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The Management of the Class of Students – Ways of Intervention in Situations of Educational Crisis

Greta AIRINEI¹

Abstract

The issue of teacher-student relationship is at the heart of all debate on the success of the school, the child's personality development, supporting the education of the family, social adaptation, professional insertion and thus prestige education unit. Management behaviour of the teacher should be in concordance with what the teacher's role is, in concordance with the request of the family and of the other stakeholders of the society in order to ensure the effectiveness of pedagogical actions. In order to implement the best strategies, the didactic personal must study the class of students in from academic and psychosocial perspective. This article seeks to identify the regulatory dimension at the level of the class and school, to identify the intervention procedures, the types of relations and of educational interactions, the way that the teacher's personality influences those actions, as well as managerial roles and their impacts in different educational contexts. The instruments used in the research were: case studies, systematic observation, questioning the family members and the students, the study of the documents and of the procedures on the issue of educational crisis in primary and secondary school level.

Keywords: social group, leading, affective climate, influence, trust.

1. Managerial behaviours and arguments for the need to change attitudes and relationship in situations of educational crisis.

In the social system of education, teachers must construct an adequate behaviour, they should cooperate and interact with child's parents and other stakeholders of the society. This growth and development, management and targeting requires to the teacher - as manager of the class, a maximum responsibility regarding the interventions and behaviours. The status of the teacher as only a mediator in the relationship student-science, as factor which generates educative actions with a formative and informative character, is no longer enough to give value to the pedagogical actions. Multiplying the reference plans in the education and in the behaviours types

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assumed by the pedagogical actions and interventions of the teachers involve a strong managerial cohesion, both in terms of the functions and perspective of organizational management of the students as an organization.

From the didactic point of view, a class of students represent the space means the space intended for the educational process, with the final purpose of the intellectual development and of the motivation for study, but the perspective that defines the best in terms of management of the class is the psychosocial perspective. As a group, the class of students has a structure and features of its own, and its members have different positions, roles and establish relationships.

The success of a management of a class involves the change as a must have feature of the managerial course. The agent of change, following the model of the Huberman's analysis (1978), is the didactic framework itself. The innovation at this level is based upon the knowledge of educational practice, trends, traditions and on the waiting's horizons of the students.

Some of managerial behaviours of the teacher in the educational activity with the students class of the Iucu, B. Romiță, are : planning of the activity with instructive and educative character, organizing the activities of the class (program structures, forms of organisation), communicating of the scientific information by establishing channels of communication, setting out the way to dialogue in an open, constructive and stable climate and leading the activity class (Durkheim (1983) defined pedagogical conduct through the concept of "control" in facilitating the elaboration of common ideas and feelings), coordinating all common educational activities, pursuing individual and common interests of the class, promoting cohesion and solidarity of the group, advising the students during knowledge through structured interventions to support crisis and exceeded the success, motivate and conciliate the students' activity using many and various techniques of appreciation, mediation, and rewarding, controlling and evaluating the level of knowledge, of the realisation of tasks, of the performance, in order to improve all of them.

In conclusion, he carries a wide range of qualities and attributes on the class and on each student in order to achieve success in school and the formation of desirable behaviours.

The managerial style of the teacher, is defined by Ulich Dieter (Padagogische interaktion, Beltz Verlag, Weinheim-Basel, 1995) as a "process by which a person or a group of **persons identifies, organizes, activates, influence the human and technical resources of the class** in order to achieve the proposed objectives." Design of Fred Fiedler who used the term continece in the construction of its theory, assert that the

management effectiveness depends on: leader's personality (motivated by the interpersonal relations or by the instructive-educational tasks) situational variables (favourable and unfavourable).

Another normative model on an educational style is that of Vroom who classify the style in the following ways: autocratic I (take the decision on his own, based on the information held), autocrat II (get more information, then decide), advisory I (present the problem to some relevant members – the leader of the class, and then decide), advisory II (often, the group or the class members, take a decision), group II (implements a decision taken by the group).

Likert identifies the four systems of governance and leadership: the authoritarian exploitative system, the authoritarian benevolent, the consultative and the participatory. Regardless of the style presented, they depend absolutely on the specific learning situations.

2. The educational crisis in the classroom

In an attempt to define a crisis situation, it is required a justified call to the elements of the theoretic management, Romiță B. Iucu (2006) asserting that this could be defined as: stated: *"an event or a complex of unplanned events, unexpected as well unscheduled, generating danger for the climate, the healthy or the safety of the organization (class) and its members."*

The ways by which it is possible to foresee, to gut, to control and to solve a situation of crisis involve safe intervention strategies with a great effort of energy.

The characteristics of a crisis, by Iosifescu (2001) are: an instant outburst that affect the informational system and the interpretation of the messages, make difficult the communication through deconstruction of the channels induce a sense of confusion and of insecurity, generate panic and in the strategic plan is a unique event that creates a state of insolvency.

Most often the teachers focus on teaching activities and they deal superficially the diversity of the educational situations as complex structures of attitudes and relations. Such an attitude creates the proper conditions of the occurrence and development of crisis situations.

In this way, it is found that the educational environment is not only the place where the students receive information in order to form and develop themselves, but also the most important space for socialization and interaction. The interactions between students make the school to become an area full of challenges, where can arise a variety of crisis situations, and even conflict.

Solving the crisis situations depends on the teacher's strategic options in general, as well as on the interior rules, in particular. In any situation, the "positive" approach of the conflict, of the educational crisis is the only one suitable for rapid and profound changes that class should live. Avoidance or neglect of the conflict, lead inevitably to the worsening of it, affecting the students, while engaging, the open expression of opinions and feelings, any innovative potential of negative emotions and resolving the divergence will create the proper functioning of the group and a better internalization of the causes.

The classical approach (developed in the 1930s by Parker-Follet) (Parker, 1949/1987) proposes four ways of fundamental solving: "the dominion" (settlement in favour of a party), "compromise" (to satisfy both parties), "integration" (the complete satisfaction of both parties), "the separation of the warring parties". Evidently, these procedures put greater emphasis on the strength of the parties than on values, which entails the finding of new methods for solving the dispute, such as: recourse to purposes/"threats" (m. and c. Sheriff): the identification of objectives or common threat that can be avoided through cooperation, "recourse to *the third party* (conciliation) in many forms: the query, the arbitration and the mediation.

The techniques and strategies of a crisis situation at the level of the students class may be considered the following: obedience without emotional involvement, focusing on what is said and not on how it is presented, focusing on the content of the speech, along with a problematic of personal gain and of avoiding conflict, the lasting consequences in interpersonal relations plan at group level.

An essential approach of the class management in order to achieve the final educational goals, it is the productive use of the conflict or the solving of it in a creatively and constructively way.

2.b Situations of Educational Crises Among Students

The real causes of classroom-related crises or conflicts may refer to the following: *the competitive environment* (students often work alone, stimulated by the competition that exists between them, lacking the ability to work as part of a group and by the confidence in their colleagues and teachers), *the climate of intolerance* (being part of a "group" in the absence of support among students often results in solitude and isolation, resentment, lack of confidence, hatred), poor communication (the most commonly encountered causes of crises and conflicts, students do not know how to positively express their needs and wishes and cannot listen to the others), *the*

inappropriate expression of feelings (exacerbated feelings, lack of maturity in non-aggressive presentation, suppressed emotions), *the lack of skills to effectively resolve conflicts* (students and teachers do not possess the methods and tools necessary in resolving a crisis), the teacher's incorrect use of power (the escalation of conflict or extension of crisis caused by unreasonably high expectations from students, managing the class by means of inflexible rules).

If teachers use conflict-resolving techniques in a frequent and sequential manner, then the students will be able to learn from them how to resolve their crises on their own. This will have beneficial consequences on the educational climate characterised by: cooperation, communication, tolerance, positive emotional expression (expressing sorrow and dissatisfaction using non-aggressive and non-destructive means), and resolving conflicts.

2.c. Situations of Educational Crises Between Teacher and Students

This type of crisis appears when the teacher uses his power discretionarily. Authoritarianism resolves issues only on a short-term basis and superficially. The teacher must express his authority in a constructive manner in order to build a climate favourable to learning and to stimulate the student to take an active and unconditional part in his/her own training and development.

In what concerns the students, an educational crisis of this type may reflect in the following situations: lack of students' involvement and participation in school activities (absenteeism in school, leaving classes, classroom or break indiscipline, ignoring teachers' messages, refusal to fulfil school-related tasks) while in what concerns the teacher, some aspects may be identified as well: ironical attitude, not paying attention to students, threatening gestures or glances, students' marginalisation). All these occurrences are clearly based on psycho-individual, family, school or social reasons.

In order to avoid conflict situations in case an educational crisis of this type takes place, the following measures must be taken: establish the rules of procedure for the class with students' support, present the list of rules and explain the reasons of each one with logical and relevant arguments brought by the students themselves, determine by mutual agreement the penalties (these must be heavy but not abusive and must change the behaviour and not give rise to a desire for revenge) for not complying with the regulations, display the rules of procedure, their writing by students and awareness by permanent consultation any time there is a possibility to avoid a penalty.

The proposals for the action plan aimed at reducing educational crises include, by Leroy (1974): interactive activities addressing issues such as: personal development (self-knowledge and inter-knowledge), emotions management, communicating and relating to others, children's rights, "peer to peer" relation has a greater impact on young people and they do not distinguish the information sent as being compulsory, an order, Forum Theatre, a social intervention instrument, where starting from a situation of crises the resolution falls within the responsibility of the spectator public. Unlike real life, Forum Theatre offers the participants the possibility to observe the end from outside and to follow the situation in a tragic manner, just like the hidden witness, and to understand the results of ignorance, indolence, labelling or discrimination.

Developing a strategy for a school becomes an imperative only when the number of situations of educational crises and conflict is increasing. This plan will include targets and objectives regarding the functional fields. The diagnosis of specific situations will identify the problems and weaknesses based on the analysis on objectives. The development of possible solutions and courses of action will lead to a favourable prognosis and improved aspects, respectively.

For example, if the problem identified is poverty and thus marginalisation of some students due to poverty, the solutions could be the following: cooperation between the school and the other parents from the parents association in order to direct some social welfare grants, support from the local authorities and non-government organisations, identification of some programmes for social insertion of those parents who cannot find a job, volunteer projects involving students helping their colleagues.

From the point of view of the internal structure of the crisis, it takes the form of a complex condition which necessitates specific resolution procedures. From an axiological perspective, the principles that must govern managerial intervention in resolving situations of crisis are the following: honesty, cooperation and common benefit.

2.d Situations of Educational Crises Between Teacher and Parents

The main causes of these conflicts are the following: poor communication due to some misunderstandings, value conflict, listening problems, lack of reverse connection, false reverse connection, resistance to criticism, selective and subjective perception, obtaining information by discrete manipulation, language inadequacies, cultural barriers and fight for supremacy.

In order to improve their relationship with parents and to decrease the possibility to have situations of crisis, the following actions must be taken: periodical written or verbal notification of parents on reaching the objectives, their children's progress and behaviour observed, involve parents in educational activities where they can be close to the teacher and child, conduct training activities for parents where they could become familiar with various studies on child education, creating opportunities for the parents to get to know psychologists, psycho-pedagogical advisors, physicians, experts in education. Some concrete actions for supporting parents taken by our organisation include the following: topic-based lectureships ("The Role of Family in Developing a Healthy Lifestyle", "The Impact of Excessive Television Watching and Computer Game Playing. Psychological Implications and Perspectives", "Parents and Efficient Communication") activities of the Parents Association ("The Occupation of Parent is Learned", "How can I Be a Good Parent?", "Violence Doesn't Make You Stronger") giving questionnaires to parents at parents' meetings, organising panels on topics identified by parents' interrogation ("How Can I Overcome Together with My Child the Emotions of an Exam?", "Pubescent Personality – Pedagogical Measures and Interventions", "How Can I Raise a Successful Child?").

The educational programmes for parents represent a form of impact on parents in favour of their children's education, of decreasing and diminishing educational crises that exist in a family, in the relationships with the school, class, teachers and other students. Comprising a set of supporting educational measures, parents' education aims at developing educational skills and abilities for all members of the community, as well as confidence in their own forces at many levels: understanding their own needs (physical, social, emotional, psychological) knowing and understanding their children's needs, building bridges between parents, children and teacher, setting educational continuity between the child's main living environment, family and school, encouraging the family to express its own cultural dynamism, improving family educational practices.

From this perspective, the benefits brought by the classroom educator are multiple: improve the child's learning performances, reduce communication barriers, parents pay more attention to their children and become a real support in any endeavour initiated by the teacher as real cooperation and dialogue partners.

Conclusions

The activity of a classroom educator, "his/her qualities and pedagogical errors committed can be analysed and appreciated only as elements of a set of different agents: the class, the social and material conditions, and especially the psycho-social interaction with class members or parents, as well as with his colleagues" (Halpert,1993).

Being an effective classroom educator who efficiently manages crisis situations means accepting the fact that the teacher – student relationship cannot be seen anymore as a dependence or abstract communication. The educational influence aimed at building, forming or changing behaviours or attitudes derives from the teacher's ability to be a significant presence, to alternate strategies adapting them to educational situations, to delegate responsibilities, mobilise students and family for collective cooperation and make the most of any situation in order to set up a strong and productive partnership.

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