

TEACHER'S PERCEPTION OF THE EDUCATIONAL RELATIONSHIP ON THE RELATION TEACHER-PUPIL IN A SCHOOL

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Abstract

Contemporary pedagogy, when thinking about education, puts an emphasis on the wholesome growth and development of man. The educational relationship supposes a personal relationship between the educator and student. A teacher in a contemporary school is a motivator, facilitator, moderator, coordinator, mediator, mentor..., an educator in the widest sense of the word. The teacher, with their personality and behaviour, is involved in creating an atmosphere in school and developing a school culture which is impossible to define and perceive as one-dimensional. Positive school culture is a prerequisite for a quality teaching process and research that contributes to understanding this phenomenon is scientifically justified and practically applicable. Interpersonal action, as a mutually constructive relationship, demands constant deliberation and challenge.

The paper deals with the educational relationship between the teacher and pupil from the teacher's perspective. The objective of the research was to determine teacher's perception of the educational relationship and communication with pupils in school and educational process. Problem of the research has been aimed towards analysis of the teacher's perception of the teacher-pupil relationship and comparisons of mutual views of communication problems and teacher-pupil relations with the intention of improving the quality of their mutual relationship, therefore the educational process itself. 78 high schools have participated in the research. The results have indicated the elements that teachers consider important for creating positive rapport with pupils, as well as those they consider to be obstacles in creating such rapport and also their assessment of how the pupils see them, or which feelings the teachers excite in them. Given results have been compared to pupil's answers, which were the result of a parallel research.

An atmosphere should be developed in schools, which makes them a seminal and harmonized place for studying and adopting values and attitudes. The results of the conducted research and deliberations connected to them are contributing to the understanding of mutual relationships between teachers and pupils as one of the factors for creating school's identity and culture.

Keywords: contemporary pedagogy, teachers, pupils, perception, school, educational relationship.

1 INTRODUCTION

The educational relationship between a teacher and a pupil in contemporary pedagogy assumes a key place and is one of the elements of school culture which commonly created, whereby the teachers bring into the school and the teaching the cultural models of the communities, their understanding of "social reality" which they, their families and communities use or don't use in the educational attempt [1]. School culture is a complex, multi-dimensional phenomenon which is not easily described or theoretically defined. The multi-layered nature of this phenomenon is partially a consequence of the "elusive", non-material nature of the construct [1]. Authors Schoen and Tedlie [3], when observing this phenomenon, recognize complex rituals of personal relationships, a variety of traditions and certain ethical rules which make up the school identity. Schein [4] believes that organizational culture is one of the strongest and most stable forces acting in the organizations and Morgan [5] mentions the culture and sub-culture of each organization. The culture of an institution is a set of official, written, open, but also concealed and secret, rules, values, and principles which are constant and which focus behavior in an organization.

Along with the school culture theory, the authors conceptualized the basic prerequisites of the relationship between a teacher and a pupil with two more theories: the theory of affection and the theory of interpersonal relations [6]. The theory of affection stresses the basic human need to connect which assumes and explains interpersonal behavior in social contexts [6]. Within the theory of interpersonal relations, the same authors recognize several types of relations: positive, negative and indifferent.

Interpersonal relations, especially the ones between a teacher and a pupil, significantly contribute to the construction of a positive school culture, which is a prerequisite for the quality of the teaching process and the research which contributes to the understanding of this phenomenon is scientifically justified and practically applicable. The relationship between a teacher and a pupil is intertwined with personal and professional components and is marked by interaction and influence and a teacher's empathy, positive attitudes in view of sympathy, social perception and trust towards the pupil are necessary for a successful relationship [6]. Positive interaction greatly resides on quality communication which often prevents possible difficulties when building positive interpersonal relations. The teacher is a starter of communication and their sovereign governing of verbal and non-verbal aspects of communication [7] are predictors of a quality relationship with pupils.

Based on the research of a relationship between a teacher and a pupil, Sanders and Rivers [8] conclude that pupils of the most successful teachers are more successful in learning than the pupils of the least successful teachers and that influence is increased with the passing of time. Hamre and Pianta [9] stress the importance of setting up quality relations between a teacher and a pupil because it allows pupils to regulate the emotional and social behavior, to adapt to the demands of the school, engage in the school environment and self-control, which is ultimately tied to the academic success of a pupil. The positive relationship between a teacher and a pupil, in literature in Croatia, is mentioned as a protective element in the psycho-social development and the education of a pupil in a school [6].

2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 The aim and the research problem

The aim of this research was to establish the teacher's perception of the educational relationship and the communication with pupils in school and the teaching process. The problem of this research is focused on the analysis of the teacher's perception of the relationship between the pupil and the teacher, as well as the comparison of their attitudes on the problems of communication and the relationship between the teacher and pupil with the intent of improving the quality of their relationship and, along with it, the very teaching process.

2.2 Research hypotheses:

- H1 There is a statistically significant difference in the teacher's perception of the relationship with the pupils considering the type of school where the teachers work
- H2 There is a statistically significant difference in the teacher's perception of the relationship with the pupils considering gender
- H3 There is a statistically significant difference in the teacher's perception of the relationship with the pupils considering the years spent working

2.3 Examinees and the procedure

78 examinees took part in this research (out of which 21 were male and 57 were female) from vocational schools (N=42) and grammar schools (N=36) in 4 counties: Požeško-slavonska, Splitsko-dalmatinska, Osječko-baranjska and Dubrovačko-neretvanska, in 10 schools. All the examinees were familiarized with the aim and the tasks of the survey prior to the implementation, and they were guaranteed anonymity with a plea to answer their questions truthfully. A questionnaire consisting of two parts was created. The first part contained questions of a socio-demographic character, while the other part questioned the teacher's perception of the relationship with the pupils in the school and the teaching process. The research results were gathered and analyzed using the SPSS program package, whereby descriptive and inferential method of data analysis was used.

2.4 Research results

Research results showed that teachers believe that the greatest influence on creating a positive attitude in the relationship between a teacher and a pupil is possessed by the understanding and respect of the pupil's personality (32,1%), followed by clear and two-way communication (24,4%), readiness of a teacher to help a pupil (16,7%), an intimate and warm relationship between a teacher and pupils (11,5%), an equal relationship towards all pupils (10,3%), interesting presentation of the teacher (2,6%) and objective grading (1,3%). This is in line with the research done by Drobot and Rošu [10] who,

similarly, recognize the elements of a good relationship between a teacher and a pupil (open communication, a friendly attitude, honesty and patience).

Several examinees did not respond to a question (1,3%). It is interesting that, when comparing results with the survey performed earlier in the same schools where the pupils' perception of the positive attitude in the relationship between a teacher and pupil was examined, the pupils put the intimate and warm relationship of a teacher towards pupils on first place (25,6%), and then understanding and respect of the pupils' personalities (23.6%). From this, it is visible that there are differences in the perception of teachers and pupils and they are relevant for the understanding and improvement of their mutual relationship in class and in school.

It is interesting that teachers believe the most frequent cause of misunderstanding between a teacher and a pupil (*Figure 1*) is a defiant attitude of a pupil towards a teacher (37,2%), followed by the inability of a teacher to understand the pupil (21,8%), then the attitude of a teacher that he/she must always be right (14,1%), a depreciating attitude of a teacher towards the pupil (10,3%), age difference (7,7%), something else (7,7%), and 1,3% of examinees did not respond. It is significant to highlight that pupils also stressed a defiant attitude of a pupil towards the teacher (40%) and the inability of a teacher to understand the pupil (19,9%), as well as the attitude of a teacher that he/she must always be right (18%). From this, one can surmise that pupils and teachers are in accordance on what is the cause of misunderstanding between a teacher and a pupil.

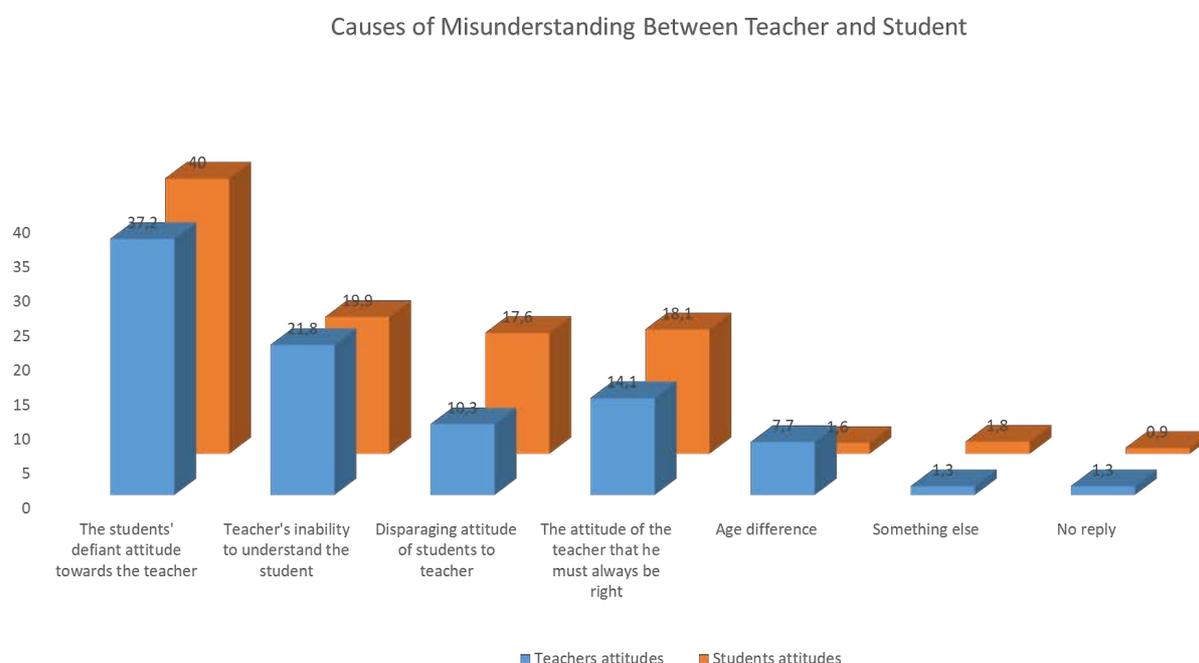


Figure 1. Causes of misunderstanding between teacher and students.

Teachers also believe that the discipline of a pupil in class (*Figure 2*) depends on the ability of a teacher to keep pupils interested (39%), then on house manners (19,5%), the way a teacher presents (18,2%), the strictness of a teacher (11,7%), whether the material is interesting (10,4%). The beliefs of pupils are opposed to this. They believe that the disciplined nature of pupils depends more on the way a teacher presents (24,9%) and whether the material is interesting (21,7%). This shows that there are differences in perception of a teacher and pupil when regarding the cause of a lack of discipline in class. We can also conclude that they agree that the quality of class and content is an important motivator for pupils to follow class and be active in class, which contributes to better discipline.

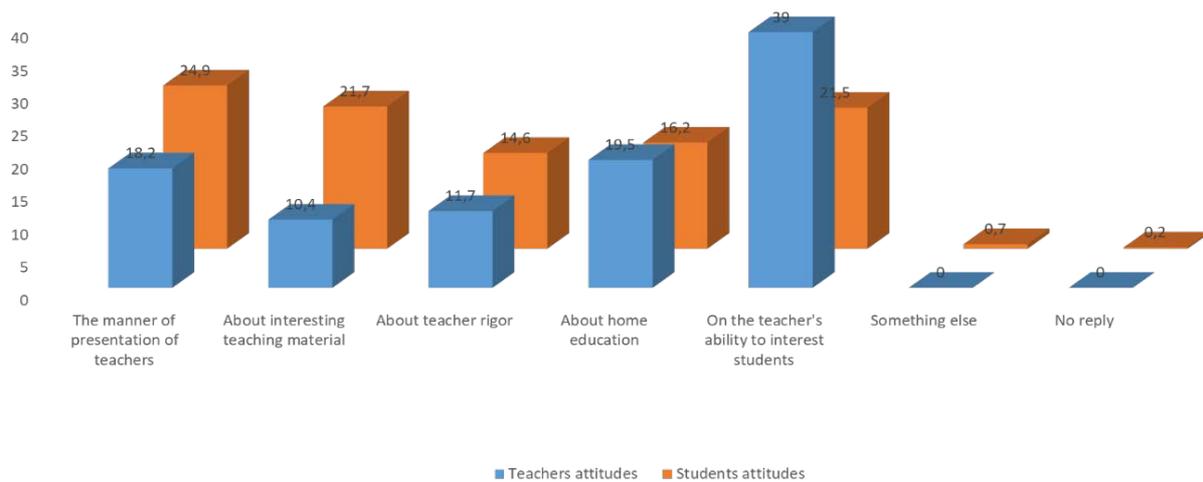


Figure 2. What determines discipline to teaching hour.

When asked what brings the pupils the most pleasure in class (Figure 3), the teachers responded that it is the quality of the relationship between a teacher and the pupil (33,8%), whether the material is interesting (19,5%), praise and encouragement by the teacher (16,9%), valuing the opinion of the teacher (11,7%), clear, descriptive and interesting presentation (11,7%) and being funny (3,9%), something else (2,6%). It is interesting that the previously implemented research where the pupils were surveyed showed that they also share a similar classification but they primarily value whether the material is interesting (24,9%), and then the quality of the relationship between the teacher and the pupils (19,9%), followed by the teacher being funny (18,1%), and the praise and encouragement by the teacher (13%), a clear, descriptive and interesting presentation by the teacher (12,1%), as well as validating the opinions of the pupils (9,6%), and something else (2,3%).

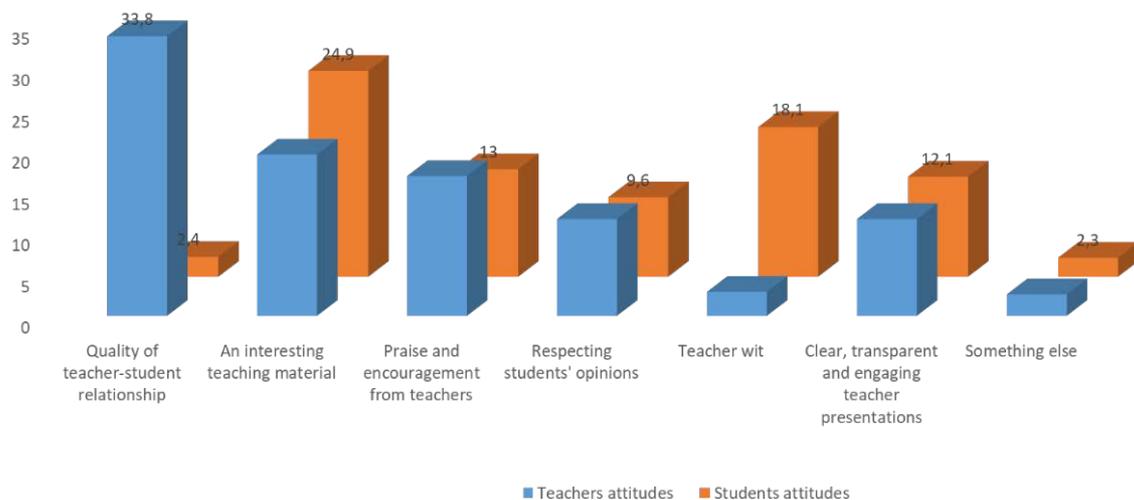


Figure 3. What gives the students the most satisfaction in the class.

When asked to estimate what the pupils feel or how they see their teacher, the teachers say that it is primarily respect (53,8%), affection (37,2%), indifference (5,1%), something else (2,6%) and least of all awe (1,3%). It is interesting that no teacher chose the answers such as: admiration, contempt, hatred, fear. By way of this, we reach the conclusion that the teachers and pupils share an opinion on how pupils see teachers. The pupils also stated that this feeling is primarily respect (67,7%) and affection (7,6%), but there were some who chose answers such as indifference (7,3%), admiration (5,5%), hatred (3,9%), unlike the teachers who do not consider these answers to be possible (Table 1). This shows that the majority of pupils is friendly towards teachers and they chose the same answers in the majority of cases, but there are the responses of individual examinees which, in a minority, assume negative feelings and connotations.

By analyzing the teacher's perception of how they see the relationship with the pupils by using a t-test for independent samples, it has been determined that there is no statistically significant difference in the teacher's perception of class considering the type of school where they work ($p>0,05$) nor considering gender ($p>0,05$) and this rejected the first and second hypotheses (H1 and H2).

The t-test for independent samples also determined that there was no statistically significant difference in the teacher's perception of the relationship with the pupils considering the years spent working ($p>0,05$) and this rejected the thirds hypothesis as well (H3).

Table 1. The feeling towards the teacher from the perspective of a teacher and pupil

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Pupils</i>		<i>Teachers</i>	
	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>%</i>
Affection	33	7,6	29	37,2
Admiration	24	5,5	-	-
Respect	296	67,7	42	53,8
Awe	12	2,7	1	1,3
Fear	7	1,6		
Hatred	17	3,9		
Contempt	3	,7		
Indifference	32	7,3	4	5,1
Something else	13	3,0		
No response	-	-	1	1,3
Σ	437	100,0	78	100,0

3 CONCLUSIONS

The postmodern curriculum needs to empower pupils for the insecurity of the future as a preparation for life in a pluralist, multicultural, fragmented society of fast and unexpected changes. The educational relationships, values, attitudes, elements of the hidden curriculum will influence the shaping of school culture much more than the official curriculum. Schools need to develop a culture which makes it an encouraging, harmonized place to learn and adopt values and attitudes [11]. This culture can be created and developed if a positive, quality, intentional, educational relationship between a teacher and a pupil is systematically thought-out, developed and created. The quality relationship between a teacher and a pupil is precisely the prerequisite of a positive class environment, but also the teaching process as a whole. This also requires taking into account the pupils' and teachers' perception of this relationship i.e. the views of this relationship from the perspective of both sides need to be compared and synchronized i.e. empirically researched and verified. Initial education of a teacher cannot ensure the competences, knowledge, and skills needed for all aspects of teaching, so that education and professional development of each teacher, where the creation of an educational relationship also falls into, must be observed as a lifelong task and the teachers need to be aware of the constant need to advance this relationship. Therefore, the research which contributes to the understanding of the phenomenon of the relationship teacher-pupil are scientifically justified and practically applicable.

The relationship between the teacher and pupil is complex, ingenious interpersonal relationship marked by a professional and personal component. The pedagogical relationship is not and cannot be a single-sided action in which the teacher purposefully and systematically acts on a pupil, who only responds and accepts the behavior imposed on them. This is an active communication process which is marked by interaction and mutual influence, but also a certain hierarchical relationship and a series of positive (affection, trust, admiration, respect...) but also negative elements (fear, contempt, indifference...). Such a relationship is, at the same time, composed of clearly stated elements, but also the messages of a hidden curriculum. A teacher must make aware the components of this relationship and build a humane relationship full of trust, tolerance, patience, acceptance, empathy, and all those positive emotional attitudes and values which ultimately mark a positive school culture.

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