

Communication ...where to?

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I intend to compare, on one hand, the direct communication between me (as Physics teacher) and my high school students, and the distance communication between me and my evening-class-students, on the other hand.

Of course, this latter form of communication is not exclusive, the evening class students come at least for two tests and for the mandatory work per semester, but we communicate mainly by e-mail; I am trying to help them to keep their jobs, but also be able to complete their secondary education. Their employment program is generally extended, many of them are parents and I know it is not realistic to claim the same good frequency as I claim for my high school students.

Therefore, at their proposal, I accepted this way of communication and now I am interested in this study to see which are its benefits or if there are any benefits! I want to see if they are able to learn some main specific scientific information, but also if they are able to use them in their everyday life.

Direct, classical communication showed its advantages in education for ages everywhere in the world: our society has molded many outstanding people in all scientific fields, through an education system based on this type of communication. It allows a real-time dialogue between teacher and student, a good inter- and intra-personal knowledge, depending on the degree of involvement of both main partners, but also other partners involved (family, community, society, etc.).

Now it is useful to analyze the benefits, if there are any, of distance communication, of remote collaboration, educational sites as Wikipedia, blogs, eLearning Platforms, etc.

Introduction

We live in the age of computers and the education system is influenced by the characteristics of the society. Our country was isolated till 1989 from technological and computer achievements, but in the last 23 years we witnessed the exponential growth of computer equipment in schools as in entire society. We also witnessed the increasing interest of students and their parents in Informatics profile over other profiles. Romanian curriculum encouraged this trend and introduced in school education -particularly- many disciplines, for example:

- in preschool education there are *Optional activities* and *Extensions*;
- in primary education there are *Optional Subjects*;
- in high school education (direct or progressive route) there are different subjects for different profiles (for example *Information and Communication Technology*).

Communication

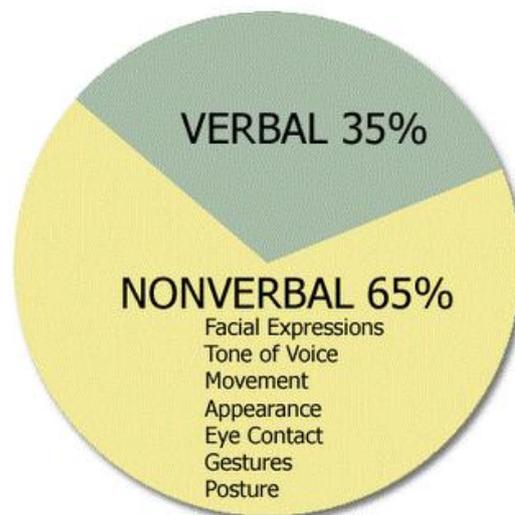
Communication means all the actions that lead to the transmission of information (messages, news, signs, gestures, text) between two people. This communication is based on a language, a system of speech (verbal) but it can be done on the basis of texts (written communication). Communication is both verbal and non-verbal (Figure 1).

Verbal communication is not made only by words but also the tone of voice, the magnitude and location of breath, change in skin coloring (especially of the facial), body attitude of the partners involved in communication, etc. This type of communication is called *direct communication* and it aims expression and transmission of thoughts, feelings, desires through a system of symbols discovered / invented by man. In other words we speak only appealing but the vocal cords, we can communicate with the entire body and direct communication is more expressive in relations established with the caller (clothing worn, the space that you control with distance at which to place our interlocutor, and others).

In summary, we can say that this type of direct communication involves three components:

- verbal communication by word, oral or written, specifically human ;
- para-communication by vocal features that accompany the word, such as voice characteristics, timbre, tone, loudness, rhythm, flow record, intonation;
- non-verbal communication through gestures, position, movement, facial expressions, appearance (clothing, accessories, jewelry, clothing colors and decency).

In order to stop the sense of interest in this work, *didactic communication*, we must say that the communication is done through education and communication, this process being essentially an act of communication [1].



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Figure 1: Verbal and nonverbal communication
(<https://gbeaubouef.wordpress.com/tag/cloud-erp-pains/>)

Direct communication is a classical one and it showed its advantages in the history of education, Romanian or not: human society had made a lot of great men in all fields of science through the education system based on this type of communication. It enables real-time dialogue between teacher and student as well as a good knowledge of inter-and intra-personal, dependent -of course- on the degree of involvement of the two partners (teachers and students) mainly, but also other partners involved (family, community, society, etc.). Formal education process is based both in direct communication classes and the related activities. The advantages of this type of communication are [2]:

- continuous feedback;
- different embodiments: oral, in writing, internal language;
- allows the transmission of information of varying degrees of complexity, systematic, and so on, depending on the interlocutor;

- show the ability of expression and thought of the transmitter;
- transmission efficiency through explicit verbal content;
- transmission efficiency through nonverbal communication,

While its disadvantages are:

- lack of expression if it is not accompanied by para-verbal and nonverbal means;
- impossibility of performing it without direct contact between people or between distant people (hence the necessity of so-called remote media analyzed below);
- difficulty in expressing emotional states.

The actual process of education is characterized by a marked and rapid decrease in the importance of direct communication for remote communication, especially in terms of teaching and learning methods, assessment methods are those that are still using mostly direct communication.

Reasons for this are [3]:

- computerization of society as a whole, our education system cannot remain isolated or unaware of modernization;
- emergence of new forms of education;
- alignment with European standards worldwide.

Communication at Day Classes Vs. Evening Classes

In this paper we tried to make a comparison between direct communication between myself (as Professor of Physics) and high school pupils, on the one hand and the remote communication between me and evening classes students, on the other hand. Of course, this latter form of communication is not exclusive, my evening school students attending physics classes to be evaluated at least (the two required tests per semester and semester thesis), but my communication with them is mainly via instant messaging and / or e-mails, I try to help them retain both their job and to complete high school.

Their program of work is generally prolonged or messy one, many of them have families to support, we have seen that it is not realistic to have 100% claim their presence (as we claim day classes students).

Therefore, we accepted the proposal students to communicate at a distance and we did this study to see the benefits of this new means of communication (remote) regarding the assimilation of scientific information and on their training as future useful people in society (because, in my opinion, the teacher's role is to shape the character of the student, not only transmit knowledge and teach them to think).

I taught a few lessons with eLearning platform implemented in the computer lab of the school unit, irrespective of time spent entering data to identify students for one hour course, teaching effectiveness (as measured by final test results) was not greater than these after the classes of classical teaching. Students have learned the content being taught by notes or using the Internet (type educational websites Wikipedia, blogs, etc.), depending on the capabilities of each student. Evaluation was performed at fixed dates (thesis semester) and at hours when they were at hours (tests), and additionally, in exceptional circumstances (maternity, accident involving hospitalization, etc.), the evaluation was done on essays, and portfolios of projects. In addition, these students have not used the homework.

The conclusions I reached after two years of using this type of communication to students of evening classes, conclusions supported by the learning outcomes of these students are:

- ✓ evening school students have great difficulty in understanding the physics curriculum content, especially those who use the exclusive method of Internet information (of course, compared to students from day courses), which means that this method is ineffective in teaching and learning;
- ✓ students who attend classes, although better understand the phenomena explained directly by the teacher (they have the opportunity to ask questions and get answers), face weight expression of knowledge, due to insufficient time spent learning and accumulated gaps in previous classes in math and Romanian (Physics has as main tools in math formulas, and language in describing different phenomena);

- ✓ students from day courses that have a high degree of absenteeism but still teach after their colleagues present notes in class do better in school than those from the evening classes, which demonstrates once again the inefficiency of learning through distance communication;
- ✓ students generally do not have the ability to sort information on the Internet and in this case it is very useful communication (direct or remote) with the teacher, so that he can guide the student in choosing the appropriate and credible source of information, but generally students not aware of the need for guidance of a teacher, their class-work presents some wrong learned information, so totally unsatisfactory outcome assessment, both students and teachers;
- ✓ remote communication is required when direct communication is almost impossible (in case of hospitalization of the student, for example) or when it is used to guide, advise the student (for example in the development of projects, in the student discussing personal problems, etc..).

In this respect I can confirm the utility's Messenger (for personal) and educational mails (they are an extension of the form classes, they increase the possibility of the student's education by other teachers and not only the teacher-tutor);

Remote communication by phone, mail and instant messaging is especially fruitful for former students, allowing contact with the teacher (and thus continue the educational process) and after school.

Lately teachers are encouraged to use communication methods based on IT technology (Microsoft programs, for example) to get "performance" students. First see what "performance" means by DEX (Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language):

"Result (very good) obtained from someone ... special achievement in a field of activity"

We must conclude that student performance can be considered both note 5 for a student with intellectual disability (a student in a low level school), an Olympic student in Physics, self taught one... but Olympic student with additional training, some in early childhood, home and / or at a school with teachers integrated in the Olympics, which elaborate topics for these competitions! But what big differences there are between these students!

"Performance" is a highly subjective reality and is not worthy of being so desired, sought and praised. After all, child training involves so many factors that I think it would be more realistic to get citizens with common sense rather than the Olympics! Especially the times in which we live "our student is our master" and adults are manipulated and controlled (both parents and teachers!) by children (see Child Rights vs.. Teacher/Parent Rights and the book of Josh McDowell & Bob Hostetler, *The New Tolerance*, Aqua Forte Publishing, Cluj-Napoca, 2006.

Generation adults suffer from some kind of amnesia and forget the benefits of Christian education based on moral values, clearly and strongly promoted (education that discourage violence or aggression, and who was -obviously! - "student-centered" because the student was its beneficiary, i.e. who was using it). The consequences of this are obvious blackouts: school results increasingly weaker, student anti-social behavior is increasingly, professional conduct problems reported increasingly often to teachers (but not only to them, if we relate to society; after all it is unfair to ask from teachers only moral values in a society that discourages moral values through all media), etc.. Although we are aware of the ravages of libertinism, of adverse consequences of post-modern psychology, there is no official action at the highest and the number of teachers who are trying to help students become literate graduates (who knows how to read and count) is increasingly lower. These teachers are faced not only with students' disinterest but also with parents' disinterest in the educational process. It's a pity that although teachers have implemented aberrations of the current system, they are the only scapegoats for the increasingly weaker of our graduates ... Many teachers have watched the efficiency of modern methods in teaching and learning and they have noticed any improvement in intellectual level, in performance at the students who have benefited from modern means of learning, e.g. interactive whiteboards, flip charts, video projectors, etc.

The teacher is confronted with different situation: the teacher in a class with students who have learned until tenth grade (for example) decide to let students use the computer's pocket, but the teacher who has students who cannot do simple calculation cannot do this, but must use items that assess the correctness of calculations. Obviously, the work of the latter is heavier than the first.

Therefore is not appropriate to praise some communication methods over others, but to seek balance and track the purpose of education: the graduate, of any level may be, to reach a minim of skills: speaking, reading and calculate correctly.

Conclusions

Consequently, although many students prefer for remote communication, although the ministry encourages this type of communication without having a study to prove its effectiveness (compared to classic type of direct communication), from my own experience and from the experience of many colleagues, I have concluded that remote communication is not more efficient than direct teaching communication. As shown surveys and trade specialists, direct communication is more efficient both other areas than education.

Remote communication is an alternative to the exceptional cases in which direct communication cannot be applied. The remote communication is efficient in further education students and graduates but not in the teaching-learning process as curriculum (at least in physics).

So I believe that we, the teachers, we must be critical of the new communication methods, methods of teaching, learning and assessment, do not indiscriminately adopt all that is new or fashionable.

My teaching experience showed me that real communication involves emotional factors rather than intellectual or otherwise (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Effective Communication
(<https://justinhay.wordpress.com/tag/normalization/>)

Of course, it is not desirable to the other end, the rejection of a new; as outlined above it is necessary to have judgment to choose effective and appropriate methods, from case to case, either following their own convenience not recommendations of other (even if have leadership positions), but the benefit of students, thereby realizing their ability to successfully pass the baccalaureate exam and their successful examination in various faculties. I do not deny the important role of this type of communication after graduating from high school, in higher and academic education, where the individual is called to investigate and bring his original contribution.

Either we are witnessing a clear decrease in the level of preparation of our students for these exams although the degree of difficulty of exams is not higher now than in the past, an increasing number of students with school failure, failure of which superior forums consider teachers responsible!

Of course, not just one factor (type of communication teaching) is responsible for lowering the level of preparedness of graduates or students' school failure, but I think that, among other factors, this factor encourages the student:

- intellectual convenience (e.g. essays taken from the Internet with copy-paste);
- lack of motivation in learning (note taken on papers or projects is-usually-higher than the scores in tests or oral assessment, which encourages student not to learn, not to practice problem solving, etc.);
- unconscious intellectual theft, if I may say so, the fact that the student takes someone else's work papers or projects and often do not realize that he calls the teacher a note (which in most often receives) for work that he never performed it;
- wrong mentality that work (teaching) does not benefit or, at best, provide the same benefits as not- work; to be aware that this mentality will characterize graduate in his future family and in his job, as a citizen in the community! This mentality is in the detriment of the entire society!

We should not forget that education "has to do with tracking and obtain the truth, (...) with the ability to search and work with evidence, with the ability to evaluate information and manage conflicting views" [4], and not transform it into a method of trying to get people (students in particular) to feel good and have good self-esteem at the expense of their achievements and thus the price of self-destruction.

The methods of teaching and learning using computer, video projector, educational software are increasingly used in pre-university education because students nowadays have an emphasized attention deficit. They have no individual intellectual work habits, pencil and paper, but are captivated by the screen where they can view pictures without thinking them only record more or less consciously. Of course, this can be seen in the increasingly poor baccalaureate preparation and college graduates. I think I am realistic when I say, after 31 years of experience in pre-university education, that members of humanity will be increasingly incapable of thinking, in other words more easily manipulated... unfortunately...

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