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Optimization, Communication and Relationship in Teaching Process

Oana ATOMEI¹

Abstract

Communication is the core activity of the teacher-students, students-students groups. The teaching process requires the involvement of these socio-educational actors and continuous interaction between them. While the teacher provides information, the student builds his message on the basis of the information received, which, in part, will be returned to the teacher. In the teaching process, the student should provide feedback to the teacher to demonstrate that the message has been clearly perceived and understood and that communication purpose has been reached. In turn, the teacher should provide feedback to the student to show him that he answered according to the expectations, the answer was specific and not general. In schools, students are in a permanent process of interaction, relationship with other students or teaching staff. As a result, new situations that arise through ignorance, lack of communication or an inadequate approach can lead to an installation of complex (inferiority or superiority), inhibitions etc., that hamper the development of a harmonious, balanced and assertive personality. One can overcome the internal obstacles (emotion, misperception, global approaches, stereotypes, lack of basic knowledge) through an efficient relationship in the teaching process which emphasises teacher's permanent adaptation to a situation or context which has to be known and controlled for an efficient educational process.

Keywords:communication, education, teacher-student relationship.

1. Introduction

In this day and age education is useful in the distribution of roles in society and in fostering change. Today's knowledge base, which is rapidly changing, demonstrates that schools not only provides fundamental truths on students, but they also teach them how to continue to learn to adjust to change. Learning how to think is another fundamental part of the education system. Social norms and values are also taught indirectly. Respect for others, obedience to authority, honesty, simplicity and punctuality are part of the "hidden curriculum" (Goodman, 1992, p. 266). All relationships between participants (more or less active) in the education system are based only on communication.

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Communication is the core activity of the teacher-students, students-students groups. Communication between them does not occur randomly. They communicate information, feelings and attitudes. They relate in the teaching process. The educational process is done through and for communication, and it is ultimately an act of communication. Communication per se contains educational potential: knowledge conveyance, training and facilitating the operations of intellectual thought, self-regulation of intellectual activity, science codes transmission etc., between communication and education there is a relationship of interdependence. French researcher Alex Mucchielli (2002, p. 197) states that: "To communicate involves to use a set of communication methods: speech, intonation shaping, a certain behaviour, specific pantomimes, gestures and attitudes, combined actions preparation, physical or normative devices development and action on the environment ... everything to solve, as well as possible, a problem connected to a fact of life." According to some analyses interprinsed by some theorists, communication can be hierarchical and mutual (Cucos, 2002). Communication in school involves both of the strategies, the predominance of one in a certain context is justified by the targeted objectives, the content, the teaching methods and resources.

While the teacher provides information, the student builds his message basically on the submitted informational items. The message (explicit or through transparency of gestures) is partly returned to the teacher. Apparently, the teacher does two contradictory actions: listens and talks to students at the same time. The purpose of the communication in school is that of warning, informing, explaining, entertaining, describing, convincing, building relationship and so on.

2. The mechanism of communication in school

As part of communication in school/training, in transmitter's analysis are used five bases of power identified by R. P. French and Raven B. (Pânișoară, 2003, p. 22):

- rewarding power – teacher has the power to reward student involvement, interest, and performance;
- coercive power – "negative reward", the coercion of the marks/grades in school nowadays tends to decrease;
- referential power – the teacher becomes a reference model that students (especially at elementary school age) want to identify with;

legitimate power – that is based on the understanding on both sides of the fact that anyone has the right to expect obedience from others;
expert power – the transmitter has superior knowledge that impacts the cognitive structure of the receptor. Traditionally, the teacher benefits of such power, but it tends to fade in the of the student's highly diversified knowledge (from many informational sources).

In teaching process, feedback role is undeniable. The student should provide feedback to the teacher to demonstrate that his message has been perceived and understood, and the communication purpose has been reached. In turn, the teacher should provide feedback to the student to show that his answer is in accordance to the expectations, the answer was specific and not general.

3. Forms of communication

The teacher-student relationship issue is at the heart of science education. The school dialogue is in fact the principal axis the entire educational issue of contemporary school revolves around. Depending on the complexity of the process, both forms, content and levels of communication and the diversity of codes, channels, situations and ways in which it occurs, the form of communication and relationship in school is a problem of dominance, and not of exclusivity. For example, teacher's communication can be at the same time a group communication (it addresses everybody the same requirement), an interpersonal communication (emphasises an idea as direct response to a specific student) and intrapersonal communication (self-interrogation: "Did they understand me exactly? "; "Was X paying attention to what I said?"). Similarly, the same communicative act can be referential, operational and attitudinal. For example, to the requirement: "List as many similarities and differences as possible between x and y phenomena", the teacher indicates through gestures the manner of the expected solving (two columns, one for similarities, the other for differences) and through the tone he shows the great importance of the required task at that moment, and the confidence that they are able to solve the requirement. The finality of communicative act (that the actors of the school relationship may realise or not) has enabled the demarcation of several types of communication depending on several criteria (Cosmovici & Iacob, 1998, p. 183):

the number of partners: intrapersonal, interpersonal, in a small group and public (the audience is a broad audience in direct or indirect relationship with the transmitter);

- the status of interlocutors: vertical (partners' unequal statuses) and horizontal (partners' equal status);
- the code: verbal (by word and everything related to it in terms of phonetic, lexical, morphological and syntactic), paraverbal (through prosodic and vocal items which accompany the word), nonverbal (movement, gestures, pantomime) and mixed ;
- the finality of the communicative act: adventitious (accidental transmission of information), subjective (expresses directly the speaker's emotional state) and instrumental (focus on the specific purpose, the ability to change depending on the partners' reaction to achieve the aim);
- self-regulation capacity: lateralized (without feedback) and unlateralized (feedback caused by the presence of transmitter-receiver interaction);
- the nature of the content: referential (targeting a specific truth), operational/ methodological (targeting the understanding of the truth which is transmitted to be deciphered) and attitudinal (valorizes the content).

3.1. Verbal communication uses spoken words as means of action (Rus, 2002, p. 17). Some experts accept the written word too. Verbal communication is done based on a common language and a common speech. Beside spoken language, the speech is very important in the communication process, because it is part of a wide range of systems called symbolic behavior.

On the basis of verbal communication is semiotic function which "assigns individuals' ability to use signs and symbols as substitutes of objects or actions, and to work mentally with this plan" (Apud et al 1994, p. 185). The signs are learned according to a plan oriented by the concepts, grades and different levels of understanding (Dospinescu, 1998, p. 74). Destutt de Tracy recommends starting "from the point when we know people are talking to, and to use their most familiar ideas". The student learns scientific elements which have to be prime principles and basic course at the same time, using a "perfected language".

Belong to the oratorical or specialized register of the language, the verbal speech is influenced by the following factors (Chiru, 2003, p. 59):

- average sound intensity (indicates the student/ teacher's energy essence and features like determination, authority, calmness, self-confidence etc.);
- fluency (continuous or discontinuous nature of speech) as a direct indicator of cognitive processes mobility. Fluent and uninterrupted speech shows the ease in finding the right word and the adequate

terms of a desired idea. Hesitant and discontinue speech interrupted by frequent breaks denotes difficulty in conceptualization;

the speed of speech is a feature of temperament. It depends on of the subject's awareness of discussion and the emotional relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor.

inflections in intonation are characteristic to speakers with a rich emotional background who tend, consciously or not, to impress the interlocutor;

pronunciation depends on neuropsychiatric features, and the encyclopedic competence of the speaker.

The most frequently encountered problems in verbal speech in school relate to:

diction (consonants omitted, "swallowed" endings phrase, pronunciation problems);

interjections abuse or verbal tics ("you know", "good", "let's say", "it seems", "ok", "let's see");

deficiency in time management through very extensive introductions or unbalance in speech;

repetitions or resuming of topic, as proposed in titles or subtitles.

3.2. Written communication involves a conscious control over the informal, expressive and formal elements which form the content of the message, and also an obvious presentation of arguments and motivations, verification of statements through critical requirement, exercises of empathy, and wording in compliance with grammar.

3.3. In paraverbal communication, information is encoded and transmitted through voice and prosodic elements that accompany the word and speech in general and has special communicative meanings (Cosmovici & Iacob, 1998, p. 185). In this category we can find: voice characteristics (communicate primary data about speakers, young-old, spoiled-determined, active-passive etc.), peculiarities of pronunciation (provides data about area of origin: urban-rural, geographic area, degree of training etc.), utterance intensity, rhythm and flow of speech, intonation, pause etc. The auditory canal is used.

3.4. Nonverbal communication is the totality of the signs and gestures by which we are able to send a message, an emotion or a reaction (Rus, 2002, p. 18). Verbal statements are influenced by a number of factors such as: fear not to offend or upset, desire to make a deal, social pressure which sometimes leads us to say that we agree with someone even though

we do not and so on. Nonverbal communication supplements, strengthens, and nuances meaning of verbal messages and, in some cases, is even more credible than verbal communication.

3.5. Intrapersonal communication is characteristic to both teachers and students. It turns dialogue itself into an interior or verbalized monologue. This form of communication occurs in every human being. When the frequency of occurrence and use this form of communication exceeds a certain limit, intrapsychic problems of the individual occur, thus putting out different mental degeneration or malfunction of the person.

3.6. Interpersonal communication implies the presence of at least two partners involved in the communication process. A similar type of communication can be extended to others who can take part in the communication or taking an active or passive role.

3.7. Accidental communication is characterized by random transmission of information not expressly covered by the transmitter and, moreover, does not address the learning process developed by the receiver. Example: the teacher observes that the chalk and blackboard sponge are missing when transcription of the text is necessary and he says that a projector would have exempted him of censure and student on duty of blame.

3.8. Partial communication expresses the speaker's emotional state directly (verbally, paraverbally or nonverbally) out of the need to externalize and rebalance, as a consequence of the accumulation of mental stress (positive or negative). In this category we can find the exclamation of surprise to great response ("Excellent, kid!") and high tone of reproach ("You've upset me!"). The diversity of expression forms and partial communication is extremely high. This includes movements of externalizing: the student that automatically turns the locks of hair until the answer appears, the student girl who arranges the shirt –otherwise befitting! – while tackling the problem, the student who tears chalk during oral response, the teacher who plays with his glasses more nervously waiting for the student's responses and many others.

3.9. Instrumental communication occurs when a number of features are combined:

deliberate focus on a specific aim, more or less communicated to partners;

the pursuit of it by getting a certain effect in the receiver's behavior;
the ability to change, depending on the partners' reaction, to achieve its goal.

This type of communication does not exclude other types of communication.

3.10. Group communication is closely related to interpersonal communication, and it is actually an extension of it to more people. Group communication can provide information about the passivism or activism manifested by some people in the process of communication, as well as information about people's reactions to various stimuli in certain situations.

4. Efficiency of communication in schools

In the current school activities multiple interpersonal relationships are created between teachers and students. Interactions are not limited to the communication of scientific content, but they are also extended to ways of activity management, performance assessment, personal feelings and attitudes.

Not always are the teacher-students and students-students relations optimal. Conflict situations arise in everyday classrooms due to discrepancies between perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, goals, ways of doing different things or to a situation generated by the guidance, leadership, guidance of activities and appreciation of performance.

Blockages in communication can have such an intensity that there are visible differences between the transmitted information and the perceived message. Blockages that occur in the teacher-students and students-students communication may happen or be due to:

- teacher's the authoritarian teaching style;
- characteristics of the psychosocial environment;
- social blockages;
- methodological blockages;
- creative blockages.

To optimize the teaching activities, blockages in communication can be removed using various ways such as:

- using active-participative strategies of teaching and learning. The teacher should persuade students to take initiatives, to stimulate communication between them. He also supports, encourages and appreciates students' contributions, and the progress they have made.

the teacher must become a dialogue partner in student-teacher relation.
the teacher-student relationship should be devoid of autocratic feature, specific to the traditional school, which does not encourage real communication, maintains anonymity and inhibits the student, who will be reduced to passivity and inertia.

teachers must use teaching strategies suitable to stimulate student's participation in activities, to increase their independence and opportunities for initiative, and to develop responsibility.

establishing a genuine dialogue with the students, the teacher will show flexibility and openness for the plurality of modes of thought, confrontation of viewpoints or adjustment of responses. The teacher must pursue reactions of interest or boredom, comprehension or puzzlement that the students can have during the teaching activity.

predominance of the teacher's role should be replaced by students' increased participation in activities as active subjects of their own training.

during the activity, the students should be given the opportunity to ask questions, thus manifesting their curiosity, bewilderment, interest, to be led to find the answers themselves, if possible.

the teacher must understand what learning the content means for each student, what difficulties students cope with in order to understand a concept well, what tasks of free activities are necessary to complete the preparation, without the threat of a mark or grade. The teacher should be open to interaction to students, he must listen and accept their judgment, criticism or counter-arguments. Thus, he will get to establish with them, and between them, a chain of multilateral communication.

relationships between teachers and students must be a mixture of freedom and taxation. Sometimes they are established through a free and spontaneous game of interactions, whose purposes are school tasks, sometimes the teacher's intervention is necessary to trigger duties and motivations, to guide and oversee the learning.

capturing and revealing the structural peculiarities of psychosocial phenomena that occur in the classroom helps to eliminate the blockages in communication.

the teacher should be permanently concerned with students' stimulation and multiplying positive interpersonal relations, designing and organizing activities that enhance student participation at the start of such relationship with colleagues.

Knowing the ways to eliminate blockages in communication enables the teacher to achieve cohesion in the groups of students, proper

development of their relations, communication and discipline in classroom, with positive consequences on school performance.

5. Conclusions

In schools, students are in a permanent process of interaction, relationship with other students or teaching staff. As a result, new situations that arise through ignorance, lack of communication or an inadequate approach can lead to an installation of complex (inferiority or superiority), inhibitions etc., that hamper the development of a harmonious, balanced and assertive personality.

In addition encouraging communication directly leads to strengthening student's self-confidence and the development of situations and relationships based on trust in others. In turn, self-confidence helps create a responsible attitude. It is, however, the authentic communication based on shared beliefs and values which is impossible without an effective reception/listening. This creates the basis for understanding different life contexts, which leads to increasing tolerance and acceptance of those with different value systems. Especially in schools with students belonging to minority ethnic communities or different social classes, development of tolerance and a responsible attitude towards their own goals are impossible to accomplish without efficient and open communication between school members.

Optimized communication and an efficient relationship of the teaching process ensures overcoming internal obstacles (emotion, misperception, globalist approaches, stereotypes, lack of basic knowledge) and consists in the permanent adaptation of the teacher to a situation or context which must be known and controlled for an efficient process of education.

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