MENTAL REPRESENTATION OF PSYCHIC HYGIENE IN BASIC SCHOOL AS SEEN BY TEACHERS STUDENTS

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Abstract: *If a child should learn, at school, to discover world, to develop healthily and to grow, it is very important to be provided with necessary conditions thereto. Among these conditions rank, among others, also the care of psychic health, which is secured by the psychic hygiene. In our entry we have focussed our attention to tracing to what extent its rules have been applied and respected in schools. The research investigation, the results of which have been presented here, has been based on the mental representation of the feature as seen by teacher students.*

Key words: Psychic hygiene, mental health, psychology of health

1. Introduction

The psychic hygiene represents the "system of scientifically elaborate rules and advice designated for the maintaining or recovering of psychic health, psychic balance" (Míček, 1984, p. 9). Initially, it was focussed to the removal of adverse impacts to the psychical health of man. Later on, its concern has been extended by the elimination of these adverse impacts and by the effort to develop an individual (Bedrnová, 1999). Apart from the term psychic hygiene we may come across also with other designations: psycho-hygiene, mental hygiene (for example in Bartko, 1990).

The dealing with the psychic hygiene has a long history. Its origins have been adherent to ancient era already. Ideas of maintaining the psychic health occur there in documents on philosophy, medicine, and even in social standards (Mrňa In Hřebíček, 1971). For example the ancient philosopher Demokritos saw the optimisation of individual life in the retrieval of balance among oneself, nature, and surrounding world, in the temperance and ability to find rejoice in pettiness (Bedrnová, 1999). Within our culture we could refer to Komneský's work.

It was Clifford W. Beers who succeeded in the enforcing the term "psychic hygiene" in the life of society in the early 20th century (Míček, 1984). Gradually, various organisations have been founded involved in the psychic hygiene (for example

the World Federation of Mental Health), many authors address these issues from most various viewpoints (from the Czech authors: Haškovec, Brandejs, Vondráček, Hádlík, Bartko, Míček...).

Focussed to the mental hygiene in the school environment are Černý, Míček, Hřebíček, Bartko and others. Authors specify all sorts of factors that influence a pupil. Černý (1960) beholds pertinent problems in the personality and specific features of a child or teacher in their interrelation as well as in relations of children, in a change of school or class, in the influence of media. Míček (1984) enumerates the influence of the teacher, teaching process (school maturity problems, pupil overloading, respecting the pupil's output curve, adequate subject matter selection and presentation of learning, inattention problem solving, securing of pupil's activity, respecting didactic rules, and of social/psychological aspects of education), material influences (menu setting, optical and acoustic influences), discipline issues, examinations or issues of slow students. Form foreign authors, for example, Engelmeyer (1974) speaks first of all about the mental hygiene of work, Schenk-Danzinger (1980) assigns the meaning of negative experience of a child and measure of the frustration tolerance, overloading, rejection from a collective; Bühler (1958) mentions stress due to examinations, due to competitivity, indiscreet behaviour against children, furthermore, he reminds the necessity of belonging and problems with the child's change to a new class or school.

At present mental hygiene is displaced to background and highlighted is rather the psychology of health. However, we perceive the psychology of health as a roof term, a part of which the psychic hygiene undoubtedly is (the psychology of health is involved by the health in general; the psychic hygiene is then involved only in the issue of the psychic health). Therefore also in the path to the psychic hygiene we have respected this development and we will first of all look in on the more general psychology of health. The following project has then been conceived as the entering research solution, which is focused not only to the psychic health but also to the physical and social health.

In this direction also the programme Health maintaining school, or the Sane school, has proceeded. It goes hand-in-hand with the social trend to live in a sane manner, to eliminate negative impacts to our health even in the enlightenment process. We have divided it into three piers (Havlínová, 1988, 2006):

A. MATERIAL, SOCIAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND
1. **The material background**... Hygienically unobjectionable status; Safety in the material meaning of the word; Functionality and expedience; stimulative nature; Aesthetic and domestication nature; Availability of all premises of a school for staying and use; Offer of a personal space.
2. **The social background**... Development of humane attitudes as a part of education and personality progress of both teachers and children; Respect, confidence, tolerance; Appreciation, sympathy, empathy; Frankness, and helpfulness; Willingness to co-operate and to help.
3. **Organisation background**... Daily regime respecting biorhythms; Daily regime respecting physiologic needs, mentation; Daily regime respecting the necessity of leisure time; Healthy boarding; physical activity - holistic conceived physical training.

B. SANE TEACHING/LEARNING

1. **Purposeful nature of education**... Authentic teaching; Approximation of real life by school; Experience teaching; Consequential thematic units; Utilisation of close to school resources.
2. **Option, education adequacy**... The right of individual or group option of a certain content part of subject matter; Optional and non-compulsory subjects; Optional method of teaching/learning; Adequacy in respect of age and individual abilities; Faster proceeding pupils; Pupils with special needs and with educational problems; Proportionality of the rational, emotional, and social component.
3. **Participation and co-operation during teaching**... Soul of democracy and friendship; Clear written coexistence rules; Elected bodies; Participation style of management; School open to partners; communication as the co-operation presumption; Co-operation within the teaching process - the so-called co-operative teaching.
4. **Motivating classification of a pupil**... No-conditioned appreciation - mutual respect; Classification in the form of the provided material feedback; Verbal classification.

C. OPEN PARTNERSHIP

1. **School as a democratic community**... Partner relation with parents; Democratic communication; Individual respecting behaviour; Participation, team cooperation.
2. **School as a culture and educational centre of a municipality**... Incorporation of the school into the municipality's life.

These will also be compared to the factors established through our research project.

2. Research methodology

For the research solution the content analysis of text was selected and its following coding. Investigated is the influence of the basics school on a pupil's health. For the analysis utilised have been reflecting works of students of the 4th year of teaching studies in the Faculty of Education of the Masaryk University of Brno. The collection of research data was performed within two stages. The first, pre-research, stage was represented by the quality prospect investigating students' experience from our school system. Within the second stage (material for the main research investigation) the students have expressed themselves, in a more detail way, to their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with schools. To individual expressions they added their valuation within the 0 to 100 % scale, which indicated their agreement with a certain statement and urgency (topicality) of a given feature.

Authors of the essays are 197 students of 4th year of teaching studies in the Faculty of Education of the Masaryk University of Brno. An intentional selection of the research sample was applied due to its availability for the experimenter. From these 197 works 162 were used for the quantitative processing. The remaining 35 did not contain quantitative data, therefore having been used for the interpretation of the data, as a qualitative touch in of the issue.

This research project is to serve as a first step on the path to the understanding of the application of the psychic hygiene in basic schools. Its objective is to define basic school factors that impact the health of an individual, and to establish concepts superior

to these factors (categories). Such categories will be compared, respecting the frequency of replies (how many people perceive the given factor or category as significant and impacting the health of an individual) and respecting the arithmetic mean of their quantitative reply (how do they perceive this factor, or category, as urgent). The same procedure will be applied also in individual categories, for partial factors. Furthermore, found out will be whether pupils really specify such factors that exist in the branch literature and whether the specified list of factors could be extended.

3. Research results

The objective of the research investigation was to find out factors that impact physical, social, and psychic health of a child in a basic school, as well as to establish the superior concepts, categories. The basic classification of the factors has been mediated through the group of positive and negative impacts. Here many factors were defined (174, out of which 86 were positive and 88 negative). Above such factors the superior concepts (categories) have been established that represent complementary pairs for the positive and negative features.

Overview of the categories and factors:

A. POSITIVE FEATURES

1. **Teacher (+)**...brightening education, Influencing; Qualified; Model teacher; Kind; Good; Friendly; Fair; Willing; Interested in pupils; Influence of the teacher on the approach to the subject; With individual attitude; Supporting interests; Pedagogic workers of the school; Helpful; With a good relation; Motivating; Rigorous; Co-operating; With good attitude; Pleasant; Patient; Others.
2. **Material equipment of a school (+)**...Garden, Gymnasium; Swimming pool; Good equipment; Specialised classrooms; Pleasant environment; School decoration; Canteen; Teaching materials.
3. **Social interaction (+)**...Good relations; Friends; Contact with peers; Collective; First loves; Friends from kindergarten.
4. **Boarding (+)**...Regular boarding; Optional boarding in a buffet, vendor; Quality meals; Delicious meals; Optional snacks.
5. **Health conditions (+)**...Safety; Prevention and medical care; Non-overloading; Enough free time; Physical and hygienic conditions; Vacations; Intervals; Drinking regime observance.
6. **Class-work (+)**...Basic education; Preparation for secondary school; High level; Development of communication; Subjects; Learning tolerance, respect, mutual assistance, authority; Providing specific support; Learning habits; Teaching methods; Preparation for practical life; Guide to independence and responsibility; Attitude to nature, books.
7. **School activities (+)**..Physical training; Foreign stages; Support of motional activities, sports events; School trips; Skiing, swimming, skating; Stays with lessons in curative natural environment; Hobby groups; After-school care centre, school club; Contests, school "Olympic games"; Culture events; School events.
8. **Non-stressing situations (+)**... Considerate testing, Others; School "climate"; Joy in

learning and in school as a whole; <u>Regular daily regime, order</u>; <u>Study achievements</u>; Praises, awards.

9. **Organisation issues (+)**...Canteen at school; <u>Vicinity of school</u>; <u>Others</u>; Smaller school, class; <u>Co-operation with families</u>.

10. **Other reasons (+)**

B. NEGATIVE FEATURES

1. **Teacher (-)**...Old; Non-coping with issues; <u>Bad</u>; Teacher - pupil relation; <u>Non-certificated, non-professional</u>; No interest in pupils, classes; Rigid, cathedral; Unpleasant; Nervous, unstable; with no authority; <u>Pedagogic workers and school employees</u>.

2. **Material equipment of school (-)**...Toilets; <u>Non-aesthetic environment</u>; Gymnasium; <u>Bad</u>; Teaching materials; Obsolete; <u>Change-rooms</u>; Heating.

3. **Social interaction (-)**... <u>Chicanery</u>; Gibing, allusions; <u>Bad collective</u>; <u>Asocial behaviour</u>.

4. **Stressing situations (-)**...Stress laid on grades; Anxiety about entrance examinations to secondary schools; "Pigeon-holing"; Derogating of pupils; Favouritism, "picking" a pupil; Comparing; <u>Testing, grades</u>; Stress, anxiety; Injustice; Grades for achievements, not for endeavour; <u>Other stressing situations</u>; Punishments, few awards; Anxiety about physician; <u>Pointless orders and prohibitions</u>; Notices for parents; Anxiety about reporting meeting with parents.

5. **Boarding (-)**...<u>Forcing pupils to finish up meals</u>; No choice; Low-quality meals; <u>School canteen</u>; <u>Gross meals</u>; Buffet.

6. **Health conditions (-)**...Lack of motion and rest; <u>Overloading of pupils</u>; Early-morning getting up; Prohibition to drink beverages during lessons, to leave lessons for WC; <u>Safety</u>; Few prevention and medical care; Carrying heavy textbooks; Hygienic conditions; Physical conditions; <u>Intervals</u>; Danger of taking disease from other children; Sitting.

7. **Class-work (-)**...Provision of no specific support; Frontal-type class-work; Obsolete class-work methods; Home preparation; <u>No individual attitude, work with gifted pupils</u>; <u>Restraining freedom and expression of views</u>; Memorizing; Boredom, stereotype; No self-governing work; <u>Complaints on certain subjects</u>; Other shortcomings; Low level of the school; Pedantry; No motivation; No collaboration, competitivity, rivalry.

8. **School activities (-)**...School activities, <u>Out-of-school activities</u>; Motion and sports activities.

9. **Organisation activities (-)**...Change from kindergarten; Curriculum; <u>Change of school, class</u>; No collaboration with parents; Frequent changes of teachers, moving; <u>Queues in school canteen</u>; Length of classes; Many children in one class; Other organisation issues; <u>Commuting to school</u>; Canteen in a far location.

10. **Other reasons (-)**

NOTE: The partial factors within individual categories are aligned according to their arithmetic means, the number of replies is expressed by underlining of three factors (of one for the school activities in the Negative features group) that have been mentioned most often.

Two items were investigated both in the categories and individual factors: the

frequency of replies and the arithmetic mean. The following diagrams show these specifics for the positive and negative categories, completed by their standard deviation.
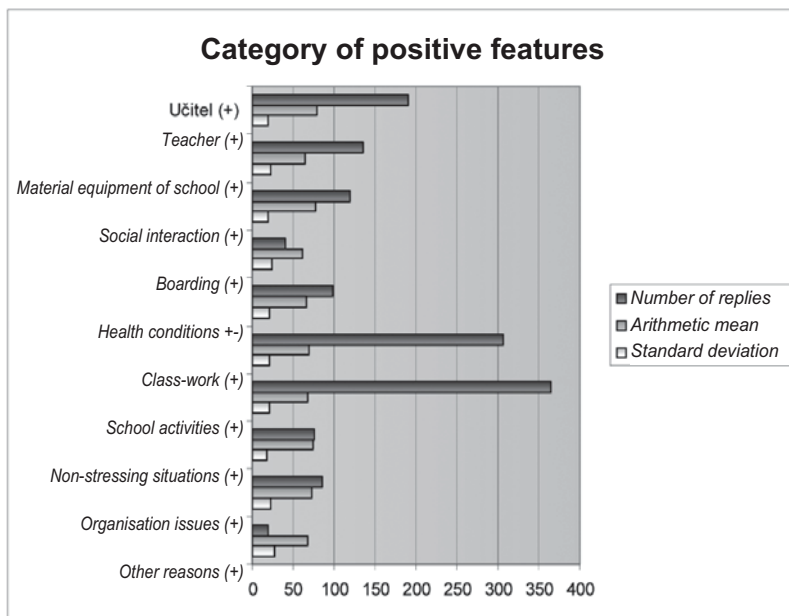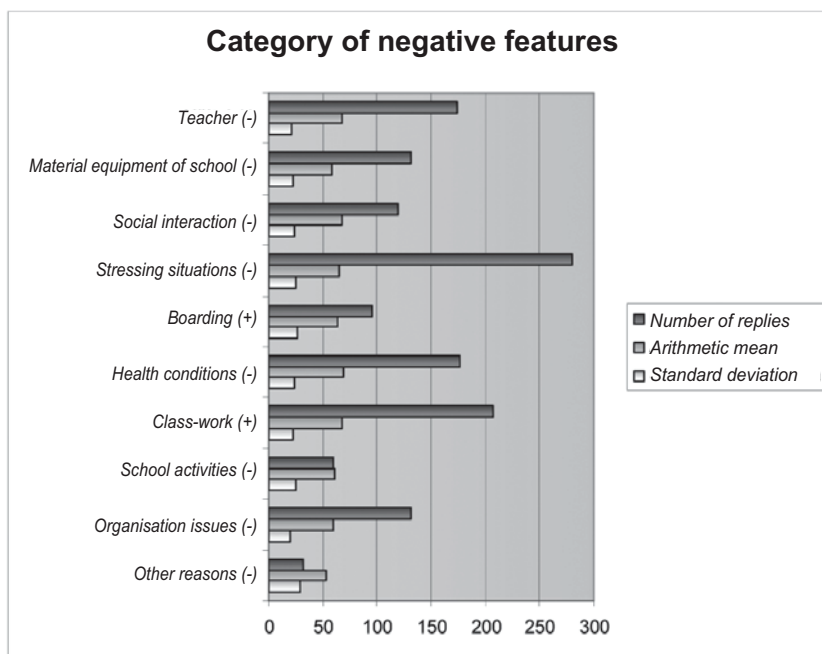

Diagram 1: Category of positive features 1)

Diagram 2: Category of negative features 2)

For a more thorough investigation tables are also available providing the line-up of the categories respecting their number of replies and arithmetic mean with numeric data.

ORDER RESPECTING THE NUMBER OF REPLIES			
School activities (+)	364	Stressing situations (-)	280
Class-work (+)	306	Class-work (-)	207
Teacher (+)	190	Health conditions (-)	177
Material equipment of school (+)	136	Teacher (-)	174
Social interaction (+)	120	Material equipment of school (-)	132
Health conditions (+)	98	Organisation issues (-)	132
Organisation issues (+)	85	Social interaction (-)	120
Non-stressing situations (+)	75	Boarding (-)	95
Boarding (+)	41	School activities (-)	60
Other reasons (+)	19	Other reasons (-)	32

Table 1: Order respecting the number of replies

As already described, the frequency of replies discloses how often children come across with a given feature at school. The orders of the positive and negative features differ as that what we notice within the positive and negative views also differ (we mostly realise what has been vital, what we have needed, only when we have lost it). Among the most frequent positive features rank the school activities, the class-work and the teacher. From the negative features most often occur the stressing situations, the class-work, and the health conditions. On the other hand, among the least frequent positive features are the other reasons, boarding, and the non-stressing situations. As the least frequent negative features the respondents again mention the other reasons, school activities, and the boarding.

ORDER RESPECTING THE ARITHMETIC MEAN			
Teacher (+)	78,82	Health conditions (-)	68,65
Social interaction (+)	77,46	Class-work (-)	68,22
Non-stressing situations (+)	74,17	Teacher (-)	67,49
Organisation issues (+)	72,24	Social interaction (-)	67,36
Class-work (+)	69,28	Stressing situations (-)	65,25
Other reasons (+)	67,89	Boarding (-)	64,00
School activities (+)	67,13	School activities (-)	61,08
Health conditions (+)	66,88	Organisation issues (-)	60,13
Material equipment of school (+)	64,82	Material equipment of school (-)	58,29
Boarding (+)	61,07	Other reasons (-)	52,59

Table 2: Order respecting the arithmetic mean

The arithmetic mean renders importance of   the given factor, how a respondent perceives it as actual and urgent. In this respect the highest importance is assigned to the teacher, social interactions, and to the non-stressing situations among the positive features. From the negative ones a child is most of all influenced by the health conditi-

ons, class-work, and by the teacher. As the least influencing, among the positive features, has been evaluated the boarding, material equipment of the school, and the health conditions.

A more substantial analysis would exceed the framework of this report. That is to say, the article has been conceived only as a preliminary report from the research and the whole research project will be examined within a dissertation thesis where this will occupy the position of a preliminary research stage. However, furthermore we will yet focus our attention to the comparison of the recognized facts with those described as psychic hygiene impacts by the branch literature and also to the comparison with factors defined by the Sane school.

In the data recognized by us equivalents have occurred nearly to all factors as described by the referred authors involved in the psychic hygiene:

- influence of teacher... the teacher,
- education process... the class-work,
- teacher - pupil interrelation, interrelations among pupils... the teacher - pupil interrelation, social interaction, good relations,
- child's negative experience and frustration tolerance measure... the stressing situations,
- test... the testing, stressing of grades and grades for achievement instead for endeavour, considerate testing, study achievements,
- rejection from collective... the rejection from collective,
- change of school / class... the change from kindergarten, change of school, class, frequent change of teachers, move,
- overloading... the overloading of pupils,
- issue of slow pupils... the specific support, individual attitude,
- indiscretion towards children... the degrading from the side of a teacher, gibing and allusions or chicanery from the side of children,
- optical and acoustic influences... the physical and hygienic conditions,
- stress due to competitivity... the competitivity, rivalry.
- ...

The factors that we can confirm are as follows:

- <u>Influence of media</u> - Černý understands the designation pupil as a child in the school age. Therefore it is influenced not only by school, but also by family environment, and by media… In our concept we consider only the school influence.
- <u>Problems of the personality and specifics of a child or teacher</u> – The personality of a child and teacher is often mentioned by the respondents (teacher, kind, patient, willing, unpleasant, nervous, labile…), however, specifics of a child have not been specifically mentioned. We suppose they perceived the issue of the school influences as external factors.
- <u>School maturity</u> – The respondents have not mentioned this issue. However, it should be included and taken into consideration in the further investigation.

- Reasonable selection of subject matters, presentation of a subject matter, inattention issue treatment, securing of active attitude of pupils, respecting didactic principles and of social/psychological aspects of education, issue of discipline – these features have not been directly described but similar categories occurred (securing the activity of pupils… boredom, stereotype, …), or they have not occurred. Thus, they will again be considered and added, as the case may be, as new factors in the following investigation.

As regards the comparison with the influences as referred to by the Sane school, the differences are more striking at first sight. After having studied them in a more detailed manner, we again realise a prevailing compliance with the facts found out by us. The factors are classified here in a different way. The difference of our concept is based on the effort to approach the classifications referred to in the psychic hygiene.

Among the consistent influences we may mention:

- unobjectionable hygienic status… hygienic and physical conditions,
- safety in the factual meaning - safety,
- aesthetic and domesticated status… decoration of school, pleasant environment,
- social environment… social interaction,
- daily regime respecting biorhythms… regular daily regime, order,
- daily regime respecting the necessity of leisure time… enough leisure time, vacations, intervals,
- motion activity… motion support,
- approaching real life by the school… preparation for practical life,
- pupils with special needs and education problems… providing specific support,
- communication as a condition of co-operation… development of communication,
- motivating classification of pupils… motivating teacher,
- partner relations with parents… co-operation with families,
- ...

Differences between the both classifications:

- In the Sane school classification for example these new factors have occurred:
  - Material environment: Functionality and usefulness, stimulative nature, accessible status of all school premises for motion and use, offer of personal space,
  - Sane teaching: Purposeful nature of class-work, options, participation in the class-work, clear rules of co-existence in writing, existence of elected bodies,
  - Open partnership: School as a democratic society partnership,
  - ...

- In our classification the following factors occur, for example, on the other hand:
  - Teacher with his/her individual personality and professional characteristics,
  - Forcing to eat up meals,
  - Queues in canteen,
  - Provision of basic education,
  - Vicinity of the school,
  - Number of children in a class,
  - Change,
  - ...

All differences will be assessed and included in the new classification to be established, which we will use for the further investigation of impacts of school to the psychic hygiene of a child.

4. Conclusion

The preliminary report on the research investigation deals with the investigation of the mental representation of the psychic hygiene in basic schools as seen by teacher students. 197 participants of this investigation have expressed themselves to the positive and negative influences of school on their corporal, social, and psychic health. On the basis of the obtained data we have performed the text analysis, factors have been defined and ten superior categories have been established above them, parallel for the both positive and negative features: the teacher, material equipment of school, social interaction, boarding, health conditions, class-work, school activities, non-stressing situations, organisation issues, and other influences. After having assessed the found out data the comparison was applied on the basis of the number of replies (how often children come across with a given factor) and of the arithmetic mean (actual, urgent nature of a given phenomenon). Another objective of this research project was the comparison of data that are described as influencing the psychic hygiene by those authors involved in the psychic hygiene with those influences that are specified by the Sane school.

We take the application of similar questionnaires for an important cognitive method. With their help we may recognize what is the real situation in our schools; we are able to verify whether data specified in the branch literature are up-to-date and complete.

We take the involvement itself, in the issue, as very important as the care of psychic health is the condition of a quality and contentedly lived life.

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MENTÁLNÍ REPREZENTACE DUŠEVNÍ HYGIENY NA ZÁKLADNÍ ŠKOLE OČIMA STUDENTŮ UČITELSTVÍ

Souhrn: Má-li se dítě ve škole učit objevovat svět, zdravě se vyvíjet a růst, je velmi důležité, aby mu k tomu byly poskytnuty nezbytné podmínky. Mezi tyto podmínky patří mimo jiné i péče o duševní zdraví, kterou zajišťuje duševní hygiena. Na zjištění, nakolik jsou její pravidla ve škole uplatňována a respektována, se zaměřujeme v našem příspěvku. Výzkumné šetření, jehož výsledky jsou zde prezentovány, je postaveno na mentální reprezentaci jevu z pohledu studentů učitelství.

Klíčová slova: duševní hygiena, duševní zdraví, psychologie zdraví