THE MULTI-FACETED TEACHER IN THE CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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Abstract: *The contemporary educational system, through its promoters, endeavors to draw the portrait of the teacher whose mission encompasses a multitude of roles. We have long forgotten the image of the traditional teacher, secluded into certain strict teaching methods, leaving room to the reflective mentor who knows how to negotiate the route from one context to another in order to allow for a richer learning experience. The contemporary teacher is no longer a mere provider of knowledge, but rather a complex figure who manages various memberships and navigate in more than one world. The present study is a foray into the challenging world of teaching, whose protagonist's main role is to explore new spaces and design new activities that transcend classroom constraints of time and space. This will lead to the reconfiguration of the teaching process, which will become more attractive and consistent with the needs of the learning community.*

Keywords: *learning experience, constraints, learning community.*

Communication and its evolution space

People's need to communicate has always been recognized in our geographical area, being influenced by the free flow of groups beyond the borders of any state, trade or migration phenomenon. Immigration as a phenomenon is often perceived as an uneven transaction. People settle in various parts of the world, in search of a better life or to follow examples. The brain drain, for example, took unimaginable proportions, especially for those adventurous enough to strike out for new opportunities.

The communication field meets and develops new exigencies adapted to a diverse reality and the man who communicates through language is fully involved in all the experiences, beliefs, cultural values. From the simple theory of communication developed by Roman Jakobson, who supports the transfer of information from the transmitter to the receiver by a simple code, modern communication channels are more complex and engage sign language interpretation, analysis and communication rules that govern the subject's attitude during the exchange. The act of communication is not strictly limited to the development of language or social skills but creates a global network of dependencies and a more advanced conceptual framework. The cultural variations aiming at the semiotic sources, gestures, space, forms of address, etc., open broad prospects of a communicative space for interaction and interrelation.

Communication usually takes place bilaterally or multilaterally. The two participants involved in the act of teaching and learning are the teacher and the student i.e. the transmitter and receiver of information. The two partners in the conversation achieve the so-called "linguistic exchange economy", in which the predominant term is *trade*, as *information trade*. The two-subject oriented conversation aims at their cooperation, which includes a series of actions: initially the student is hesitant in his relationship with the teacher, while the latter interferes through correction, suggestions, urging the student to self-correction. The present study focuses on the role of the teacher in an educational setting in a permanent change.

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The teacher of the past

In the context of a less-formalized school education, the teacher of the 17th century used to have a much easier mission: transmission of knowledge to a small segment of the population. The teaching act was defined by a random series of personal initiatives and no further training was necessary except for information dissemination. In terms of teaching methods, teachers used to follow the traditional approaches in a logical sequence from the simple to the complex. At a later point in time, a new vision of teaching emerged due to the high need for education among teenagers. Therefore, managing larger groups of learners became a heavy burden for the teachers of the time. A new approach of the world was based on total control of the students who had to be educated. This control was interpreted in terms of time, space, gestures, actions of the group etc. The group diversity demanded the emergence of new teaching techniques that quickly spread throughout the Western communities and even beyond.

In the late 19th century and early 20th century the so-called total control became subject to severe criticism, due to the growing development of science. The science of teaching itself needed considerable improvement with a particular emphasis on the student's needs. In the early 1990s, a major reform of the teaching process was launched aiming to turn teaching into a professional act.

An innovative model – the professional teacher

The reform undertaken at the beginning of 2000 sought to put a high pressure on teachers and followed certain coordinates: group diversity, the phenomenon of globalization and technological advances. The teacher's mission was made harder due to the high level of responsibility to the class management and the teaching act. The classroom setting was no longer sufficient to solve all the problems, hence the extension of education to less formal contexts, outside school.

Everything was related to the concept of professionalism, which also became the main concern of the international stage. The above-mentioned reform was meant as a universal dimension specific to all Western scholarly areas. The provision of educational services had to comply with the requirements of the society. Therefore, school autonomy, professional expertise and innovative teaching methods were highly needed to raise positive expectations.

Competency-based programs came into being and teachers had to adjust to them in order to facilitate the teaching-learning process. Inert materials were replaced by living, dynamic subjects, whereas students adopted a new strategy to interfere with from their pedestal, teachers must, day after day, earn the credit and influence they formerly enjoyed automatically." (Lang 1999: 129)

The polyvalent teacher had to assume a wide range of roles and tasks in accordance with the complex professional situation. Such roles involve designing teaching directions, guiding students through varied activities, evaluating, adapting to the student's needs, collaborating with the learning community (partners, school teams, parents etc.).

In terms of teaching environments, polyvalence implies the efficient management of underprivileged socioeconomic areas and ethnic groups. A great emphasis was also placed on real life teaching situations, along with the fruitful collaboration with various professional bodies. The main purpose was to redefine and reshape the teaching process in a four-dimensional trajectory: cognition, skills, attitudes and set of values.

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The role of the cultured teacher

Human entities are in a steady relationship with the world. As inheritors of the world, children acquire the categories of language and give them different connotations. Every world aspect is interpreted at an individual level and is enriched with various meanings. A particular event, person or place is experienced in a unique way by each human being. What is crucial for someone may be of little significance for somebody else.

The teacher creates a universe both within his class and outside it. Through the mediation of cultural items, the teacher as a bearer of culture, designs a special microcosm. For a long time, educators' mission was to convey a unified heritage of knowledge and values. Due to the high control over the students' conduct and level of culture, the teacher's image was well-shaped and asserted authority and prestige.

Recent times have brought about a completely different perspective on teachers' role, especially due to increased class heterogeneity. The school setting has undergone radical transformations that allow a wide comprehension of the surrounding world. From the simple traditional methods, the world has evolved to multiple interpretations of the general knowledge. All these imminent changes have substantially contributed to outlining the new teacher.

Under the circumstances, the new educator no longer belongs to himself. He is to develop a solid relationship with his students, with the community he belongs to and far beyond it. "There is no longer a unanimous cultural stockpile, a delimited set of knowledge and models of conduct of which teachers are the respected holders and confident transmitters for which they feel responsible for the society that surrounds them and which they represent by their profession." (Dumont 1971: 53)

The rhythm with the society evolution is essential for each teacher who inevitably has to become an inheritor, a transmitter and interpreter of culture. As inheritors, they are responsible to build up continuity and create transitions between the present and the past, between knowledge and the world. They also have to convey a new interpretation of the world elements, and understand the quintessence of the human being.

As transmitters, teachers share their knowledge of the world and make their students aware of the cultural heritage importance. He helps them to acquire a transcultural competence, one of the highest educational awards. Transmission of culture is in fact transmission of a cultural pattern inserted with specific interaction competences.

Teachers also need to interpret culture and make it relevant for others. This involves a rigorous selection of the information to be interpreted. The double role of decoder for the subject they teach and for the group of students generates a sort of flexibility meant to release the tension in the classroom. Therefore, a particular cultural training is required for the teacher whose knowledge areas comprise linguistics, science, arts, technology, social sciences and self-development.

In order to better comprehend nuances and diagnose reality, the teacher coordinates his teaching act in accordance with his own attitude and his attitude towards the others.

The teacher's career – a job or a mission

When exploring the dimensions of human personality, the teacher instructs, urges, guides, cultivates, corrects and improves the educational process. The teacher's mission cannot be accurately quantified because the human subject is subjected to

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behavioral change, vulnerability, whereas the lesson is more than a lesson in itself, it is a life lesson. One speaks more often about student-centered learning and an educational system that takes into account the needs of the student. Because of the high heterogeneity of groups, these needs are extremely varied. As integrative parts of the teacher's personality, the cognitive, psycho-pedagogical and psycho educational skills interfere and give flexibility to the educational act. There are a series of behavioral clichés of educators that devalue the teacher-student relationship and affect the communication between the two partners in the dialogue. The teacher must give up the classic pattern and turn into a mediator and facilitator to create a pleasant, challenging climate, based on teamwork. As long as these coordinates are embedded in a person, the educational act goes beyond a job and becomes a mission. The role diversity that teachers take on is in close correlation with the type of work they perform.

At different times, teachers act as planners, informers, managers, parents or monitors. As a planner, he prepares the lesson in detail and is thus able to build up the appropriate activities. In planning the class, the teacher selects the useful materials and manages the classroom dynamics in such a way as to add value to the teaching act.

The role of manager establishes the learning space and sets up rules and routines. Working dexterously to build up the synergy of the class is essential for teachers and students alike. The former exploit the strengths and weaknesses of the class, whereas students bring their active contribution to the smooth running of the activities.

The monitoring act involves checking students during their activities. The better understanding of the purpose and nature of these activities, the greater the likelihood that everybody will recognize the importance of their roles, in order to maintain and improve learning standards.

The role of a parent is not a negligible aspect and is closely connected with the psychological dimension of the teaching process. A teacher comforts his students and empathizes with them in an attempt to find out and solve their problems and inner uneasiness. It is through the process of trying to understand your students, to see the world through their eyes, that the greatest chance of transferring information can be achieved.

The diagnostician teacher is able to recognize the learner's difficulties. He also diagnoses the perils of routine and anticipates with accuracy certain endeavors to be carried out.

The moderator teacher must be objective and should not impose his own point of view. Decision making is a two-sided issue and is part of a negotiation process. The efficient teacher keeps an even balance between the demanding role and the decision freedom of the group.

Teachers and their reluctance to change methodologies

Over the time, teachers have been engaged in a series of changes and challenges of the educational system which aroused a strong hostility towards new methodologies. Most of them have shown resistance to any form of change, because they are not fond of experiments that are sure to partially fail in a stuffy heterogeneous classroom. They have built up a repertoire of effective teaching techniques which work properly in the classroom context and are by no means willing to replace them.

Most often, teachers are not open to change and show little enthusiasm for the latest trends in teaching. Such reluctance to innovation is explainable by the fact that

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teachers are not always convinced that a new teaching method will be advantageous, whereas students will not be convinced of its value.

The teacher between modern and traditional

The authentic teacher, as outlined by the modern society assimilates qualities and virtues of subtle psychologist, educator and trainer, being perceived as an inventive and inexhaustible person in the knowledge process. If the teacher of the past was a simplified structure reduced to two essential dimensions of informing and training, the contemporary society opens wider horizons focused on linguistic, media competence, desire, willingness, availability and creates opportunities for communication. Openness to novelty, adaptation to different contexts, self-development and involvement are as many teacher training privileges needed today. School subjects are treated in a complex, logic, systematic manner, and pave the way for critical reflexivity. Today, reading a book is no longer confined to mere accumulation and imitative reproduction of passages or fragments, but leave room for questions, reflections, so that students have the curiosity to approach the subject from other perspectives. The modern teacher is to eliminate the gap between the cognitive and the emotional factors. Therefore, the learner should be engaged in seeking and mental processing of data. Cultural pluralism, respect for diversity of opinions and epistemic curiosity lead to a fruitful cooperation and strengthening the aesthetics of human relationships.

In the complexity and specificity of the didactic scene, teachers shall be responsible to manage the group, despite the student's initiative of autonomy. How the teacher asks questions is essential to learning, all the more so as questions are usually pre-established with limited response possibilities. The teacher's speech must be modeled so that the learner should understand its logical sequences. The teacher who manipulates communication gives students the opportunity to find varied answers to the requirements expressed and discover innovative strategies. As a ritualized environment, the class dynamics highlights the important roles that the teacher needs to assume.

Because of the unpredictable factors such as the great variety of cultural contexts, the political exigencies, the economic directions etc., teachers must become their own methodologists in the assiduous process of self-observation, self-analysis and self-evaluation.

Conclusions

The teacher remains the undisputed linguistic reference, mistake proofreader and performance evaluator. The present study was intended to open up new possibilities for far-reaching changes in teacher training practices. In order to meet the rigorous requirements of the 21st century, teachers have to perform a variety of roles: educator, motivator, manager, diagnostician, to name just a few, since teaching is an art and demands a lifetime of continuous refinement and improvement.

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