# THE TEACHER'S COMMUNICATION ABILITY IN THE CLASSROOM CONTEXT

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This article is dedicated to training the communication skills of teachers who work with students at risk of dropping out of school. In our research we have developed a new model, which we call the "Playful Model", which provides a practical way to increase the motivation of students at risk, as well as teachers, by implementing a series of five steps, which are = mutually reinforcing and together create a circle of motivation for learning. Thus, the ability to inspire and awaken motivation consists in the ability to see, create and strengthen the connections that exist between different steps and different actions, respectively. Thus, being offered a complex approach to didactic communication.

*Keywords: communication, learning motivation, school dropout, Game model, flexibility.*

**ABILITATEA DE COMUNICARE A PROFESORULUI ÎN CONTEXTUL CLASEI**

În prezentul articol este afordată formarea abilităților de comunicare ale profesorilor care lucrează cu elevii expuși riscului de abandon școlar. În cadrul cercetării noastre am dezvoltat un model nou, pe care îl numim „Model ludic". Acesta oferă o modalitate practică de a crește motivația elevilor în situații de risc, precum și a profesorilor, prin implementarea unei serii de cinci pași, care se fortifică reciproc și, împreună, creează un cerc de motivație pentru învățare. Astfel, abilitatea de a insufla și a trezi motivația constă în abilitatea de a vedea, de a crea și de a întări legăturile ce există între diferiții pași și, respectiv, diferite acțiuni. Deci, este oferită o abordare complexă a comunicării didactice.

*Cuvinte-cheie: comunicare, motivație pentru învățare, abandon școlar, model de joc, flexibilitate.*

**Introduction**

One of the most important components in learning is the ability to motivate yourself and others. Instilling motivation into pupils at risk and work colleagues is a necessary skill in order to ensure the individual teacher's success in any type of school. The term "motivation" is defined as the ability to arouse yourself or another in order to achieve something which is meaningful to yourself or to the other individual. If one does not possess motivation, it is usually impossible to motivate, and usually, the opposite is also true. The personal motivation motivates the individual to continue succeeding, urges those who feel incapable to lift their head up independently, and encourages everyone's growth.

Many teachers see positive communication with students at risk as a powerful motivating force in teaching. Studies show a clear link between the quality of teacher-student relationships and strengthened pedagogical issues, such as learning, positive school emotions [1] or increased academic ability, better behaviour and improved achievement [2].

Some researchers observed teacher-pupil connections from a pedagogical point of view, according to which building trust is a central axis for the leaning ability of pupils [3]. It influences thinking, feelings and ambitions of the pupils and contributes to the influence of adults on different aspects of life of teenagers.

The most relevant ways of making didactic communication more efficient were indicated in the context of the specially designed format of the vocational classroom, in which the students at risk of dropout were faced with repeated failure and with low self-image; these obstacles can be overcome by creating a direct way of communication that takes into account the students' own interests and emotional needs.

In the context of the analysed literature we determined the indicators of academic competences, which can be both challenging, but also achievable by the students exposed to the risk of dropout, in the form improved level of attendance, completion of homework and the desire to carry out a qualitative technical project according to their own choice. A final step in the process of obtaining the motivation of the students exposed to the risk of dropout was the development of self-feedback tools within the teachers and students.
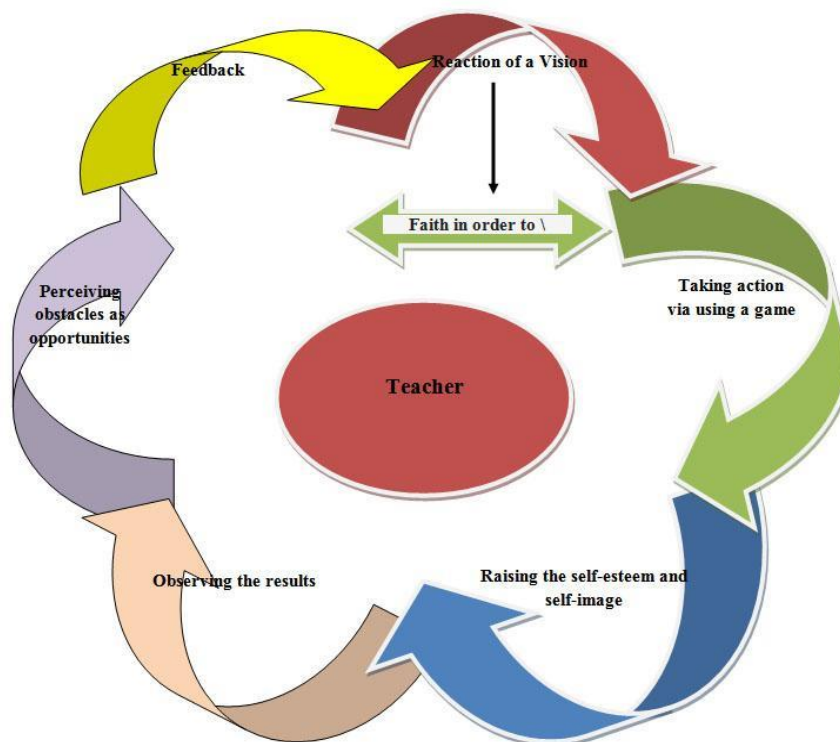
**The Game Model for Creating Motivation**

In the framework of the current research, we have developed a novel model, which we call the "Game Model". Our model suggests a practical way to raise the motivation of your pupils at risk, as well as your own motivation, by implementing a series of five steps:

- Creating a vision.
- Establishing a purpose and a motivating factor.

- Taking actions through games.
- Raising one's self-image.
- Overcoming obstacles, and providing feedback.

These 5 steps strengthen one another and together, create a circle of motivation to learn (Figure 1).



**Fig.1.** The Game Model for Creating Motivation.

Creating a vision is the first step in the game circle to increase motivation. The vision must be concrete and manageable according to the principles of result intelligence and the SMART paradigm and not too far away from the world of the pupil at risk, - optimally challenging and not too threatening for pupils who are not used to experience academic success; the direct implication of a realistic vision starts with the development of a definite goal as a first, preliminary stage for the development of motivation. This step is returned to periodically, even after progress had been made to other stages of the game circle. Without a strong will, the chances of losing the way whenever a lack of self-confidence or low self-image appears, increases.

The vision is supposed to be a prolonged picture of the goal and stepping stones on the way to achieving the goal. It is important to ensure that the vision is practical and that it can be used in order to create a preliminary action plan. It is crucial to be creative and imaginative in order to instil vitality into the vision, in a manner which will be able to get all of those included to become swept away. It is also extremely important to get all of the relevant staff involved in the development of the vison, in order to increase the level of identification, the obligation level, and the level of responsibility of all those who are involved in its fulfilment.

An example of a vision which was developed over the past school year in one of the twelfth-grade classes which is participating in the current study is one in which the pupils at risk had adopted the saying: "There is no such thing as there is no such thing". We accompany our pupils at risk in the course of their development of a new process for recognizing a perception, according to which, there is no such a thing as a situation in which they will not be able to prepare a final project in one of the subjects taught with the accompaniment of the teacher every step of the way. The perception of "I am unable to do this" simply does not exist - the alternative of "I am not able to do X", is replaced by concrete steps of looking for clear steps of how can I accomplish X, such as: who can support me, in which way, what is my responsibility, what certain things should I do right

now [4]. This particular classroom teacher decided to create a learning revolution, in the course of which all the pupils at risk in his classroom would do their personal best, until they had reached the goal – submitting their final project. In order to turn this vision into an action plan which is implemented by the school staff, clear and achievable goals were defined. These included decreasing the rates of the implied and actual dropping out and increasing the percentages of pupils at risk whom are eligible to receive a technological or a full high school diploma.

It is important to set up goals in addition to defining the motivating factor. This is because the sense of destination is even more inspiring than a successful relevant mission. A definition of the desired goal is likely to ignite the circle game and to greatly increase the actual level of motivation. Some of the main examples to this are: intensity, pride, obligation, growth and success, faith, honour, etc. Of these, faith and belief in the destination and goal are critical in order to progress to the next stage of the game circle. Even if an individual possesses a strong vision of success, if they lack self-esteem, they shall not be able to commit themselves to achieving higher goals. Thus, they will not receive praises for their accomplishments, and the game circle will not be able to exist.

Measurable goals were defined in the "Learning Revolution" Project in order to examine the results of the project and to assess the effectivity of the training programmes which had been developed for the purposes of their implementation over time. Besides setting up clear goals in the "Learning Revolution" Project, the homeroom teachers were instructed to increase the values and sense of mission, which had been created through the vision. This must be done through cooperation with the rest of the faculty - staff as well as through cooperation with the pupils at risk. The principle of adapting the didactic means to the pupils needs and difficulties.

Taking action through a game. In order to achieve the goal and destination, occasionally, there is a need for proper training. Sometimes we jump into deep water with a clear vision and goals. Confidence and faith in the ability to achieve the goals and destinations which we have set up to ourselves will allow us to succeed. The chances for its success greatly increase when an invigorating vision is revealed, support has been provided from others, and the issue of timing has been widely considered. In addition, there ought to be an internal saying which shall push and motivate towards actions. In other words, it is necessary to program an image, a statement which shall pass in crucial moments, such as: "There is no such thing as there is no such thing". Hesitancy is able to cause a disconnection in the circuit, and it should be avoided at all costs.

In the course of assimilating the "Learning Revolution" Project, the homeroom teachers, the other teachers, and the pupils at risk used the hands-on training to learn about all of the management tools and skills, which had been developed in cooperation with the staff and the pupils at risk. One of the tools used by the teachers is games and learning through games. Each unit is taught through games. At the end of the lesson, a student must present the topic through a show, a computer presentation, or in any other form that they please. The lesson is dynamic. These teachers have been trained in the "at-risk children" continuing education programmes. Thus, they are capable of containing the pupils at risk, understanding them, using various, non-regular teaching methods, etc.

It should be mentioned that training activities were organised based on the following principles:

*The principle of raising the self-esteem and self-image*. One of the goals of the suggested model is to raise the individual student's self-esteem and self-confidence in their own abilities to achieve significant learning achievements. The teacher in the experimental classes refers to raising the pupils at risk' self-image as a major mission. They share this goal with all of the teachers of their classroom, as well as the pupils at-risk themselves. When the classroom teacher shows the student that they believe in their abilities through verbal as well as non-verbal means, the teacher causes a rise in the pupils at risk' self-esteem and self-image. Thus, the pupils at-risk experiences success and their motivation is raised, and this allows their further successes.

The work hypothesis behind this intervention aspect is that when there is overall commitment to this common mission, the development within the process will be very clear, as the pupils at-risk will naturally be motivated to actively participate, which would be expressed by homework preparation and real increase of motivation level to get to school will rise.

*Observing the results*. The most important thing as per the connection between results and motivation is their connection to the long-term vision of the project. As aforementioned, this requires planning a general action plan which translates the image of the road to success. This image had already been developed while the vision was being created. In order to ensure maximum value of the results, it is necessary to understand the way that they accommodate with the general plan.

*The principle of simplicity.* The programme must be simply built and one which allows flexibility. It is important to develop the ability to be open to random discoveries – turning occasional events into assets. The positive results must be perceived as steps towards the goal. The progress itself also serves as one of the most motivating factors.

*The principle of -perceiving obstacles as opportunities.* Each obstacle must be referred to as an opportunity to achieve better results for the entire mission. The homeroom teachers and the other teachers acquired practical, hands-on tools in order to provide their pupils at-risk with the required skills and expertise. They also acquired the encouragement and support which are necessary in order to deal with conflicts, oppositions, failures, as well as unexpected reactions from the pupils at-risk. The planning and fitting of a vision which serves as a "learning revolution" cannot be fulfilled within a short time, regardless of the population we are dealing with. This is especially true when one deals with at-risk populations. This is a gradual process which involves flexibility, creativity, devotion to the goal – and most of all: optimism.

*The principle of obtaining effective feedback.* The feedback is the main source of learning, development, and motivation. Thus, it is worthwhile to focus on ways to provide a meaning and a response to the given feedback. The positive feedback of successful actions must be used directly in order to build up our confidence and motivation. However, at the same time, it is also necessary to use the feedback for less successful actions in order to improve our abilities.

Reframing: It is important to rephrase non-promoting thoughts, such as: "Why am I failing?" or "Successful people are able to do this", into structuring thoughts, such as: "Which factors have led me to this decision?" or: "What will be the most useful way to do it the next time?"

The homeroom teachers, as well as the other teachers who participated in the "Learning Revolution" Programme had undergone training concerning providing a constructive feedback to pupils at risk as a tool for assessment and improvement of their accomplishments, and no less important – of their accomplishments as a tool for empowerment, encouragement, directing, and raising the individual student's confidence and self-image. The coordinators received guidance through the entire way that the teachers who stand in front of the classroom serve as the most important factor for achieving goals. Thus, they should be nurtured and supported to the maximum extent possible on the personal as well as on the professional levels.

**Conclusions**

In the framework of our research, we have developed a novel model, which we call the "Game Model". Our model suggests a practical way to raise the motivation of your pupils at risk, as well as your own motivation, by implementing a series of five steps that strengthen one another and together, create a circle of motivation to learn.

In the heart of the game is personal own role, the one person shall fulfill by instilling motivation. Clearly, this role is characterized and created by a great deal of factors, but the steps of the "Game Circle" have a critical role in creating motivation, and just like the model shows, it is possible that the most important thing is not the simple sum of these components, but rather the intensity of the connections which exist. Thus, the ability to instil and arouse motivation consists in the ability to see, create, and strengthen the ties which exist amongst the various steps.

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