

COMMUNICATION OF TEACHERS DURING PANDEMIC

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Abstract

Communication has been approached by different specialists, having multiple perspectives and being analyzed from a scientific, psychological, theological and social point of view.

Communication is one of the foundations of human existence. Without it, man would not have been able to fully detach himself from the condition of existence in animality and settle in the plane of mystery. (Lucian Blaga)

Communication plays one of the most important roles in our lives. We can say that everything that is alive can communicate, whether it is an individual, an animal or a cell. Even before it is born, the fetus communicates with its mother through various interactions. Cells communicate through the membrane. Everything in the human body communicates through different signals. In turn, animals interact with each other, and we humans are constantly communicating with other humans, even with ourselves.

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INTRODUCTION

Communication includes all methods of expression. We can interact through all kinds of means, from *verbal communication and written* until *communication artistic* through music, dance, painting, etc. The word carries broad meanings, letting us manifest this process exactly as we feel and want, as long as we follow all the rules.

Communication is a necessary condition for the world we live in and for our existence. This is one of the important factors of our evolution. The process is born spontaneously and has the role of helping us adapt. Communication is what contributes to the survival of individuals and, at the same time, to the creation of relationships with the people around us. Interaction is responsible for the way we organize our lives, helping political, economic organization, religious life, scientific activities, etc. All society needs communication.

"Communication (...) had a significant contribution in the process of adaptation to the varied environmental conditions throughout the historical stages. Communication can be considered the first tool used by man in solving problems and contributed decisively

*to the development of intelligence and the learning process . "*¹

The communication process is human and conscious, communication taking place from the desire to transmit information and receive it. It is a continuous and complex process, we need to follow certain steps to make the interaction possible. The process it manifests is irreversible (the message transmitted can have a great emotional impact for the receiver).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The methods used in this study were different: the historical method, the comparative method, the sociological method, the logical method and the analytical one, their aim was the systematic analysis of the information selected from the sources studied in order to develop personal points of view and conclusions about the stated objectives.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

As we well know, educational communication has happened so far at educational institutions,

¹George Hălărescu, *Perspective istorice și conceptuale despre comunicare*, suport de curs, https://www.academia.edu/34594447/Perspective_istorice_%C8%99i_conceptuale_despre_comunicare, accessed on 08.03.2022.

being an interaction between students and teachers, done in a physical environment, in the classroom. Students could spend their class hours in the pews and professors teaching in front of the students. The blackboard was one of the most important elements in the transmission of information, being a useful and effective teaching material for teaching. The introduction of technology in the way of teaching has been a slow evolution. New techniques include Powerpoint projects, educational videos on Youtube and online games such as Kahoot, etc. The charm that traditional education had and still has is that students and teachers felt in close touch with each other. The environment in which students attended classes was specially designed for their attention to the materials and teachers.

However, the emergence of the SARS-COV-2 virus forced this approach to change for a limited period of time. Thus, online education was introduced. The education system was not prepared for this stage and had to comply as soon as possible. Even if the debut of the online school was not a bright one for students and teachers, after almost a semester of activity, students and teachers managed to adapt to the situation. The state has introduced courses and masterclasses for teachers on technical information, strategies and uses of educational platforms. Students received free school supplies as well as necessary electronics (given to the needy) for attending classes.

The most used platforms were: Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom, GoogleMeet, Zoom and Moodle. The Moodle platform was the place where students and teachers had access to all the necessary teaching materials. As well as Google Classroom, an application where course materials and assignments could be found. Microsoft Teams, Zoom and GoogleMeet were the "rooms" where online activities could be carried out, based on the video call.

Students have easily adapted to all that online education means, but traditional school remains the preferred method. After participating in an interview focused on a focus group of 8 people, conducted by the students Lasc Alex, Stan Ioana, Butiri Petronela, Ardelean Mădălina and Lata Răzvan from the Faculty of Economic Sciences, I managed to listen to the opinions of the students regarding this new system. They created an analysis of the attitude and behavior of students of the University of

Oradea towards the use of the online environment in university education.

The statistics made reflected that the adaptation was easy for the students. Although there were positive opinions, it was not overlooked that there were quite a few problems and difficulties regarding online school. Impediments include poor internet connection and disruptive factors in the environment where students were connecting to class. Many students state that their exam grades have increased significantly, but their level of knowledge has stagnated. Some of the participants even talked about the fact that they experienced a decline in the quality of learning, public speaking and expressing opinions in a group, etc.

In terms of time management, all participants claimed to be making progress, managing to do more activities than usual, but not at peak levels because they are no longer focused on a single task. The interaction between students and peers or between teachers and students became absent and rigid, most felt stiffness and roboticism, a significant lack of empathy and anxiety about relating to other people.

The advantages that were registered for this educational system were:

- better time management;
- faster access to information;
- digitization;
- speed in correcting assignments or exams;
- interactive materials.

Disadvantages:

- physical and mental fatigue caused by the laptop/computer;
- lack of dedication;
- lack of interaction;
- lack of putting into practice what was taught;
- technical issues regarding educational platforms;
- faulty internet connection;
- lack of knowledge of colleagues or teachers.

All participants claimed that teaching materials became much more practical and interesting in the online environment and even that teachers quickly adapted to this way of teaching and interacting with students. Although classes became more interesting, students reported that they lacked attention in class, became disinterested, and did not turn on

their video cameras and microphones because of the distractions in their environment, as well as because they were simply not present and engaged in a completely different activity.

Likewise for educators, learners and teachers, online schooling has had a major impact, leading in some situations to frustration and anxiety. Many teachers stated that it is very difficult for them to teach "in some black squares" and that they do not feel listened to by the students. The lack of feedback was a significant impediment, as was the tendency for students to stop being creative. The teachers were aware that the students' temptation to copy is very high and they tried all kinds of means to force the student to think for himself (see ch. 6: *Case study. Communication of teaching staff during the pandemic. Stylistic analysis of the questionnaire*).

However, even though the period of online school was difficult, students and teachers adapted to the situation and managed to bring teaching and learning to a good enough level. This stage will remain a landmark period for the educational system and perhaps even a future option for people who want to study from home.

Questionnaire *Communication of teaching staff during the pandemic* (see *Annexes, Questionnaire 2*) was drawn up with the help of the website <https://docs.google.com/> on 10.08.2022, answers being accepted until 29.08.2022. 50 (fifty) anonymous responses have been issued to date, with 16 (sixteen) questions. The questions had different response types, divided into multiple choice, check boxes, linear scales with the possibility of scoring from 1 to 10, and short answers. The questionnaire tracked the way in which teachers communicated with students during the pandemic compared to the period before and how to adapt to the situation.

The first question was about the occupation that the participants have in the education system. 29 secondary, high school and university teachers, 5 educators and 16 teachers were registered.

To the question: *On a scale of 1 to 10, has your daily life been affected in a negative way during the pandemic?* (1 being the weakest and 10 being the strongest), 28 people stated with grades between 1 and 5 that the pandemic did not negatively influence their lives, and 22 people supported with grades ranging from between 6 and 10 that they felt a change negative in the life because of them the pandemic .

To the question: *On a scale from 1 to 10, were you able to communicate easily with the people around you?* (1 being the weakest and 10 being the strongest), 40 of people stated with marks between 1 and 5 that they were unable to communicate easily with the people around them, and 10 people claimed with marks between between 6 and 10 that they succeeded to interact easily.

By asking: *How did you get in touch with your students?* , we wanted to find out the method by which the teachers contacted their students, having as the method of choice type May box _ many answer options. From individuals, 46 chose the platforms educational, teams/zoom/classroom, 16 social networks, 13 mail, 12 telephone networks and 4 communication face in the face.

The question *how do you taken connection with colleagues your work ?* They had as a method of choice type box with many answer options. From teachers, 46 chose the platforms educational , Teams/ Zoom/ Classroom, 25 social networks, 17 mail, 41 telephone networks and 0 communication face in the face.

To the question next I chose to use the linear scale method with the possibility of scoring from 1 to 10. This is: *On a scale of 1 to 10, how difficult was it to adapt to online education?* (1 meaning the weakest and 10 the strongest), 16.7% chose grade 3 and 25% chose grade 5, meaning that it was not easy for them to adapt to online education, and 60% chose grades ranged from 6 to 10, meaning that it was quite easy for them to adapt.

In the questionnaire I chose to include some short-answer questions, among which are: "Describe in a few words how you found the experience of teaching online". To this, the answer was optional, thus we obtained 11 statements:

- *unpublished* (2 answers);
- *Online teaching is not effective in the long term. It cannot replace face-to-face teaching. Initially, online teaching was more difficult due to technical issues, but later these were largely resolved.*
- *Students have also adapted to the online environment, but it does not compare to face-to-face teaching.*
- *challenge ;*
- *We have adapted day by day, adding one technical way in online teaching.*

I consulted with colleagues to find out what was new. ;

- *Tough, you can't empathize with others very well. Communication suffers from many causes. At home, children are distracted by various things. ;*
- *New for both me and the little ones. Deficient in communication, different in every way. ;*
- *I consider the online experience a failure. ;*
- *The results from the national assessments have been seen. ;*
- *Interesting at first, then it got pretty boring. ;*
- *provocative .*

What did you find to be the difficulties in communicating and carrying out online activities? was a multiple choice box type question, 66.6% chose poor internet connection, 25% disruptive factors in the environment in which you attend online classes, 25% lack of empathy with students or colleagues, 66 % absence of students during class hours, 75% inattention of students during class hours due to disturbing factors such as the telephone/TV, etc., 66.7% refusal of students to turn on their video cameras, respectively the microphone during class hours, 16, 7% feelings of anxiety and the feeling that there are no participants in the discussion, 33.3% the feeling that they are not interested in what they communicate, 66.7% the tendency of students to copy and stop being creative and 33.3 % isolation.

To the question *Which method of teaching do you think is more effective, online or face-to-face?* 100% stated that face-to-face teaching is much more effective.

Regarding the question *What are the advantages of online communication?* , 75% of the participants stated that the advantage is that we can communicate in any place/ no geographic limitation and 41% the speed/ simplification.

What are the advantages of online teaching? it was a multiple choice box type question, of which 8.3% chose the fact that it saves more time, 33.3% the student can learn from anywhere, 25% is modern and a pleasant style of students , 25% is comfortable, 16.7% is flexible, 50% students/teachers can attend classes without moving.

To the question: *How do you feel about online versus face-to-face learning activities?* 15 people answered:

- *It is much more demanding, the feedback from the students is weak. ;*
- *soulless ;*
- *Online learning activities are not viable in the long term. I noticed this after the students returned to school. They ran out of patience and learning efficiency decreased. ;*
- *The student is comfortable learning from home, but I feel that online learning activities are not as effective as face-to-face. ;*
- *They are more difficult. ;*
- *It is harder for students who need multiple explanations to understand a concept. ;*
- *The activities for small children were very difficult. ;*
- *Although online is comfortable, certainly face-to-face activities are necessary for the development of the student, both socially, physically and mentally. ;*
- *Face-to-face learning activities are more effective. ;*
- *They seem less effective to me. ;*
- *Online are not so beneficial for students. ;*
- *Students cannot concentrate online. ;*
- *I prefer physical activities because teaching can be done much better. ;*
- *There are no terms of comparison between the two. ;*
- *Student feedback is very poor, students do not interact and do not pay attention.*

On a scale of 1-10 (1 meaning not at all, 5 meaning the same, and 10 very well) has communication with your students improved during the pandemic period compared to the normal period? 39 people said on a scale of 1 to 4 that interaction with students did not improve or remained the same, and 11 people said that they managed to improve their relationship with students.

To the question *Do you think that online education will be favored in the future?* 42% affirmed the answer Yes, and 58% No.

What type of education do you think is most suitable for students? Online or physical? Please justify your answer. There were 46 responses to this question:

- *face to face* (19 similar answers);
 - *Physical. The student is attentive, the instructional-educational process is efficient. ;*
 - *I believe that face-to-face education is the most suitable for students for the reasons I have previously stated. Online learning may be an option, but only for a short period. ;*
 - *I opt for the type of education with physical presence, because the student needs to be in a community to develop, to feel a competitive environment, to socialize, to empathize, to progress. ;*
 - *Face-to-face education because the psychology of the young schoolboy is based on concrete thinking. He needs to perform, to work with his hands to convince himself of the correctness of performing an exercise, a calculation. ;*
 - *For primary school students it is suitable by physical presence, they have not yet formed the will. ;*
 - *As I stated above, children need physical interaction, they need to discover, develop and evolve in an environment that offers them this possibility. Children perceive information better when it is transmitted face to face than in the online environment. ;*
 - *Being a student, being in the skin of a student, I could notice how difficult it was for me to communicate and learn in the online environment, being always distracted by small things. ;*
 - *For students, I think that education through physical participation is more appropriate. I think that education with physical presence at school is healthier. ;*
 - *Students need to communicate physically, make friends, learn to integrate into society. ;*
 - *face to face education. ;*
 - *Physically because they are captured like this and we have the opportunity to socialize face to face not through a microphone and without cameras. ;*
 - *online* (17 similar answers).
- *Not really, because it's demanding! Not because I have digital skills, I had many materials in electronic format! ;*
 - *I didn't particularly like it, but I adapted. ;*
 - *Online teaching was a new experience for me. It wasn't hard to adjust, but I can't say I enjoyed teaching online. ;*
 - *I was used to the online environment during my studies, so I adapted to the requirements, although it was not always easy due to technical difficulties or the inattention of the students. ;*
 - *difficult accommodation ;*
 - *It was quite difficult for me at first, but I adapted more easily after taking training courses (online teacher). ;*
 - *I didn't like it, it was very hard. ;*
 - *It was interesting, because the online also has a lot of interactive applications that you can use to "bring color" to the online environment. ;*
 - *I adjusted pretty easily, but it was hard for me not to see the little ones, to not interact physically, and to follow our usual schedule. ;*
 - *I adapted very well, but I didn't like it. Verification and assessment of acquired knowledge is not conclusive. Even if the camera is turned on, it can still be copied. ;*
 - *There are also the disruptive factors around them:*
 - *the mother who is doing something and still whispers ;*
 - *the cry of the younger brother. ;*
 - *TV. ;*
 - *It was interesting because I learned a lot of new things. ;*
 - *I adapted quite quickly, but I didn't reach great performances and, I'm sure, not even the most suitable teaching methods. ;*
 - *It was not difficult, but for students it is not a good solution.*

To the question *Did you enjoy teaching online? How hard was it to adjust? Please justify your answer.*, 11 responses were recorded:

CONCLUSIONS

Certainly the communication process has undergone changes over time, the pandemic being the moment when modern - online communication took off and was the most desired method by people.

Social media was the most important and useful element in the communication process, it played a vital role and helped us to survive in this period when we were not allowed to resort to traditional interaction.

We were able to gradually follow how communication changed over time and we were able to find all kinds of means to facilitate the exchange of information. We managed to adapt to the situation and balance what is happening around us. The period of the pandemic has reached a certain point to turn into a normality for us and to see it as a way of life with which we have to live and coexist.

All this unfortunate period has shown humanity that although we have come to communicate only through the phone and online, more and more we will prefer traditional communication with the people around us, because it is the only one that will always make us feel human and connected to each other.

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