

MANAGERIAL COMMUNICATION WITHIN PRE-UNIVERSITARY EDUCATION- MAIN COMPONENT OF THE EDUCATIONAL POLITICS - A CASE STUDY ON „MARIA TEIULEANU” ECONOMIC COLLEGE IN PITESTI

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“The competence of teachers and especially that of the managers from all kinds of tuition, broadly conditions the future of the country.”

Alexandru Puiu

Abstract:

The present paper is structured in three parts. “Managerial communication and its strategies at organisational level” makes reference to Managerial Communication as a subject. The communication strategies at the organisational level are determined and some of them are also defined: control strategy, dynamic strategy, acceptance strategy, egalitarian strategy, structural strategy or avoidance strategy.

The paper continues with “Communication within schools”, on the example of “Maria Teiuleanu” Economic College in Pitesti, tackling the idea: “Valuable education- education for values”.

There follows the SWOT analysis of the activity within this institution. The managerial vision, the mission and the values promoted within the school are highlighted as well as some of the strategic priorities which will guide the whole activity, the didactic and educational activity for the current school year.

The next perspectives which open in what regards the training of teachers within the field of education are tackled:

1. The development of some real collaboration relations between the experts who teach didactics and psycho pedagogy.

2. The training of some teachers who should be able to use the textbook in an optimum way under the conditions of the modern curriculum.

3. The reform of the promoting system on the grounds of the revision of the didactic personnel status and of the official introduction of some standards of didactic profession.

The paper ends with some “Perspectives” which can improve communication within the school in the present situation and also within the existent institutions in what regards:

A. Communication in the relations between school/teachers and students.

B. Communication between the teachers, respectively teachers and the school managers.

C. Communication between school and community (parents including).

All things considered, it can be said that, according to the new requirements of the educational politics, the capable managers have the possibility and at the same time the duty towards themselves and the communities they manage, to establish the managerial strategy characterised by a set of values that they have to propose and promote within the learning and tuition process.

Keywords: *management communication, strategies, values, perspectives*

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1. Managerial communication and its strategies at organisational level

Managerial communication was set up as a subject of management out of the need of managers having at their disposal the optimal means of interaction in the view of fulfilling their functions and roles. Later, it developed as a subject of study which offers more than a “working tool” to managers and to their organisations. Efficient managerial communication represented a competitiveness factor, a strategic advantage of the organisations.

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Communication strategies at organisational level

Communication is considered a vital component and resource of the functioning of the organisation. “**The organisational culture** represents a structured assembly of the material and spiritual materials of the organisation integrating a system of values and beliefs which is systematically cultivated and transmitted within its members and outside the respective organisation “(Puiu Alexandru, 2004, p. *Management – Analize și studii comparative*. Pitești: Ed. Independența economică).

It is rather difficult to define the notion of “communication within the organisation” bearing in mind that it applies to a totally different area and fields. They can be summarised and classified into **four categories**:

1. Interpersonal rapports within the organisation: motivation problems, recruitment of the personnel, daily rapports between the clerks, spatial organisation of working places;
2. Information distribution, circulation and use, in other words, the enterprise as an information system: dispositions, procedure formalisation, spreading of intern information;
3. Communication management between the leading staff and the employees: human resources management, internal journals;
4. External communication based on products (advertising, marketing, products way of using) or on the organisation itself (institutional communication).

At organisational level, the strategies of individual communication acts have to integrate within a unitary communication strategy which should assure the implementation of the organisation strategy, both through direct action, but also indirect, through the created communication climate.

Function of the specific situation in which the organisation is at a certain moment, but also of the direction which it follows, different types of communication strategies are appropriate. The most frequently used strategies are:

a) Control strategy

By means of this strategy the manager coerces and directs. It is a one direction communication which uses feedback especially for qualification. It is frequently based on the individual styles of the “reprehending” and “informing/conducting” types. It is recommended in urgency situations when time is the critical element and the manager needs indisputable authority over the people involved. It is also useful in the instruction process of the new employees, in working with dependant, unable employees or who are not motivated for the work they do. If the control strategy is used in a wrong way, it can generate negative feelings, resistance to change or opposition from the part of those not bearing direct control. For this reason the control strategy is not recommended for the change implementation situations.

b) Dynamic strategy

Communication is direct and concise and the content of the messages is pragmatic and action-oriented. It is based on the “informing/conducting” and “persuading” individual styles. Communication is not of the supportive type but it is oriented to immediate activities the manager and the organisation confront with. It is not to be applied in situations which involve distant future. It is to be recommended to the managers who act in areas found in a rapid change. It differs from the control strategy in that the manager, in his communication acts, presents a brief declaration of his position and afterwards he delegates the authority in making decisions and acting to the interlocutor who, at the same time, he stimulates and motivates and motivates. The key of the success of this strategy consists in the performer’s competence and the existence of a trust climate.

c) Acceptance strategy

It is characterised by the acceptance of the interlocutor’s viewpoint which can be, for example, a team of consultants or the auditing commission. It is to be applied when the

purpose of the communication is, for example, that of eliciting the opinion of some specialists regarding the internal processes, the market or the competition. It is an inappropriate strategy for situations in which the responsibility transfer is desired or in the communication with people without initiative since they could interpret the respective means of communication as a sign of weakness and incompetence.

d) Egalitarian strategy

It is characterised by a bilateral transfer of information in which the influence is reciprocal; supportive communication elements are manifested. Making decisions is based on consensus. Through this strategy a mutual agreement atmosphere is generated. The predominant individual communication style is the “problem solving” one. It is recommended in forming and uniting the groups, in implementing participating management, in communicating with small groups when time is not a constraint, in the process of mandating employees. It is a very indicated strategy for the decreasing of the resistance to change and for the introduction of the change and but it is not effective in communication with incompetent people, lacking experience, knowledge or initiative, in urgency and crisis situations.

e) Structural strategy

This kind of strategy is successfully used by managers in establishing order in the process of institutional reorganisation, in the introduction of organisation and planning in very complex situations in which clarifications and permanent transmission of instructions are needed. As a predominant individual style, the manager uses “informing-directing” or “persuading” through maintaining standards and procedures, establishing objectives, distributing and explaining tasks, encouraging the employees to respect deadlines. The managers conduct communication towards the assistance of the structure. Structural strategy is not recommended in critical situations or with emotional implications, in evident and simple situations or when the organisation functions in a stable environment.

f) Avoidance strategy

This strategy is used to avoid communication in relation with certain situations, events or states. In general, it solves few problems and it is recommended in situations in which the avoidance of delivering information is to be imposed or when the emotional tension is very high.

2. Communication in tuition institutions

Managerial communication can be defined as an intentioned process of transfer of information and meanings between people, groups, levels or organisational subcomponents and whole organisations. At educational level systems and communication procedures are built having as their purpose the realisation of managerial functions (projecting, organising, monitoring, evaluating, etc) in the specific functional areas (curriculum, human resources, physical and financial resources, institutional development and cooperation). The specific functional areas have been analysed both from the point of internal communication (at the level of organisational subsystems) and that of external communication (with other institutions and organisations from the tuition system and from the outside). Using the existent data, there have been tackled the following aspects:

A. The presence of pupils as communication partners. Communication with pupils will not be tackled from the educational point of view (even if the managerial perspective is justified in this case), but from the organisational one.

B. Communication between teachers.

C. Communication between teachers and the school managers.

D. Communication between school and family.

E. Communication with the school partners within and outside the school system, from the local community and from the outside.

“Valuable education – education for values”

A. The socio-economic and political context of the current school year imposes the necessity of connection to the European standards and requirements in the educational field. The study of the European educational systems and the implementation of progress elements are becoming a moral obligation towards the young generation. The initiation and organisation of some activities to lead to the achievement of these standards are taken into consideration when creating the Managerial Plan.

B. The SWOT analysis of the activity carried at “Maria Teiuleanu” Economic College in Pitesti within the current school year highlights the following aspects:

Strengths

- pupils are motivated for learning;
- pupils’ encouragement to obtain some prizes at regional, national and international level;
- “Maria Teiuleanu” Economic College in Pitesti offers good academic training;
- relaxed atmosphere, of reciprocal trust;
- varied offer of school and extra-school programmes which leads to the personalisation of the teaching-learning process;
- good equipment;
- good relations with parents and community.

Weaknesses

- mainly extrinsic motivation for professional development, complacency, tendency to exaggerate their own role in the pupils’ successes;
- indifference, passivity, lack of attitude of some substitute teachers in what regards the teacher-pupil relationship;
- lack of real communication, coordination, cooperation between the teachers to harmonise the educational influences (“we all have *the same pupil* and at the same time *a diversity* of pupils”).

Opportunities

- a new batch of very good pupils;
- diversity of training courses addressed to the teachers, within convenient programmes;
- possibility of the pupils who have set up training firms to take part in National and International Fairs organised by ROCT.

Threats

- lack of relevant means of motivation and enforcement for teachers;
- centralised hiring system based on irrelevant criteria;
- absence of sponsors to develop the school equipment.

The managerial conception for the current school year is based on the fulfilment of the educational ideal proposed by the Tuition Law and by the documents of educational politics of the National Educational Ministry. From this perspective the finalities of high school tuition have in view the training of a graduate able to decide on his own career, on his intellectual and professional development, being actively involved in the social life. In order to obtain this, the high school has to lead to the fulfilment of the following finalities:

- The formation of the ability to reflect upon the world, to formulate and solve problems, relating knowledge from various fields;
- The valorisation of personal experience;
- The development of functional competences essential for the social success (communication, critical thinking);
- The shaping of moral self-sufficiency.

Managerial vision

Starting from these wishes established by the effectual educational documents, in the current school year there is in view the concentration of the efforts in order for the students

to acquire a **good general training, deepened knowledge** in the areas relating to their future career, **competences** necessary to the **social insertion** and **intellectual work skills** to be able to learn throughout their life. The whole activity will be organised in such a way that within “**Maria Teiuleanu**” **Economic College** in Pitesti will be created a professional educational environment at high instructional and moral standards.

The moral and action profile of the graduate from “**Maria Teiuleanu**” **Economic College** in Pitesti is characterised by a set of values which we propose to promote by means of the teaching and education process.

Values promoted within “Maria Teiuleanu” Economic College in Pitesti:

Integrity – having the inner power to tell the truth, to act honestly.

Wise judgement – to define and understand valuable purposes and establish the priorities; to think by means of the action consequences and to fundament the decisions on practical wisdom.

Responsibility – to carry out consistently the obligations each one has, assuming responsibility for their own actions.

Respect – to show sympathy towards people, authorities, property and, not least, to their own person.

Perseverance – to be consistent and find the strength to go on despite the difficulties or personal failures.

Courage – to have the strength to do what is right and follow their own conscience.

Self discipline – to control their own actions, words, wishes, impulses and have an appropriate behaviour to each situation; to do their best in any situation.

Kindness – to show care and sympathy, friendship and generosity towards the others.

All the teachers have the moral and professional obligation to organise their lessons and extra school activities in order to form students able to:

- know their own value;
- communicate efficiently with the others;
- plan and fulfil tasks;
- think independently;
- solve problems by themselves;
- try to overcome themselves;
- learn to protect themselves.

In order to form these competences in students, all the teachers from “**Maria Teiuleanu**” **Economic College** have to prove by daily activity that they have these competences too.

„Maria Teiuleanu” Economic College - **Mission**

Our mission is the development of each student at their maximum potential; we place great emphasis on the development of the values promoted through the educational philosophy of the school and of the key competences which permit their social insertion and lifelong learning.

Strategic priorities

For the current school year we will direct the whole activity, the teaching and educational process on the following **strategic priorities**:

- Raising the teachers’ professional level;
- Adopting strategies for the personalisation of the teaching-learning process;
- Elaborating teaching and evaluation standards within “Maria Teiuleanu” Economic College in Pitesti for the speciality subjects, Romanian language, Mathematics, ICT and Foreign languages;
- Developing ICT skills, using ICT as a learning tool;
- Raising the responsibility of each teacher towards pupils, parents and community.

For the current school year we have in plan to continue the structuring of the managerial activity with the involvement of each department and the teachers while planning it in the idea of building a managerial plan in which every person should recognise themselves and which should be assumed by all the staff. The managerial plan contains objectives and activities conceived in a more general perspective. The teachers responsible for each department propose activities which correspond to the strategic objectives from this year, activities included in the managerial plan. We believe that, in this way all the teachers, all the auxiliary teaching and non-teaching staff have the possibility to promote their creativity and at the same time to prove responsibility, building and achieving the specific activities proposed, adapted to the area to which they belong. The working plans of the departments and commissions reflect, through concrete activities, these objectives. Moreover, we consider that, in this way, we do practise the principles proposed with the school mission within the managerial activity, too.

3. Perspectives

As a consequence, in what regard the training of teachers in the direction of education of communication, the following perspectives open:

1. The development of some real collaboration relations between the experts who teach didactics and psycho-pedagogy in such a way that the partnership to achieve:

- a) the coherence of education efforts of communication competences for the future teachers and of the competence to facilitate their development at students;
- b) the dissemination of positive communication attitude of the future teachers;
- c) the promotion of active strategies and of evaluation complementary methods as procedural acquisitions within didactics and psycho-pedagogy courses to offer a basis in order to build real communication contexts by the future teachers;
- d) the reformation of speciality classes from the perspective of interactive approaches in order to stop the repetition of over-verbalised practices in classrooms by the future teachers.
- e) the pleading of communication masters – as a starting point in forming the didactics teachers as facilitators both initial forming and also in the continuous one;

2. The training of some teachers who should be able to use the textbook within the conditions of the modern curriculum. The previous syntheses have proved, on the one hand, the persistence of some traditional textbooks, and on the other hand, the confusion of teachers regarding the syllabus and the textbook. Continuing a pattern transmitted by the tradition of a unique textbook identical from the point of view of the analytical syllabus content, primary school teachers and teachers refer to the textbook when syllabus is discussed! In this context the training programmes have to include:

- a) the development of operating competences with the modern textbook, strongly interactive and of substituting the lack of any textbook-more or less innovative;
- b) the development of selection competences of some textbooks adequate to the group of students and the personal profile;
- c) the development of the syllabus reading competences, personalised didactic project and application of the curriculum through the development of adequate strategies.

3. The reform of the promoting system on the grounds of the revision of the teacher's status and the official introduction of some standards of the didactic profession. These have to stipulate professional competences which all the teachers are to acquire, the differences between the promotion steps being given by the level of performance within each competence. In this way, the list of the wished professional competences has to be completed with the performance indicators, corresponding to each promoting step. It is to be discussed the possibility of introduction of some research competences, action necessary for the last promoting steps (which should not be obligatory at the beginning of the didactic career).

a) the introduction in the continuous training offer of some courses specialised in the development of communication competences at students and within school as a learning organisation;

b) the correlation of the different components which aims at training from the Phare and World Bank programmes from the perspective of complementary training supports and of the efficiency of costs;

c) the taking over in continuous and initial training of the markers of curricular projecting and of the course supports developed within PIR;

d) the promoting of using ICT in the teaching-learning-evaluation process;

e) the sensitise of school managers for the improvement of the communication by means of training at the school level.

The communication models will change only with the dominant organisational culture, therefore in a longer period of time. As a consequence, the proposals which will follow will aim only some of the aspects which can improve communication within the school in the present situation and within the existent institutions.

A. For the improvement of the communication in the relations between school/teachers and students, the proposals could be:

1. The real functioning of the students' councils which have to represent the students' interests and options even if these do not correspond to the teachers' or school managers' opinions.

2. The offering of a motivated answer to any request, verbal or written, coming from the part of the students (through the Students' council or outside it).

3. The responsibility of the students for communication – at the level of the classroom and of the school – through the management, by the students, of some informative boards, of the radio-broadcast station or of the web page.

4. The introduction of some feedback solutions and evaluation of communication effects: formal and informal discussions referring to the national exams, grants and other elements of school life; pools for suggestions, questions, critics (under the anonymous protection); completion, by the students, at the end of a term or school year, of a survey (anonymous) with reference to the main aspects of school life, followed by the presentation in front of students and parents of the conclusions (on informative boards, in meetings, etc).

5. The priority training of teachers in the area of educational communication.

6. The de-formalisation of school life – for example by giving up to separate entrances/steps for teachers and students or asking the students' opinions and contributions in decorating the classrooms and the school, in maintaining the school uniform or not, etc.

B. The suggestions for the improvement of communication between teachers and teachers and the managerial staff are as follows:

1. Promoting the cooperation between the teachers beyond the discipline they teach by promoting the topics within curriculum at the school decision.

2. De-formalisation of school life by encouraging the celebration at school of some personal events (birthdays, etc) and by organising some common informal actions (trips, etc.).

3. Training focused on the school – for example: a training programme on didactics communication topics to which all the teachers in the school should take part; specific teambuilding programmes. These programmes contribute to the creation/consolidation of organisational culture..

4. Using all the communication channels to distribute the information at all the levels- informative boards, radio station, internet page, etc.

C. Proposals for the improvement of the communication between school and community (parents including):

1. Curriculum at the school decision to really reflect parents' options.

2. Offering a motivated reply to any request, verbal or written, coming from the part of parents or the community.

3. Inviting parents, local representatives and other community representatives to the school and extra school activities. In some schools there is the practice of “open days” and “open lessons for parents”.

4. Necessity of reporting to parents and community of the results of school inspections (which is required by the laws which apply nowadays).

5. Introduction of some feedback solutions and evaluation of the communication effects similar to those presented above.

“The capable managers have the possibility and at the same time the duty towards them and the staff they manage, to establish their leading strategy by correctly choosing the methods of management which best fit the given situation and not to consider the choice as being fixed, keeping into account that we live in a dynamic world in which the speed of change has sped very much”.

Being known that “the spiritual life” has always been “the engine of human society”, nowadays, in the conditions of the scientific progress being the decisive factor of performing economic development, the tuition problems are extremely complex. Therefore, the exigency towards the managers in this field is more important as a way of expression according to the new requirements of the educational politics.

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