

Effective educational communication – bridge between present and future

Assistant Professor PhD Carmen Gabriela Secară

University of Pitesti
Faculty of Economic Sciences
carmen.secara@yahoo.com

Abstract

The need for communication is essential in the most various areas of our existence. To live means to communicate. The true face of humanity lies in the "dialogued man" in that kind of Me-You relationship, celebrated by Martin Buber who creates the reality of the individual as such and not only as a collective existence. In the relation between Me and You it is developed the personality of everyone, mutual respect, openness to and towards each other. In this dynamism, the narrow bounds of the self are broken up, dissolved, leaving only the authenticity of the dialogue, communication, creating collectively, the truth discovered together. Thus, we should study, learn that we can use our knowledge more effectively. Any communication involves creation and exchange of meanings. Effective communication is the key of individual to the society and to his integration into it. Lack of communication entails an imminent alienation from the group, team, society, etc.. Group means rules, reputation, teamwork, meanings determined by actions, so by communication. The human community cannot exist without communication in none of the major aspects. Communication means much more than the exchange of information dissemination; communication creates and maintains the society.

Effective communication is closely related to education, because "Nature resembles us. Education distinguishes us." (Confucius). Education is a component of human and social existence. It is a developing process, a direct, intrinsic custom of this existence. Education is the one developing the ability to communicate.

I believe that the evolution of society is mostly influenced by education. Without education, everything would be a chaos. Education makes the society be a civilized one, where peace and harmony should prevail.

The steps that I followed in the article were to highlight the characteristic features and concepts of communication, the importance of communication in the education system, the benefits brought to the higher education as a result of integration of Romania into the European Union and the communication level between the teaching staff and students within the University of Pitesti. Institutional education plays a crucial role in training people. Education institutions contribute to the training of future specialists. Teachers are those who enable the operation of institutions, while the pupils, as well as the students are those who render life to institutions. The specific character of the relation between teachers and students is expressed through the act of communication present in all circumstances of the educational activity, either instructional/ educational, or social. Based on an extensive and expressive communication conduct, the teacher achieves the persuasive impact with his training student, positively influencing him. Education means action upon of human being. This action of human upon human in the making always has a communication

structure. The European dimension has a special role in education, because European integration is not just progress in economy, agriculture and introduction of the single currency, but also in education.

Awareness of causes for lack of effective communication and a successful education is a step forward in improving the education system and interpersonal communication.'

Keywords: effective communication, European dimension, teacher, student, deficiency.

JEL Classifications: I23

1. Teacher-student communication

The education communication is a fundamental form of interaction between teacher and students by which the teacher deliberately and systematically monitors either the stability or the change of behavior regarding the students and / or group of students.

The education community is divided into two categories: teachers and pupils/ students. These categories are not necessarily opposed, but they are distinguished from one another, especially by the fact that their actions and purposes are different. The distinction may be blurred or emphasized, it depending on the vocation of the teacher, the students' characteristics and even the changes occurred in the contemporary society, which have an influence in the organization and development of the educational process. "The communication between teacher and student is based on different levels of development of thinking" (Miron Ionescu, Ioan Radu, *Modern didactics*, Dacia Publishing House, Cluj - Napoca, p. 40.). The ideal teacher-student relationship involves mutual knowledge, openness to communication, willingness to share, but to listen and also to listen to, undertaking new roles by the teacher, etc. Both teachers and students participating in an educational approach have a series of expectations regarding the relationship between them, expectations that condition the quality and effectiveness of education activity. The students want the teachers not to confine themselves only to their formal professional role, not to be solely concerned with the teaching and assessment activities, but also to relate to other people, to know each other, be able to communicate effectively, to respect each other and permanently co-operate. Usually, the teacher is the initiator of formal communication in his activity with the group of students and its members, which does not remove the possibility that the students have an initiative in this regard. The European dimension has brought obvious changes in the education system by encouraging extracurricular projects, exchanges of experience, etc which facilitated the closeness between teacher-student and student-student contributing to an effective communication between them.

The teacher's relations with the students is evident through a large variety of behaviors, which generates different degrees of intensity of interaction and involvement of the two terms not only in the communication, but also in activity. Thus, if the teacher give orders, while the students are perform them, the interaction between them is weak, as in the case of the non-verbalized control of the teacher regarding the execution of some tasks by students or assessment of the

students' knowledge. If the educational relationship is based on exchange of information, in which the initiation of communication is done spontaneously and freely, the degree of teacher-student and students-students interaction is strong, the involvement in activity is intense, the formative effects are strong, provided they are scientifically and morally substantiated. Several factors may act divergently and disadvantageously for that educational activity, leading to the occurrence of some barriers on the way of optimum communication. Some obstacles are of a material nature and are related to the environmental features. Other obstacles are related to the features of the two terms of the relationship: teacher and students. Thus, the students and the teacher master the language differently, differences in this respect being also among the students themselves. Between the teacher and various categories of students, there is a socio-cultural distance more or less emphasized. Such realities may cause distortions in communication and require differential treatment of students by the teacher. Similarly, the lateralization of communication and lack of feedback have restrictive effects on the acquiring of knowledge, as well as on the intellectual training of students. However, the implementation of feedback and encouraging of inter-students communication in the teaching activities allow the optimization of the teacher's influence on students. The teacher's role is to provide the students with the most relevant information (content) in a framework (process) to generate motivation, enthusiasm, involvement and enjoyment of students. Under these circumstances, the students' progress will be the largest possible. The teacher allows each student to follow his own path of development, giving them the model of civilized and ethical behavior, of language and emotional balance.

Teachers expect their students to be interested in building new scientific explanations, replacing the explanations they came with from home and high-schools, to be creative; to read theory, which is the explanations offered by the research, and to read it critically; to continually test the theories with data about reality, which they have to look for, to be continuously curious, etc. Ideally, the teacher-student relationship should be based on the following motivation: the desire of the first one to send and form knowledge and skills and the latter's desire to acquire knowledge and skills. The student is the one who, by imitating the teacher in order to contradict it, builds its own personality of a researcher. Thus, the relationship between the teacher and student would be a relationship whose purpose is education. In order to efficiently use all opportunities (formal, non-formal or informal) to provide or receive education, to adopt desirable behaviors as a teacher or as an educated person, the classical syntagm of pedagogy: "focusing on the student", recognizing the students as key actors in the process of educational development. The relationship between the teacher and student is a double relationship, an approach one and an academic one. Both relationships are important to live in a harmonious academic community, because there is no teacher without a student nor a student without a teacher. "When a person is trained, either through mentoring, or through continuous professional training, it gains immediate access to professional experience and perspective of that mentor or trainer" (Violeta Ciobanu, *Journal of organizational psychology*", Volume 1, no. 3-4, Polirom Publishing House, Bucharest, 2001, p. 61).

Studies have shown that positive progress is also obtained by these programs in other areas, mentioning a more flexibility and openness, communication and mutual understanding.

In order to find out the level of communication relationship between the professors and students of University of Pitesti, we made a questionnaire (Annex 1) on effective communication in the academic world. At completing the questionnaire it took part a number of 200 students and 30 professors of the University. Following the interpretation of the questionnaire answers, the results are as follows:

√ At the first question, namely: *How could be characterized the student-teacher communication at the University of Pitesti, in your opinion?*, 10% of the students consider the communication is effective in all cases, 50% believe that it is only sometimes effective, 20 % of the students consider the communication is satisfactory and 20% consider it to be poor. The teachers' answers were the following: 5% of the teachers consider the communication is effective in all cases, 45% believe that it is only sometimes effective, 30 % of the teachers consider the communication is satisfactory and 20% consider it to be poor.

√ At the second question: *What is the level of responsiveness of the information received from teachers among the students?*, 30% of the students believe that the level of responsiveness is high, 40% consider it average, 25% of the students consider it distorted, and 5% consider it almost null. The answers among the teachers were the following: 10% believe that the level of responsiveness is high, 60% considered it average and 30% consider it distorted.

√ In case of the third question, *How do you consider the communication between teachers within the University of Pitesti?*, 50% of the students consider the communication between teachers to be effective, 40% consider it relative and 10% of the students consider it ineffective. The teachers' answers were: 55% consider it to be effective, 40% consider it relative and 5% consider it to be ineffective.

√ At the fourth question, *Do you consider that Bologna-type university system will contribute to a better professional integration across Europe?*, 50% of the students believe that this system will certainly contribute to a better professional integration across Europe, 40% consider the system only an auxiliary factor and 10% of the students are neutral. From the answers of the teachers, it is noticed that: 50% believe that the Bologna-type system will certainly contribute to a better integration across Europe, 20% believe that is an auxiliary factor and 30% are neutral.

√ To the fifth question, *Do you think that the higher education in Romania has changed in the same time with the adhesion of the country into the European Union?*, 10% of the students believe that the higher education in our country has changed dramatically, 25% think it has changed only in a lesser extent, 60% believe that the changes will be evident over several years and 5% of the students believe that the higher education has not changed at all after the country's integration into the European Union. The teachers' answers were the following: 5%

believe that the higher education has changed dramatically, 35% believe that the system changed to a lesser extent, while 60% believe that the changes will be evident in a few years.

√ In the case of the sixth question, *Concerning the question above, how these changes influenced the Romanian university system?*, 57% of the students consider that these changes have influenced the Romanian university system positively, 3% believe that the higher education was influenced negatively and 40% are neutral. From the teachers' answers, it is to be noted that: 40% believe that these changes had a positive influence upon the education system and 60% are neutral.

√ At the seventh question, *Do you consider that the exchange of experience between the Romanian students and those from other European countries will have a beneficial effect on the transnational communication?*, both students and teachers gave affirmative answers unanimously.

√ At the eighth question, *Do you think that in the universities abroad the communication between students and teachers is more effective than in Romania?*, 5% of the students answered affirmatively, 55% believe that this varies from case to case, 35% are neutral and 5% answered negatively. The teachers' answers were the following: 40% believe that this varies from case to case, 55% are neutral and 5% answered negatively.

√ At the ninth question, *How do you think the communication in the academic world will be in the near future?*, 30% of the students consider the communication to be more effective, 40% see it somewhat improved, 10% see it unchanged and 20% believe it will be increasingly ineffective. The teachers answered as follows: 15% see the communication more effective in the future, 65% believe it will be somewhat improved, 15% see the communication unchanged and 5% think it will become increasingly ineffective.

√ At the tenth requirement, *List three steps by which you believe an effective communication could be obtained in the academic environment*, the steps often mentioned by most students were: teachers' empathy, a greater openness to students, teacher-student mutual respect, students self-esteem (compliance duties secretariats) and achieving the optimal environmental conditions (light, heat, modern and clean space), and the measures often mentioned by teachers were: relationship, appropriate scientific discourse, extra-university activities in that area.

√ In the case of the eleventh requirement *List three advantages of adding the European dimension in the Romanian university system*, the advantages listed by most students were: a better organization, the beneficial effects of globalization are visible, a better level of training for students, possibility of further education abroad and the opportunity of experience exchange with foreigners. The advantages listed by most teachers were: information flow, free access, openness to professionalism.

√ At the twelfth requirement, *List three things that a student need to do for a more effective communication regarding the teacher-student relationship*, the answers listed more often, both by the teachers and

students were: attending the courses in a greater proportion of the latter ones, students' seriousness in all related to the faculty, their active participation in courses and seminars. The teachers stressed the importance for students to have the courage to ask questions regarding any possible doubt.

√ Within the thirteenth requirement, *List three issues that a teacher need to consider for a more effective communication as regards the teacher-student relationship*, the answers often listed by teachers and students were: the work of carrying out projects should focus especially on teamwork, because it helps to a better communication between student-student and between student-teacher; attracting students to attending classes and seminars in an original manner (to link the theoretical information with real life, thus capturing the attention of students by making them participate in discussions). Most students have pointed out that their closeness to teachers is done through attractive teaching methods, such as: research trips, using new technologies in teaching (beamers, efficient laboratories, etc.). Many teachers consider important the distribution of questionnaires addressed to students by means of which they grant grades to their teachers regarding the methods of teaching, effective use of time for classes, etc. Some teachers support the idea of introducing a course for studying the grammar of Romanian language, regardless of the students' specialization. The arguments supporting this idea are the following: the way in which we express ourselves is very important, especially as future licensees, or the grammar of Romanian language is studied only in the gymnasium, this being somehow harmful to the whole society, because the rules of writing and even spelling change.

√ At the fourteenth question: *How do you find the communication at the secretariate level?*, 5% of the students consider the communication to be effective, 55% consider it relative and 40% of them consider it ineffective. From the teachers' answers, it is noted that: 30% of the teachers believe it is effective, 40% think that it is relative and 30% consider it ineffective.

√ In case of the last question: *How satisfied are you of the fact that you teach / study within the University of Pitesti?*, 70% of the teachers replied they were satisfied and 30% of them are neutral. In case of the students' answers, the results were as follows: 70% of them replied they were satisfied and 30% are neutral. Neither teachers, nor students have chosen the answer "not satisfied".

Following the interpretation of the questionnaire, it results that most students and teachers are satisfied with the fact that they study or teach at the University of Pitesti, but they believe there could be better for ensuring the quality of the communication level. The views of respondents on the level of communication of the secretariats were not quite satisfactory. There seems to be a problem in this regard. During the case study, after several exchanges of views with my colleagues I found that there is not a very good relationship between the secretariat staff and the students of the university, because the latter are not satisfied with the way they receive the information. Probably because the secretariats have to fulfill so many tasks, the time they would have to grant to students is used in solving other problems they considered more important. I might compare this situation with the lack of importance that some teachers give to gym classes or

homeroom classes in the gymnasium or secondary school, preferring to replace them with Mathematics, Romanian classes and so forth. Therefore, the students do not give due consideration to the classes "imposed" by the teachers and class masters, because they feel under pressure. That's the way things happen in the secretariats within the University of Pitesti. As I also mentioned above, the secretaries grant more time to other issues than those related to informing the students and thus arise stress states, affecting the communication relationship between these two parties.

At the same time, questionnaire answers proved that the most effective way to motivate the students is not only the recognition of merit, but also the non-formal side: extracurricular projects, the opportunity to experience the ideas and to test skills, exchanges of experience, carrying out probationary stages, etc. The integration of Romania into the European Union stressed the concerns over the directions of development of the Romanian university system, it offered the universities an explosion of opportunities and increased the competition by in its internationalization. The international relations is an essential component of the process of increasing quality. These issues also appeared in the University of Pitesti, and following the interpretation of the respondents' answers, it also results that the integration of Romania is a beneficial fact for the higher education.

2. Conclusions and recommendations

I believe that the conclusion of a research article should contain a balance stating its necessity for the contemporary world. In this balance situation, when it is completed a research on the communicative character in the educational field, a personal point of view is required. In this article, I proposed to bring forward for discussion the importance of communication and education in the academic world.

In the present article, the questionnaire developed for finding the quality of the level of communication between teachers and students is the point of originality because through it, both students and teachers had the opportunity to tell their point of view about the level of communication from the University of Pitesti. Some teachers have noted that it is important to introduce a course for studying the grammar of Romanian, regardless of the students' specialization. In this way, the students will be accustomed to all any changes that occur in DOOM (Spelling, Orthoepic and Morphological Dictionary) and at the same time they will also recall the grammar rules studied in the secondary school, while the teacher-student relationship will improve.

Following the interpretation of the questionnaire, it arise some deficiencies of the university, which if taken knowledge of, they can improve the strategy and communication method in this institution. For example, it was found that both teachers and students considere the communication non-satisfactory in the secretariats. This situation could be avoided if the secretaries would have a more light program, or where this is not possible, the staff of the secretariats could be increased.. Another effective method would be the introduction of some computerized mechanisms to help in carrying out the tasks of secretariats (ATMs, the introduction of payment systems found in banks, etc.).

Another thing to be remembered as a result of interpreting the questionnaire is that we have to encourage the exchange of experiences between the Romanian and foreign students. At the seventh question, *Do you consider that the exchange of experience between the Romanian students and those from other European countries will have a beneficial effect on the transnational communication?*, both students and teachers gave affirmative answers unanimously. It has also proved that the most effective way to motivate students is the non-formal side: extracurricular projects, carrying out probationary stages, teamwork, etc. and the integration of Romania into the European Union offered the universities opportunities in this regard and increased the competition by its internationalization. These issues were also occurred in the University of Pitesti.

Therefore, both the satisfactions and dissatisfaction of the students and teachers from the University of Pitesti were identified and I believe this may have an impact on the university personnel in improving the educational communication. It can also be increased the effective methods desired by the students and teachers in the process of training the future specialists.

Bibliography:

- Ciobanu, V., 2001, „Organizational Psychology Magazine”, no. 3-4. vol. 1, *Polirom Publishing House*, Bucharest
 Ionescu, M., and I., Radu, 2006, „Modern teaching”, *Dacia Publishing House*, Cluj-Napoca
 Secară, C., 2006, „Communication from science to art”, *University Publishing House from Pitești*, Pitești.

Appendix 1

QUESTIONNAIRE- EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN THE ACADEMIC WORLD

1. In your opinion, how could be characterized the student-teacher communication at the University of Pitesti?
 - a) effective in all cases
 - b) effective only sometimes
 - c) satisfactory
 - d) critical
2. What is the level of responsiveness of the information received from teachers among the students?
 - a) high
 - b) medium
 - c) distorted
 - d) almost null
3. How do you consider the communication between teachers within the University of Pitesti?
 - a) generally effective
 - b) relative
 - c) ineffective
 - d) non-existent
4. Do you consider that Bologna-type university system will contribute to a better professional integration across Europe?
 - a) yes, certainly
 - b) it is just a n auxiliary factor
 - c) I don't know, we'll see
 - d) definitely not
5. Do you think that the higher education in Romania has changed in the same time with the adhesion of the country into the European Union?
 - a) yes, dramatically
 - b) somewhat
 - c) I think the changes will be visible in a couple of years
 - d) no, not a t all
6. Concerning the question above, how these changes influenced the Romanian university system?
 - a) positively
 - b) negatively
7. Do you consider that the exchange of experience between the Romanian students and those from other European countries will have a beneficial effect on the transnational communication?
 - a) definitely yes
 - b) I don't know
 - c) no, this will only lead to loss of national legitimacy
8. Do you think that in the universities abroad the communication between students and teachers is more effective than in Romania?
 - a) yes, I'm sure
 - b) it depends from case to case
 - c) I don't know, I'm not interested in this
 - d) definitely not, the Romanians are recognized as being good communicators
9. How do you think the communication in the academic world will be in the near future?
 - a) much more effective
 - b) a little improved
 - c) unchanged

- d) increasingly ineffective
10. List three steps by which you believe an effective communication could be obtained in the academic environment.
11. List three advantages of adding the European dimension in the Romanian university system.
12. List three things that a student need to do for a more effective communication regarding the teacher-student relationship.
13. List three issues that a teacher need to consider for a more effective communication as regards the teacher-student relationship.
14. How do you find the communication at the secretariate level?"
- a) effective
 - b) relative
 - c) ineffective
15. How satisfied are you of the fact that you teach / study within the University of Pitesti?
- a) satisfied
 - b) neutral
 - c) non-satisfied.