

QUO VADIS THE NEXT GENERATION? COMMUNICATION SKILLS - PERFORMANCE IN EDUCATION (POSTMODERN PARADIGM OF TEACHING)

The importance of communication, a concept that became a sort of cliché because of its so frequent use, begins to be inclusively admitted by educators, maybe the most necessary guild, the Promethean people able to civilize and mould characters.

Have you thought about what image has the student created himself nowadays? His condition changes from day to day, he has other perspectives, he thinks differently and he appropriates other rights and obligations. As the world is changing day by day, we are wondering how is the student nowadays, in the 21st century, compared to the students in the past? In what way has he changed, for better or worse? Schools have changed, and probably the teachers' way of thinking, as well. But has the student's mentality really changed today from the past student's mentality?

In response to these questions, most of the teachers think that the students' low interest in school (see the 2012 Baccalaureate weak results) is caused by the influence of the society and the mass media to which students are exposed. Another cause is the lack of children's supervising and the family's non-involvement in children's education, followed by a too wordy school structure and the lack of motivation. Certainly, the "next generation" will deeply imprint on this society, both from a theoretical as well as a practical point of view.

The educator in the broadest sense, the professor, must be aware of his own communication barriers ("We must make our own education training first and then to the new generations of students"), through "mirror exercises", *i.e.* to see how you look yourself when interacting with students, to acknowledge your inabilities to communicate.

That is why there is a need to include a compound to develop the ability to adapt to the changing needs and demands, under the social

dynamics pressure and the evolution of information technology. It is also required that the focus should be changed from theory to practice communication. Teachers recognize that the theoretical support is necessary, but not enough. It is very important the learning based on individual situations through the introduction of communication skills courses. The use of multimedia, observational sequences, debates and discussions, classroom practices are all likely to build real communication skills and not just theoretical. Another highlighted need is that of learning through the exchange of experience or on some success models, namely to learn from the ideal teachers that implement these models of effective communication".

What I will present in this column is derived from a clear perception of a new teaching paradigm that fits the so called 'next generation', which we called postmodern, although the term does not have an epistemic fixation. The fundamental change in the pattern of the mental and behavioral attitudes led to a pleading, almost unanimous, for a new education mentality. It conjugates depending on the keyword "learning" with its entire semantic field. The evolution of the concept, its refinement according to the different theories of learning, the relationships of the notion with the human personality and the formal institutions have made from "learning" a solution for the human existence and progress. Without lifelong and efficient learning, all become superficial, including life.

Astolfi (1998) identifies the "transition" to the new paradigm in ten variables: transmission - building, training - education, teacher - facilitator, student - learning, program - curriculum, lessons - device; notions - concepts, memory - cognition, knowledge - power, control - evaluation.

The constructivist model excludes the idea of knowledge being transmitted or the so-called "conductivism", according to which

the teachers propose a mentality of a whereby generation that no longer coincide with theirs. The obsolete character of the “teacher-transmitter of knowledge”, the one who performs the “training” comes into opposition with the new idea, motivated by the psychological experiments that “Learning is always a continuous personal acquisition that requires an ongoing effort for mobilizing the social group” (Astolfi). Meanwhile, the instruction requires the aggressive involvement of the variable-teacher into student learning program. The teacher asks the students to follow the proposed path imposing a rhythm, a body of knowledge, focusing on the formula “be as I say”, requiring also a docile behavior.

“Un-teaching” the learning process involves students’ need for freedom to (be) mentally reconstructed, to individually represent and change their thinking schemes according to the new conceptual and psychomotor acquisitions. The professor does not remain a *magister dixit* that supplies a hierarchical relationship, but he will assume the role of a guide or facilitator between the students and the learning content.

The magister tutors the relationship between the learner and what is being learned, becoming an interface that ensures the appropriate communication between “the mediated and the immediate” according to students’ expectations that support them in a fully empathic attitude. Students – those who occupy seats of a class in which the teaching process takes place – are the characters of a lesson-activity, of a default learning program established by the teacher to run under a uniform and rigorous time schedule. Jacquinet (1999) proposes that the lesson-class (“*chrono-maitre*”) to be replaced with the concept of device (a military term) to which he assigns the following four dimensions: *projective*, organized around an educational objective; *strategic*, organized by goals, methods, ways, contexts, material resources; *communicative*, the connection between knowledge and autonomous subjects; *tactic*, of a flexible adaptation to a pedagogical relationship a priori unplanned.

Essentially, it concerns the student’s “disposal” to learn or the knowledge disposing around those who learn and their access according to their pleasure and interest. However, the notions,

events, concepts, knowledge are not (anymore) stored according to the will of the teacher and their place is taken by concepts, similar and applicable structures to other situations than those operated. This result leads to the “knowledge” priority replacement with skills, or “cross mental operations” (Rey, 1996) or observable behaviors, which are made during a longer period of time, but become fundamental for building / compiling the “conceptual and behavioral field” of the individual.

Naturally, an activity concludes with an assessment of its effectiveness. Valuing the teaching process through composition of “skills” and “behaviors”, the student is assessed by different methods. The modern paradigm considers knowledge assessment as a confrontation between teachers’ requirements and students’ memorized assimilations. Therefore, the “terror of the red pencil” (Ungureanu, 2001) is placed inside the control concept (“*contre-role*”) as a form of determining the failings to a scale fixed by the teaching exercise of the teacher. In his turn, he “runs” the provisions of a knowledge program/curriculum, developed in a textbook. The “*contre-role*” is clearly justified by the assertion of several teachers that the maximum mark is for them and the students place themselves, if possible, according to Gauss’ curve, on the entire scoring grid system. The postmodern paradigm avoids putting a “note” as a label on the students’ forehead and the evaluation is a form of determining the relationship between their purchased capacity and value.

The evaluation targets more than knowledge, being focused on identifying the progress and on the personality development as a whole as well as its successes. However, the assessment is a way of comparison with the past performance and with the group which the “new individual” belongs to. Ultimately, the assessment identifies the value added by the conduct and skill, on their qualitative dimension. Using a successful pun, Hamelin (1987) states that the assessment swings between “esteem” (referring to student being looked in a sympathetic and positive way in his/her effort to learning) and “estimation” (referring to the student’s performances reported to the group’s results and the curriculum requirements).

The new terminological dimension cannot be considered a “verbal inflation” or “elegance” as designating by the new paradigm of education. It craves to cancel the distance between “the modern teacher and the postmodern student”, i.e. to make compatible the learners’ intentions with those of the educator, to balance apprentice’ status in relation to that of the magister. Thus, the ‘next school’ will get a new behavioral mentality, along with the old paradigm problem analysis. We stand between the modern professor paradigm and the postmodern student paradigm. In other words, we are nowadays between teachers’ school and students’ school. In both cases, teachers and students are well determined

and have clearly defined responsibilities. They both have common interests and concerns about learning, but the new school mission is to coordinate the institutional and organizational learning of another type: pragmatic, efficient, creative and functional.

However, the new constructivist model (“each builds his own cognitive and emotional becoming”), which makes its place in the school learning procedures of the “next generation” is increasingly imposing in teaching experience and its pragmatic projections try to suggest obvious results in shaping students’ abilities and skills of tomorrow’s next generation.

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