

DETERMINING THE FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE USE OF A COMMUNICATION METHOD IN THE CLASSROOM

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Abstract:

Within a broader research on the educational communication, the first step was to identify the way for achieving this type of communication, taking into account both vertical and horizontal communication in the classroom. The working tools used were two questionnaires, one applied to teachers in order to identify how the teacher - student communication in classroom is obtained, and the second aimed at identifying the teacher's style for leading the classroom. Teachers participating in the study were 46 in number and the context for approaching them for the collection of responses was attending a training course. The results of the questionnaire confirmed the formulated hypothesis.

Keywords: *communication style, experience, leading*

Introduction

In the relational context of education, the subject (teacher, transmitter) communicates and broadcast information and attitudes, stimulates the biopsychic potential, guides and influences the receiver of the education (student, receiver). In turn, the receiver responds to these influences, receives, selects, processes and assimilates the information, organizing them into their own structures. Arguably the educational phenomenon as a whole is achieved through human communication in general and educational communication in particular. The educational communication occurs *"as a particular form, mandatory in changing some determined content, specific for an act of systematic, assisted learning, ... it represents the basis of teaching and assimilation of knowledge, within the institutionalized framework of the school and between partners with determined roles: teacher-student"* (Jacob, L., 1999, p.181).

Unfortunately, the issue of teacher's communication style, a topic which surface relatively frequently in the studies regarding this aspect, has not yet got the attention of all teachers, therefore situations where the teacher uses a

unilateral, unidirectional communication and not taking into account the active role of the student in the process of his own development, still occurring.

The communicative style of the teacher

During his activity in class, the teacher brings his whole life experience, beliefs, values and conceptions that he had accumulated over time, that is, as it is called in the literature, his **personal style**. This personal style of the teacher integrates into his professional style (see Liliana Ezechil) which refers to its professional aspirations, to the values the teacher applies to his work, to the successes or failures met in the past.

Every teacher has certain views and conception about the classroom, about how it should be managed and organized. On the topic of managing the classrooms numerous studies were conducted (Dan Potolea, Emil Paun, Romița Iucu, Ioan Jinga Elena Joița, Emil Stan, Catalina Ulrich etc.) all emphasizing the idea that the teacher, as a class manager, has to permanently focus his attention on the learner, on the student. The class management appears in the related literature in three forms, each with its advantages and disadvantages. Regarding the **communicational style** of the teacher, seen here as way to communicate with students, these leadership styles can be characterized as follows:

AUTHORITARIAN (DIRECTIVE)

- accent only on emitting messages;
- doesn't consider the messages transmitted by students and sometimes neither the feedback;
- the messages are in the form of orders, demands, criticisms;
- multiple blockages in communication appear;
- doesn't stimulate the communication in classroom (neither vertical nor horizontal);

DEMOCRATIC (PARTICIPATIVE)

- stimulates student-student and student-teacher communication;
- constantly in dialogue with the students, helping and guiding them;
- emphasis on interactivity in communication;
- constantly alternates the transmitter – receiver role;
- communicational barriers are few and immediately removed;

LAISSEZ-FAIRE (PERMISSIVE)

- confusing and contradictory relations of communication;
- passive role in any communication;
- doesn't initiate dialogues, indifferent;

The communicative style of the teacher, his way to communicate with students is reflected, most often, as stated by Liliana Ezechil (2002, p.155) in: the quality of classroom interactions that the teacher manages; responsiveness to the student, as an interlocutor; the way the teacher facilitates the students' process of reception, understanding and processing messages; the way the teacher directs and controls the process of a message development by students; the ways in which the student to student communication relations are stimulated;

what the teacher thinks about effective communication; what the teacher evaluates in his interaction with the students.

All these aspects are part of the teacher's communicational style, which in the related literature appears in three forms:

1. **unilateral or unidirectional**, when the teacher focuses only on the transmission of educational information, regardless of the fact that he must also be a receiver for the messages coming from the classroom. The teacher characterized by this communicative style ascribe a passive role for the student in the teaching/learning activity, and considers that the student comes to school only to receive messages sent to him;

2. **bilateral or bidirectional**, when the teacher keeps in mind that he must constantly change the role of the transmitter with that of the receiver. He is the teacher who is constantly in dialogue and cooperating with students, taking into account their views and keeping in mind that the student can also learn from his own experience. He is a teacher open to communication, who believes that effective learning can be achieved through dialogue and cooperation;

3. **random**, or (in our opinion) **situational, contextual**, when the teacher hasn't formed its own communication style, oscillating between the unilateral and bilateral, thereby inducing confusion and ambiguity. He is the teacher from whom you don't know what to expect in terms of communication relationships

Experimental Part

Objectives

O1. Identifying the ways in which the educational communication is achieved, taking into account both vertical and horizontal communication in the classroom;

O2. Determining the factors contributing to the use of a specific communicational method in classroom, focusing on the classroom managing style and the teaching experience;

O3. Identifying ways to stimulate student-to-student communication, used by teachers.

Research hypotheses

I(1) The way in which the teacher communicates with the students is determined by his classroom managing style.

I(2) The previous work experience influences the way in which the teacher communicates with the students.

Subjects and sampling

In order to test the above hypothesis, we compiled a sample of 46 teachers with a work experience between 12 and 36 years. Those teachers come from 27 schools in Arad County, and the context of their approach for to the collection of responses was attending a training course, which demonstrates a common point, namely valuing lifelong learning and the realization that there

will always be an area to be improved. It pays to investigate why wouldn't that just be the educational communication.

Tools and working procedure

The questionnaire that was applied to teachers was developed with the aim of identifying how the teacher - student communication is accomplished in the classroom, zooming in on aspects that are first and foremost considered by the teacher. The questionnaire has 17 items, each with three possible answers, alternatives that aim to capture the teachers tend to focus primarily on the classroom (individuals) or the curriculum meant to be sent. Training for the questionnaire consisted in ordering to encircle a single choice. Following the interpretation of the questionnaire, teachers will be divided into three categories, depending on how they perceive and use communication in relation to students: teachers who practice a unilateral, unidirectional communication, from the educator to the educated; teachers who practice a bilateral or bidirectional communication, constantly alternating the roles of transmitter and receiver and first considering the needs of the student; teachers who practice a random or situational, confused, uncertain communication, depending on a particular context.

The "classroom management style" questionnaire for teachers, includes 18 items aimed at identifying the teachers style of managing the classroom. Depending on the answers to the 18 questions, the teachers are divided into three styles of classroom management: directive or authoritarian style, participative or democratic style and permissive or laissez-faire leadership style.

Results and Discussion

The study on classroom communication was conducted under a correlational experiment.

From Table 1 it can be seen that the subjects answered the questions of the questionnaire at the rate of 100%. There were no invalid answers. The average of the educational communication dimension demonstrates that bilaterality is the characteristic method of communication of the sample of teachers, with a standard deviation of only 0.37 to it.

Table no.1 – Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics	Number of subjects	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard deviation
educational communication	46	1	3	2.00	.37
teacher's management style	46	1	3	1.91	.41
work related experience	46	12	36	24.61	5.35
valid answers	46				

The average for the teachers leadership style component is 1.91 and the standard deviation is 0.41, which demonstrates the participatory approach in educational activities. Low standard deviation indicates that this style is a representative characteristic of the sample.

The work experience of the teachers is between 12 and 36 years, which reinforces teaching experience, making communication styles and educational management to be stabilized. The classes in which we collected data are I, II, III and IV grade classes with which the interviewed teachers work.

We will focus the quantitative analysis of the surveyed data on objective aspects of the research objectives, namely the frequencies of responses to three quality dimensions: educational communication, teacher’s management style and work related experience.

In the following we present data from a quantitative perspective, with the corresponding explanations.

In Table no. 2 we present the frequencies and percentages of the educational communication dimension, recorded after the application of questionnaires to the teachers. The results indicate the self-assessment by the teachers, and as we can see, 87% consider that they practice a bilateral educational communication. A graphical view of educational communication frequencies is included in Figure no.1. 13% of teachers perceive themselves as unilateral (6.5%) and situational (6.5%), which is a positive aspect on the validity of the data, meaning that the expectancy of these responses was much lower.

Table no.2 - Educational communication

Educational communication	Frequency	Percentage%	Cumulative percentage %
Unilateral, unidirectional	3	6.5	6.5
Bilateral, bidirectional	40	87.0	93.5
Situational, random	3	6.5	100.0
Total	46	100.0	

Figure no.1- Self- assessment frequencies on the educational communication dimension

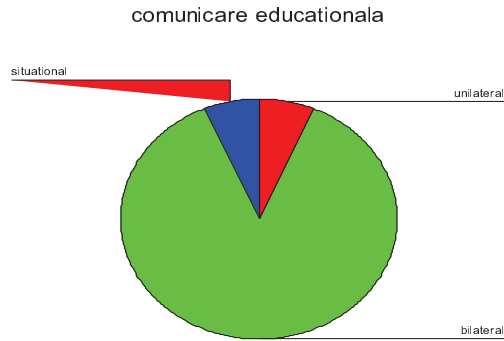


Table no. 3 summarizes the frequency of the data collected from teachers on their management style dimension in the educational process. One should also keep in mind that managing style is in itself a relative concept, which can not be extended to all aspects of life. The research took into account the management style of the teachers only in the context of education, namely relationships with students.

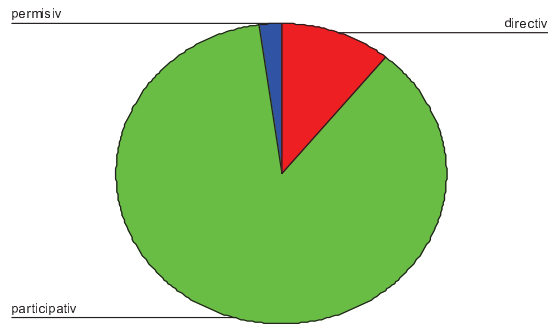
Table no.3 - Teacher's management style

Management style	Frequency	Percentage%	Cumulative percentage %
Directive, authoritarian	5	13.0	10.9
Participative, democratic	19	82.6	52.2
Permissive, laissez-faire	22	4.4	100.0
Total	46	100.0	

The data reveals that 82.6% of teachers consider themselves as participative during the educational activities, 13% believe they have a directive style, and 4.4% believe are permissive, which is a positive thing in the relationship with students.

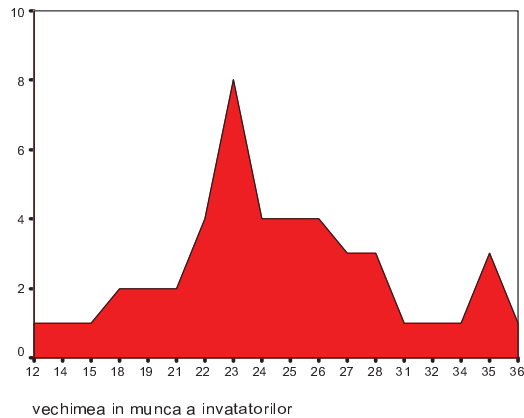
We can see the self-appreciation frequencies on the management style dimension in figure No.2

Figure no.2 - Self- assessment frequencies on the management style dimension



We must also consider the influence of the label variables in shaping the educational communication and management style. The variable considered in this study is the work related experience of teachers, shown in Figure no.3.

Figure no.3 – Frequency of work related experience of teachers



As can be seen in Table no. 1, the average is 24 years, which shows a rich educational experience. We can relate this through 6 generations of students who contributed in turn to the formation of these educational styles but also certain prejudices, generalizations and extrapolations that every teacher holds, even unconsciously.

Conclusion

The hypothesis that the method of communication of the teacher is determined by his class management style class (I1) was confirmed. The following interpretation of the data shows that questioned teachers perceive themselves as bidirectional in their communication with the students. This self-assessment is not necessarily in accordance with reality, but rather an idealization of reality as to always be bilateral in the educational communication

in the I-IV grade classes is a very difficult thing. 1st grade students are confused, have a lot of questions that await answers, they accommodate with difficulty with the schedule imposed during lessons and often personal characteristics, such as shyness or emotivity have a negative impact in the educational process, influencing the external perception of the teacher and colleagues. If you were to draw a parallel between the educational communication and class management style, we see that the percentage is kept approximately at bilateral and participative or democratic, following with the unilateral and authoritarian or directive and finally, a weaker relevance between the situational and permissive or laissez-faire.

To some extent it was expected that this hypothesis should be confirmed because the managing style of a teacher develops during a teaching career, is stable and also involves the ways to communicate with the students. It is normal that a participative, democratic management style, to be based on a bidirectional communication in which the student can also take the role of transmitter (due to numerous sources of information with he comes into contact), and the teacher should adopt a more flexible and adapted behavior, simultaneously developing specific receiver roles. Likewise, a directive, authoritarian management style, is based on an unilateral communication in which the major role of the transmitter is that of the teacher, demanding clarity, internal consistency and expressiveness.

The second hypothesis (I2) that previous work experience influences the way in which the teacher communicates with the students has been confirmed, but in the negative sense. In the case of the teachers in the sample, we are dealing with a wide experience in teaching (between 12 and 36 years). But the interpretation of statistical data leads to the conclusion that teacher's long work experience impacts the students in a negative manner, meaning that they believe that this contributes to the rigidity of the teacher, that he is more reticent when it comes to updated information, or in particular modern information other than books and the manual. It sometimes happens that good students have more information about a particular topic than a teacher with great teaching experience, obtained through media or the internet. This is one of the reasons why good students perceive younger teachers as more open regarding educational content and teaching methods.

Regarding the horizontal communication, the research shows that the method commonly used by teachers to stimulate student-student communication is cooperative learning, in which small groups work together to achieve a common goal. It was assumed that during cooperative learning students work in teams and being able to apply and synthesize knowledge in varied and complex ways, while learning more thoroughly than when working alone.

Interactive group methods enables and stimulates collaborative work carried out by those involved in the activity (students), in which all "bring" (participate) something and no one "leaves" with nothing. Following the group

work, even the student with poorer results in school takes part in discussions and remains with "something". Profit is both to the group of students (problem solving, finding the optimum response) and to the individual student (results, effects shown in the cognitive, emotional-affective, behavioral dimension, learning something new). Cooperative learning strategy offers students an opportunity to translate their need to work together, to constantly communicate with all their colleagues in an atmosphere of mutual aid and mutual support. The group enables the testing of ideas, opinions and the development of interpersonal intelligence. The group work also covers the shortcomings of individualized learning, offering a considerable importance to the social dimension by developing interpersonal processes.

Such group learning method is beneficial in many aspects, contributing to the efficiency of both horizontal and vertical communication, improving student-student, teacher-student, student-teacher, teacher-class, class-teacher relations, contributing to a more efficient learning, generating feelings of acceptance and sympathy, driving the growth of self-esteem and self-confidence.

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