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SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

THE SCHOOL AS ORGANISATION.

*THE DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATIVE MANAGEMENT AND ITS
IMPLICATIONS FOR BECLEAN INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL CENTER*

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school organisation, leadership, competency, democratic participative management, engaged pedagogy, empowerment/ self-motivation, taking responsibility/ acknowledging responsibility, acceptance/ commitment, human resources management, decision management, information management, supportiveness, directivity, decisional participation, organisational communication, didactic communication, organisational culture, organisational behaviour, informational fluency, organisational intelligence, organisational health, degree of acceptance of educational change and innovation, organisational climate, job satisfaction, job stress, community perception of the Beclean C.S.E.I. inclusive educational centre, educational partnership, institutional visibility, educational performance, socialisation.

SYNTHESIS OF THE MAIN PARTS OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

Overall, the doctoral thesis entitled *School as Organisation. The Democratic Participative Management and Its Implications for Beclean Inclusive Educational Centre* represents the outcome of systematic theoretical reflections as well as of practical applied investigations resulted from our preoccupations with the design, implementation and maintenance of an efficient management system in the educational institution C.S.E.I. Beclean, in line with contemporary management trends.

In this sense, following theoretical research within management theory in education and based on in-depth knowledge of the particularities and specificities of our organisation, we have chosen to implement a leadership/ management style based on the principles and requirements of *democratic participative management*.

Therefore, the *independent variable* used in our research is the democratic participative management, practiced both at school management and at teacher-student relationship level. Democratic participative management is an advanced form of democratic management. It is based on the distinction between the consultative democratic management and the democratic, participative management.

In the case of *democratic consultative management*, managers / teachers have some trust in subordinates / students and the communication is both upward and downward; while important decisions are taken at the top management structure, subordinates / students make less important decisions at basal levels. As regards the *democratic participative management*, managers / teachers trust their subordinates / students, decision making is highly decentralised and communication is carried out efficiently, both horizontally and vertically.

Democratic participative management practice, be it headmaster's behaviour towards teachers or the teacher in relation to pupils, requires actions capable of providing operational alternatives to the group, of promoting the pedagogy of engagement, i.e. teachers' and pupils' personal engagement in their work tasks. It also promotes the formation of joint working teams consisting of headmasters and teachers, teachers and students respectively, where they play partner roles, providing support and advice to achieve group goals. In the case of the democratic participative leadership of the team of teachers / pupils, internal motivation, cohesion and satisfaction of members as a result of consultation and participation in decision making are high. The objectives are negotiated / explained, and the group is consulted to identify the best strategies for attaining them. Note should be made that the major dimensions of democratic participative leadership are:

- *support* (valorisation of the members of school organisation, namely teachers or pupils);
- *facilitating interpersonal interactions*, promoting mutual assistance and support in solving the most difficult tasks: ;
- *highlighting the importance of achieving the aims agreed*, insisting on collective benefits and personal results;
- *advice* in identifying effective action strategies;
- *encouraging permanently the group towards own improvement*

The democratic participative management practice also requires:

- consulting organisation members on taking on objectives and the means of achieving them;
- the leader / teacher chooses the role of moderator of the debates, demonstrating availability to opinions and suggestions put forward;
- leadership is based on fostering internal motivation and emotional dimension of work / learning;
- special attention is given to two-way communication, transparency, openness and cooperation with employees / students;
- individual or group initiatives will be particularly rewarded together with the voluntary acceptance of duties;
- teachers / students will receive from school management / teachers an adequate and permanent support in terms of both their professional/ education and personal development;
- a desire to integrate members of the group/ class in a common activity and to convince them to cooperate is explicitly manifested

We should also mention that our option to implement the democratic participative management at the Beclean Inclusive Educational Centre was based on several factors among which:

- opportunities through education decentralization measures;
- the transformation, in 2006, of Beclean Special Education School into an Inclusive Education Centre (C.S.E.I.), a new statute that allowed flexible decision making;
- the particular features of activities in such schools, which require both individual decisions (e.g. psychologist, speech therapist, physical therapist) and teamwork to develop and implement personalized intervention plans;
- expression of the wish for change by the teaching staff;
- The existence of competent and capable human potential, able to successfully meet the requirements of democratic participative management practice.

In general operational terms, our experimental intervention at the Beclean Inclusive Educational Centre is as follows:

- *at the level of leadership of school as organisation*, we shall practice a leadership style based on democratic participative principles, as they have been mentioned above;
- *In terms of the educational process*, we plan to offer to the teachers both through courses/ training activities and through individual assistance and advice the skills and competencies needed to implement a democratic participative teacher-pupils relationship in educational practice.

Thus, at the Beclean Inclusive Educational Centre our intervention focused on the following areas:

1. *Organisational structure*, by optimal establishing and defining work processes, grouping/ organising positions, departments and their coordination to achieve the agreed organisational objectives;
2. *Performance management systems* focusing on the functions of training and staff development, evaluation and reward of performance;
3. *Organisational feedback system*, which guarantees the collection, evaluation and dissemination of information on both the working groups' activities and on the individuals who compose the organisation;
4. *Organisational culture*, understood as all the basic assumptions, values and standards shared by the employees.

The management program we devised was conceived as a homogeneous and articulated

system of projects, approaches and managerial decisions, designed for formal, non-formal and informal contexts, by directly involving the teachers in the educational institution subject of the case study. As a result of our longitudinal study of the process of managerial design and implementation, where we examined the interval 2006–2009, the following *assumptions and major principles* can be highlighted:

1. *The premises of the management program design*

Preparatory steps – the conceptualization, prediction, anticipation, networking etc and the actual development of practical approaches and their inter-relations were based on the following major assumptions:

- Complying with laws in force in Romania on the organisation of special education;
- Complying with the curriculum specific to special education units and curricular regulations issued for this category of educational institutions:
- Encouraging and promoting teacher participation in managerial approaches, activities and adequate management decisions at school level, so as to positively influence their professional behaviour in school, their relationship with colleagues and the school manager, as well as their didactic conduct in direct activities with students;
- Valuing and encouraging curriculum developments at the level of school carried out by teachers;
- Promoting at micro educational level personalized educational approaches and interventions.

2. *Issues of principles in the program design and implementation*

To ensure sound scientific foundation of our management program, we formalised the following *general principles*, which we followed through in all stages of our research:

- Ensuring transparency of school education policy for teachers, students, parents, community members;
- Diversifying and expanding social interaction, collaborative dimensions and channels of communication between manager and teachers;
- Increasing the school's institutional relations with local community representatives, and the interpersonal relations between school personnel and the staff of local/ regional community institutions;
- Providing a comprehensive feedback mechanism for school teachers concerning the approaches, activities and management decisions carried out by the teams up at school level;

- Developing tools and instruments to achieve the democratic participative institutional type of management;
- Ensuring proper ethical treatment of pupils and contribute positively to their full physical and personality development;
- Ensuring adequate ethical treatment of all persons involved in implementing the intervention program - teachers, employees, local community members.

The management program was structured according to the following four major sequential but interrelated stages:

- a) Diagnosing the dimensions and characteristics of managerial interventions that make a democratic participative management possible and appropriate;
- b) Planning managerial approaches and concrete actions operated from the following perspectives: strategic, curricular, social, collaborative, interactive, temporal;
- c) Making effective action interventions - by involving school staff in work teams;
- d) Assessing the results of interventions, which is a multilevel approach carried out at school level (including the analysis of the impact of this type of management in relation to the community), at class level but also at individual level where appropriate.

3. Description of the management program

The design and implementation of the management program was based on the systemic vision of the design and practice of the management processes, with emphasis on the horizontal and vertical correspondences established between the various components thereof. Therefore, the management program aimed at substantial restructuring of all sections of school organisation, which are likely to bring about a shift in the manager-employee relationship, respectively teacher-pupils and, by this means, to establish a genuine democratic participative climate.

In this context, assertive communication, positive inter-relationship, and unconditional acceptance of persons (excluding undesirable behaviour) were items related to the full success in business management.

The manager's target behaviours were developed in line with the whole strategy addressed to achieve the objectives of the program management; they have resulted in:

- consulting close collaborators in connection with decisions to be taken so as to benefit from an external view of the problem and obtain an unbiased point of view before the final decision;

- examining the actions of successful colleagues, understanding and applied generalization of their success "recipes";
- examining how unsuccessful colleagues make decisions and of the causes of their failures;
- consistent application of the principle: "Always think well before taking important decisions and avoid impulsive on the spur of the moment actions!"
- knowing one's weaknesses and then developing self-control;
- avoid complacency in routinely driven strategies, knowing that even a wealth of experience in this field may lead to failure; (Be aware of one's own limitations)
- use positive cognitions such as "Work to develop your own creativity.", "Work systematically and do not skip any step in your activities."

Although the issues covered seem heterogeneous, their common denominator is *the organisation seen in the light of a group of individuals who agree to work for a given time to achieve common goals.*

The main features of the program are as follows:

- *Result orientation*: action of any summary evaluation may lead to the identification of novel elements, particularly in the work with children with special educational needs; the instructive, educational and therapeutic process is child-centred;
- *Employee orientation* – Decisions and responsibilities belong, as appropriate, to the Management Board and / or Professors Council chaired by the school manager, with great emphasis on human resources; this is illustrated by the following:
 - * *Training and development* (teacher training working groups; pedagogical work groups, training courses organized, financed and provided by the school or other organisations);
 - * *Development of motivation and sense of organisational affiliation* (granting diplomas, awards and honours, organising joint cultural and leisure activities).
- *Promoting employees' sense of self-identity in relation to their professional organisation* - employees will be future-oriented and enhanced skills obtained in the workplace will ensure high professional achievements and a sense of positive psychological comfort; competence in the workplace will ensure them both "entrance into the unit," promotion or, if necessary, the "exit ticket" to another organisation.

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- *Open system* - every year structural and compositional changes occur at the level of teaching staff and pupils; integration and positive relationship is a motto followed by the entire school community.
- Intense non-invasive control - the cost-benefit balance is a priority in management activity; consequently, formative transparent assessments hold a central place, which entails a thorough analysis of the entire activity; the management program consists of operational sequences in accordance with the objectives; planning Board meetings and Teaching Staff Council meetings is not a formal but a substance activity;
- *Pragmatism* - providing logistics for compensatory regenerative intervention programs for children with special educational needs (SEN) determines an active, participatory approach, and critical-constructivist teaching methods, pupils are the centre of interest and the entire teaching arsenal focuses on them.

The targeted sections of our intervention program were: *the resources, the educational program conducted with internal and external partners, the programs of professional development, research and promotion of educational and specialized services.*

Concerning the *resources*, the main objectives were: improvement of material base through the sheltered workshops providing employment for young people capable to be integrated into the labour process; redistribution of existing facilities to increase efficiency in accordance with the profile of the school, namely *inclusive education*, modernization of resource materials (furniture, teaching resources, audio-visual devices), maintaining premises at a high degree of comfort (permanent sanitation, maintenance of optimum operation of the electrical system, water and gas), increasing the book and information acquisition, ensuring various teaching materials, organising and participating in national and international exchanges organising and / or attending training courses and facilitating the contact student / trainer / community by promoting extracurricular activities.

The educational program conducted with internal and external partners is meant to maintain previously initiated collaborative partnerships and to build new effective partnerships, with positive consequences for institutional life and image, to promote a positive image of the school by the popularization of actions taken and of their results, to enhance employees' confidence in obtaining mutual benefits by partnering and also to raise the school profile and attract extra budgetary funds.

Regarding programs of professional development, research and promotion of educational services, they focussed on initiating and organising of teacher information, training

and development and research activities, valuing of positive pedagogical experience by demonstrations, promoting modern ideas on special education through applied research, creating educational resources and reorganising existing resources in special education focusing on the development of inclusive practices at local or county levels, setting up projects of European interest (Comenius, Socrates), as well as implementing a sustained system at local, county and national levels for integration and employability of students, using modern educational software in teaching and institutional management and new alternative education strategies in teaching, developing educational offer and providing logistics to promote it, participation in county, national and international sport events, publishing a school magazine, auxiliary materials, organising scientific meetings, carrying out research projects and promoting best practices and, last but not least, publishing books and articles based on teaching experience in journals.

The educational offer and specialized services aimed at achieving the following objectives: teaching-learning-assessment activities, providing educational services in inclusive education: training, information, research, counselling, projects and programs of specific therapies, working with schools and education related institutions (the County Welfare and Child Protection Authority, Pupils' Club, local authorities, companies, NGOs), local and foreign individuals with concerns in the field of education, providing methodological and scientific support for inclusive education schools for mainstream teachers, support for learning activities and preparation for adult life, early detection and early intervention for children with special educational needs, adapting curriculum for children with special educational needs integrated into mainstream education, continuous monitoring of the development of children with special educational needs investigated, providing educational assistance to motor disabled children / students by various schooling schemes: home schooling, part-time, merged, etc., research and consulting activities under the scientific methodological coordination of the County Centre of Educational Resources and Assistance, implementation and enforcement of personalised service plans customized for each assessed child / student, evaluation, diagnosis and monitoring school progress of children with special educational needs through the Commission of Internal Continuous Assessment, providing advice to parents and families with children in need, supporting assessment and counselling programs for adolescent school and professional orientation and supporting specific therapies programs according to formative offer and of specialized training for local community and beyond.

The intervention program was developed for medium and long term and its *strategic goals* were to change the core values of organisational culture, to carry out specific educational programs, to diversify funding sources, to develop local, national and international partnerships,

and to improve the school material base so as to ensure optimal educational services for pupils with special educational needs and specialized services to ensure their social and professional integration with maximum efficiency.

The Operational plan for Human Resources Management and the Operational Plan for Assessment, Guidance and Control of Teaching included a series of interventions designed to consolidate the democratic participative management practiced in the C.S.E.I. Beclean. Among these, we mention developing custom procedure for granting merit pay, the Code of Professional Conduct, and the Partnership Agreement with Parents; these procedures led to the emergence of new structures and operational leverage, which, due to their formative nature, generated positive influences both in terms of management-subordinate relationship and of organizational climate within our school.

Regarding the impact assessment, emphasis should be made that this intervention program was monitored continuously by direct observation on the development of management actions based on a scale of behavioural monitoring, through regular analysis at the end of each semester, of managerial achievements and systematic assessment in relation to indicators and performance indicators included in the Operational Management Plan aimed at quality and performance.

The investigation of selected issues, namely of the impact of institutional democratic participative management practice has on school organisation C.S.E.I. Beclean, was based primarily on *action research* because of its massive potential for analytical and operational introduction of change in a school organisation.

By combining investigation with practical action, the action research aims primarily at change and draws together equally the reflective and the investigative and acting dimensions. Moreover, reversing terms, action research in research action, we noted that practice generates knowledge.

Action research is different in relation to both fundamental research and applied research, being most appropriate for an integrative approach to the investigated phenomenon. In this respect, we mention that although both use *scientific methods*, action research differs from *practical, applied research* in that the latter is used mainly to establish relationships and to test theories and rigorously applies the scientific method: it studies a large number of cases, it sets maximum control over the variables, uses specific research techniques, rigorous sampling and shows great care in generalising results and in extrapolating findings to comparable situations.

In contrast, action research uses scientific methods in a freer and more relaxed manner, since it focuses on a *specific issue* considered in *specific circumstances*. Its goal is not so much to obtain generalisable scientific knowledge, but to obtain a *knowledge focused on a particular*

situation and purpose.

In the specific case of our investigation, the *purpose* underlying the investigative steps is to *verify that the implementation and practice of democratic participative management in inclusive education is an important mediating factor of change, able to lead both to positive and long term restructuring of teacher attitudes towards change and innovation in education and to increase students' school performance*

Following the previously mentioned considerations, we intend to achieve implementation of democratic participative management and analysis of its impact on two distinct dimensions, which are, in fact, interrelated in educational practice:

1. *the dimension of democratic participative management of the school organisation;*
2. *the dimension of democratic participative management of the teacher-pupils relationship.*

Therefore, the general purpose of the action research is to describe in detail and quantify the major changes caused by the introduction of democratic participative management, at school level as an organisation, at the level of community perception of schools as inclusive educational institutions, and at the level of the teaching and educational process.

In this context, we expect that the independent variable mentioned above, will act at the level of two dimensions, which are distinct but interrelated:

- a. *school management (institutional management);*
- b. *teacher-pupils relationship (classroom management);*

At the level of school management, we anticipate that the practice of democratic participative management (*independent variable*) will cause long-term positive changes in the following areas (*dependent variables*):

- acceptance of change and innovation in education;
- quality of the organizational climate;
- professional satisfaction;
- occupational stress;
- community perception on the inclusive educational unit C.S.E.I. Beclean;

Regarding teacher-class relationship, we consider that the application of democratic participative management (*independent variable*) will influence favourably the following items (*dependent variables*):

- pupils' educational attainments;
- pupils' level of socialisation.

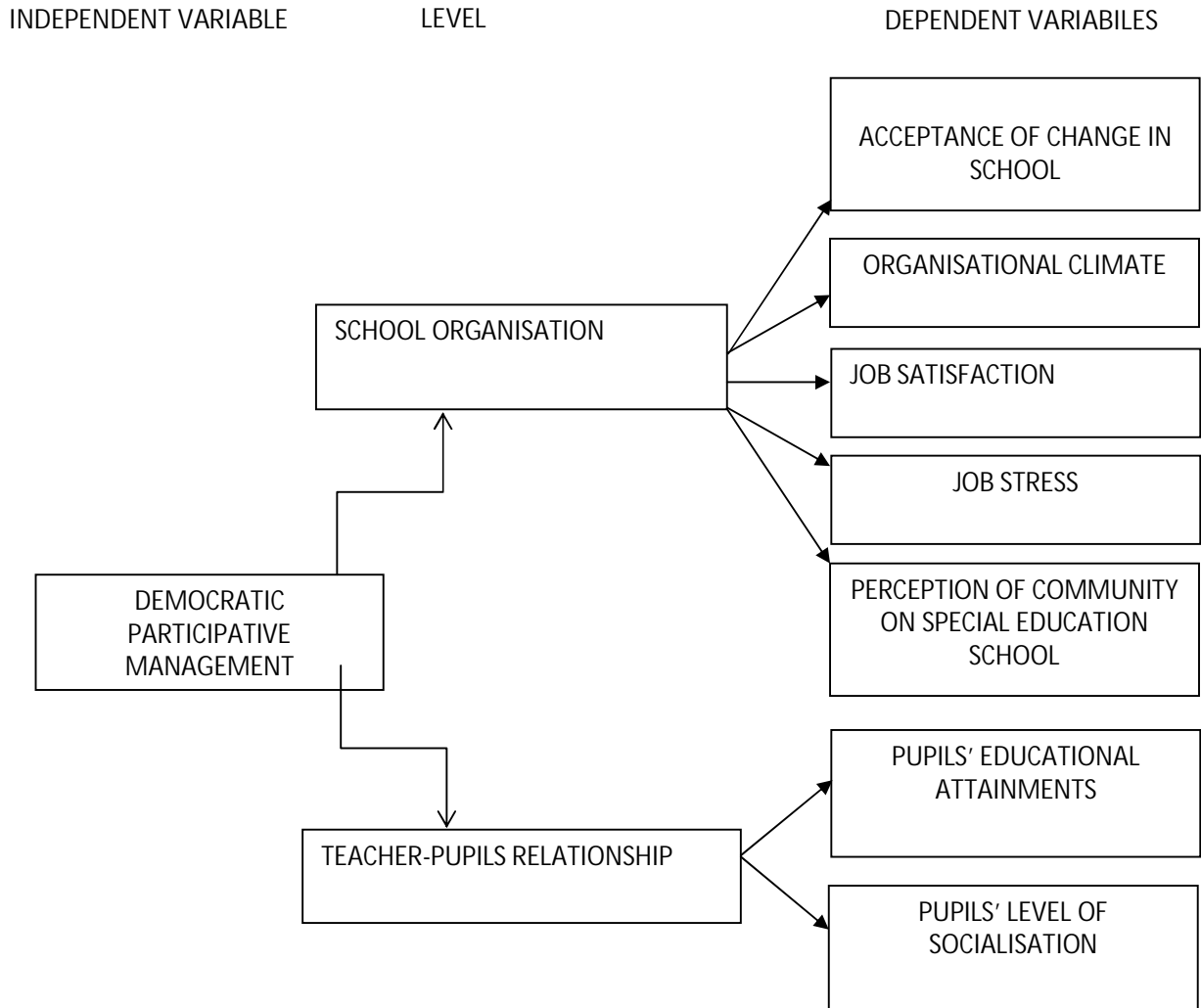


Figure 1. Variables of the action research

Correlative with the purpose of action research set out above, we proceeded to formulate general and specific working hypotheses of the investigation. The assumptions that guided and provided consistency throughout our investigative approach are:

General research hypothesis: practicing transparent democratic and participative institutional management, focused on empowerment/self-motivation, taking responsibility/acknowledging responsibility, acceptance/commitment, causes positive changes on the following variables: production and acceptance of change at institutional level, organisational climate, community perception of the inclusive school as educational institution, and at the level of the actual learning activity carried out within the micro pedagogic context of classes of students.

Specific hypothesis 1. *Change and acceptance of change at school level as organisational-functional system is significantly enhanced by active participatory involvement of teaching staff in decision-making regarding institutional policy development.*

Specific hypothesis 2. *The implementation of democratic participative management will improve the communication between the manager and the teachers in the institution; it will also ensure a climate of cooperation in the intra-group relations as well as increased job satisfaction and reduced job stress.*

Specific Hypothesis 3. *The transparency of educational policy guidelines, of the values promoted and of complex, objective and multi-directional communication at macro educational level, between school, local community and education authorities will lead to both significantly improved community perception of the inclusive educational centre C.S.E.I. Beclean and increased institutional visibility.*

Specific Hypothesis 4. *A democratic, participative management of teacher-pupils relationship as framework for using active and activating teaching methods will entail increased students' academic attainment and level of sociability.*

The investigation undertaken to test the aforementioned assumptions is based on the use of action research, combined with several other methods such as the following:

- *observation method* (the method has proven useful on several levels; primarily, we use it to get a detailed picture of how the teachers at Beclean C.S.E.I. reacted to change and innovation in education; additionally, it allowed us to form a clearer picture of the characteristics of organisational climate, occupational stress level, professional satisfaction as well as of pupils' level of socialisation/ sociability);
- *interview method* (it was used in research aimed at the teaching staff of C.S.E.I. Beclean to obtain specific information concerning the acceptance of change, the organisational climate, occupational stress level and its causes as well as the degree of job satisfaction; we also interviewed community representatives, local or county officials in order to surprise their perception our school and highlight parents' opinion on the degree of socialization of their children);
- *focus-group method* (the focus group was used as a technique for in-depth investigation on certain topics such as the acceptance of change, organisational climate, job-related stress, job satisfaction and level of socialization of students; focus-group method was used with three distinct categories of subjects: teachers from Beclean Inclusive Educational Centre, pupils from our educational

institution and their parents; groups were composed of 8-12 persons and the discussions were on average 90 minutes long. At the end, 5-10 minutes for unforeseen additional questions were added);

- *the questionnaire-based survey method* (in the particular situation of our research we used the following questionnaires: *questionnaire on the acceptance of change, questionnaire on occupational stress, job satisfaction questionnaire, questionnaire on pupils' degree of sociability* - addressed to parents, and *questionnaire on community perception of Beclean Inclusive Education Centre* – addressed to representatives of local / regional and local community);
- *the sociometric matrix* (was administered to a sample of pupils from C.S.E.I. Beclean but also to a similar number of pupils in mainstream schools in the city to reveal the pattern, nature and intensity of interpersonal relationships within the class group);
- *psychological and pedagogical experiment* (to achieve the psychological and pedagogical experiment, we used a *single sample technique*, which corresponds to an *experimental intrasubject design* that involves tracking the group - the teaching staff of C.S.E.I. Beclean – in *the pre-test stage* by the initial assessment of the overall state of the investigated system from the perspective of dependent variables, then throughout the *experimental intervention*, with the introduction of the independent variable – i.e. *democratic participative management implementation* and, finally, in the *post-test stage*, to determine changes in the dependent variables: *acceptance of change, organisational climate, job stress, job satisfaction, community perception of the educational institution, students' academic attainment and their level of sociability*);
- *document analysis method* (in the case of our investigation, we refer to the official curriculum documents and other school documents, which allow the collection of factual information on the work of teachers and the academic performance of students, documents and materials that reflect the institution's image in mass media, documents on the presence of local / regional and community representatives at events organized in C.S.E.I. Beclean, documents on the situation of children and frequency of their visits home at their families, etc.).

Regarding the issue of subjects / participants sample, presented in Table 1, we mention that we opted for a *fixed sampling*, given the fact that this option is most effective in longitudinal

research because it offers the opportunity to collect data quickly, several times, from one and the same population, which is investigated in a given period; our sample forms, therefore, match the typology of *existing research samples* (in whose selection the researcher was not involved); subject samples used in the action research are:

- *The teaching staff of Beclean Inclusive Educational Centre* – 35 teachers - (to investigate how the democratic participative management influences the degree of acceptance of change in school, the organisational climate, the job satisfaction and the occupational stress);

- *V-VIII form pupils of Beclean Inclusive Educational Centre* for the interval 2003-2006, 90 pupils, and for the 2009-2010 academic year, 76 students, and pupils of public schools in town - 81 pupils (to highlight the effects of democratic participative management, as a mediator and facilitator of the use of interactive methods, has on the level of actual academic performance but also on their degree of socialisation) and students in mainstream schools;

- *the parents of pupils of Beclean Inclusive Educational Centre* - 47 parents, and *parents of students in some mainstream schools as reference group* - 52 parents (for monitoring changes that democratic participative management practice induces at the level of pupils' sociability);

- *representatives of local / regional authorities and of the local community* - 32;

Research participants	Number
<i>Teaching staff (C.S.E.I. Beclean)</i>	35
<i>Pupils</i>	247
<i>Parents</i>	99
<i>Representatives of local / regional authorities and of the local community</i>	32
Total	413

Table 1. *Number of participants to research – synthetic presentation*

Following the completion of the investigative research, by building a holistic vision, we have carried out subsequent analyses comparing pre- and post-test stages, meta-analyses and a series of pedagogical inferences, combining the qualitative and quantitative research paradigms; in relation to the research hypotheses, the following conclusions were formulated:

1. Conclusions regarding the influence of democratic participative management on the acceptance of change and innovation in education

In view of testing specific hypothesis number 1 we used – using a combined methodology - two main research methods: a questionnaire-based survey and the observation

method. The corroboration of data collected through these methods, together with the mathematical and statistical analysis (percentages, χ^2 test, etc.) allowed the formulation of the following findings and general conclusions: *Throughout the development of the research, most teachers investigated (35), respectively more than 90%, have a positive attitude toward organisational change and consider that a substantial in-depth educational reform is necessary in our country; these findings indicate the absence of relevant macro-level reforms that would positively reflect on the analysed institution. It is worth noticing that in terms of the type of reform that teachers support, we noted throughout the research (from pre-test stage to the post-test stage) statistically significant shift of options: from the research and development model (which requires a top to bottom approach, from the macro to micro educational level) to the problem solving model (based on the effective involvement of practitioners, who are both organisational change agents and its beneficiaries). We attribute this result to our modelling intervention, which helped teachers to understand the particular relevance of active and responsible involvement and of cooperation within the institution they belong to.*

We noted a symmetrical and statistically significant change of teachers' views concerning reform priorities: from the material (in pre-test) to the curriculum and procedural-relational (in post-test) level.

Our attempt to determine the cause of the slow pace of change showed that between pre-test and post-test there is a statistically significant difference in the hierarchy of the reform-impeding factors. Thus, the pre-test showed the main factor to be the critical mass, namely scarce human, material, and financial resources, which the respondents corroborated with the Romania's precarious economic conditions. In the post-test, more than 50% of respondents believed that the main hampering factor is the critical threshold, namely the low willpower of reform agents to promote reform and effectively implement change and educational innovation. These results allowed us to conclude that, by involving teachers in our research, we were able to reinforce the view that educational reform is more subject to the availability of teachers to effectively implement it than to potential financial and material resources. That conclusion may be correlated to results obtained in investigating the main reasons for the refusal to change – which are not based on whim or failure of previous reform attempts, as pre-test opinions suggested, but on ignorance and denial determined by anticipated loss of personal benefits (post-test). We explain this change by the use in the research of the active attitude in formulating and pursuing common goals, group activities, intra-group relations based on cooperation, mutual support, mutual assistance in solving tasks.

A significant change of teachers' opinion and attitude in terms of educational reforms is related to the ranking of educational system crises, according to their seriousness. Thus,

whereas the pre-test ranked first the financial crisis, the post-test ranked first the management crisis. Therefore, by engaging in a democratic participative management, teachers realised its vital role in schools for overcoming practical difficulties that may arise in implementing educational change and innovation. The crisis of knowledge ranked second in the post-test, indicating that due to experimental intervention, subjects were aware of the objective necessity of having managerial and change management skills, which incorporate current theoretical knowledge, which is both operational and functional. Educational policy crisis ranked third (it ranked second in pre-test); we considered this a sign of teachers' distrust in the firmness, wisdom and appropriateness of educational policy decisions, but also of an enhanced self-confidence and trust in the power of the individual and of the group to find adequate solutions specific to institutional problems, without waiting for interventions and involvement of higher authorities.

We deem encouraging the fact that financial policy crisis ranked sixth in post-test (while in the pre-test it ranked first), which is explained by the opportunity offered by the democratic participative management to allow efficient sharing with maximum effect of existing material resources, because of consultations in view of decision making

In conclusion, we appreciate that, based on results obtained by survey data processing and interpretation and by exploiting the systematic observation, we can say that the specific working hypothesis 1 that we wanted to validate, namely that practicing democratic, participative management facilitates change and acceptance of change at school level as organisational-functional system, was confirmed.

II. Conclusions regarding the influence of democratic participative management on the quality of organisational climate

In the investigative section devoted to quantify the quality of organisational climate, we used a questionnaire (adapted from literature) containing 31 items, respectively closed-ended questions to which respondents answered using a five-step scale. The diagnoses made in the pre-test and post-test using these items, have used the following system of operational indicators, which we consider the fundamental dimensions of organisational climate:

- perception of school organisation, considered as a whole;
- relationship with organisation management;
- relations with colleagues;
- self-perception of own position within school organization.

A comparative analysis of data obtained by applying this tool in the post-experimental phase, in comparison with those of pre-experiment, showed that there are differences between the percentages of responses. The mathematical and statistical analysis used to determine the threshold significance of these differences included the Z test, as a non-parametric method of data analysis of the two pair samples, because the distribution of responses to questionnaire items was asymmetric.

Calculation of Z for each of the items test questionnaire allowed us to see that *there were statistically significant differences for 27 of the 31 items used. Therefore, comparative data revealed during the investigation clearly show a much higher percentage of positive opinions about the educational ethos in the post-experimental phase. In other words, there was a significant improvement in organisational climate in terms of teachers' perception in the post-test phase as a result of the successful implementation of democratic, participative management.*

This facet of the school ethos is perfectly explainable by the impact of democratic participative management practiced in the institution in terms of teachers' genuine involvement in the life of the institution. The practical consequences were felt in the formulation and formalisation of the institutional goals, the acknowledgement of the flexible nature of organisational structure, of supportive managerial attitude, of the modern educational policies and strategies, of the manager's efforts to organise the teacher teams, and of individual and collective valorisation, etc.

To sum up, by applying statistical-mathematical and logical-deductive analyses to the results of the two comparative phases of the psychological and pedagogical intervention (the pre-test and the post-test), respectively the values of the Z criterion, we can say that the implementation of democratic participative management at C.S.E.I. Beclean had clear beneficial effects on organisational climate in this school at all four formalized operational indicators, which registered significant improvements during our research.

III. Conclusions on the influence of democratic participative management on job satisfaction

Another approach analysed comparatively the job satisfaction level of members of C.S.E.I. Beclean balancing data collected at the end and at the debut of the research. This methodological approach was based on systematic observation and the questionnaire-based survey methods. Given the particular characteristics of our research, questionnaire was adapted from the questionnaire JSS (Job Satisfaction Survey,) containing 15 closed-ended questions to which answers were given using a three step score: "yes," "undecided", and "no." Therefore, responses to this questionnaire represented, in terms of research, categorical variables, which prompted us, in order to compare the results of pre-test and post-test in terms of threshold value

of differences, to use the Pearson Chi-Square (χ^2) test. Subsequent graphs, designed to highlight the comparative relationship pre-test-post-test, for each questionnaire item, confirm the positive evolution of job satisfaction of teachers from C.S.E.I. Beclean. Factual data revealed during analysis performed on each questionnaire item are explained by the educational effects democratic participative management had on improving job satisfaction, which we followed by means of operational indicators, transparent for the respondents: acknowledging quality professional performance, convergence of individual and collective activities and their meaning, individual valorisation, teacher consultation in making decisions, promotion according to professional results, the intensity of feeling of pride generated by well done job etc.

We noted with satisfaction the dynamic (pre-test - post-test) of responses to the item on teachers' opinion about the value of their manager's or colleagues' verbal appraisals, which can compensate for inadequate financial rewards. Thus, whereas in the pre-test about 54% of respondents disagreed with this and about 28% were undecided, in the post-test the situation is significantly different, namely approximately 57% agree with this assertion. We attribute this dynamic to the fact that a new type of management, democratic and participative, was able to create a protective school environment and organisational climate, based on the consolidation of teachers' individual positions within the institution, on the establishment of positive, constructive, mutually beneficial inter-personal relationships, and desirable working relationships with the institution management, on the increasing active participation in policy and institutional development strategies; under these conditions, the low amount of financial incentives may be substituted with the desirable formative effects, with verbal feedback and rewards - integrated in a professionally stimulating and motivating atmosphere; all these operational and observational indicators demonstrate a high level of professional satisfaction of teachers in post-test. To summarise, we conclude that there was a significant increase in the level of job satisfaction of members of C.S.E.I. Beclean, due to its management's option for a type of modern management, participative and democratic, which promotes individuals and the professional group to which they belong.

IV. Conclusions on the influence of democratic participative management on the level of occupational stress

We included in the analysis of the organisational climate, the variable of job stress level - considered before and after the experimental intervention, using a research tool adapted for this purpose - the JSS questionnaire (Job Stress Survey). It included a total of 14 items designed as closed-ended questions, asking subjects to assess the level of stress associated with each

event considered as stressor noted in various items, using scores between 1 and 9, where 5 represented the average level of stress.

Also, respondents were asked to indicate for each of the events listed in the questionnaire the frequency expressed in the approximate number of days in the last six months when they personally experienced that event, with 0 if no event took place in the last 6 months, 1 if the event occurred only once during this interval and so on, down to the "9 +" if they lived these events in 9 or more days in the last six months.

This time as well, teachers' responses were scored on an asymmetric curve; therefore, to determine the threshold value of differences registered between subjects in the post-test responses as compared to the pre-test in terms of frequency of the stressful events, we resorted to the non-parametric method of data analysis for pair samples advanced by Wilcoxon (Z test).

Using statistical-mathematical and logical-deductive analyses of the results of calculations comparing the two phases (pre-test and the post-test), respectively the values of Z criterion, we found that the implementation of democratic participative management at C.S.E.I. Beclean caused a noticeable reduction of job stress with school staff. Due to its design aimed at teachers' active and deep involvement in institutional decision-making, this type of management was likely to lead to a substantial reduction of job-related stress generated especially by tasks with fixed deadline.

Among operational indicators used, we mention those related to stress conditions such as distribution of difficult, new or unpleasant tasks, non-fulfilment of tasks by colleagues, not enough support from the manager or from the school leadership, confrontation with crisis situations or tasks not included in the job description, the need to take critical/ rapid decisions, solving a large amount of tasks with fixed deadlines, etc.

In relation with these operational indicators, *we often found that in spite of the relatively equal occurrence of certain events before and after intervention completion, these are considered less stressful in post-test than in pre -test.*

Thus, the democratic participative management demonstrates its benefits by reducing job-related stress level, which could be correlated with increased job satisfaction (mentioned in the previous paragraph).

This is more so as in contemporary educational organisations we often notice intense proliferation of professional tasks with fixed deadlines, which may constitute a relevant source of stress and decrease the level of job satisfaction.

Corroborating the findings identified by us in paragraphs II, III and IV, we may claim that the specific hypothesis 2, regarding the fact that the democratic participative management

improves the climate of collaboration in intra-group relations, increases job satisfaction and reduces job-related stress is confirmed.

V. Conclusions concerning the influence of democratic participative management on community perception of C.S.E.I. Beclean

During our research we have been permanently concerned with the image of the educational institution that was the object of our case study in community perception due to the numerous exchanges between them. Management steps taken aimed to bring about a significant improvement in the image of the school as perceived by the community and to raise awareness of the mission and activities of this institution. Key factors that made these goals possible can be organised on three operational levels:

a) Educational partnerships initiated and developed at local, national and international levels - for which we resorted to a series of quantitative operational indicators, including: number of internal and external partners, number of protocols with other institutional structures;

b) Educational activities with aesthetic, ecological, religious, cultural, sports values organised within formal and informal contexts – with the following quantitative operational indicators: awards in school competitions (held in our school or in other institutions), number of performances, trips, contests and exhibitions;

c) High performance educational marketing activities were analysed in terms of operational indicators such as: number of appearances in the media, product development for popularisation of educational and specialised services - a brochure containing details of the school educational offer, the school web site, the school magazine, specialist books and teaching aids by multiple authors, scientific and cultural activities with educational, religious, social, cultural and community-related character.

Activities carried out at school level during the interval September 2006 - September 2009, when democratic participative management was implemented, and the data registered show an *improvement at all three action levels, a clear qualitative leap as compared to the previous interval (June 2003 - June 2006)*. Throughout the research period, with the development of modern, democratic and transparent management practices, we noted with satisfaction *the increased availability of territorial administrative authorities to support the development of our educational institution and their effective support, which denoted a co-variation, in the same sense, of confidence that authorities have invested in our institution and teaching staff. We were also content with the fact that the target audience, from whom we received favourable responses and a strong positive feedback in relation to all our efforts of disseminating curricular and extracurricular activities, was large. Participants' interventions in events organised by us, discussions and conclusions of workshops and roundtables organised*

in our school, the notes in the school's honour book, are evidence for our success in raising awareness, influence and persuade the public of the necessity of giving constant support to our institution. Based on our systematic observations and on the aforementioned qualitative indicators, we can conclude that the institutional, professional and informal groups, individuals who were involved in the publicity and support campaign for our institution or voluntarily joined this campaign, had numerous opportunities to convince themselves of the quality of decision making processes and the correctness of the management decisions.

Corroborating recorded quantitative data and those provided by our systematic observations, we can refer to another fact, respectively the radical changes affecting the perception of C.S.E.I. Beclean by the local community, which marked an attitudinal shift, from the undesirable negative pole of rejection and indifference to the desirable, positive pole of acceptance, of effective support and real appreciation.

To conclude, we claim that the specific hypothesis 3, regarding the relationship of direct dependence between transparent educational policies, values, and complex communication promoted by school and the favourable community perception on C.S.E.I. Beclean (perception that was considered including the increased visibility of the educational institution in the community and the extent of community awareness about its concerns), is confirmed.

VI. Conclusions on the influence of democratic participative management on the level of pupils' academic attainment

In our analytical and inferential steps, parts of our educational research, we anticipated that the practice - at the institutional level - of a democratic participative management, involving teachers in management processes, will have beneficial chain effects down to the direct relations with the class and contribute to the improvement of their academic achievements. We felt that this type of management will determine, in the context of fostering communication within the institution, a better understanding of training needs and provide "answers" to these needs under the form of strongly adapted activities. Moreover, the active involvement of teachers in institutional management may be able to shape a positive teaching style in the classroom, contribute to increasing the amount of active and interactive teaching methods and improve students' academic performance.

To test this assumption, we used the statistical comparison in terms of overall class averages for V to VIII forms, in the period 2003-2006, the period prior to our research, with those of V to VIII forms during the academic year 2009-2010 - subsequent to the completion of our research.

Except for the fifth form, in all cases the differences of averages were statistically significant in favour of the school year 2009-2010, with significance threshold $p < 0.05$ for forms

VI and VII and $p < 0.01$ for the eighth form. We explained the statistically insignificant difference between the overall averages of the two fifth forms by the fact that the transition from primary to secondary levels requires accommodation efforts from pupils, which impede the transfer of democratic participative management elements in the educational relationships of teachers with the pupils at the level of teaching.

Also, *the comparative relationship between the average school performance of V-VIII forms during the 2009-2010 school year (with an overall average of 8.96) with results obtained during 2003-2006 (which have an overall average of 8.22), we concluded that there exists a statistically significant difference, and the calculated value of t is high, namely 2.214, at a significance threshold of $p < 0.05$. Two other studies were carried out, respectively the comparison of the overall averages of sixth forms in the post-experimental phase with the previous school year that found significant differences in favour of post-experimental stage; the second correlated average academic achievement for forms VI-VIII in the period 2005 - 2006 with the 2009-2010 period and found a significant increase in the post-experimental phase. Both allowed us to acknowledge the existence of an increase in the academic achievement of C.S.E.I. Beclean pupils during the period subsequent to the completion of the experimental intervention.*

The logical and deductive synthesis of the results of analyses and inferences compared for the two periods, shows that another benefit of introducing democratic participative management is the transfer of practices based on activism and interactivity from the level of institutional management to the direct educational relations with pupils, resulting in the statistically significant improvement of students' academic achievements in post-test compared with results of pre-experimental stage.

VII. Conclusions on the influence of democratic participative management on pupils' sociability

Given the specific educational activities in schools that educate students with disabilities, in our research we were concerned with one of the facets of this activity, with particular relevance to students with special educational needs, i.e. their degree of sociability.

In our pedagogical research, we assumed that the indirect effects of the democratic participative management will affect pupils' sociability; this variable was investigated in 2010 with the following research methods: the sociometric matrix (applied to pupils in our school and students in three other schools in Beclean - as a basis for comparison); the structured interview (questionnaire addressed to parents); analysis of school documents (relating to frequency of pupils' going home to their family).

Mathematical statistical calculations indicate that *between the answers given by students in C.S.E.I. Beclean and those given by their counterparts in mainstream schools there are no statistically significant differences, so they are comparable, which means that the degree of sociability is almost identical. A special mention should be made for the higher number of interpersonal relations of companionship and the lesser number of relations of indifference at the students from C.S.E.I. Beclean. The differences from the average of these variables at students from other schools are statistically insignificant, a finding explained by the lower number of pupils in classes, which allows for relationships to be set more easily.*

Interviews with parents of pupils in schools involved in the research revealed that in terms of communicativity – a variable that is the main indicator of the level of sociability - no statistically significant differences were recorded.

The increased need for affection of pupils with special educational needs explains, in our view, their option to stay rarely alone in their free time and seek the company of peers, while students in mainstream schools prefer to spend alone their free time, probably because their material situation is more favourable, in that most of them have personal computers with internet connection which prompts them to spend time in a different way than playing with other children. Also, as managers and researchers, we were content that there are no significant differences between the two categories of students (pupils in mainstream schools and pupils of C.S.E.I. Beclean) in terms of willingness to communicate with people outside the family and of communicativity with them.

The comparative mathematical statistical analysis of the frequency of students from C.S.E.I. Beclean going home in post-test and pre-test indicated statistically significant differences in favour of the post-test. Thus, we found that, at the end of our investigations, an increased number of parents agreed that their children come home unaccompanied, even if the majority of them were commuters, which is a proof that they had an increased awareness of their children's social skills and of their potential to face new situations that might arise while on the way to their home/family.

Given these results and conclusions, we believe that by practicing the democratic participative management at C.S.E.I. Beclean, by the safe social and emotional climate established in the educational space and by exploiting some of its elements in the teacher-class relationship both in curricular and extracurricular (competitions, visits, trips, etc..) contexts, we obtained visible benefits regarding pupils' degree of sociability.

Based on the findings identified by us in paragraphs VI and VII, we can say that the specific hypothesis 4, relating to the fact that democratic participative management has indirect effects on educational relations class-teacher for the purposes of fostering activism and

interactivity, which leads to significantly improvement of students' academic performance and substantially increased sociability, is confirmed.

Corroborating all results of mathematical statistical, logical-deductive and inferential analyses mentioned above, we conclude that our general research hypothesis was confirmed, in the sense that the practice of transparent and democratic participative institutional management, focused on empowerment / motivation, taking responsibility/ acknowledging responsibility, engagement / self-engagement causes positive changes on the following variables: production and acceptance of change at institutional level, organisational climate, community perception of C.S.E.I. Beclean and the level of the actual educational activity, carried out within the micro pedagogic context of classes of pupils, which resulted in students increased ' academic performance and enhanced sociability.

Summary of Doctoral Thesis

The doctoral thesis entitled *School as Organisation. The Democratic Participative Management and Its Implications for Beclean Inclusive Educational Centre* values the results of action research aimed at implications which democratic participative management practice has at the *organisational level*, namely the degree of acceptance of change and innovation in education, the quality of the organisational climate, job satisfaction, job-related stress level and community perception of the C.S.E.I. Beclean, and at the level of *teacher-class relationship*, with emphasis on the pupils' academic attainment and their degree of sociability.