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COMMUNICATION BARRIERS IN THE WORK OF THE SCHOOL COUNSELLOR

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***Abstract** This paper attempts to draw attention on the importance of communication in the classroom, as a means of solving conflicts and on the method to solve future conflicts through student participation in the counseling program.*

Communication is an open process, influenced by many factors. The concept of "barrier" in the communication process designates several categories: barriers related to the system, process, message, reception, understanding, acceptance, action.

Communication blockages could have such intensity so as to produce noticeable differences between the information transmitted and the message perceived. Ineffective communication leads to loneliness, conflicts, family problems, professional dissatisfaction, psychological distress, physical illness and even death when communication is completely disrupted.

The lack of conflict resolution skills was observed in students who had inappropriate communication style.

Being a student these days is a difficult task. During this period the requirements and expectations of society accumulate, becoming the source of many conflicts and tensions.

Working with students represents an important and beautiful activity, but a very difficult one. To be a true teacher means understanding the needs, the way of thinking of the students and acting thereunder when teaching the lesson.

In classes where the ability to solve conflicts is reduced, most of the time is spent on solving such conflicts that arise during breaks and during the day.

Appropriate means of communication contribute significantly to choosing the adequate conflict resolution strategy.

Keywords: communication, conflicts, barrier, information, message, inefficient communication

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to analyse to what extent there is a significant influence of offering counselling services for conflict resolution on the ways of resolving

future conflicts and aggression of students that participate in that program.

The following specific objectives emerged from the general objective:

– analysis of conflict resolution techniques in a group of students

- analysis of aggression in a group of students that did not attend the counselling program
- analysis of conflict resolution techniques after attending the counselling program
- analysis of the behaviour of a group of students during the counselling sessions aiming at solving conflicts
- analysis of aggression in a group of students that attended the counselling program

This research was performed on a batch composed of 62 students.

A questionnaire was applied on student/student conflict situations and an interview.

We used two batches of students (namely two classes). On the first category we applied the questionnaire on student/student conflict situations and after a period of time (one week) we applied a survey.

On the second batch we applied the same questionnaire on student/student conflict situations. Subsequently the students participated in a counselling program (3 sessions of 3 hours each).

In this research we relied on the hypothesis that the influence of collective counselling activity for conflict management on appropriate solution techniques and students' aggression exists and can be validated.

2. THE INSTRUMENTS USED WERE THE FOLLOWING: THE INTERVIEW AND THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

We identified and analysed the educational environment where the classroom activity is conducted, focusing on communication issues. In this regard we developed a questionnaire.

The questionnaire for the analysis of organizational and communicational environment is structured on questions and answers defining trust, work satisfaction, group cohesion.

It provides information on:

- o identification of problems at group level

- o definition of desired performance level

- o construction of a training program that guides group performance to the desired level.

The results obtained allow us to consider that at student's group level, although the psychosocial environment is functioning, characterized by high trust in the teacher and themselves, strong collective opinion, good adaptability, high normativity and professional training, there are communication and relationship problems between team members that affect it often.

Tensions and even conflicts are present and ideas and initiatives are often not expressed.

There are a number of organizational issues that need attention; they may not be very serious at this stage, but preventive measures must be taken before problems escalate to problems difficult to repair.

Analysing the results obtained by the subjects, we identified specific problems, such as:

1. *Deficient communication* due to insufficient inter-knowledge of all team members, to the tendency to turn dialogue into monologue, stereotypes in the ways of transmission and presentation of information, the use of high tone, lack of attention or skill in directing and controlling the dialogue.

2. *Relationship difficulties between team members* due to the difference in skills and habits, difference of opinions, preferences, aspirations.

One of the elements with great influence on psychosocial environment is communication, and more precisely interpersonal communication. The development of this type of communication is essential and plays a special role in the organization. Good interpersonal communication will lead to the development of appropriate behaviour, favourable for positive development of the work group.

The planning phase of the change process consists of defining precisely, starting from the diagnosis of the situation, the most appropriate actions to achieve the desired



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change. The planning phase can be guided by the answers to three categories of questions:

- Questions regarding project feasibility ("Is the intervention project accepted by all persons involved?")

- Questions regarding the selection of change strategy ("Which is the intervention strategy?", "Which will be the intervention areas?", "What exactly will aim the change process?");

- Questions regarding the programming of the intervention ("What will be the start?", "Who are the persons in charge and resources necessary for each action?", "Which will be the results' evaluation criteria and how will the evaluation be conducted?").

Optimization of psychosocial environment by improving interpersonal relationships and communication irrespective of individual behaviour based on the idea that interpersonal relationships within the work group and communication can be developed in a positive way through games and group dynamic exercises.

Ameliorative psychological intervention on organizational environment.

The training program resorts to the group of students and aims at creating new opportunities to change and develop the group.

The methods are interactive, chosen based on the problems identified, relying on the experiences of participants and providing a broad framework for dialogue and interaction.

The program means carrying out a series of exercises and dynamic group games resulting in communication and networking between group members.

Group members are directly involved in the practical actions without theoretical thoroughness.

Each group member shall practice and experience different roles required by the situation, shall participate in decision making.

The program includes 3 "communication practice" sessions.

The impact of the program on the group: noticeable changes in attitude, behaviour, motivations that influence in a good way the professional activity.

To achieve the objectives and methods proposed, we will use the interview and questionnaire to identify and analyse potential problems. Both methods are approached from the view of the school counsellor, whose task is to solve this kind of problems.

We will present you hereafter the way the research was conducted through counselling interview. First we will present this type of study, and then we will illustrate how it is applied, with the objective to integrate marginalized and undecided students, regarding their choice of future profession within the majority group.

Brammer and Macdonald describe very comprehensively the essence of individual counselling, which involves two steps: creating client-counsellor relationship and facilitating change (positive action), all in a context defined by work alliance. The authors express their views in a paper that became the basis for all counsellors who want to become effective practitioners: "The Helping Relationship, Process and Skills", in its sixth edition in 1996. This presents the conditions to achieve a level of interpersonal relationship that would allow facilitating change and development: the counsellor must implement special personal qualities and develop a range of appropriate attitudes, while the client responds with confidence and availability. The authors call the counselling relationship as *helping relationship*, support relationship. Basically, during the individual counselling process, a

point of utmost importance is represented by the collection of information from the client.

The intake interview is presented by Hackney and Cormier as a crucial element to achieve a desirable level of efficiency in the counselling relationship. Presented and described both as a start time for client-counsellor information sharing and as a method of assessment, the intake interview (also called history interview) is different from other discussions between the client and the counsellor and involves collecting information on the general identification data of the client, its lifestyle, current issues, personal and family history, recommendations, etc.

Findings:

Through his/her way of thinking, how he relates to himself/herself, the interviewed subject has a positive attitude, which is highly important for his/her professional life. Positive thinking can help move forward, to succeed in life and be happy.

By attending one of the school counselling meetings, the subject reinforced the belief on his decision to choose football career, gaining trust in his own forces. Now, he can be determined in exposing to his colleagues his option for the football career.

3. FINAL CONCLUSIONS

The art of communication is not a natural process or a skill we are born with. We learn to communicate. Therefore we need to study what we learn in order to be able to use our knowledge more effectively. Any communication involves creation and exchange of meanings. These meanings are represented by "signs" and "codes". It seems that people have a real need to "read" the meaning of all human actions. Observing and understanding this process may cause us to be more aware about what happens when we communicate.

Counselling provides support to the individual in exploring and understanding his/her own identity, supports him/her in developing strategies for problem solving and decision making. In counselling four directions derived for the problems approach of problems that individual may face during

its evolution: intervention in crisis situations, ameliorative intervention, prevention, formative and development intervention.

Individual counselling is a personal interaction between the counsellor and the subject, during which the counsellor assists the subject in solving mental, emotional or social issues. Individual counselling is conducted in sessions providing maximum confidentiality, which allows exploration of problematic ideas, feelings or attitudes. The counsellor and the counselled person form together a team.

Group counselling involves a relationship between the counsellor and a group whose members have a common problem. The counselling process leverages the experience and knowledge of each counselled person. At group level, a social network is established through which, the methods and plans to clarify the current situation, leading to the individualization of the problem are developed for each individual. This type of interaction contributes not only to the development of the individual but to the development of the group as a whole. In group counselling a sense of community based on the need for affiliation, membership is crystallized, clarifying desires, needs and options, and positive self-realization of each member is related to group dynamics. Group counselling objectives aim at creating an environment to develop participants' ability to obtain information and skills, to develop constructive attitudes.

Since educational counselling is a complex process, this process shall be following certain steps and techniques depending on the problem and the personality of the counselled person.

The initial step in counselling involves establishing an effective relationship between the counsellor and the student. Establishing this relationship is absolutely necessary to create positive change. Only acceptance and trust offered by such a relationship provides this. Formulating together goals on behavioural changes, decision making skills and eliminating negative thoughts is also a step that must be performed. At this stage it is very important for the student to receive



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signals that he/she is accepted as he/she is, with the problems he/she has. This is indispensable in order to proceed with the counselling process. Also in this stage summarization has a special role: together they highlight the essential elements, keeping in focus the main issues and being able to glimpse some options.

The second step in counselling will proceed to assisting the child to develop social interests, cooperation and communication with others. Focus is set on helping the children to know and evaluate themselves. Warm environment and empathy shall be provided without excluding interpretations and constructive confrontation. At this stage information shall be used as working technique, meaning that a lot of information will be directed from the counsellor to the child. Also the use of suggestion can be very helpful for the student. Possible options can be suggested that will add to those already identified by the child and even methods, ways that may be taken into consideration. The technique of addressing questions is useful because it can help much in the way of seeing things and to highlight certain issues that otherwise might remain unknown.

The final stage in counselling will focus on directing the child's attention on constructive acts and behaviours. Specific procedures will be taught, action plans will be developed starting from the simplest ones to the most complex ones in order to adopt a new behaviour. At this stage confrontation will provide support to children to assume their responsibilities. Encouragement is one of the best ways to help the child achieve its needs and to assimilate new behaviours.

During the established relationship, the counsellor and the student should not forget for one moment that they are partners engaged in a

joint development effort, characterized by individual goals, and common objectives:

- work closely with the counsellor during the assessment of counselling needs and own potentialities;
- assume personal responsibility regarding involvement in the counselling process

Finally, we can judge that the importance of individual counselling relationship is a major one in the profession of the counsellor. Counsellor trainers all agree that the experience in individual counselling is a necessary stage for the next step, group counselling. In fact, all the other roles of the counsellor (consultancy, training, organizational development) are based on communication and support skills that a counsellor can only practice during individual counselling.

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