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Didactic Communication – Key Element for Any Successful Teaching Activity

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Abstract

The society we live in is one of communication par excellence. Be it non-verbal communication, gesture or technological communication, the work that we perform relates to the same common goals: to share information, and to share your thoughts, feelings, actions, as well as to relate with other actors that participate into the act of communication. Didactic communication is the one which intermediates the accomplishment of the educational phenomenon as a whole, it occurring only as a particular form required in the transmission of some specific learning content. It is particularly needed in achieving certain objectives, in the transmission of knowledge and information that is to be received by students and it also produces changes in students' cognitive, affective, behavioral and action-like reactions. And our ultimate purpose is, as Maria Montessori also stated, that of teaching children to adapt a world that may be different from the present one.

Keywords: didactic communication, persuasion, expressiveness, interpersonal communication.

Techniques and means of efficient communication

In the context of the educational process, "the epistemological aspect" and the "diagnosis" one of communication represent educational objectives and communication is not only "knowledge", but also the main instrument of action, specialized for training and developing the child's personality. This objective can be achieved, especially through the unceasing use, within the teaching-learning process, of two essential features of communication: expressiveness and persuasion. Expressiveness is a means of manifestation in communication, a

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"complex aptitude feature, which includes the capacity to project mentally and to express, appropriately, suggestively, in a given situation, an idea or some mental state." [1]

Popescu - Neveanu calls expressiveness as being the communication from one system to another with effects of emphasis, which creates and imposes the message. Expressiveness brings into bolder relief some cognitive content, but also facilitates the manifestation of some affective manifestations. "The expression of affection is a language which one learns: it acts as a means of communication" [2] which facilitates the understanding of the message by the student.

Another side of communication, persuasion, comes from the Latin word persuader and it means to advise effectively and to convince. It actually consists of the action by which a person is made or convinced to perform a certain activity. For the action to succeed, it is necessary that its initiator should be very aware of the desires, attitudes, ideas of the one he wants to convince. [3] In any act of communication, persuasion is understood as a quality of the emitter individual, as his capacity to "advise" or convince or as a purely affective component of communication, by which, the internal feelings of the receiver person are directly aimed at.

That is why, in communication works, special importance is given to the manner by which the receiver assimilates the message from the emitter, by which the qualities or deficiencies are ascribed by the receiver-person to the emitter-individual. Regarding this aspect, a lot of emphasis is laid on the great part played by the credibility of the message.

In order to convey his message, the emitter uses a series of signs with verbal or nonverbal significances, called code, which the receiver identifies with the signs of his repertoire. Both the emitter and the receiver possess signs which are more or less common, the communication being essentially based on the side that the two actors of communication have in common. In didactic communication, as well as in any type of communication, one can apply the scheme of the communication process proposed by R. Jakobson:

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CHANNEL
EMITTER ---- MESSAGE ---- RECEIVER
CODE
CONTEXT
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The emitter and the receiver are in turns, both educators and persons to be educated, depending on the context. In general, the former appear in source position. However, it should be noted that the sign repertoires of the two agents of didactic communication differ essentially, especially for small schooling, when the teacher has a far more extensive and consistent lexicon than the child. The information, as raw material and argument of didactic communication is inevitably didactic information, previously processed, in order to be accessible to students. Consequently, the message where the information is put together is a didactic message that wants and must be clear, concisely structured, as a rule deductive.

As the didactic message is coded by the teacher, it must be kept carefully on the axis of communication as long as it is necessary. The didactic context is carefully built and especially created to have evocative power, considering that it is equivalent to what is called "learning situation, learning experience." A didactic context, which does not occasion, challenge or guide the learning process, can even lead to compromising the teaching act itself.

The didactic communication channel is a direct, immediate one, and it is not about a didactic channel itself, but about the use of a polyvalent channel of interpersonal communication. Thus, besides the verbal, linguistic, most commonly used channel, one equally resorts to the vocal, mimic-gesture, proximity direct and clear contact channel, of the channel of territoriality of “classroom didactic space”. One equally should add the audio-visual channel, considering the enormous impact of the mass media phenomenon at the class and didactic process level.
At the school level, communication is a necessity not only for every teacher, but also for the students, as they have to help one another, it is the essential means of existence of communication methods, a class being first and foremost, a communication environment. Thus, in this context, communication can be: vertical (teacher-students) or horizontal (student-student).

Between these two types of communication, there are overlapping and interferences that may have positive or negative effects, depending on the position of the teacher in the group and on his attitude towards the horizontal level of communication. Due to psychosocial characteristics, the educator and the educated are partly reported in a different way to the language, as a means of communication in the instructive – educational process, with differences according to the degree of mastery and manipulation of the language.

Considering that one of the basic objectives of the education system is to prepare the child for real life situations, the communication at didactic level should be designed as a permanent interaction between trainer and the one who is trained. The method is the path of tracking, research and discovery that can be followed in order to achieve a goal. On the other hand, the didactic technique is actually a variant of an already existing method.

The attempt to make a classification of the methods generates certain difficulties, considering the evolution of the didactic methodology that determines the permanent appearance of new methods and techniques. That is why, Ion Pânișoară resorted to a double modality to classify the system of education methods: on the one hand, one has in view a functional-action approach, which gives the teacher the responsibility of continuously identifying certain ways to improve the methods he uses, and on the other hand, an approach that has in the foreground the main objective sought by each method. From the first perspective, we consider a continuity that starts from the active dimension of methods and continues with the interactive one, which necessarily supposes a simultaneous activation of the partners of the didactic act.

Didactic communication is a type of interhuman communication. As such, it is used by almost all other forms of communication: verbal, paraverbal, non-verbal and even intrapersonal, interpersonal communication. It remains to ask ourselves: what makes the difference between didactic communication and other types of communication? The question is all the more legitimate because, as we know, there are many other types of interhuman communication: imagistic language (painting, sculpture, choreography, cinematography), figural-symbolic language of music, abstract symbolic language (which is typical for mathematics and logic), the language of science, the cyberspace. All of them have characteristics that distinguish them from one another and make them intelligible, especially for the receiver persons in those areas.

Săucan asserts that "... We are convinced that we can not talk about specific items of didactic communication, other than those that characterize human communication in general, the specificity of the former occurring in the context of communication in the classroom, where the items in question get weights, different gradients and are organized in a different manner ". [4]. The goal of didactic communication is to produce, cause or induce a change in the behavior of the "receiver".

A possible definition of didactic communication can be structured on the idea that this is an instrumental communication directly involved in supporting a systematic process of learning. [5] In this sense, one eliminates restrictions of content (because learning is equally focused on the acquisition of knowledge, skills, motivations, attitudes), of institutional framework, or those relating to partners.

In addition to classroom communication circuits, didactic communication blockages, the efficiency of this communication form, studied in the specific of didactic communication, the following can be added: the effort of the teacher to present the material to teach in a logical way, to make it intelligible to students, which in the current communication between two or several partners is felt with higher difficulty. In other words, in didactic communication, this effort of the educator becomes or should be configured in a real didactic skill. [6].

The same can be said about achieving persuasion. This acquires the necessary force only due to the personal qualities of the educator. Because it has some strength as shown, in any act of communication. Its strength is rooted in the thorough specialized training of the teacher, in his capacity to convince and in his knowledge of the individual and group features of students.

Another aspect specific to didactic communication, is the danger of transferring the authority of "status" over "the contents" by the argument of authority. "Communicativeness", essential component of didactic ability, is
instrumented in a way which operates constructively. In the case of some teachers, there is a real disposition of communication and influence with its components: expressive speech, gesture, capacity of instructive and logical demonstration, significant and intelligent exposures, engaging colloquial dialogue, everything focusing on the child's mental activity. [7]

The specificity of didactic communication is registered then by the features of the teacher-student relationship in the classroom. During the activity in the classroom, the competent teacher leads the dialogue with the students skillfully, so that he influences the children’s personality with pedagogical tact and, at the same time, still with pedagogical tact, he lets himself be influenced by their personality, stimulating, thus, one another. Therefore, students will receive, more effectively, the message started from the teacher, and this one, in his turn, by the questions and interventions of the students will get real feedback about the effectiveness and defects of the teaching-learning act.

Analyzing the art of speaking in the classroom in some papers, the means by which it is achieved are pointed out. For example, the way how “phrasing” is achieved has a lot of importance. Thus, "phrasing between two meanings" not only disturbs the receiver, but induces ambiguity in transmitting the message. That is why, the quality of the message is ensured by "the choice of value words", thus avoiding confusion and ambiguities. The way in which sentences are constructed comprises a logical structure, clear for the teacher-student communication, as "the word itself is nothing compared to the idea that dominates it, being the one which gives value and meaning." [8]

In the classroom communication, it is recommended that students should be accustomed to listening. Laura Stefan (2003) says that listening is important not only at a personal level, as shown by the phrase "knowledge is power". Good listening may improve the quality of the classroom emotional climate. Listening is important in all types of didactic communication ".[9]

Communication in the classroom through questions and answers has fully demonstrated its efficiency and specificity. It stimulates the intellectual activity of students, causes them positive feelings, involves them more in achieving school tasks and creates a suitable environment for the development of the teaching-learning process.

Thus, didactic communication must:
1) have a strong explanatory character (great importance is given to the students’ understanding of the message);
2) be structured according to the pedagogical logic of the science which is taught;
3) emphasize the active nature of the emitter and also of the receiver, the teacher filters the information, making it accessible, organizing it and, especially, customizing it in order to suit the recipient and the frame of its transmission, obviously he guides himself according to the syllabus and textbook;
4) have as a dominant the verbal communication initiated and supported by teachers (60-70%), as well as the tutelage by the teachers of the communication act;
5) be evaluative and self-evaluative equally for the educated and educator, aiming to achieve the aims proposed to meet the needs and interests of students. [10]

From our point of view, some ways of effective didactic communication include:
• correct, open and direct speaking (which prevents or reduces the distortion of messages);
• encouraging feedback from students (in order to know to what extent the transmitted messages were correctly received and understood);
• careful listening to the messages received from the students, along with the effort to understand exactly the meaning of these messages;
• the use of multiple forms of didactic communication for the same type of messages (oral and visual concomitantly);
• repetition of complex messages. [11]

Our research aims at emphasizing, therefore, the fact that, despite their increased efficiency, none of the didactic communication methods, mentioned above, can only lead, at a theoretical level, the didactic process to the achievement of the objective.
In order to manage the didactic communication in an efficient way, it is essential that one should take into account that children in the classroom are different and they behave differently. Thus, some effective didactic communication involves an open expression to trigger the students' interest and motivation for learning, by combining verbal communication with the non-verbal one, involves the creation of a relaxed context to give children self-confidence and independence.

Although it seems easy, didactic communication requires long training for its success, it relies on a lot of exercise and experience. For what the teacher should never forget is that students do not necessarily need the new information, but they want to be taken into consideration, stimulated, trained and well-disposed. And all this can be achieved and perfected, only by experimenting new and different communication situations from a lesson to another.

References: