaching (among middle school teachers), and in providing assessment and learning factors feedback to students (among elementary school teachers) [30, pp 3-7].

5. *Conclusion*

One of the main goals of a school, is establishing a social and optimal climate, in which there is educational, supportive and pleasant environment, that develops social skills and provides opportunities for diverse experimentations [29, pp 120-140], with a commitment

to integrating all students in the learning. There are considerable difficulties in Israel in relation to school staff handling with discipline issues, prevention of violence against students and teachers, and numerous conflicts in the relationship between the school staff and the parent, all these issues create a tense and not advancing classroom climate [1]. The various researches show that an improvement in the classroom climate, produces an improvement in the school achievements, and hence contributes to increasing interest and motivation in learning [16, pp 106-120]. Moreover, it was found that a positive educational climate prevents violence. Additionally, when children perceive the classroom climate positively, there is a rise in their scholastic motivation which is expressed by goal-oriented behavior as well [17, pp 331-349].

The findings of the Meitzav (School Efficiency and Growth Indices) in the frame of the Arabic- speaking schools (Arab, Druze and Bedouin sectors – South) of the year 2011 presents a general positive feeling toward the school, that 76% of 5th to 6th grades students, 69% of 7th-9th grades students, and 65% of 10th-11th grades students report general positive feeling toward their school. Regarding the teachers' satisfaction with the school, it was found that 69% of the teachers teaching in elementary schools and middle schools report satisfaction with their school. With the increase in the students' age cohorts, there is a significant decline in the volume of reports on involvement in violent events (in average 17% of 5th-6th grades students report involvement in violent events). A higher rate of students in schools of the Bedouin sector in the south, in comparison to their peers in schools of the Arab sector and the Druze sector, reports involvement in violent events and an absence of feeling protected at the school. Parallelly, students of the Bedouin sector report in a higher rate than their peers in the Arab sector and the Druze sector, on proper behavior of the classroom students. A lower rate of students in the Bedouin sector's schools in the south reports positive relations between the students and their classmates, in comparison to their peers in the Arab sector and the Druze sector.

It can be concluded and said that, there is a great importance to the educational atmosphere and the educational climate within the school. An un-inclusive and not optimal educational climate leads to a creation of a tense and learning inhabiting atmosphere, and even legitimizes violence of all kinds: physical and verbal. In

accordance to the MEITZAV findings of the year 2011, in the Arab and Bedouin sector in southern Israel, in comparison to the rest of the Arab sector in Israel, there is a troubling phenomenon that indicates the absence of an optimal educational climate that promotes learning, this affects directly on the level the Bedouin student achievements in southern Israel, furthermore, it consistently leads to a significant and tangible in the percentage of violence among the students, specifically in the educational framework, and in the Bedouin community and society generally. These worrying findings, require follow-up studies for examination of the violence phenomenon in this society, as well as providing treatment and systemic solutions in the field of educational climate improvement, and creating among the students an educational atmosphere that is optimal, advancing and empowering. An atmosphere that bases on bridging the gaps, investing resources, and a profound change in the level of educational projects and programs to the reduction of violence in the educational frames of the Arab and Bedouin sector in southern Israel. Finally, it is important to preform evaluation and follow-up studies to these projects and program on order to test their efficiency and effectiveness, and subsequently to channel and improve the level of responses and the central focuses on which these programs will be based.

6. *Bibliography*

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