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METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO FORMING TEACHERS' EFFICIENT COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS AT RISK OF SCHOOL DROPOUT

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This article is dedicated to the specific methodology on forming the communication skills of teachers who teach students at risk of school dropout. The quality of teacher training in effective didactical communication must become an integral and compulsory part of teacher training. They will support all students to reduce the risk of school dropout. These teachers need to become professionals who are always available to students, demonstrate openness and flexibility for communication / networking with students, have the ability to resolve conflicts, developing learning motivation of students at risk of school dropout.

Key-words: *communication, learning motivation, school dropout, openness, flexibility.*

ABORDARE METODOLOGICĂ ÎN FORMAREA COMUNICĂRII EFICIENTE A CADRELOR DIDACTICE CU ELEVII EXPUȘI RISCULUI DE ABANDON

Prezentul articol este dedicat metodologiei specifice de formare a abilităților de comunicare a profesorilor care învață elevii în situații de risc de abandon școlar. Calitatea formării profesorului pentru comunicare didactică eficientă trebuie să devină parte integrantă și obligatorie în procesul de formare a cadrelor didactice. Aceștia urmăresc să sprijine elevii pentru a reduce riscul abandonului școlar. Profesorii trebuie să devină profesioniști care sunt totdeauna disponibili pentru elevi, ei trebuie să fie deschiși și flexibili în comunicare / relaționare cu elevii și să aibă capacitatea de a rezolva conflictele, de a-i motiva pentru învățare.

Cuvinte-cheie: *comunicare, motivație de învățare, abandon școlar, deschidere, flexibilitate.*

Introduction

According to International standards all children have a right to education. The new global education goal, SDG 4, covers an ambitious range of targets, including the pledge to 'ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes' and to 'eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations' by 2030 (United Nations, 2015).

According to statistical data, globally, 263 million children, adolescents and youths between the ages of 6 and 17 are out of school (2016) [1].

In the Europe 2020 Strategy, one of the goals is to have at least 40% of 30-34 – year-olds complete higher education. Reducing dropout and increasing completion rates in higher education is one of the key strategies for achieving this goal, which is regarded as crucial for creating the high-level skills that Europe's knowledge-intensive economic sectors need as well as for Europe's capacity to innovate and foster productivity and social justice [2].

The education system which is responsible to constraint the inclusion policy practically face a complex variety of problems around the mainstreaming of pupils at risk, from which their probable dropout is the most disturbing one since it may have harsh implications on society at large. Since pupils/ students at risk are likely to become a social problem if not approached adequately, the educational system keeps looking for strategic solutions to these problems.

Pupils/ students at risk of dropping out live in similar but still different circumstances than their normative colleagues, sharing similar IQ-s and similar age oriented issues that have to do with re-defining their own world and their chances to turn into successful productive citizens but unlike their colleagues their starting point is far behind, putting a significant educational challenge in front of their teachers who must assist them in reaching their legitimate goal to realize their potential.

The present article reflects the summary of the results of a pedagogical experiment focused on exploration of the correlation between the teacher's communication skills and its impact on student's learning motivation.

The issue of teacher communication skills is addressed by several authors. At the same time, aspects related to didactic communication with students at risk are studied by authors such as: L.B. Rosenfeld & J.M. Richman explores the relationship between supportive communication and school outcomes for two groups of lower socioeconomic high school students: those identified as "at-risk" of poor school performance and those not identified as "at-risk" [3]. R.Urea focused attention on the impact of teachers' communication styles on pupils' self-safety throughout the learning process (2013) [4] etc. Availability approached more from a functional-technical perspective [5], a broader approach is required, through multidisciplinary interference – availability of communication, which requires exploration at the educational system level.

Usually we identify processes that are parallel characterizing team work with the excluded youth that are expressed in staff relationships. Teachers who abandon others are also abandoned; the lack of authority and attendance will come up in the workshops and groups in a dramatic way. The way that teachers take part or avoid taking part or expressing attitudes and their place in the group, lack of ability in upholding authentic interpersonal dialogues will be characterized in communications behavior between the staff and will be expressed in the ability of the teachers to give direct and focused feedback, and by the lack of the teacher to identify his needs as a professional.

The teachers who work in an environment of deep exclusion will suffer, as noted, from a lack of esteem and lack of prestige. They experience dropping out and see themselves as invisible just as their pupils at risk do. Throughout the work with the teams and principals we shall emphasize the parallel process of erasing the needs of the teacher as a person, and encourage the teachers to define verbally and clearly what they need as emotional support, acknowledgment and appreciation.

A teacher who identifies with the weakness of the student, experiences his weaknesses as insufferable; the experience is disgusting to him. The anger prevents him in separating vulnerability that comes from family, self-image, absence of ability, to accept the fact that he is 'stupid' and the place of the student who is experiencing these difficulties.

Bringing out a personal story invites the teacher to research the significance of the behavior he experiences as bullying toward the student. The teacher describes the emotional block created in the story of his life and is now experiencing in his professional life. The process of cooperation involved in the personal story creates an intimate opportunity for relations within the team to develop empathy with the teacher toward himself and the staff toward him. The teacher brings to life the internal subconscious behavior with the student in a way that is not necessarily threatening. He is the one building the connection between dropping out behavior and the personal story with no external, interpretative or judgmental intervention. He is the one to observe logic in his own illogical professional behavior. Buber (1958) claims that through interpersonal relationships, the participant can bring himself to the experience, at least superficially. Superficially – as he wishes to be perceived by others.

We conclude that Communication is a flexible binder that allows the relationship between people. In order for this binder to be effective, it needs certain capacities, conditions and a favorable environment. There are many publications about communication skills. Many teachers see positive communication with pupils at risk as a strong motivating force in teaching [6]. Studies show a clear connection between the quality of teacher-student relations and strengthened pedagogical aspects such as learning, positive emotions toward school, or an increased academic ability, better behavior and improved achievements [7].

It is crucial to establish effective communication and ensuring synergy and complementarity between the actions of all actors involved in the education process!

Based on analysis of researches and practices, we would like to propose *our vision on effective communication with students at risk: the ability of the teacher to be functional under any circumstances, by verbal and non-verbal communication, demonstrating openness and flexibility, simplicity in relation to students, willingness to listen to pupils, acceptance and adaptation to the situation, overcoming preconceptions about children at risk and encouraging them to positive behaviors*. Our vision is presented in Figure 1.

The basic idea of this research is to build a comprising teacher, someone who is flexible who can adapt to the rapid changes of today. A comprising teacher should fit himself to the conditions and the special needs of pupils at risk. In the past the role of a teacher was to transfer knowledge, expertise and he expected the pupils to be obedient according to the psycho-social approach [8].

The expectations of a teacher from of pupils at risk are based on the assumption that educational images at school can and should be significant figures in order to build the mental resilience of these pupils and to prevent

their deterioration. It is expected that this teacher would not only be an educational figure as per the old paradigm (transferring knowledge) but should grant a personal educational treatment, would know how to make a close and optimal relationship with the child, with a good personal relationship that will cure the child based on his personal world and make him succeed in learning. The teacher is supposed to be attentive and to implement his tasks coming from the organization (outside authority) as well as from his/her subjective authority (from his own being) [9].

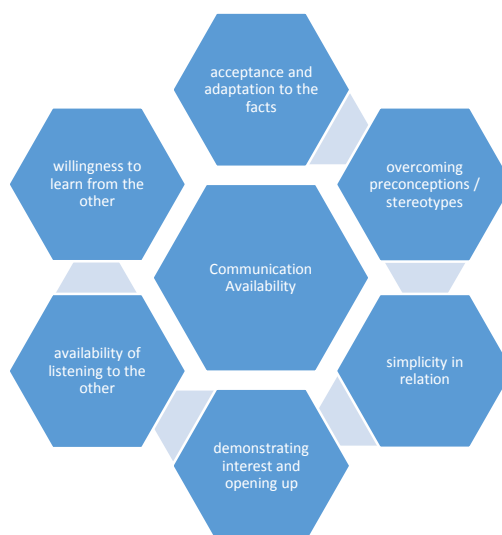


Fig.1. Efficient Communication.

One of the most significant achievements of the modern world in the field of education is the transition from education for minority to education of the general population. This achievement has great significance in the field culture, economy and sociology. This transition was the main cause for the training of teachers in general and caused the evolvement of defining the characters of teachers in particular.

We state that the profession of teaching is complex; it is hardly predictable and is multi-faceted, dynamic and simultaneous, demanding not only a good professional knowledge, but also teaching methods based on flexibility, mobility and interactivity. A proper educator will be a model of morals; the meeting between the teacher and pupil will create a deep connection, experience and mutual affection. There is no greater accomplishment in education than the affection between teacher and pupil. So many moving moments have happened during the school experience, the warm hugs, the love, the inclusion, the empathy, the attentiveness, that have caused the pupils to come to school and finish twelve grades and even full matriculation. This special connection with the pupils has created a revolution in the lives of pupils at risk.

The characteristics of "significant" teacher were proposed. Also, the paradigm on New teacher in context of work with pupils at risk, was explored and completed with following qualities: students/pupils at risk are encouraged, viewed as potential agent of changes (in the school – adaptation strategies); cooperation between teachers and students on the net; human rights based approach: all students are equal, but different – with specific needs that should be taking into consideration etc.

Our model encompasses the aspects that clarify the transformation of the teachers' communication availability, namely: from the low efficiency of communication of the teacher, manifested through reduced professional motivation, which affects the motivation of the children within the range of the exclusion circle, the efficiency of high teacher communication, manifested through high professional motivation that enhances learning motivation within the promotor circle.

We reiterate the fact that the teachers were involved in the "Learning Revolution" Program, as a component of the pedagogical Model of efficiency of the didactic communication to encourage the motivation of learning of students at risk of dropping out. The purpose of the intervention plan was to increase the teacher's awareness and create effective feedback on the working methods to meet the emotional needs of the student. 20 teachers were involved in the training program.

The experiment is based on milestone strategic educational approaches which are suited through non-verbal skills which are passed from the teacher to the pupil, through the teachers' openness and flexibility to the pupils,

appropriate learning strategies, alternative evaluation procedures, projects instead of examinations, in order to reduce stress. Also, end of term projects makes for a more successful learning experience for these students.

We would like to mention some results of pedagogical experiment with focus on Openness and Flexibility of the teacher for communication/relationships (Figures 2 and 3).

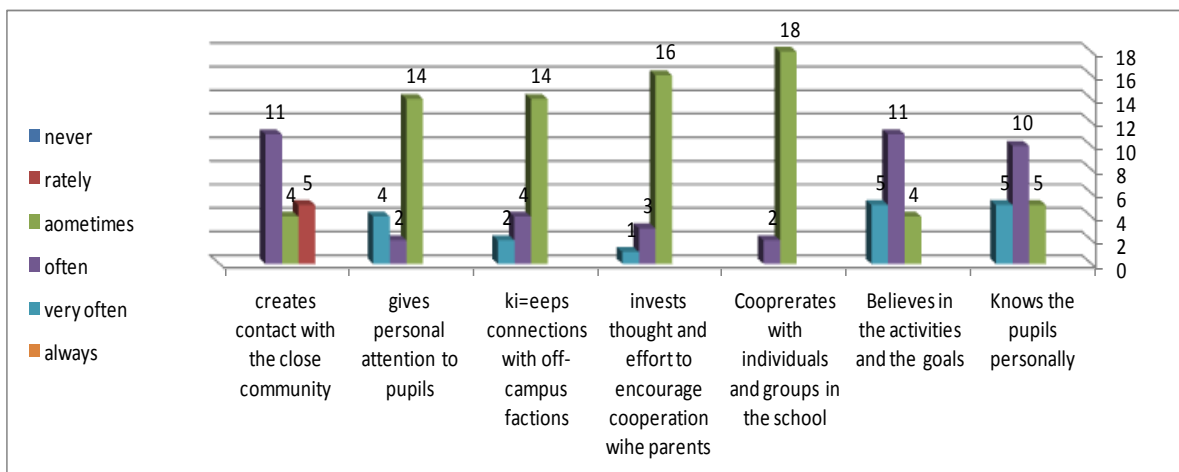


Fig.2. Openness and Flexibility of the teacher for communication/ relationships before intervention.

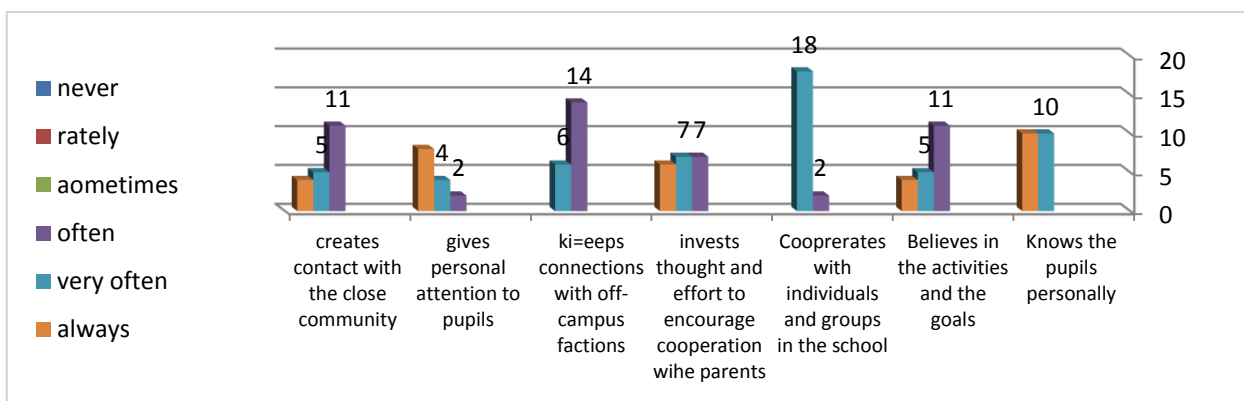


Fig.3. Openness and Flexibility of the teacher for communication/ relationships after intervention.

Conclusion: after the program intervention the communication /relationships with pupils and community increased significantly.

Thus, figure 4 and 5 reflect the involvement of teachers in conflict resolution before and after the intervention.

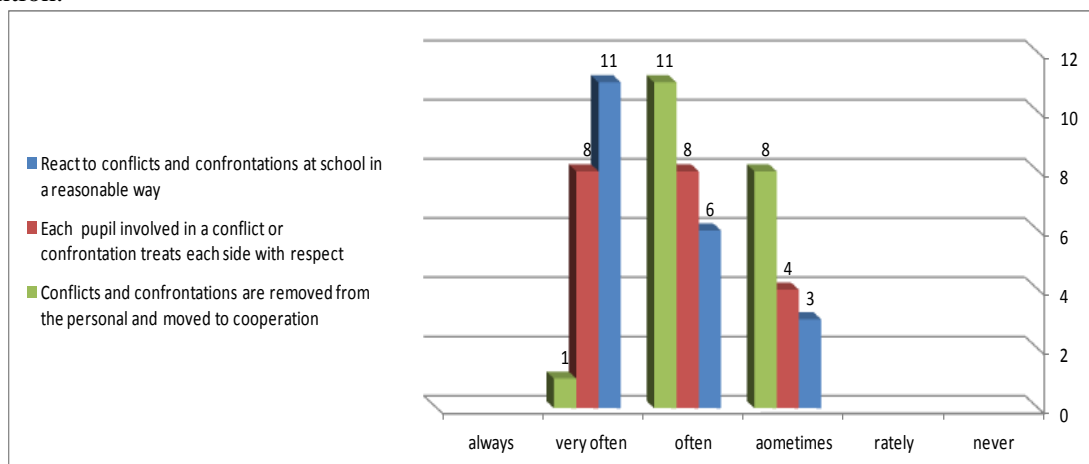


Fig.4. Presence solves conflicts – before the intervention.

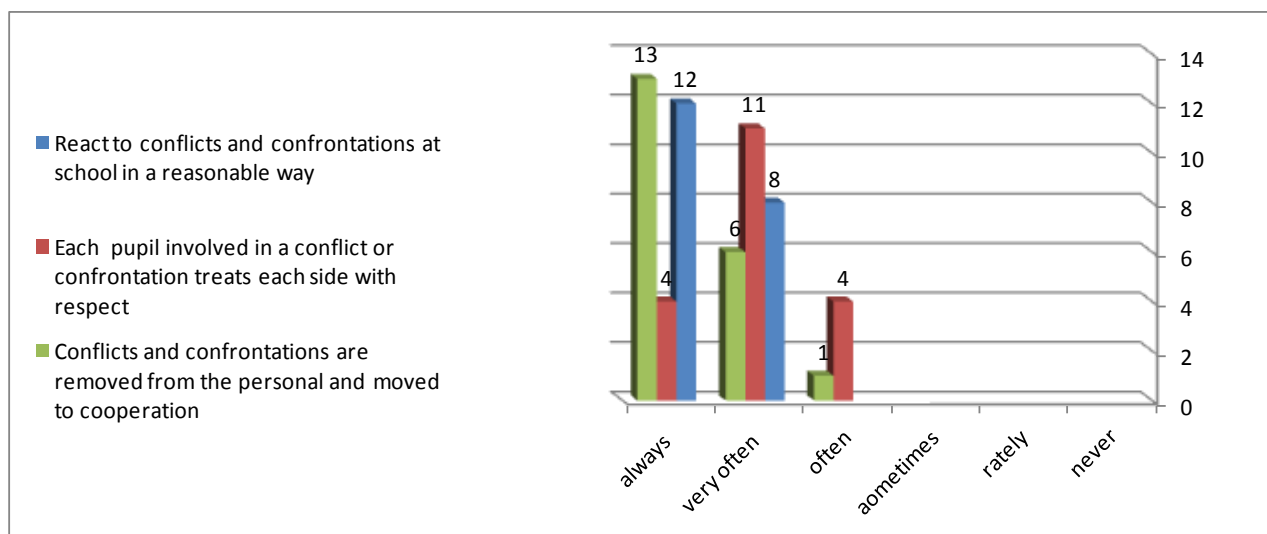


Fig.5. Presence solves conflicts before intervention.

Finding: After the intervention program, the teachers' capacities to solve conflicts have been improved.

In **conclusion**, according to the data evaluation of the intervention program that focused on designing an improved way of providing skills and for 'approachable communication' with teachers for pupils at risk of dropping out, it appears that the teacher that has undergone this process is able to conduct communication and will be able to contribute to his pupils' social and academic success. It appears that this meta-competence gradually becomes second nature to the teachers who undergo this intervention and becomes a clear trend that pupils can trust their teachers for the first time to be people that they can communicate with in order to succeed.

From here it may be concluded that the intervention program is a success and has reached its goal of bringing the pupils at risk and the teachers of this population to new heights of achievement. In the academic year 2017 the program was proposed for implementation in all classes in the school.

The quality of teacher training in the field of approachability and communication will ensure and become an integral and obligatory part of teacher training. It will support all pupils at risk of dropping out. These teachers will become teachers who are present by attaining practical tools directed at awakening and preserving motivation for learning by pupils at risk.

At the same time, we mention that the quality of teacher training was validated by questioning pupils. Thus, a comparative analysis was made of the group of students whose teachers participated in the intervention program (60 students - experimental group/ GE) and the group of students whose teachers did not participate in the intervention program (60 pupils - control group/ GC).

The results are as follows: In the control group, 43.33% of the students were absent for more than two weeks and 16.67% were absent for one week; 15% were absent for one week, 3.33% were absent for three days, and 1.67% were absent for two days. 3.33% were not absent. The experimental group presented a significant change. 3.33% were absent for more than two weeks, and 3.33% were absent for one week, 8.3% were absent for three days, 8.33% for two days, and 10% had were absent for one day, 58% did not miss at all. According to the results, a significant change in the participation of the students in the studies has been demonstrated, as the absenteeism is diminished.

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