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TOWARDS POSITIVE INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CLASSROOM

Adina BABONEA*, Ana MUNTEANU*

*Faculty of Legal and Administrative Sciences, Brasov, 'Spiru Haret' University, Romania

Abstract: *Our paper looks at the basis of every interpersonal relationship: communication. It is an important form of interpersonal interaction and its forms can really help teachers improve their teaching style, strengthening the bond between them and their students. A positive interaction is essential for a good teacher-student(s) relationship. And, last but not least, the goal of our paper is to help teachers become acquainted with the importance of establishing and maintaining a positive professional interpersonal relationship in their classrooms with the help of verbal, para-verbal and non-verbal communication.*

Keywords: *communication, interpersonal relationship, interaction, teaching*

1. INTRODUCTION

A person can be approached scientifically in two ways: substantially and relationally. The former approach looks at the person from a structural point of view; the latter tries to answer such questions as: 'How does a person behave in a certain social situation?', 'Can a person influence the people around him?' and 'Can that person be influenced by the people around him?' There is a considerable body of research literature that answers these questions so we will just underline some important aspects related to the art of teaching.

In the environment of the classroom the interpersonal relationship between teacher and students is an important element contributing to the students' learning process. We look at communication as the most important form of interpersonal interaction. Communicating, through all its forms, teachers can improve their teaching styles, thing that will help create a positive interaction.

The establishment of common ground between teachers and students is a fundamental component for a good and, why not, a lasting interpersonal relationship. Trust and transparency are essential in any relationship, so all the individuals found together in a classroom, sharing similar interests, i.e. learning, passing an exam, acquiring new things, should try trusting and respecting each other in order to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts, aiming at having a nice, relaxed atmosphere during their classes. Teachers are extremely important in this process, as a significant body of research indicates that academic achievement and students' behavior are influenced by the quality of the teacher-student relationship. It is said that students prefer teachers who are warm and friendly. But do teachers (who are human beings living in a more and more demanding and stressful society) know how to be warm in the classroom?

2. POSITIVE INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

2.1 The interpersonal relationship.

Pantelimon Golu defined interpersonal relationship as a 'conscious, direct, psychic union, based on a complex reverse connection – union comprising at least two people' [3]. Moreover, interpersonal relationship refers to a strong association between people sharing common interests and goals. Constantin Noica [4] noted that the interpersonal act is not limited to the emotional attraction-repulsion dimension. It is always a mixture of perceptions, sympathetic and communicative acts.

2.2 Communication, a form of interpersonal interaction. Interpersonal relationship is a process mediated by communication. Communication is the main manifestation of the psychosocial interaction, because all the interpersonal effects (perceptive, sympathetic or functional) are transmitted through communication. The essential element of the message is attracting the receiver's attention to the reference object and its characteristics.

Teachers communicate during their classes. They need a good preparation in order to send correct, up-to-date messages. This would be intentional communication. But the preparation should be doubled by an adequate way of expressing ideas, thoughts, and feelings. Non-verbal and sometimes non-intentional communication is also important, although the message is received unconsciously. The presentation skills should be continually improved as we think of them as a key medium through which learning occurs. Teachers must learn to be aware of not only *what* content they are delivering, but also *how* they are delivering it.

2.2.1 Verbal communication. To enhance communication of materials, teachers must skilfully incorporate a variety of delivery skills, both verbal and nonverbal.

Verbal communication refers to the use of sounds and language to relay a message. It serves as a vehicle for expressing wishes, ideas and concepts and it is vital to the processes of

learning and teaching. Interpersonal communication refers to a two-way exchange that involves both talking and listening. It is essential to help forming bonds and building relationships between teachers and their students.

Through verbal language, individuals draw attention to themselves, influence and get influenced. Interinfluencing vary according to the degree of intensity. Taking into account this report, P. Golu states the existence of three forms of communication: simple verbal communication, persuasion and suggestion [3]. All of them should be used by teachers during their classes in order to establish a good interpersonal relationship and influence positively the students' academic achievements.

2.2.2 Para-verbal communication. In this case the message is not transmitted through words, but could not get to the listeners without speaking. According to some authors, the 'para-verbal subsystem' consists of the following elements: the intonation, the volume of voice; the intensity of voice; the tone of voice; the speech rate [1].

A really important element of the verbal communication and one of teachers' greatest tools is the voice. An effective speaking voice has the following characteristics: pleasant, natural, dynamic, expressive, and easily heard.

A pleasant voice is easy to listen to over extended periods of time. It is very important while teaching one-on-one or in small groups.

A natural voice reflects your true personality and sincerity. Combined with a natural rhythm – not too fast, not too slow – it becomes an important commodity.

A dynamic voice is helpful for speaking in front of large groups. It gives the impression of force and strength, even when it is not especially loud.

An expressive voice never sounds monotonous or emotionless.

An easily heard voice projects the proper volume for the size of the group to whom you are speaking.

An effective speaking voice can be obtained by practice (again, practice makes perfect) and should be one of the main goals of any teacher who wants to establish a good



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relationship with his/her students. A 'new voice', more resistant, melodic and convincing is a tool that facilitates communication between human beings as it is derived from a better self-control [2].

2.2.3 Non-verbal communication.

Although verbal communication is a primary means of expression, non-verbal actions such as body language can greatly affect the way a message is perceived.

Non-verbal communication uses as tools physical appearance, facial expression and gesture, which give nuances to the message and helps people to express themselves.

Teachers cannot prevent sending nonverbal messages during their classes, but they certainly can learn to manage and control them. Nonverbal delivery skills can be further described as: posture, hand gestures, body movements, facial expressions, and eye contact.

The posture reflects people's attitude. It lets the listeners know if those persons, the teachers in our case, are confident, alert, enthusiastic, and in command of themselves and their course.

A hand gesture is a specific movement that reinforces a verbal message or conveys a particular thought or emotion. Teachers should not use too many hand gestures, but if they use them, they should make sure that their gestures are pleasing and convincing, smooth and well timed.

Body movements should be treated with care because changing the position or physical location while presenting information communicates a message, whether one likes it or not. Teachers have to consider the impact of their movements if they are used to moving all around the room or juggling their weight from one foot to the other. Students may be watching their movements instead of listening to their words, so it may be better for the

teachers to make a concentrated effort to change their habit.

Students usually watch their teacher's face during the course, waiting for a confident, friendly and sincere facial expression. This would help them feeling better, wanting to establish a rapport.

What teachers say can create (or destroy) rapport, but that is only about seven percent of communication. Body language and tone of voice are more important. People who are in rapport tend to mirror and match each other in posture, gesture and eye contact. The deeper the rapport, the closer the match will tend to be, meaning the interpersonal relationships will be better.

Eye contact helps teachers establish rapport with their students. Effective eye contact means focusing your eyes for a few seconds on individual participants throughout the course, building person-to-person relationships with them. Monitoring the visual feedback, teachers can gauge the group's reactions to what they say and adjust their presentation accordingly.

If people have rapport with each other, they have a relationship in which they have a special ability to understand each other's feelings and points of view. To create rapport, teachers should join their students' 'dance' by matching their body language sensitively and with respect. This builds a bridge between them and their model of the world. But this matching should be mimicry. A teacher can very well match his students' arm movements by small hand movements and their body movements by head movements.

A satisfactory rapport means good communication and a positive relationship. Earlier studies investigating the associations between interpersonal relationships and students' results have shown that positive, enjoyable and pleasant teacher-student relationships are more effective for students'

achievement and attitudes than indifference or bad relationships. Ryan and Grolnick found that students who perceived their teachers as personally positive and supportive were more likely to feel a greater sense of competence and to be more intrinsically motivated [5].

3. CONCLUSIONS

The conscious union, the interpersonal relationship based on common interests and goals between teachers and their students is an important element really contributing to the students' process of acquisition and their ability to pass examinations.

Successful teachers create rapport and rapport creates trust, which is a key element to having good interpersonal relationships in the classroom.

Communication is an important form of interpersonal interaction and its forms can really help teachers improve their teaching style, strengthening the bond between them and their students. A positive interaction is essential for a good teacher-student

relationship, which facilitates students' efficient work and their good academic results.

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