

Classroom Climate:

An Executive Summary of Miloshevski's Master's Project

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In order to understand how conducive a classroom environment is to its students, one must investigate that particular environment against a set of criteria. Kimberly Miloshevski researched the creative climate using Ekvall's 10 Dimensions of Creative Climate (1983) in a classroom setting. After compiling her research, she produced a Master's project entitled, *Identifying Ekvall's Creative Climate in a Classroom Setting* (2000). Miloshevski's work was a part of a larger initiative to develop a classroom climate checklist known as C.L.A.S.S. (Creative Climate Checklist About School Settings). Miloshevski's research focused on specifically grades sixth through eighth (children aged 11-14) and was conducted by a team of people.

Background Information

In preparation for this research Miloshevski was motivated by several goals as a schoolteacher herself. She wanted to find out the characteristics of a creative classroom. To do so, Miloshevski posed three questions to guide her research:

- 1) How do Ekvall's climate dimensions manifest themselves in a classroom setting? What is similar? What is different?

2) What descriptions of creative climate in the classroom exists in literature?

3) What observed behaviors are indicative of creative behavior in the classroom?

(Miloshevski, 2000, p. 3)

As the research emerged Miloshevski began to answer her question. She also identified professional and personal goals which can be read in their entirety on pages 3-4 of her project.

Literature Search

Miloshevski conducted a review of the literature pertaining to her investigation. She found such literature in the Wilson Select Plus Database between the years 1996-2000. When searching for the literature she used the following search terms to focus her search: creative classroom climate, creative classroom environment, and classroom climate. She received 182 hits from this search and decided to break the literature into two categories. The first category contained literature that had similar climate descriptions as Ekvall's dimensions. The second category contained literature with the descriptions dissimilar to Ekvall's dimension definitions. Out of 182 articles only 54 provided useful information. On pages 12-

25 Miloshevski discusses each dimension in terms of the literature found.

Method

Data Collection

Part Three of the project contains the data collection. There were five stages in this phase of the research: preparation, procedure, organization and analysis, synthesis, and reporting. In order to prepare for this research Miloshevski decided to focus on classrooms from sixth to eighth grade. In addition, she wanted to maintain consistent levels of observation throughout the research. To accomplish this level of constancy she developed two protocol forms. Form one, which she developed, was to be used as the basis for interviewing her colleagues. Form two as used for the observation and reflection aspects of the research; this was developed by Gordon (2000). She then obtained permission to conduct research in a school setting (p. 28).

Data collection came from four different sources. First, data were obtained from Miloshevski's fellow teachers. Second, data were collected from informal talks with students. Third, Miloshevski and her research team held brainstorming sessions with professionals in the education field (p. 28-29). Fourth, Miloshevski completed

a self-reflection session on a series of lessons she taught in the classroom. In order to organize the data, Miloshevski found it necessary to color code the data sheets to separate the four different data collection methods. As a collective research effort, the team decided to sort the data by dimensions across each set of data in order to determine similarities and differences (p. 29). Finally, the research team began to see themes emerging from data, and each theme was put aside and then articulated. The final stage in organizing the data was to place all the information into a computer.

As the consistencies and inconsistencies with Ekvall were discussed, Miloshevski began to explain her findings. Also, she found that there were areas she could not identify and offered insight regarding the dimensions. Upon completion of data synthesis, Miloshevski began to verbalize the results to the research team. She looked back at the data for key points that needed to be further synthesized and networked back with the research group. Once discussion of the results was completed, Miloshevski put together a final report of the information.

Results & Outcomes

For each of Ekvall's dimensions, Miloshevski used Ekvall's definitions to identify the similarities and

differences she found in the four data sources: teacher interviews, CPS brainstorming session, classroom observation, and student conversations. In Miloshevski's results and outcome sections she also included the results and a summary for each dimension. For a complete list of her findings see pages 34-86 of her project. Another thing that is included in this part of the project, at the end of each result section, is a category entitled, "Things to ponder/consider" (2000) which contains questions regarding the findings for each dimension.

Assessment

The outcomes of the project were:

- 1) The reporting of baseline data for the development of C.L.A.S.S.;
- 2) The development of a climate observation protocol;
- 3) The creation of a list of identified baseline pool of behavioral indicators of a creative classroom; and
- 4) A summary of current literature regarding creative climate in the classroom. (p. 88)

Key Learnings

The key learnings for Miloshevski came as a result of the professional and personal goals established at the

beginning of her project. She also mentioned five aspects from which she obtained insight into the world of the creative classroom environment (a detailed list can be found on pages 88-89 of her project). Finally, Miloshevski suggested that four things needed to continue in order to grasp a better understanding of a truly creative classroom climate:

- 1) Continued classroom observation and analysis;
- 2) Further observation and discussion from the student perspective;
- 3) The baseline data should be edited into a concrete list of descriptors to be field tested; and
- 4) Documentation on creative climate needs to be distributed so that others in the education field can become aware of the positive impact.

(p. 90)

Appendices

There were three appendices in this project. They contained:

- 1) Miloshevski's Concept Paper which provided a good look at her beginning level thought processes and research on the topic;

- 2) The Guided Conversation Protocol developed by Miloshevski; and
- 3) Observation and Self-Reflection Protocol developed by Tammy Gordon.

Personal Opinion

Miloshevski's work seems to lay the foundation for future climate research to continue. I believe that what she has developed and analyzed can be used at any educational level (pre-school to graduate school). In addition, the manner in which her project was presented was conducive to the natural flow of research. I felt as though her writing style and the information presented were valuable and credible. Overall, I believe her research to be well designed and reported.

References

- Ekvall, G., Arvonen, J. & Waldenstrom-Lindblad, I. (1983). *Creative organizational climate: Construction and validation of a measuring instrument*. Stockholm, Sweden: The Swedish Council for Management and Organizational Behaviour.
- Miloshevski, Kimberly L. (2000). *The impact of climate in the classroom: Reporting baseline data for the development of CLASS*. Unpublished master's project, Buffalo State College, Buffalo, NY.

*Listed below are references used in Miloshevski's project that I believe may be useful for follow-up reading.

References

- Amabile, T.M., & Stubbs, M.L. (1982). *Psychological research in the classroom*. New York: Pergamon Press.
- Fassinger, P.A. (1997). Classes are groups: Thinking sociologically about teaching. *College Teaching*, 45, 22-25.
- Gordon, T. L. (2000). *Identifying Ekvall's creative climate dimensions in an elementary school setting*. Unpublished master's project, Buffalo State College, Center for Studies in Creativity, Buffalo, NY.
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- Stewart, S.C., Evans, W.H., & Kaczynski. (1997). Setting the stage for success: Assessing the instructional environment. *Preventing School Failure*, 41(2), 53-56.

* A complete list of references can be found on pages 91-93 (Miloshevski, 2000).