

# METHODES FOR KNOWING THE CLASS OF STUDENTS

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**Abstract:** *Nowadays most classes are made up of 28 to 30 students, so the class teacher's work is not easy. To avoid situations in which students are treated discriminatory, it is recommended that when he/she takes the class for tutoring to conduct research focused on two areas: first by filling the psychopedagogical files for each student individually and the second step related to the pupils seen as a whole. The article aims to make a brief presentation of the most important methods to know the students.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Mere knowledge of students is not enough to achieve an effective activity in the classroom by the class teacher.

Experience has shown that, although individual students have great qualities, their meeting does not always leads to a good class, easy to work with.

Therefore we believe that the pupils study is important, as a whole, as an entity that relates with their class teacher and the other teachers.

### **Characteristics of the pupils are:**

- The class consists of 15 to 30 students who have not opted to be part of that class;
- The class members react among themselves through direct relationship of the type "face to face";
- The class its own hierarchical structure determined by the relations between group members; - Cohesion is dependent on external factors acting upon it;
- It is a structure that is in constant change due to the change of hierarchy within it, the leaving or the arrival of new members;
- The class a formal structure determined by mere sharing of group members and an informal structure determined by the relationship between group members, this may be influenced by the fact that some of the group members have known each other for a longer period of time;

- The class shows its direct action on individuals that form it, both positively and negatively;

- It has the purpose of achieving some fundamental goals (eg. completion of a course of schooling);

- The class has an adult leader, represented by the class teacher and a leading student. Educational experience has proved that the formal student leader is good to be acknowledged by his peers as authority is required to lead team;

- The class influences the teaching process and the teachers through its actions.

**The class teacher activity** of knowing the class of students must be conducted according to the following issues:

- Highlight the characteristics of the class connected to the its formal and informal structure;
- Capture the real group hierarchy, not influenced by the teacher – student relationship, and the direct relationships between class members;
- Specify the values class members tend to achieve;
- Estimation of the collective dynamics.

## 2. METHODS OF KNOWING THE CLASS

The main **methods** used for knowing the class are the following:

**2. 1. Psychosocial observation** can be applied by the class teacher as he/she has the required pedagogical skills. When retrieving the results of this method, it should be kept in mind that the observer can affect the observation by mere presence, and that the teacher must discern between observed phenomena that were influenced and those that were conducted normally.

The teacher can notice manifestations and reactions of the whole class as the action of external factors, how individuals interact, and the hierarchical relationships that exist within.

We present an analytical model of psychosocial observation of the class of students taken from "Ioan Nicola – The class teacher and the syntality of the class of students", Didactic and Pedagogic Publishing House, Bucharest 1978.

*Table 1. Analytical sheet of psychosocial observation of the class of students*

Date of observation	
Manifestations of syntality *	
Interpretations and hypothetical assumptions	
Psychosocial manifestations	
Interpretations and hypothetical assumptions	

\* Syntality is the total of essential characteristics, edifying for the moral profile of the group; personality of a group.

We will present the results of this method, applied to a 9<sup>th</sup> grade during the school year 2013-2014.

*Table 2. Analytical sheet of psychosocial observation applied to a 9<sup>th</sup> grade during the school year 2013-2014*

Date of observation	24.11.2013
Manifestations of syntality *	Developing class
Interpretations and hypothetical assumptions	Students do not know each other enough
Psychosocial manifestations	Lack of communication
Interpretations and hypothetical assumptions	Students' ranking not established yet

Interpretation of the results of observation can be done immediately, or after observing more facts and allows an overview of the class.

This method may be affected by errors due to misinterpretation of the observed phenomena, so it is recommended to use a combination of methods.

**2. 2. Sociometric methods** - "is a set of tools and processes designed to record and measure the configuration of their interpersonal relationships, within a social group" (Ioan Nicola "The class teacher and the syntality of the class of students" Didactic and Pedagogic Publishing House, Bucharest 1978).

For teaching practice, the sociometric test and the sociometric matrix can be used successfully.

a) **The sociometric test** consists of a series of questions formulated so that students should answer honestly about the relations of sympathy and antipathy between class members. It is indicated that this type of test to be applied once a year to see how their relationship evolves over time.

We present a sociometric test pattern taken from Ioan Nicola "The class teacher and the syntality of the class of students", Didactical and Pedagogical Publishing House, Bucharest, 1978.

### **Sociometric test**

Name .....

Date .....

*Instructions: Read the questions carefully and then indicate one, two or three names of classmates who best fit your desires connected to that question. If you have no colleagues who meet the requirements of the question, do not complete anything.*

*I.A. Think that in the class you are put in a position to work with other colleagues at a given subject. Who would you like to if you had to choose?*

1 .....  
2 .....  
3 .....

*I.B. Who in the class you would not like to work on this subject?*

1 .....  
2 .....  
3 .....

*II. A. Think of your favorite leisure activities and then show those colleagues in the class you would most like to participate in such activities.*

- 1 .....
- 2 .....
- 3 .....

*II.B. Who in the class you would not like to participate in such activities?*

- 1 .....
- 2 .....
- 3 .....

*III. A. Indicate those colleagues in the class that you would regret if they should leave with their family to another city and you should separate from them and they will not be in the same class with you.*

- 1 .....
- 2 .....
- 3 .....

*III. B. Indicate those colleagues you would not regret if they leave your class.*

- 1 .....
- 2 .....
- 3 .....

*IV. A. Assume that during a holiday a trip by train is organized. In each compartment there are more seats available. Who in the class you would like to travel in the same compartment?*

- 1 .....
- 2 .....
- 3 .....

*IV.B. Indicate those colleagues you would not like to travel together on the trip.*

- 1 .....
- 2 .....
- 3 .....

*V.A. Who are your best friends in your class?*

- 1 .....
- 2 .....
- 3 .....

*V.B. Who are those colleagues who you do not want to be friends?*

- 1 .....
- 2 .....
- 3 .....

Honesty in students' answers depends on the way the questions are formulated and who manages test. It is obvious that students must not see what their colleagues are writing or the final results of processing the test. If they do not trust

the class teacher, this test is compromised from the start.

It is recommended that this sociometric test should be applied at the beginning of the school year, for example in October. Data obtained from processing the results can be taken as part of feedback of the class in that school year.

After applying this questionnaire in Class IX of G, on 24/11/2013, the result is a list of five highly regarded students and two students that nobody wanted.

The five popular students live in Pitesti, have a class average height and average IQ or above average. Given that in the collective class, out of a total of 28 students, 26 are boys, the presence of a girl in the group with high popularity, is noteworthy.

The students selected by the class are cheerful and communicative, are interested in school and extracurricular activities.

Though much appreciated by the class, these students do not yet enjoy the appreciation of all. There are some students, primarily those who have good results and very good school appreciation, who believe that student No. 1 is too much concerned how he dresses and manifests superficiality in everything he does.

Regarding the 2nd ranked student in the top popularity, it appears that her opinion is important and she is one of the leaders of the class. She even assimilated male personality using expressions like "we, the guys from 9G" and was chosen as representative of the class in the student council.

The group of students rejected includes 2 students: a girl who has chosen not to communicate with any colleague, just with neighbor-class friends, and a boy, who commutes and is constantly concerned to catch up due to the fact that he has to leave early from school. Unfortunately, the research has found that the student girl who did not integrated in the class, has serious problems with a sick sister, and that there is little interest for her in school activities.

Applying again the same questionnaire at the end of semester 2 of the school year to brought about the list of popular students increased to 10 and sadly the list of considered unpopular students increased to three, due to a repeater student who managed to annoy all students by his way of manifestation.

Popular students features are: good students and very good at studying, communicative, practice sports, available to participate in outdoor activities, always ready to give a helping hand to those who have problems.

Unpopular students features are: lack of communication with colleagues, distant and arrogant attitude, vulgar language.

What is to be noticed is that the student with the nickname "troll" in the group with low popularity, ranked first in the top class and managed to be respected, even if not loved.

**b) Sociometric matrix** - is the data processed from the sociometric test, allowing the arrangement of information so that we can see more easily the nature of interactions between

students. To ensure confidentiality of data, it is recommended that a number should be assigned to each student, other than the serial number from the register.

The sociometric matrix is filled in two ways: Matrix of Choices and Matrix of Rejections.

To ensure that a picture of the relationships between students is clearly formed, it is recommended that the two matrices should be recorded in the teacher's notebook one after another.

We present one matrix model taken from Ioan Nicola "*The class teacher and the syntality of the class of students*", Didactical and Pedagogical Publishing House, Bucharest, 1978.

Table 3. Matrix of choices

No. order	Student 1	Student 2	...	Student 30
Student 1				
Student 2				
...				
Student 30				

Table 4. Matrix of rejections

No. order	Student 1	Student 2	...	Student 30
Student 1				
Student 2				
...				
Student 30				

Table 5. Coding of students from the sociometric matrix

First name and surname of student	Number given in the matrix

For privacy, the class teacher can complete the form presented in Table 5.

**2. 3. Questionnaire method** – it is one of the most used methods in teaching practice. It consists of a set of questions, which is to be answered orally or in writing. The method may be affected by errors because subjects may not answer truthfully, or the formulation of the questions is not consistent with the objectives of the test.

The questionnaire and processing its results are of real help for the class teacher because it helps to know the real situation of the class of students as students live it. Also, given the fact that some teachers form their stereotypes in relation to students which may be more or less true, the questionnaire allows teachers to form a more close to the truth picture.

A sample of questions that can be a questionnaire is presented by Ioan Nicola "*The class teacher and the syntality of the class of students*", Didactical and Pedagogical Publishing House, Bucharest, 1978.

**a) For the relationship between the formal leaders (student leaders) and the rest of the class:**

- Describe the way your leading colleagues behave inside the class?
- How are the leading students appreciated by the class?
- How do the leading students take care of the prestige of your class?
- How is the class promoted by its leaders in achieving the proposed tasks?

By giving this questionnaire to class 9G, at the end of 1<sup>st</sup> semester, school year 2013-2014, the class teacher changed the leader of the class due to his unworthy behavior and failure.

The new option of the students coincided with the one of the teacher and he was the most hard-working students but not so popular.

As to the students counselor, she is the same girl in a boy-dominated class, but she is well-appreciated and there was no need to be changed.

#### **b) The relationships established between class members**

- If there are certain rivalries and jealousies among class students, how do they manifest?
- What do you think are the causes of these rivalries and envy?
- How do you assess relations between boys and girls in the class?
- There are certain subgroups inside the class, what kind of relationships are between them?
- How are the best students viewed by the class?
- What about the worst?

Applying this type of questionnaire to the same class there were crystallized the following conclusions:

- There are two types of rivalries: one positive competition related to classroom studying and one negative related to the specific problems of adolescence, manifested by verbal violence and insults.

- Students appreciate correctly the two types of rivalry and considered as a cause of violence and verbal harassment, the unjustified pride involved. Taking into account the low percentage of girls in the class, all the guys show the right attitude towards girls, taking care of them permanently, even if one girl sometimes uses vulgar language in communication.

- Good students are regarded as equal members of the class, the attitudes towards them depends on how they behave themselves with other colleagues. Good school results do not give the keynote to their relations, but their approach to communication and collaboration.

- As to weak students, the class staff succeeded to have an objective opinion, noting

where appropriate, lack of participation in class, hypocrisy and skipping classes.

- There is a case of a student who does not communicate too much, failed some school subjects, yet he is popular. The student spends a lot of time at the computer, in the virtual world, but fortunately there is another student willing to help him pass.

In conclusion, at the end of the school year, the students from 9 G, have a well-defined hierarchy, showing understanding and compassion for those with problems and respect for those in the ranks of class.

Because students may fear that the class teacher knows their handwriting, or a colleague, maybe more can read their answers, it is possible that some of the answers could not be honest.

It is therefore advisable to carry out a questionnaire where the answers are ticking of boxes.

The assessment scales method is used, as presented in the following examples.

*Table 6 Models of scales of assessment*

All	
Most	
Many	
Some	
None	

Always	
Often	
Sometimes	
Seldom	
Never	

Yes	
Rarely	
No	

### **3. CONCLUSIONS**

For the class teacher to know the class objectively, it is good to apply a combination of methods, depending on specific events and the pedagogical preparation that the teacher has.

The knowledge of the class of students can only be achieved if the class teacher understands that each student is a major character within the group with his/her qualities and needs.

#### 4. REFERENCES

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