

Education for Peace: Influence of Teacher's Communication Style in the Relationships Primary School Pupil Create with Each Other

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Abstract

Establishing a comparison between self-regulation skills that pupils develop in Primary Democratic, Active Learning and a Traditional school, a big difference in the communication styles were displayed by the teachers. Going along with this, very different social interactions were observed between the pupils. It has been established a relationship between the communication styles teachers have chosen and the effect it has in children's behaviour and the relationships they create between each other. However, teachers are not completely free to choose the way they want to communicate, it is also decided by the type of school they are working in. Each schooling type have their own principles, teaching method and philosophy. They even have a different understanding about the meaning of education. This is also decided by the current educational policy in each country. This is why two different laws of education (Spanish and Scottish) have been analysed. This study is a qualitative and no experimental or Ex Post Facto research, in which the variables are going to be studied in their natural context undertaking no control over them. A reflexion is also been made on why alternative education is not legal in Spain comparing Spanish educational system with the Scottish one.

Keywords: Education for peace, Communication style, classroom environment, Primary School.

1. Introduction

This paper is aimed to present a very important part of the teaching education that, at least in the Spanish teaching training is not been taking care of properly: teachers style of communication and its influence the relationships children establish with each other.

The present paper presents how style of communication chosen by teachers has an influence in children's behaviour and in the way they face different kinds of social interaction.

Here is presented the unexpected findings of a PhD research which was originally focused on understand how different schooling types develop self-regulate learning skills in Primary School pupils.

To understand this research a quick overview of the different schools participants is going to be made. Three different schooling types (traditional, active learning and democratic schools) have participated in two different countries (Spain and Scotland, UK).

The Traditional Catholic School (Spain) is going to be presented in the first place. The teaching method is content-centred, thus, classroom are prepared for rote learning. In other words, all the desks are facing the blackboard where the teacher will perform the different lessons. In this school teachers are in total control of the classroom becoming the authority.

Regarding the democratic school, their teaching method is child-centred and research-base, therefore, pupils can decide what to learn and when. This means, the learning process is completely centred and adapted to each child learning pace. Teachers and students are supposed to have the same level of authority.

Finally, in the active learning school the teaching method used is project-base, children's learning pace is respected but the teacher still holds a democratic control of the classroom.

2. Theoretical Framework

To make this comparison it was needed to create a classification of the styles of communication and classroom environment.

The style of communication is composed by Tone and Direction. The tone is referred to the aim and how we

present the message. The direction determines the interaction between the one delivering the message and the one that listens (Kaplún, 1998).

The following tones have been considered in this research:

- Affective: The message is aimed to convey an emotion (Kaplún, 1998).
- Empathetic: The message has into account the others feelings. It needs active listening (Kaplún, 1998).
- Informative: Communicate the message in an objective way is the only thing that matters (Kaplún, 1998).
- Descriptive: The message is aimed to describe objectively a situation (Kaplún, 1998).
- Authoritarian: It has aggressiveness implicit. Its goal is to impose the listeners to act of behave in a certain way (Kaplún, 1998).

All the tones are complemented by its direction. Three are the directions observed in this study:

- Bidirectional: There is an existing interaction or feedback between the one that speaks and the one that listens. In other words, it exists an exchange of messages between them (Kaplún, 1998).
- Unidirectional: The messenger assume an active attitude while the listeners are passive. There is not interaction after the delivery (Kaplún, 1998).
- Mix: When both directions are used.

Not all the tones can be mixed with all the directions. For example, the affective and empathetic tone naturally are going to be bidirectional while the authoritarian just can be unidirectional.

Having understood the styles of communication, it is needed to present the classroom environments that it can produce. The followings are the ones considered for this research:

- Authoritarian-exploitative: The authority (teacher) shows mistrust in students, what leads him/her to take over in every situation. There is a strong hierarchy where decisions are made by the "boss" (Martí Bris, 2000).
- Authoritarian-paternalistic: A mistrust and strong hierarchy is showed for an emotional reason: Make pupils feel everything is done because the teacher cares for them, and they are trying to keep them safe (Martí Bris, 2000).
- Participatory-counselor: It is showed trust in students' capacities. Teacher controls the classroom but takes into account children opinions (Martí Bris, 2000).
- Participatory-group: Teacher shows full confidence in children capacities. All participate and take part in the decision making process. Everyone's voice have the same value (Martí Bris, 2000).

3. Research Rationale

The present research is a multiple case study where three schooling types are being compared, (democratic, active learning and traditional). The design is not experimental, specifically Ex Post Facto, studying the variables in their natural context without trying to control them (Cohen, Manion & Morison, 2000). The purpose is to create a complete and detailed overview of the characteristics of both types of school and study the results produced by the primary school pupils.

The research has explored the relationships between the styles of communication used by the teachers and the classroom environment.

This is a qualitative research where the data have been gather by observation notes (Cohen, Manion & Morison, 2000).

4. Findings

As we have briefly introduced how the school works in the introduction. Here, just the relevant information to understand the conclusions is going to be presented.

Starting with the Traditional Catholic School, the style of communication used was authoritarian and mix, allowing very controlled participation. In this case there is two authority figures the teacher and the school book. Both unquestionable. A very clear example was seen in one of the classrooms:

Student: "I read a different theory from the one given by the book"

Teacher: "But what does the book say?"

Student: "What you said but maybe..."

Teacher: "But what does the book say?"

Student: "What you said"

Teacher: "Repeat with me I will never question an evidence"

Students compete for being the best in every subject, to win the teacher's sympathy and get the best grades. Therefore, the relationships established by the students are competitive with an aggressiveness implicit, coinciding with the communication style chosen by the teacher.

Taking into account the previous information, the classroom environment is classified as authoritarian-paternalistic.

By opposite, the Democratic School teachers chose a bidirectional affective and empathetic style of communication, avoiding competitiveness between children and trying to make them feel they are worthy and valuable in their own and unique way. Therefore, cooperative and respectful relationships between children are created.

There is no authority since teachers assume a companion role. Children chose when and what to learn base on their own interests, and ask teacher's for help or guidance when they need it. Therefore, the academic curriculum is created by pupils and the group needs.

The classroom environment created is participatory-group.

Finally, the Active Learning School teachers chose an affective and empathetic style of communication in harmony with the child-centre teaching method used. In this case, they have chosen a mix direction since teachers are still the authority in the classroom but children's opinion are taken into account.

The active learning school case is quite special since most of the time they use a bidirectional communication but, sometimes, the unidirectional communication is used as well. The classroom environment wanted is participatory-consulter but, depending on the activity and its source and goals, the participatory-group will be also wanted.

Matching with the Democratic School, relationships established between the students are cooperative and respectful.

5. Conclusions

As it could be observed in the previous information, there is an existing relationship between the relationships established between children, the classroom environment and the way teachers choose to communicate.

Table n° 4. Styles of Communication and Classroom environment. Own creation.

	<i>Style of Communication</i>	<i>Classroom environment</i>	<i>Relationships between students</i>
<i>Democratic Sch.</i>	Affective and empathetic. Bidirectional	Participative-group	Respectful-Cooperative
<i>Active Learning Sch.</i>	Affective and empathetic. Mix direction.	Participative-consultive	Respectful-Cooperative
<i>Traditional Catholic Sch.</i>	Authoritarian and informative. Mix direction.	Authoritarian-Paternalistic	Competitive

It exist an obvious relationship between the way that teachers communicate and the teaching method used.

At the same time, this style of communication chosen by teachers make students feel safe or not, allow them to develop their natural creativity or not. As an example, students from the Democratic and Active Learning schools feel safe and valued knowing that all of them are going to be treated with respect not just for their teachers but for their classmates. This can be the reason why pupils from both schools show a positive attitude towards learning.

It needs to be taken in account the cultural differences in the relationship teacher-pupil in the Scottish and the Spanish schools. In Scotland, students approach the teacher saying Miss, Mr. or Mrs., followed by their surname as way to be respectful. In Spain, in general, pupils call their teachers for their forename as a way to build a close relationship. However, the relationship between pupils in the traditional Spanish school was colder than in the Scottish active learning school. This could demonstrate that the communication style prevail over the way to approach the teacher.

Regarding teachers' involvement, there is not enough evidence to demonstrate any differences between what involvement means in the three schools. Nevertheless, it is observed a connection between the different levels of teachers' involvement in their pupils learning and the different pupil-teacher relationships. It seems the teaching method, classroom structure and school priorities predetermine the communicative style is going to be used. As a consequence, this will modify the relationship students will establish between themselves and the classroom environment built. This could lead us to the conclusion that the communicative style employed by the teacher modifies the pupil's behaviour. The safer they feel, the peaceful and respectful behaviour they will show.

Finally, this can demonstrate how important it is the teacher role for students. Being a model of kindness, understanding and loving behaviour could have an impact in students' attitude and in the way they treat each other. A possibility to learn how to solve conflicts in a peaceful way is given to students by living in a peaceful, safe and respectful environment. Therefore, education for peace means provide them with this atmosphere where they can be

themselves and feel worthy for who they are without being judge or compete with each other.

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