



**Mirsada S. Zukorlić<sup>1</sup>**

University of Belgrade, Teacher Education Faculty,  
Department in Novi Pazar

**Daliborka R. Popović**

Faculty of Science and Mathematics, University of Kragujevac

Original  
scientific paper

Paper received: Jun 19 2017  
Paper accepted: Nov 14 2017  
Article Published: May 5 2018

## ***Correlation between School Climate and Student Autonomy***

### **Extended summary**

The role of students in the classroom and other school activities is mainly determined by teachers' attitudes towards their ability to make decisions in line with their interests and personal will, while student satisfaction is determined by their own perception of their status in school. Students can have the role of objects by participating in the activities organised by teachers, and they can participate on an equal basis, in which case their integrity is expressed. Acknowledging student autonomy and developing curricular content that matches their interests contributes to the development of motivation for learning and a positive perception of the school life.

The aim of this paper is to examine the influence of school climate on strengthening student autonomy, particularly regarding the impact of the dimension of the class climate on the status of its students, or the relationship between teachers and students which is crucial for the realisation of the student autonomy.

The factors determining student autonomy are discussed in the first part of the paper, and a positive school climate is identified as the key factor. The dimensions of the school climate are elaborated further on in the paper, as well as their impact on student development and their achievements. The classroom climate has been identified as the crucial factor determining the level of student autonomy. The second part of the paper offers a description of po-

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<sup>1</sup> [mirsada.ljajic@uf.bg.ac.rs](mailto:mirsada.ljajic@uf.bg.ac.rs)

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tential levels of student participation in school activities, while the correlation between school climate and student autonomy is elaborated in the third part of the paper. Despite the fact that the Law on the Basics of Education System stresses the importance of student participation and prescribes a more active participation, as well as the acknowledgement of students' opinions about school activities by means of Student Parliament, these rules and recommendations are rarely put to practice in everyday life. In reality, the older and more prepared for a responsible decision-making and active participation the students are, the less willing the school and teachers are to allow them participation in school activities. Similarly, in the lower grades of primary school, teachers tend to be more permissive regarding student independence, allowing them to learn through playful activities in which they have an opportunity to express their will. The paper presents the most important characteristics of support of student autonomy, reflected in teachers' endeavour to create a feeling of satisfaction in students and the sense of belonging to their school.

The concluding pages of the paper offer recommendations for the functioning of schools as systems with the aim of strengthening student autonomy in everyday school practice. The recommendations are meant to ensure a positive psychological and social school climate and they require the participation of all actors in schools (teachers, students, school principals, parents). They also imply developing broader forms of student participation which would encompass extra-curricular activities and the school life in general. Given the specific nature of the educational process, which generally amounts to teacher-student interaction, it can be concluded that the teacher-student relationship strongly determines the level of student autonomy. The responsibility of teachers for developing participatory competences is crucial and it makes possible the relationship with which both teachers and students will be satisfied and student autonomy will be supported. The recommendations for strengthening student autonomy include the following crucial postulates:

- Pedagogic approaches should be based on mutual, interactive, individuals–community relationships;
- The competences involving the knowledge, skills and attitudes towards the opportunities, values and potential of student participation leading to autonomy should be included in the standards of competences set for teaching profession and teacher development, as well as in the standards prescribed for the position of a school principal;
- The examples of good practice in terms of strengthening student autonomy should be promoted and made available to students, teachers and parents by means of their active participation at the school level.

**Keywords:** school as a system, school climate, student participation, student autonomy.

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