

# **Perception of primary school teachers about the specifics and the role of communication skills**

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## Abstract

### Keywords:

communication; learning process, teacher's perception, communication skills, interpersonal process

Communication between people or groups is one of the most complex human processes. It is so important and useful to human existence that without its understanding we cannot have access to the understanding of the individual and the social structures.

From a psychological perspective, communication is a dynamic and complex phenomenon, which involves the simultaneous development of several psychological processes and functions, used for the interaction, through the exchange of messages between two subjects. It can be, at the same time, a human need or a source of conflict and dissatisfaction in interpersonal relationships.

Ability to speak is characterized by: clear and concise expression, well-chosen words and expressions, direct expression, logic and no exaggeration; all matched with the ideas presented.

Communication contributes to the coherence and logic of group and team formation processes, the exteriorization of emotions, perceptions and expectations, so that we can, on the one hand, achieve our personal goals and, on the other hand, live together harmoniously at the social level.

The ability to communicate is a very broad concept, often studied and often overlaid on interpersonal skills. Researches in the field highlight various abilities, so the purpose of the research was to investigate aspects specific to educational communication, which are supporting factors or barriers in the teacher-student relationship. The main objective was to investigate the perception of primary school teachers about the current level of development of their own communication skills required by didactic work through in-depth interviews.

## Zusammenfassung

### Schlüsselworte:

Kommunikation; Lernprozess, Wahrnehmung des Lehrers, Kommunikationsfähigkeit, zwischenmenschlicher Prozess

Die Kommunikation zwischen Menschen oder Gruppen ist einer der komplexesten menschlichen Prozesse. Es ist für die menschliche Existenz so wichtig und nützlich, dass wir ohne ihr Verständnis keinen Zugang zum Verständnis der individuellen und sozialen Strukturen haben können.

Aus psychologischer Sicht ist Kommunikation ein dynamisches und komplexes Phänomen, das die gleichzeitige Entwicklung mehrerer psychologischer Prozesse und Funktionen, die für die Interaktion verwendet werden, durch den Austausch von Botschaften zwischen zwei Subjekten beinhaltet. Es kann gleichzeitig ein menschliches Bedürfnis oder eine Quelle von Konflikten und Unzufriedenheit in zwischenmenschlichen Beziehungen sein.

Die Fähigkeit zu sprechen ist gekennzeichnet durch: einen klaren und prägnanten Ausdruck, gut gewählte Wörter und Ausdrücke, direkten Ausdruck, Logik und keine Übertreibung; alles abgestimmt auf die vorgestellten Ideen.

Kommunikation trägt zur Kohärenz und Logik von Gruppen- und Teambildungsprozessen, zur Äußerung von Emotionen, Wahrnehmungen und Erwartungen bei, so dass wir einerseits unsere persönlichen Ziele erreichen und andererseits im sozialen Zusammenleben harmonisch zusammenleben können Ebene.

Die Fähigkeit zu kommunizieren ist ein sehr breites Konzept, das häufig untersucht und häufig mit zwischenmenschlichen Fähigkeiten überlagert wird. Forschungen auf diesem Gebiet zeigen verschiedene Fähigkeiten auf. Ziel der Forschung war es daher, spezifische Aspekte der Bildungskommunikation zu untersuchen, die unterstützende Faktoren oder Hindernisse in der Lehrer-Schüler-Beziehung sind. Das Hauptziel bestand darin, die Wahrnehmung von Grundschullehrern bezüglich des aktuellen Entwicklungsstandes ihrer eigenen Kommunikationsfähigkeiten, die für die didaktische Arbeit erforderlich sind, durch eingehende Interviews zu untersuchen.

## 1. Introduction

Communication that takes place in an educational context can be defined as a form of instrumental

communication, directly involved in supporting a systematic learning process (Ciobanu, 2003).

This is explained by the fact that human communication has the intention of influencing - qualitatively and

quantitatively - man's existence and producing behavioural changes, being an active process of identifying, establishing and maintaining social contacts. It is present in all areas of social life, including school, where it manifests itself as a particular and personalized form of teaching. When we communicate, it is very important to be able to build a common bridge with our partners. It is built up step by step, trying to understand others, put them in their place, and anticipate how they relate to what surrounds them, including how they relate to our person.

The power of the words is very large, they can have a major impact on those who communicate, can generate strong feelings, or they can be simple statements of objective facts. The personality of verbal communication is provided by the speaker depending on how he decides to choose his words and to relate his message.

Didactic communication can be considered a specific form of teacher-student communication. It has been studied mostly from a pedagogical point of view, as the main theoretical model is the schema of communication between two or more persons and the transmission of information with educational specifics. In classical communication, communication is the process of transmitting an informational message between a transmitter and a receiver (student or teacher) through a specific channel or communication code (verbal, nonverbal, para verbal). The process is continuous and allows for feedback that has a regulatory and formative role.

## 2. Theoretical foundation

Scientific literature (Shaunessy, McHatton 2009, Brusckhe, 1991) mentions various research that examines in-depth the teachers' communication abilities, their ability to transmit clear messages, to provide feedback, to listen actively. Yuksel-Sahin (2008) highlights empathy, active listening, feedback as attributes of effective communication in an educational context, by increasing confidence and the level of school motivation (Muste, 2012).

Also, Foss and Keinsasser (1996) emphasizes the positive communication with the student, the reformulation of what he said, the manifestation of his interest in his concerns, the behavioural modelling and the doubled strategies of non-verbal language appropriate to the situation.

In our appreciation one of the most complete synthesis is that of Burleson (2003). According to them, in the

educational context, student-teacher communication relates to the teacher's communication skills, the appreciation of the level of interest towards the pupils and the development of student independence and responsibility. This highlights the link between the communication skills of the teacher and his/ her efficiency, indicating that these skills play a role as important for the education as the teacher's scientific training and the teaching methods used (Farr, 2010).

## 3. Research methodology

The ability to communicate is a very broad concept, often studied and often overlaid on interpersonal skills.

Researches in the field highlight various abilities, so the purpose of the research was to investigate aspects specific to educational communication, which are supporting factors or barriers in the teacher-student relationship. The main objective was to investigate the perception of primary school teachers about the current level of development of their own communication skills necessary for the didactic activity, through in-depth interviews.

The target group was made up of 14 primary school teachers (exclusively teachers for primary education, with a professional experience of more than 10 years, all with the highest teaching degree) because in primary education, the level of communication is considered one of the main factors influencing teaching and children academic performance.

The advantage of conducting an interview, which is a continuous dialogue, is that the interviewer and the interviewee can deviate from the initial questions and the interviewee can express their opinion without constraints. A direct interview also allows the interviewer to also perceive non-verbal impressions, including mimic, voice and tone, to better understand the reasons. The disadvantage of an interview is that the interviewer will not always receive the answers he expects. Moreover, the interviewee will sometimes try to thank the interviewer

The elaboration of the interview guide started from the study of the pedagogical scientific literature and the identification of the abilities facilitating the teacher-student communication. The construction of the questions started from the establishment of the communication skills investigated and the development of behavioural descriptors for each skill or attitude towards communication. Thus, the themes approached during the interviews were:

- General perception on the role of communication
- Teachers' self-perception of communication skills
- Empathy role in communication
- The value of the explanations offered
- Active listening skills
- Feedback offered
- Acting skills

According with the above-mentioned discussion directions, we conducted both group and individual interviews when the context allowed. We considered it useful to structure the questions in line with specific guidelines in order to support the interviewed teachers and then to outline some directions.

#### 4. Results and discussions

Following the interviews, several recurring ideas have been structured, in line with the directions of our research. Thus, in each category, the discussions led to responses that were concentrated in some guiding ideas, according to the frequency of their occurrence.

- ***General perception on the role of communication***

- an effective communication in educational context leads to increased satisfaction with the student-teacher relationship, a sense of trust and the level of school motivation;
- emphasis on positive communication with the pupil, on the importance of paraphrasing the student's words, showing interest in his / her preoccupations, offering a behavioural model;
- the use of various teaching methods and mainly classroom control, non-verbal language duplication strategies appropriate to the situation is necessary;
- the quality of communication leads to the increase of the didactic performances and to the developing process of the pupils as persons open to their communication;
- flexibility and creativity in dealing with unexpected elements that may appear during the lesson.

- ***Teachers' self-perception of communication skills***

- communication skills improve during the acquisition of didactic experience, in relation to students, after solving conflicts;
- an image that you create through communication is very important and this aspect should not be missed;
- communication skills are acquired through exercise, training and self-training.

- ***Empathy role in communication***

- empathic communication skills are those that make the difference between an effective and inefficient teacher so that students benefit more from interacting with high-skill teachers;
- empathy is the ability to transpose into the subjective world of the communication partner in order to see the situation with his eyes; through empathy, we have the opportunity to better understand the dialogue partner and his affective experiences, anticipate his behaviour and act accordingly;
- a "teacher-student approach" refers to the perception of empathy by the teacher doubled by a high degree of promptness of the teacher's reactions to student behaviour.

- ***The value of the explanations offered***

- the role of communication is also to teach students to look for the information or formulate the interrogations appropriate to an effective learning;
- a teacher who has developed communication skills and who knows how to explain according to the pupils' needs is the one that makes them happy to attend classes, listen to them, understand them.

- ***Active listening skills***

- a process which involves keeping the attention, understanding the message, understanding the interlocutor through empathy, asking open questions in order to encourage the speaker to continue;
- student-teacher communication is facilitated if students perceive the didactic framework as being close to them, and this feeling can be achieved through the process of listening to students by the professor and vice versa;

- listening is the fundamental feature of effective communication. Knowing when to shut up can sometimes bring you more than you imagined;
- the ability to listen effectively and to understand clearly the message is the key in building relationships and getting professional and personal success;
- it is important to focus our attention on the speaker; the more empathic we focus on and the more the partner and the message, the more we can understand the content and it will be easier for us to communicate.

- **Feed-back offered**

- the need to develop communication discipline skills;
- the significance of the correctness and consistency of the feed-back offered is emphasized;
- this feedback must be integrated in a predefined but flexible plan at the same time;
- from the perspective of teachers, the most important factor that maintains the pleasure of teaching is feedback, especially the one directly provided by students.

- **Acting skills**

- being a good storyteller is an effective teacher's attribute;
- teachers emphasize the dramatic dimension of the educational act;
- beyond the contents of the communication, the emotions that the educator manages to convey to children through non-verbal means of communication, the way they play their roles are very important;
- it also emphasizes the importance of teachers finding creative methods of interacting with children to facilitate the educational process;
- humour is a significant part of the teaching activity.

## 5. Conclusions

The first step in developing communication skills is awareness. Be aware of which of these communication abilities you lack and need to study, develop them to better master them.

The assumption from which the analysis is based and which is the basis for most of the respondents' answers is that an efficient communication process takes place in a favourable communication environment and is intended to have a positive impact on both actors, involves a consistent message exchange, roughly as coded and decoded by both partners and power ratios understood equally between the transmitter and the receiver.

The results of the study will be used to define and construct specifics of the training program.

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