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## IMPROVING SCHOOL CLIMATE THROUGH THE TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' CREATIVITY

DEZVOLTAREA CLIMATULUI ȘCOLAR CU AJUTORUL CREATIVITĂȚII  
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## STUDII TEORETICE

# IMPROVING SCHOOL CLIMATE THROUGH THE TEACHERS' AND STUDENTS' CREATIVITY

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### **Abstract**

The main focus of this article is to highlight the role of creativity in improving school climate. Both, school climate and creativity are two concepts with a large history of research but also with many definitions and explanations. Researches on creativity (Sadler-Smith, 2015; Wallas, 1926) present some phases of the process of creation that help us understand it better. Graham Wallas in *Art of Thought* (1926) introduces a four-stage model of the creative process including preparation, incubation, illumination and verification and other researchers on the subject developed these ideas. These phases identified by the researchers are developed in the present paper to give readers a clearer image about the concept of creativity. After explaining what creativity means, based on what researchers argue, we will emphasize the importance of both teachers' and students' creativity in enhancing the school climate. In a world in which students have a lot of distracters at each corner, teachers must help them to be an active part of the process of teaching and learning. By developing a good relationship with students, by asking them about what they like and guiding them wisely through the process of education, teachers can have more success in achieving their educational goals. The students' creativity deserves to be valued in schools and can be an essential part of improving the school climate.

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**Keywords:** creativity, school climate, student's creativity, school climate improvements, teachers's creativity.

### **Rezumat**

*Principalul obiectiv al acestui articol este de a pune în evidență rolul creativității în procesul de îmbunătățirea climatului școlar. Ambele concepte, atât climatul școlar, cât și creativitatea au fost atent investigate de-a lungul timpului și au primit definiții și explicații complexe. Cercetătorii în domeniul creativității (Sadler-Smith, 2015; Wallas, 1926) prezintă câteva etape ale procesului creativității care ne ajută să înțelegem mai bine acest termen. Pentru a explica procesul creativității, Graham Wallas, în *Art of Thought* (1926), introduce un model cu patru etape, care include pregătirea, incubarea, iluminarea și verificarea, aceste idei fiind valorificate și de alți cercetători. Prezentul studiu dezvoltă aceste etape identificate de cercetători cu scopul de a oferi cititorilor o perspectivă mai clară asupra creativității în organizația școlară. După prezentarea unei perspectivei comprehensive asupra conceptului de creativitate, se va sublinia importanța atât a creativității profesorilor, cât și a creativității elevilor în îmbunătățirea climatului școlar. Într-o lume în care elevii întâlnesc factori perturbatori la fiecare pas, profesorii au rolul de a-i transforma într-o parte activă a procesului de predare și învățare. Prin dezvoltarea unor relații bune cu elevii, prin chestionarea acestora cu privire la interesele și pasiunile lor și prin ghidarea lor cu înțelepciune prin procesul educațional, profesorii pot avea mai mult succes în atingerea scopurilor lor. Creativitatea elevilor merită să fie valorificată în colii și poate fi o parte esențială a procesului de îmbunătățirea climatului școlar.*

**Cuvinte-cheie:** creativitate, climat școlar, creativitatea profesorilor, creativitatea elevilor, îmbunătățirea climatului școlar.

## **1. Introduction and social context**

In a national and global context characterized by uncertainty and continuous change, the capacity to adapt and discover new ideas and innovative solutions to complex problems becomes a necessity. Universities and the schools as well change their way to teach and try to develop transversal competences that should help students manage the challenges of the future. These are already ideas that are found in most discourses on education and the future. In Romania, only in the last 29 years, the Ministry of Education had 28 Ministers. This huge number of Ministers that our educational system has had is an obvious proof of the lack of vision and functional structure of the

system. More than ever, the schools and all the other educational organizations have a huge responsibility towards children and youngsters. We cannot remain stuck in the same teaching methods and in the same poor public policies that we had decades ago.

To improve the quality of educational services, Miclea (2019) presents four meta-competencies for life that should ensure the success of everyone and that are close to the concept of creativity: discipline/self-discipline, entrepreneurship mentality, autonomy and designer thinking. Upon a closer analysis, we will see that the four meta-competencies involve extensive psychic processes for their development and formation.

Although the concept of creativity has turned into a common research subject and it is often discussed, there are still some limits regarding the meanings and understandings of this term (Fidana & Oztürk, 2015). Concepts like progressiveness, development, innovativeness, change, evolution, etc. are being analyzed and studied in relationship with creativity and some researchers even use them without doing any differences among them.

Originality and usefulness are two criteria generally accepted in the literature that represent the idea of creativity (Mayer, 1999) but they do not cover all the meanings of the creativity. There are also other explanations for the term creativity that highlight two different features of it, emphasizing the importance of both inspiration and knowledge in the development process of a person or organization. If we talk about the creativity of schools, we can say that it “is about people” and “creative people work hard and continually improve ideas and solutions, by making gradual alteration and refinements to their works” (Fisher & Williams, 2004, p. 12).

A helpful study belonging to Mel Rhodes (1961), clustered 40 definitions of creativity into four groups: person-centered, process-centered, product-centered and press-centered, that became known in the literature as the “four Ps” (Runco & Pritzker, 1999). If the first three groups are easy to understand, the fourth group of press-centered arises from the personality theory of Henry Murray and represents significant determinants of behaviour in the environments.

It is really important to analyze the process-centered group that is also divided into three groups: those concerning on childhood of the geniuses, the group that studies the regions and epochs, when and where creativity appeared, and those focusing on organizations. This last group of interest in organization is actually related to the organizational climate and can be helpful for understanding the relationship between creativity and school climate.

In terms of the relationship of creativity with the school climate, the emphasis is on the ability of the environment to stimulate creativity (De Alencar et al., 2011; Dul, Ceylan & Jaspers, 2011; Schepers & van den Berg, 2006) and less on the interdependence between the two concepts. The complex concept of school climate was not very deeply explored in relation to creativity and it would be challenging to see how some components of the school climate, such as interactions or teacher-student relations, could be improved if the creativity of those involved would be harnessed.

This paper will present some stages of the creative process as well as how they work and will highlight the characteristics of the teachers' and students' creativity and how they can enhance the school climate.

## **2. Stages of the creative process**

One of the most analyzed model of the creative process is the one Graham Wallas presented in "The Art of Thought"(1926) and represents the foundation of the creativity theories.

In the first stage, named "the preparation stage", the human brain is preparing to identify a new process, idea or solution to a situation. For the success of this first step in the creativity process, it is necessary to have as much information as possible, so that the creation process lays on a solid foundation of knowledge.

After the brain is prepared for creation and has gathered enough information, it goes into the "incubation stage", where, apparently, the brain is not doing too much work on discovering the idea or solution needed. In reality, this is

a very important phase in which information are being processed and set up deeply in the brain. Resting is considered to be the best solution to get through this stage.

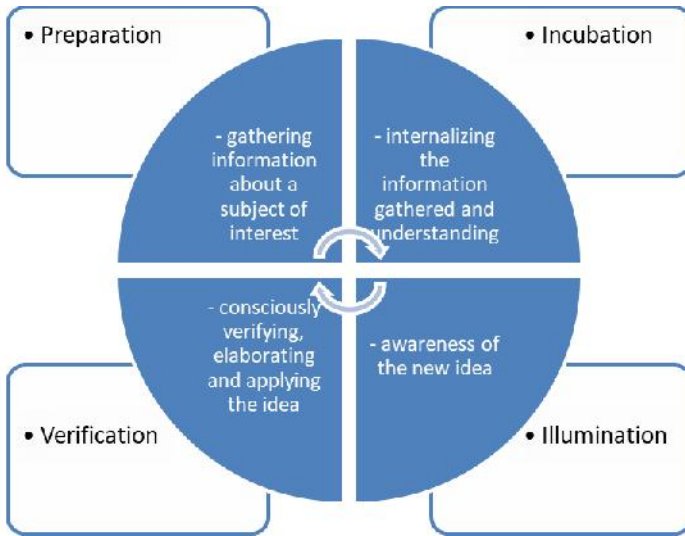
“The Illumination” stage will be achieved when one finds the solution or the idea that has been searched in the first two stages and it is an inopportune moment in which the information found are being set up in the brain and new connexions between neurons can be made to develop new ways of reacting or approaching a problem. This is actually the moment when the creative idea appears, comes to life and is made known to others.

Once the creation can be seen and criticized, the next step is “the verification” in which the idea verbalized in the above stage can be improved by considering the feedback of the other people around that can have an opinion on the situation. This verification of the ideas achieved can be made by the person himself but it can also be asked to be done by other people so that it could be obtained a complex image about the value or validity of the idea or solution. If after the self-verification and the external verification the idea or solution analyzed is approved as being efficient and it is not necessary to return to the preparation stage, then it means that the creation process can be considered complete.

A visual representation of these stages and their characteristics could be consulted in Figure no. 1.

Mednick et al. (1964) have also studied the creativity process and demonstrated that performance on a remote-associate task was enhanced by specific support to an associative interpretation of the phenomenon of incubation.

Some researchers argued that this four-stage model of the creative process does not reflect accurately all the accents of Wallas in his approach to explaining the creative process. After a careful analysis of the studies of Wallas, Sadler-Smith (2015) introduces a reinterpreted model that has “three levels of consciousness: unconsciousness, fringe consciousness, consciousness and five stages” and add to the four stages of Wallas a fifth stage named “intimation” sustaining that Wallas highlights this idea in his research.



*Figure no.1: Stages of creativity process (after Wallas, 1926)*

Other models that have been developed to explain creativity and the creative thinking process include steps with the common themes of synthesis, analysis, and evaluation, which are the higher levels of thinking (Kanematsu & Barry, 2016). These models promote the ideas that creativity is something that needs high capabilities of thinking and learning so that you can discover unique solution to common or unusual problems.

Stage-based models of the creative process are discussed by the researchers in present and empirical research suggests that the basic 4-stage model of the creative process may need to be revised or replaced. There are new questions that need answers such as how the creative process differs from the noncreative process and how process-related differences may lead to different levels of creative performance (Lubart, 2001).

There is a real challenge to investigate the process of creativity, a concept of high complexity which can be difficult to capture by a set of research tools.

Based on the integration between both the design process from engineering

design and the creative process from cognitive psychology, a new model of the creative process can be proposed (Howard et al., 2008). This integrated process is providing a descriptive model in which the different design operations are linked to the types of design output produced.

As it was presented, there are many perspectives about the stages that creativity process has, but the ideas of Wallas oriented the majority of the theories on creativity that have been growing and developing in the last few years.

### **3. Enhancing the school climate through the teachers' and students' creativity**

Pedagogical creativity defines, most often, the model of the qualities necessary to the teacher for designing and carrying out efficient activities, by enhancing on its capacity for permanent renewal of specific actions, committed at the system and educational level.

If we talk about the features of the creative teacher, we could say that they refer to the following: judicious combination of practical and theoretical work; strong motivation and commitment; keeping up with the news; flexibility, intelligence, curiosity; capacity of imagination and intuition (Savin & Borza, 2012). All these characteristics are related to an open educational climate with interactive relationships between teachers and students.

There are several studies that present the importance of stimulating the creativity of students for the plenary development of children but too few investigations that analyze the impact that student creativity can have on the school climate. Creative students have the inspiration to develop quality relationships and leave their mark on the physical environment in which they learn.

A strategy for encouraging teachers and students to be creative, but also responsible with their roles and attributions, should focus on the qualities of students and on developing some meta-competencies like flexibility, autonomy and innovativity, that give them courage to sustain their own point of view and improve themselves permanently.



Nowadays organizations “are asked to be more flexible, adaptive, entrepreneurial, and innovative in meeting the changing demands of today’s environment” (Sarros, Cooper & Santora, 2008, p. 145).

In this context, is it necessary to develop a leadership based on vision, on strategies of school development which offers each student, teacher and people involved in the life of a school, the possibility to be an active part of the organization’s processes?

To help the staff of the school community, such as teachers or principals, to improve the school climate, the “National Centre on Safe Supportive Learning Environments” from US has developed a Quick Guide with some helpful advice on school climate improvements.

The guide has five activities that go through planning, searching the interested persons in the process of school climate improvement, collecting and interpreting school climate information, and developing and applying the best solution; also, all these activities will be monitored and evaluated.

These activities and the priorities that can be set to each level are analyzed in the table below.

**Table no. 1:** *Activities for improving school climate (adaptation after National Centre on Safe Supportive Learning Environments)*

Activities for improving school climate				
Planning	Engaging stakeholders	Collecting, analyzing and reporting school climate data	Identifying and implementing interventions	Monitoring and evaluation
<p>Why is it important?</p> <p>What are the key things to do?</p> <p>What does it look like when it is done well?</p> <p>What to do in order to avoid/potential pitfalls?</p>				

Analyzing all the activities dedicated to improving the school climate from the table above, we can see how in each of the stages there is a massive impact by the capacity that people have to find solutions, to talk with specialists, to understand information and to create new ideas and opportunities.

#### 4. Conclusion

Creativity in education leads to the development of an environment conducive to learning and challenging for each of those involved in the instructional process and it is an essential part of obtaining the success in education. Between the creativity of teachers and students and the school climate there are lots of interdependencies developed by the idea that the human component of the school's reality is the main factor in shaping the educational climate.

This century is one in which technology is seen as the basis of growth in the society, but has a huge impact on educational climate and the other processes involved in the educational system.



School climate with all its dimensions has significant benefits from the creativity of students and teachers, the main actors in the educational process. Creative teachers and students, altogether build positive relationships, a captivating work environment and quality interactions that lead to a creative school climate.

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