

SOCIO-HEALTH ASPECTS IN CLASS TEACHERS' ACTIVITIES AND THEIR APPRECIATION BY PUPILS

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Abstract: *This paper sums up results of one of the partial subjects that belong to Research Intent of Faculty of Education MU Brno MSM0021622421 School and Health for 21st century. The study presents the results of a questionnaire-based research which was carried out to obtain pupils' opinions of class teachers' activities for enhancing and solidifying healthy social relationships in a class. To fulfil this goal we focused on pupils' reception correlating with teacher-pupils communication forms and contacts of a class-teacher with parents, furthermore with options of solving pupils' problems thorough the whole period of study and also with other problems of school and out-of-the school pupils' activities. The data were acquired from 248 respondents - primary school pupils and students of secondary schools. The research results will be also used in pre-graduate programs of the teaching profession studies of primary/secondary school teachers.*

Key words: *healthy social relationships, a class, the class teacher, educational activities, pupils' opinions, primary school, secondary school*

Starting points

Its topic and conceptual aim the paper is connected with problems discussed at the conference on School and Health organized in 2006. In that time we focused on measure of influence of basic educational activities on pupils health as it was seen by class teachers. It was checked how the class teachers see importance and possibilities of their activities in this direction. Now we oriented our research interest to opinions of pupils at primary and secondary schools on educational activities of the class teachers in creation of healthy social relationships in school environment. Those previous and present works are similar and therefore the both contributions can contain some identical data and pieces of knowledge.

The class teacher is a coordinating and integrating agent with a lot of serious educational tasks in relation to pupils in his class, to their parents and other teachers of the school, to school representatives and under certain circumstances also to a broader

public. In this context he becomes an educational subject with many possibilities to influence healthy mental, physical and social development of individual pupils and the school class as a whole. In this case we are interested in social health of pupils and some conditions for its formation by means of class teachers.

Social health is one of significant parts of pupil's health and school is an important institution affecting processes of his development. In literature the term social health is interpreted in various levels and connections. For characterizing social health the term relationship represents a determining and universal attribute. For our need we can distinguish three levels (dimensions) of social health – intra-personal, interpersonal and social ones. In the intra-personal dimension the social health is perceived as an inner change of a personality for expressing relationship of the human to himself, which comprises also his self-acceptance, self-control autonomous acceptance of social roles, needs, values etc. In the interpersonal dimension the social health is taken as an expression of a certain level of relationships to other people. For pupil it comprises e.g. ability to cooperate with classmates, to respect opinions of others, to cooperate in solution of common tasks, to communicate with understanding, to be disposed to friendship, fellowship and partnership. The third dimension of relationships is the social level, in a broader sense of the word (citizenship); it can comprise e.g. reflection of consequences of behaviour and actions of a human for life of social groups and the whole society. This simplified categorizing of relationships can serve us in considering the large scope of problems covered by the term social health.

Among constant activities of the class teacher connected with development of social health of pupils there are the following:

- Continuous diagnostics, analysis and interpretation of personal possibilities of a child, diagnostics of educational and behavioural problems.
- Identification of life conditions of a child, his/her family environment, social structure of the class.
- Solution of various educational situations inclusive those with socially-pathological effects.
- Initiation of positive relationships among classmates, without influence of differences (in culture, religion, social and healthy differences). The class teacher participation in development of climate in the class.
- Coordination of principle activities of other educational agents – other teachers, group of interest, families. The class teacher represents the pedagogical staff among pupils and also the class in public.
- Cooperation with the family and creation of cooperative attitudes to the pupil's parents. The class teacher knows of leisure activities of pupils and provokes to more development.

We are aware that one of the most important ways influencing social health of pupils is a personal example of their teacher. For pupils the class teacher is (together with family members) the nearest representative of the world of adults. Under this angle

of view he can be also taken as a model and example, in positive or negative sense. These basic start points were taken into account in considering our strategy of the intended research probe.

The goal of our research survey was to find what pupils' opinions are of qualities (abilities, skills...) of their class teacher – the qualities that can influence development of healthy social relationships among pupils in school environment. We prepared an authorial (non-standardized) questionnaire for respondents with the question Why do you appreciate your teacher – what is it particularly? To this question the following variants of answers were offered:

- a) suitable, friendly and objective behaviour,
- b) individual solution of your learning problems,
- c) interest in other your problems, active participation in the solution,
- d) unselfish cooperation in extra-school events (e.g. excursions, interest circles),
- e) interest in your family background, communication with parents,
- f) lifestyle of the class teacher,
- g) pursuit of well-being in the class.

For each of the answers (from a) to g)) we used the scale system with the five points scale, from the value 1 (the lowest evaluation) to the value 5 (the highest evaluation). In this connection we were also interested in correlation between variants of answers and the school type, the respondents' sex type and the length of the class teacher's practice in the corresponding class.

Research set, data processing and analysis

Our research set contained 248 (100 %) respondents. 169 girls-pupils/students (69 %), 79 boys-pupils/students (31 %) participated in the research probe. 141 (57 %) respondents were primary school pupils and 107 (43 %) respondents were secondary school students (high school, training school). The highest number of respondents (51 %) has had their class teacher only for 1 year, 33 % of respondents for 2 – 3 years and 16 % for almost 4 years.

To our sampling set which should represented the basic set we defined the pupils of two primary schools (the pupils different in sex, in number of continuous years with the same class teacher) and the pupils of the training centre that represented the situation of the secondary school and the apprentice centre. This sampling set enables a cautious generalization into the basic set, thus the pupils with experience in cooperation with the class teacher in the Czech school system. The described school types, that were fused into two types for our needs (for analysis, depicted as primary school and secondary school), define and identify also individual subgroups of our sampling set.

Data was entered to the database, coded and than analyzed by means of the program SPSS. Graphs were created in Excel, outside the database. The transcript coding

and data processing were controlled in calculation of basic descriptive statistics parameters (minimal and maximal values, missing data, and categorization). Basic descriptive statistics data were processed (e.g. tables of frequencies, calculation of average values, median, modus, variances, distribution normality etc.). Several statistically significant differences were tested by using dispersion analysis with comparison of averages (by the Kruskal-Wallis nonparametric test).

Factual hypotheses had to be operationalized to the form of statistic hypotheses. Further, we decided by using the corresponding significance test that a certain research result is statistically significant, i.e. those results could not be probably caused by coincidence. In our case (the selection of the respondents by accessibility) the variance among groups and variability inside groups could be a reason to check the statistical significance.

Hypotheses:

H1 Primary school pupils appreciate the qualities different from those appreciated by secondary pupils.

H2 Pupils of different sex type (boys, girls) appreciate different qualities of the class teacher.

H3 Pupils with different number of years spent with the same class teacher appreciate different qualities of this class teacher.

Results and discussion

How do pupils appreciate suitable, friendly and objective behaviour of their class teacher?

Answers of the pupils demonstrate that suitable, friendly and objective behaviour of the class teacher was badly or minimally appreciated by 14 % of respondents (the value 1); the same part of the pupils (14 %) marked the mentioned activities with the second lowest value (2). 29 % of pupils appreciated suitable, friendly and objective behaviour of the class teacher by the medium value 3; 18 % of pupils gave the value 4 and 26 % of pupils gave the highest value 5. the average value if this scale is 3,28.

How do pupils appreciate the class teacher's pursuit of individual solution of their learning problems?

It is evident from the answers of the pupils that 13 % percent of them evaluated the class teacher's pursuit of individual solution of their learning problems with the minimal value (2), 30 % of the pupils with the middle value, 24 % of the pupils with the value 4 and 15 % of the pupils evaluated these activities of the class teacher with the highest value 5. The average value of the scale is 3,10.

How do pupils appreciate the class teacher's interest in other their problems and his active participation in solution?

It is evident from the answers of the pupils that 23 % percent of them evaluated the class teacher's interest in other their problems and his active participation in solution minimally (the value 1); 21 % gave the second lowest value 2. The middle value was given by 29 % of the pupils; 17 % of pupils gave the value 4 and 10 % of the pupils evaluated these activities of the class teacher with the highest value 5. The average value of the scale is 2,69.

How do pupils appreciate the class teacher's unselfish cooperation in extra-school events (e.g. excursions, interest circles)?

It follows from the answers of the respondents that 23 % of responding pupils evaluated the class teacher's unselfish cooperation in extra-school events with the minimal value 1; 18 % of the pupils evaluated his activities with the second lowest value (2). The middle value was given by 22 % of the pupils; 16 % of the pupils chose the value 4 and 22 % of the pupils evaluated these activities of the class teacher with the highest value 5. The average value of the scale is 2,96.

How do pupils appreciate the class teacher's interest in the family background, communication with parents?

It follows from the answers of the respondents that 32 % of responding pupils evaluated the class teacher's interest in the family background, communication with parents minimally (the value 1); 28 % of the pupils evaluated his activities with the second lowest value (2). The middle value was given by 19 % of the pupils; 14 % of the pupils chose the value 4 and 8 % of the pupils evaluated these activities of the class teacher with the highest value 5. The average value of the scale is 2,38.

How do pupils appreciate the class teacher's lifestyle (the class teacher as an example)?

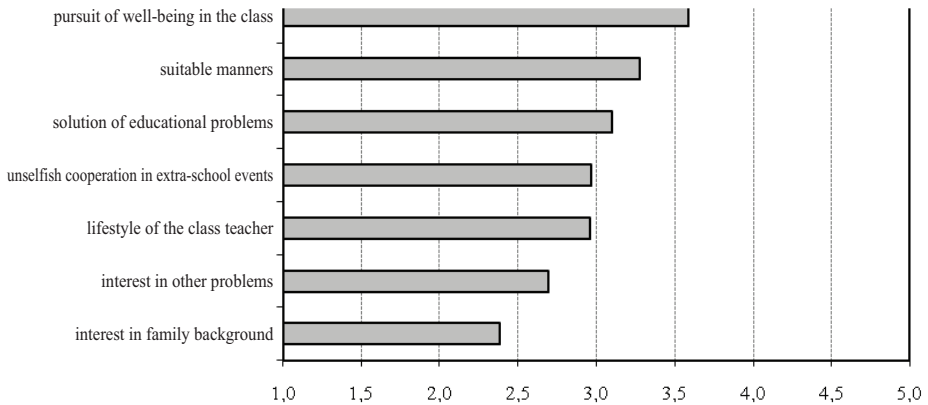
It follows from the answers of the respondents that 25 % of responding pupils evaluated the class teacher as an example and his lifestyle minimally (the value 1); 13 % of the pupils evaluated his activities with the second lowest value (2). The middle value was given by 15 % of the pupils; 15 % of the pupils the pupils chose the value 4 and 22 % of the pupils evaluated these character features of the class teacher with the highest value 5. The average value of the scale is 2,96.

How do pupils appreciate the class teacher's pursuit of well-being in the class?

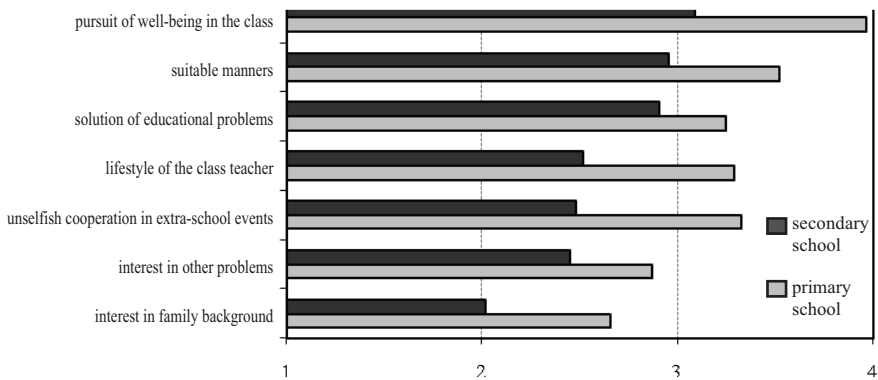
It follows from the answers of the respondents that 10 % of responding pupils evaluated the class teacher's pursuit of well-being in the class minimally (the value 1); 12 % of the pupils evaluated his activities with the second lowest value (2). The middle

value was given by 25 % of the pupils; 16 % of the pupils chose the value 4 a 37 % of the pupils evaluated these activities of the class teacher with the highest value 5. The average value of the scale is 3,59.

The following diagram displays the average values of the survey among pupils on evaluating the class teacher 's qualities (abilities, skills...) with influence social health of the pupils:



Relations among activities of the class teacher appreciated by the pupils and the school type



H1 Pupils from various types of school appreciate different character features of their class teacher.

The null and alternative hypotheses were formulated on differences in evaluation of the class teacher's character features and the school type:

H_0 = there is no dependence between frequency of pupils responses to the questions and the type school attended by the pupils.

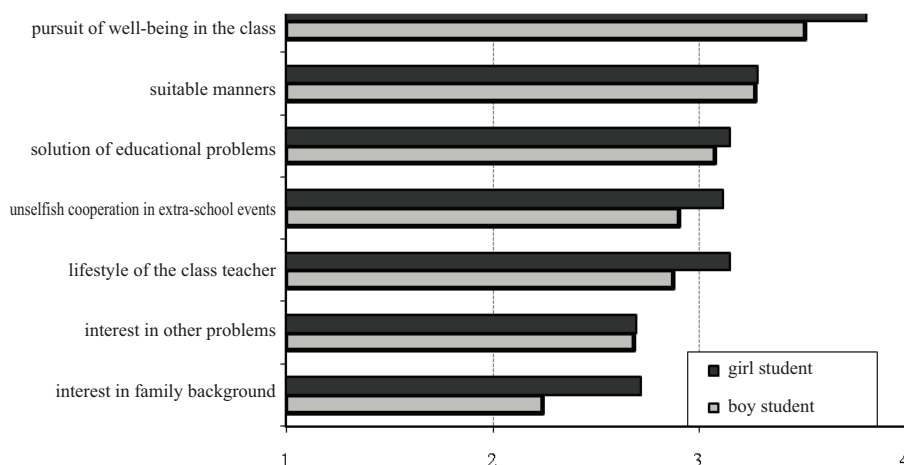
H_A = there is a dependence between frequency of pupils responses to the questions and the type school attended by the pupils.

The null hypothesis was refused, i.e. the non-existence of differences between responses to the questions and the type school attended by the pupils, based on the following results of the non-parametric test which compares two averages (the Mann-Whitney U test); the results show statistically significant differences between answers of respondents from individual school types for all character features of the class teachers that can influence health of pupils.

There is a significant statistical dependence between the type school and the features of the class teacher appreciated by the pupils (the bold print in the Table):

Significance of differences - Test by the school type		
	MANN-WHITNEY U TEST	
You appreciate: suitable manners	sig. H_0	0,001
You appreciate: solution of educational problems	sig. H_0	0,034
You appreciate: interest in other problems	sig. H_0	0,012
You appreciate: unselfish cooperation in extra-school events	sig. H_0	0,000
You appreciate: interest in family background	sig. H_0	0,000
You appreciate: teacher's lifestyle	sig. H_0	0,000
You appreciate: pursuit of well-being in the class	sig. H_0	0,000

Relations among activities of the class teacher appreciated by the pupils and the sex of pupils



H2 Pupils of different sex appreciate different character features of the class teacher.

The null and alternative hypotheses were formulated on differences in evaluation of the class teacher’s character features and the sex type of the pupils:

H_0 = there is no dependence between frequency of pupils responses to the questions and the sex of the pupils.

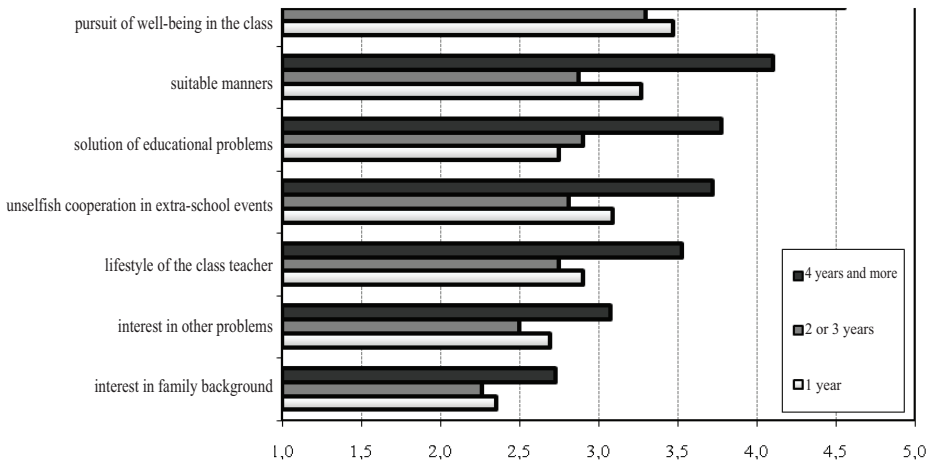
H_A = there is a dependence between frequency of pupils responses to the questions and the sex of the pupils.

The null hypothesis was partially refused, i.e. the non-existence of differences between responses to the questions in dependence on the type sex of the pupils, based on the following results of the non-parametric test which compares two averages (the Mann-Whitney U test); the results show statistically significant differences between answers of respondents of different sex for the character features of the class teachers concerning “interest in family background, communication with parents“

There is significant statistic dependence between the sex of pupils and incidence of the education question on the character features of the class teacher appreciated by pupils (bold print in the Table):

Significance of differences - Test by the sex type		
	MANN-WHITNEY U TEST	
You appreciate: suitable manners	sig. H_0	0,997
You appreciate: solution of educational problems	sig. H_0	0,689
You appreciate: interest in other problems	sig. H_0	0,984
You appreciate: unselfish cooperation in extra-school events	sig. H_0	0,181
You appreciate: interest in family background	sig. H_0	0,025
You appreciate: teacher’s lifestyle	sig. H_0	0,309

Relations among activities of the class teacher appreciated by the pupils and the length of the class teacher’s practice in the same class



H3 The pupils that differ in the number of years with the same class teacher in the class, appreciate different character features of the class teacher.

The null and alternative hypotheses were formulated on differences in evaluation of the class teacher’s character features and the number of years with the same class teacher in the class:

H_0 = there is no dependence between frequency of pupils responses to the questions and the number of years with the same class teacher in the class.

H_A = there is a dependence between frequency of pupils responses to the questions and the number of years with the same class teacher in the class.

The null hypothesis was partially refused, i.e. the non-existence of differences between responses to the question in dependence on the number of years with the same class teacher, based on the following results of the non-parametric variant of the variance analysis with comparison more averages (the Kruskal-Wallis test); the results show statistically significant differences between answers of respondents with different number of years with the same class teacher in the class, namely in the fields: suitable, friendly and objective manners, individual solution of educational problems of pupils, interest in other problems, active participation in their solution, unselfish cooperation in extra-school events (e.g. interest circles, excursions), pursuit of well-being in the class.

There is significant statistic dependence between the number of years with the same class teacher in the class and incidence of the education questions on the character features of the class teacher appreciated by pupils (bold print in the Table):

Significance of differences - Test by years with the same class teacher in the class		
	KRUSKAL WALLIS TEST	
You appreciate: suitable manners	sig. H_0	0,000
You appreciate: solution of educational problems	sig. H_0	0,001
You appreciate: interest in other problems	sig. H_0	0,039
You appreciate: unselfish cooperation in extra-school events	sig. H_0	0,000
You appreciate: interest in family background	sig. H_0	0,120
You appreciate: teacher’s lifestyle	sig. H_0	0,021
You appreciate: pursuit of well-being in the class	sig. H_0	0,000

Conclusion

The results of our research probe demonstrated that the respondents (pupils at primary and secondary schools) appreciate, among other character features of the class teacher, first of all his pursuit of well-being in the class (the average value 3,59 of the five level scale). Then suitable, friendly and objective manners were identified (3,28), individual solution of educational problems of the pupils (3,10), unselfish cooperation

in extra-school events and the lifestyle of the class teacher (the same value 2,96 for the both questions), interest in other problems (2,69) and interest in family background of the pupils inclusive communication with pupil's parents (2,38). Sequence of results in principle corresponds with our assumptions and illustrates some tendencies of the pupil's life at primary and secondary schools with effect on relation of pupils to the teaching profession, relationships between teachers and parents etc. Our findings correspond to a large extent with results of the parallel research probe as published in the contribution "Class teachers' views on the methods to influence pupils' health" (see Střelec, S., Krátká, J. In Řehulka, E. (ed.) School and health for 21st century II. Brno: Paido, 2007).

The answers of the respondents demonstrate statistically significant differences in relation to the type of the school attended by pupils. The results of the non-parametric analysis of variance (the Kruskal Wallis test) show e.g. that the primary school pupils appreciate all offered character features of the class teacher significantly more than the secondary school pupils do. The hypothesis was partially accepted which supposed that pupils of different sex (boys versus girls) appreciate different character features of the class teacher. For some still unknown reason, the boys appreciate all character features of the class teacher more than the girls, significantly more often it concerns the teacher's interest in family background and communication with parents. Also the hypothesis was accepted that the pupils having the same class teacher in the class for more years appreciate this teacher better and evaluate more all his character features.

Partial research findings do not qualify for generalizing conclusions. Our goal was rather initial and orientating view on the above mentioned problems. More detailed research focused on support of the pupil health by means of the class teacher will be executed in future.

SOCIÁLNĚ ZDRAVOTNÍ ASPEKTY V ČINNOSTECH TŘÍDNÍCH UČITELŮ A JEJICH OCEŇOVÁNÍ ŽÁKY

Souhrn: Příspěvek přináší výsledky jednoho z dílčích témat, které je součástí výzkumného záměru PdF MU Brno MSM0021622421 Škola a zdraví pro 21. století. Studie obsahuje výsledky dotazníkového šetření, ve kterém byly zjišťovány názory žáků na výchovné činnosti třídních učitelů, které přispívají k upevnování a rozvoji zdravých sociálních vztahů ve školní třídě. V této souvislosti jsme se zaměřili především na žákovské reflexe související s komunikací třídního učitele se žáky, s jednáním třídního učitele s rodiči žáků, se způsoby řešení studijních a některých dalších otázek školního i mimoškolního života žáků. Výzkumná data byla získána od 248 respondentů- žáků ŽŠ a SŠ. Výsledky výzkumu budou využity také v pregraduální fázi studia učitelství pro základní a střední školy.

Klíčová slova: zdravé sociální vztahy, školní třída, třídní učitel, výchovné činnosti, názory žáků, základní škola, střední škola