

The Communication Paradigms in Education

Silvia IACOB

Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania
popescusilviaelena@yahoo.com

Georgeta ANDRONACHE (GOGEANU)

"Valahia" University Targoviste, Romania
g_gogeanu@yahoo.com

Abstract. *Communication is the key element in the optimizing process of the activity in any public/private organization. Moreover, within education institutions, communication is the mainstay in the management/organization of educational process, but also in coordinating the efforts to increase the institutional effectiveness and visibility.*

In order to meet all the expectations of the target audience concerning the access to information, reach the own communication targets for them and also strengthening the institutional image at national and international level, the development of an internal and external communication strategy to direct the entire activity is necessary.

Keywords: communication, education, communication strategy, information, knowledge.

JEL Classification: M2, M15, M50.

1. Introduction

Since ancient times, people have thought communication as one of the cornerstones of their existence, because the man is, above all, language. In all kinds of social, civic, political, professional and personal relations, communication is an engine, instrument and stake.

As essence of human interaction, communication arises from a deep need: the need to say, of being recognized or valued, to influence, or the need for affection and always has a purpose. Verbs such as to inform, persuade, get, cause (reaction), to be responsive, to be accepted give meaning to the act of communication.

The literature defines communication as a process of transmission and reception of a message or as negotiation and exchange of meanings between individuals or communities which leads to understanding.

Optimal operation of any human community depends on communication. The continuous exchange of messages generates the unity of vision and, consequently, action by harmonizing knowledge on aims, ways and means to achieve them by promoting the skills needed, by relatively homogenizing groups in terms of affectiveness (emotional feelings) and motivation (opinions, interests, beliefs, attitudes) (Stancu, 1999, p. 36)

Communication occupies a vast polysemnatic field. It is part of reflection, also of action, acting as a social binding (Zemor, 2003, p. 17).

For Paul Watzlawick communication is a *sine qua non* condition of social order and human life in general.

At the collective mind level, communication identifies itself with both transfer and participation. Communication is not monologue, but perception, mutual understanding, commitment. Communication is the word, mimicry, gesture, information, knowledge, education.

In contemporary society, the competition success is measured not only in labor and capital, but especially in information and knowledge, the latter becoming inexhaustible strategic resources. Their proper management should be a priority for any organization that exceeded the paradigm of industrial society and made the shift toward the knowledge-based society paradigm.

Communication as a process, but also as a profoundly human act is capable of producing major changes in any field of activity and especially in education, an area where the formative action is performed by humans and it is mirrored in man.

2. Communication in the educational process

The Law of National Education states in art. 68 the eight key areas of competence concerning education, out of which two are centered on communication (in Romanian or foreign languages). Therefore, the role of teaching communication is not only to convey knowledge, but also to train skills. Didactic communication as a form of communication

and axiomatic principle of teaching activity, implies an educational message developed by teacher, aiming at formative intervention on the one being educated, which may be assessed by reverse connection, both external and internal.

The communication realized in the educational process is subject to a number of cognitive, social, psihosemantic and psychological variables. Its stability, consistency, efficiency depends on teacher's knowledge and skills.

Starting from the operational concept evolution of pedagogical communication, a shift from the unilateral nature of the informative communication to the bilateral nature of the formative communication is detected. The emphasis is on the role of the learners, the teacher and student interaction that generates a *motivational balance* ensuring their *coevolution*.

Table 1. *Pedagogical communication needs*

Pupil's needs	Teacher's needs
Motivation	Motivation skills
To be heard	Active listening skills
To be taken seriously	Empathy
To be understood	Reflection skills
To be encouraged	Encouragement skills
To be respected	Anticipation skills
To be informed	Ability to deliver the message, discernment
To identify the problem and solve it	Problem-solving skills, support
To be able to choose	Negotiation skills
Be safe	Conflict-solving skills

Source: Plugaru, 2012. *Course Book*.

The formative character of educational communication is determined by the teachers' ability to organize and transmit information, build competences in the pedagogical approach, adapt and focus the pedagogical message to the individual and group features of learners, to find a common repertoire with the disciple from intellectual, motivational, affective perspective.

This modus vivendi between teacher and student at communication level is the result of the teacher's capacity to interact, to observe, to empathize. Simple remarks such as, "He/She always wants to have the last word", "too polite and subject to", "lost in many unnecessary details", "He/She does not say what he/she believes/thinks", "He/She always wants to be right", "He/She never looks into the collocutor's eyes", etc. are able to guide the teacher in the educational process. It is true that success is determined by the experience that he/she has accumulated as well, the ability to eliminate or diminish fears: losing the logic of the teaching approach, the credibility in front of the students, the calmness or energy, lowering the authority, rigor, of being caught in an emotional conflict, abandoning the design thought, conformism fear, of eroding their image. It is also important to make a distinction between professional and ethics competence, between communication as training aim and the ability to comply with standards, between the desire to communicate and politeness.

In the process of education, the teacher needs operating skills with scientific contents, but also interpersonal communication skills. There are teachers who easily transmit the contents, who adequately select the appropriate teaching-learning methods and techniques, stimulate students' interest in knowledge, identify ways to motivate them, are concerned with the correct assessment of progress and equally empathize, offer emotional support, are models of professionalism, but also moral support.

What defines a teacher may be synthetically expressed by four verbs: to think, to know, to feel, to act (Feiman-Nemser, 2008: p. 96).

To think endorses the critical examination of the teaching endeavour, of the approach opportunities to contents, but also towards a socio-affective motivational climate.

To know is connected with mastery of specific scientific contents, but also the discipline methodology, curricula, pedagogical concepts. More and more teachers use in teaching a range of methods and techniques for collecting information (the map problem, the census issue, the kinesthetic map, brainstorming, round table, systemic analysis, SWOT analysis, analysis of causes and consequences, graphic organizers, personal reflection, independent/group reading/critical observation), or methods based on communication (argumentation, reading, "Evocation. Making sense. Personal Reflection", "I know. I want to know. I have learned", study guide, Mutual query, Interactive Grading System for Improving Reading and Thinking (IGSIR), focus group, rotating controversy, interrupted controversy, the aquarium technique, the panel discussion etc.).

To feel talks about flexibility, empathy, responsibility, trust, initiative, creativity, and devotion.

To act merges all that one thinks, knows and feels in a harmonious whole that defines him/her as a professional and as a human being. Action also requires effective communication, i.e. the presentation and the message decoding competence, the comprehensive attitude towards the interlocutor, the active listening behaviour, knowing each other, monitoring sympathy and antipathy towards the other, science reasoning, the acknowledge of the fact that the paradigms of interpersonal communication are to be found in pedagogical communication as well.

Taking into account that *the range of existing paradigms or models is inevitably wide* (McQuail, 2010, p. 49), this paper does not propose a comprehensive approach.

For a long time, the dominant paradigm in education has been the instructional one, in which the learning process is linear, the teacher being the one who provides knowledge. The same paradigm is reflected in the behaviorist theory according to which the teacher is the one who structures and organizes forward content to learn, complete the contents, usually taken from textbooks. In the educational process the student has a predominantly passive role, that of receiver, memorizing information/knowledge without processing it, without having it crossed through the own filter.

The overall development of society, of science, the changes registered in the mentality and content required a new paradigm change. Consequently, this paradigm shift was made towards learning. The cognitive theory emphasized the active role of the student in

learning, new processing having as foundation the previous knowledge, between the new information acquisition and their relevance being directly proportional.

According to some authors, the student's role was not sufficiently defined in the educational process. *The organization of higher education, the University building, we are supposed to start not from science nor from the teacher. The University must be the student's institutional project.* (Ortega y Gasset, 1999, p. 50). The constructivist theory is being developed and places the student at the very heart of learning, its optimization being possibly achieved by exchanging experiences through co-participation in the dialogue. This theory requires information processing in the students' inner forum and *building their own respect* as necessity.

In order to study phenomena related to communication, psychology itself highlights four paradigms: the structural-expressive paradigm, the formal-transactional paradigm, the phenomenological and praxeological paradigm and the relational-systemic one.

According to professor Sorin Cristea, the structural-expressive paradigm may be used in planning and organizing teaching communication. *The strategic solution is to capitalize the structural-expressive paradigm in the sense of that pedagogical constructivism that can eliminate any tendency/temptation to approach teaching as "pathological communication".*

While planning pedagogical communication, the teacher covers the following steps:

- goals, skills and specific aims setting;
- information resources specification;
- significant information selecting and processing;
- information ordering using inductive, descriptive thematic, causal, chronological variant, etc.
- an anchor plan of ideas to underline relevant information;
- developing several versions of the message;
- final version selection.

As an indispensable element of the educational activity, communication is transactional (a process whose components are interrelated, teacher-student interaction being a synergistic one), symbolic (conventionally realized through signs and symbols), inevitable (impossible not to communicate) irreversible (a message delivered can not be canceled/withdrawn), held at informational and relational level, it involves adjustment and adaptation processes and also regular feedback.

At the same time with the transition to the informational society and, thereafter, to the knowledge-based society, the socio-technical paradigm is adopted. The overall transformation of this paradigm is reflected at institutional level, including those in education, the crisis of modern institutions being perceived, but also the emergence of new types of communities. New values and ethical codes occur, and mutations at ideological and value level, at technological and economic system level, at communication level are registered.

Educational communication as circular processuality is characterized by low educational intervention. For this intervention to produce beneficial changes in learners' skills and awareness level, the teacher must permanently take care of communication personalizing, of active listening encouragement, attitudinal component stimulation (assertiveness), of conflict management and barriers communication reduction, the rules of transmission message (brevity, clarity, accountability, appropriateness, negotiation, cooperation), avoidance / mitigation of communication inhibitors factors (sarcasm, hypercriticism, stiffness, apathy, etc.).

... The education institution is the place where communication is learned; the place where it is studied and improved; where communication is created; where communication is cultivated. Here, communication has the meaning of human and social value, that is why educating communication constitutes an end in itself, a major goal of education to which all subjects must give their own contribution. (Cristea cited Nicolae, 2011: p. 5).

3. Professional communication in educational institutions

Communication in the education system organizations must be a permanent and sustainable one. The mere fact of communication is not enough. It is necessary to know what, why and how we can communicate. Because the act of communication is not only an enhancement of activity in schools and universities, but rather one of the essential elements in supporting and achieving individual and institutional aims. It can not graft on any activity without prior analysis, because within its irreversible nature, it produces immediate effects.

Organizational communication should be a reflection of reality, an element which confers individuality to institution, but also a project of it.

Beyond teaching communication, both internal and external communication are to be taken into consideration.

At the policies level, it is expected that by 2020 the European Union will become the Innovation Union. The starting point of this initiative is also to promote excellency in the development of modern education. Thus, higher education reform becomes a necessity, since it has been found that the number of European universities that rank among the Top Universities is relatively low.

Each higher education institution ought to shape and implement its own strategy to enhance the quality of students applying to attend the courses and to attract/form researchers, taking into account that we have been crossing a mobility and transnational cooperation period.

A higher education institution should provide a long-term perspective, understood and accepted by all stakeholders, internally and externally. It is sometimes considered that the use of cutting-edge information technologies, of various communication media is sufficient for an efficient communication process. This is a quite common error as their use outside a strategic design has no coherence, clarity and fails to achieve organizational

goals. Sporadic communication, especially of the successful results of the activity does not replace the existence of a strategic vision embodied into the organization strategy. Managing communication must be realized according to an overall strategic plan. In its absence, we talk about random communication in which disorders related to information quality, data volume and their spread occur.

Communication strategy is part of the institutional strategy. *Strategic communication is a driving force to create, manage and disseminate organizational excellence in delivering services and human capital management* (Nicolae, 2011, p. 23).

The main aim of strategic communication is precisely the fact that it mobilizes institution to promote and strengthen its image, to determine its strengths and those requiring improvement and depending on them to identify the progress margin, the risk factors and to place itself from competitive perspective.

Table 2. *Sizes of strategic communication*

Features	Indicators of achievement
The strategic orientation – essence of life	The ability to identify, send, receive and understand strategic information quickly, to distinguish the credible and relevant information received from the one received, according to the firm's strategic intentions.
Perspective	Strategy understanding and implementation reasons.
Assuming responsibilities and roles	Assigning responsibilities regarding communication at management level, but also of each employee.
Clarity and consistency	Develop clear messages that provide coherence, strategy stability.
Balance and consistency in listening	Ability awareness that active listening is a way of learning from others' experience.
The flow of strategic information	Contribution of rapid flow, constants of strategic information towards organization welfare.
Credibility of information	The level of integrity of the educational institution within strategic communication
Dignity and respect	Establishing a communication based on trust and responsibility both in the internal and external environment.
Continuous improvement	Training employees to support progress, change, improvement.
Evaluation	Establishing the efficiency level of strategic communication and identifying practical improvement solutions.

Source: after Nicolae, 2011. *Communication education*.

Seneca said *that there is no favorable wind for those who do not know where they're going ...* A simplistic approach, fragmentary in communication, based solely on the quality of teaching and episodic relations with the media is not able to ensure consistency in the work of the institution, no goals achievement and no extra image. Therefore, the communication process must be carefully organized and professionally implemented in a frame of a strategy.

4. Highlights in developing the communication strategy of the "X" University

I. Europe 2020

Europe 2020 Strategy is a reference for higher education institutions thereby giving an overall view of Europe in the XXIst century related to the social market economy. It proposes three mutually reinforcing priorities:

- Smart growth: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation;
- Sustainable growth: promoting a more efficient economy in terms of resource use, more ecologic and more competitive;
- Inclusive growth: promoting an economy with a high rate of employment, ensuring social and territorial cohesion.

The first target of the 2020 Strategy directs the efforts of the "X" University in a bid to improve the quality of services provided, strengthen research performance, promote innovation and knowledge transfer and contribute to achieving the European goal whereby at least 40% of the young generation should have a tertiary degree.

II. SWOT Analysis

STRONG POINTS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teachers with teaching and scientific experience. ▪ Compliance with the entire staff station. ▪ Compliance with Law no. 544/2001 on free access to information of public interest, as amended and supplemented. • Intra and inter-institutional relations based on respect. ▪ A system of effective internal management control. ▪ Communication procedures. ▪ Institutional Strategic Plan. ▪ The existence and functionality of the website. ▪ Ability to respond to requests from students, educational partners, the media. Public relations department. ▪ International bilateral partnerships which includes components for cooperation in research. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Insufficient human and material resources. ▪ Few basic norm researchers in the university. ▪ Lack of a system of efficient and rapid capitalization, also dissemination of activity. • Insufficient funds needed to modernize the communication system. ▪ Inconsistency in the application of operational procedures in the field of internal and external communication. ▪ Insufficient performant electronic equipment. ▪ Lack of a computerized system for managing internal documents. ▪ Few informative materials (brochures, Posters, flyers etc.) involved in promoting the university. ▪ Insufficient communication with students and their low involvement in the university that concern them directly. ▪ Lack of communication strategies.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ EU regional development policy - with access to structural, economic and social cohesion funds. ▪ Directives and policies, including the Europe 2020 strategy. ▪ Examples of best-practices achieved through partnerships with similar educational institutions all over the country and abroad. ▪ Increasing access to various sources of information. ▪ Existence of IT solutions for the development of an integrated information system at university level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Frequent changes in the legislative framework in the field of education. ▪ Limitations of the budget allocated at national level. ▪ Negative population growth. ▪ Competition from universities in other European countries.

III. General principles

For "X" University communication is one of the essential components of the activity, decisive in terms of success and organizational effectiveness.

The principles and core values of communication are in accordance with the general principles of the university and applied regardless the target audience particularities or the context:

- the principle of respect the human dignity, equality of opportunity and treatment;
- the principle of relationship and visibility;
- the principle of information and knowledge;
- the principle of transparency in activity and decision-making;
- the principle of flexibility in communication;
- the principle of management efficiency;
- the principle of strengthening social dialogue at all levels;
- the principle of public accountability.

IV. The purpose and objectives of the strategy

The aim of the Communication Strategy is *to identify the main action directions concerning the university internal and external pedagogical communication.*

Objectives:

- establishing a pattern of internal and external communication;
- maintaining good relations among all the actors involved in the educational process and the target audience;
- increasing the quality of work at the university level through flexible information flows;
- prioritization of guidelines at university level in order to improve internal and external communication;
- correct, applied and transparent information of the target audience;
- ensuring the university visibility, internally and externally.

V. Target Audience

A. Internal Target Audience

- professors;
- associated personnel;
- research staff;
- students;
- auxiliary staff;
- non-teaching staff;

B. External Target Audience

- Students, adults-potential students;
- representatives of other universities;
- scientific community;
- representatives of operators, public or private companies in Romania, non-governmental organizations and mass media;
- entities that directly or indirectly interact with the university;
- the general public made up of all citizens;
- Local/national/international community.

VI. Channels and media

A. Internal Communication Channels

- Direct communication in individual meetings, work meetings, meetings of the governing bodies, workshops;
- Organising information and training sessions for the staff/students.
- Communication via the display of information of interest to the students and staff.
- Organisation of scientific events: communication sessions, conferences, experience exchanges.
- Communicate electronically to ensure rapid information flow.
- Communication through published materials: magazines, handouts, plans seminars etc.

B. External Communication Channels

- Direct communication by organizing public information events on outstanding results, dissemination of research results or projects with budget funds or grants.
- Organize information sessions for future potential students on study programs, masters or doctoral studies.
- Communication by electronic means, through the media.
- Communication through edited and printed informative material to promote the university.

C. Means of communication and advertising

- Events: seminars, conferences, forums, workshops, student contests, anniversaries, launching new programs, development of partnerships etc.;
- Creation of a website, email addresses and institutional internal mail;
- Developing/updating/adaptation pages in social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn) of the University;
- Video conferencing, Intranets, blogs;
- Public speaking, team-building;
- Editing the university magazine, brochures and leaflets in electronic format, thematic CDs and DVDs, PowerPoint presentations, etc. Prezzi;
- Printing of information material: newsletters, flyers, brochures, directories, guides, reports;
- Existence of Library Electronic Catalogue;
- Press conferences, interviews in published materials, audio-video, video presentations;
- Indoor / outdoor materials (billboards, operational plans, etc.)

VII. Strategic Resources

Human resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ public relations department staff; ▪ management team; ▪ teaching staff; ▪ other interested partners in promoting the results of educational partnerships;
Material and financial resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ extrabudgetary resources from implementation; ▪ national and international projects; ▪ self-financing; ▪ sponsorships, donations; ▪ brochures, directories, reports, CDs / DVDs, thematic guides, newsletters etc. ▪ electronic equipment; ▪ consumables.

Information resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The Europe 2020 Strategy, The EU Sustainable Development, the National Strategy for Sustainable Development; ▪ specific legislation; ▪ websites: the Ministry of Education and Research, partner universities, businesses etc; ▪ Setting a development of a communication strategy guide; ▪ guide materials for strategy implementation; ▪ good practice examples of partner institutions.
Experience and expertise resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ public relations and communication department specialists; ▪ management team; ▪ university professors who deliver/provide courses in communication, PR, information technology, marketing; ▪ IT/ computer science specialists; ▪ Strategies and Public Policy Unit of the MECS
Time resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>annually allocated for:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – <i>establish lines of action;</i> – <i>strategic partnerships;</i> – <i>implementation of project activities;</i> – <i>impact assessment strategy implementation;</i> – <i>dissemination of best practices;</i> – <i>training sessions attendance;</i>
Authority and power resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ministry of Education and Research ▪ NGOs ▪ Partners.

VIII. Strategic options

Curriculum development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establishing the institutional strategy of internal and external communication. ▪ Establish in each faculty strands for communication. ▪ Provide relevant information to all target audiences. ▪ Establishing the methodology and procedures for strategy implementation and evaluation. ▪ Adapt teaching business communication needs of students in the XXI century. ▪ Updating the theme courses/seminars to the demands of a knowledge-based society.
Human resources development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inform all stakeholders on the communication strategy and procedures implementation methodology. ▪ The participation of interested personnel in courses/workshops on the issue of communication, information technology, media, and marketing strategies. ▪ Cooperation with the existing/external marketing communication specialists. ▪ Attracting resource persons of experience and expertise to support courses for master and doctoral programs.
Developing material and fundraising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure the logistics for strategy implementation. ▪ The purchase of materials, equipment through projects with European funding. ▪ Making a point of information on the activities, issues of interest to various target audiences. ▪ Purchase/editing of information materials, software. ▪ Attracting extrabudgetary funds as a result of writing and implementing projects.
The development community relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify prospective partners in developing and implementing the communication strategy. ▪ Collaborate with all public and private institutions that may support the work of the university and might promote its image. ▪ Development of activities included in the action plan.

XI. Expected results

- Providing access to information for all educational actors.
- Internal quality assurance of education provided.
- Increase the staff and students' satisfaction level.
- Making the institution's database concerning communication flows.

- Focusing on communication at the management level, as essential element of institutional performance and efficiency.
- Intra- and inter-institutional communication behaviour change.

X. Information, publicity, evaluation strategy monitoring activity.

Information and communication activity will be monitored according to the plan of action through a number of means such as:

- Applying questionnaires among the internal target audience;
- Conducting surveys among potential students' accessibility to information of interest;
- Application of interviews and analysis group to provide feedback on the effectiveness of communication undertaken.
- Carrying out analysis on the degree of information (graphs, polls, etc.).
- Recording and estimating the number of visitors to the website of the university.
- Interpretation of the results of the evaluation of teachers by students.
- Evaluation of intra and inter-institutional communication aims: the strategy quality, its implementation and its impact.

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