NLP PRINCIPLES AND TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHERS WHO PROVIDE THE BASIS FOR ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION

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Abstract: Neuro-linguistic programming (NLP) is best known as a tool for personal development, emotional balancing, a self-motivation program, but has also gained great importance in the world of education in recent years. Teachers, besides the privilege of working with souls and minds and beyond communicating scientific information, also have a very important mission, that of shaping behaviours. People have all the resources they need to change, in order to change any kind of behaviour. NLP is about how we can assist a person, or we can assist ourselves, in discovering the resources that are already in us and which we will use to achieve the desired results. NLP principles and techniques proved to have real results in the educational system as well. Applying them correctly, we find out what is the link between our own emotions and the success in life, and we will also learn to call our inner states correctly and to decode their message so that we can build confidence in ourselves and develop self-esteem which will allow us to express our needs and values on the road to achieving excellence in education.

Keywords: NLP (neuro-linguistic programming), map of reality, rapport, resourceful state, leading

"Being an educator means being a poet of love. Never forget that I will take a little of your being, in my own being" (Augusto Cury- *Părinţi străluciţi, profesori fascinanţi 2007, 1).*

Education, in all its forms, is called today, more than ever, to find solutions for the student to adapt quickly and effectively to the society in which he lives, to develop desirable and responsible social attitudes. Education is the only way to human evolution. So, we need the best teachers to prepare tomorrow's adults.

The concept of NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming) appeared 40 years ago in California, when the mathematician Richard Bandler and the philologist John Grinder asked themselves a simple but fascinating question: What is the difference between a person who is only competent from a certain point of view and another who achieves excellent performance in the same field?

The result was unexpected. Building formal models of the linguistic and behavioural structures of people with special abilities, Bandler and Grinder have found that these are repetitive and can be learned by those interested in the rapid development of these abilities.

In other words, through the modelling process that the two NLP creators have set up, models of good intra and interpersonal functioning can be identified, which can then be transferred to other people. NLP developed through the behavioural modelling techniques proposed by Richard Bandler and John Grinder after studying the work of three of the greatest therapists of the time - Virginia Satir (founder of Family Therapy) Fritz Perls (founder of Gestalt Therapy) and Milton Erickson (father of medical hypnosis).

Neuro-linguistic programming is a clear, precise, and easily applicable science. It is the study of how man works, as well as the understanding of the mechanisms and their practical use in everyday life. It is a technology to make communication more effective, to change behaviour, and to achieve success through the way we think, feel and act.

The renowned psychotherapists Milton Ericson, Virginia Satir, Fritz Perls, Richard Bandler and John Grinder have managed to break certain patterns of classical and traditional psychology. Thus, they have developed a set of models, methods and techniques aimed at enhancing the ability to choose and condition the events in our lives. These models have been taken over to make them

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accessible and to transmit them to people in order to help them achieve performance. Today, the methods and techniques of neuro-linguistic programming are used in therapy, business, justice, education, sports, etc. Using these techniques correctly, people can change their condition, change the states of other people, can convince more easily, can lead more, increase their efficiency, productivity and eliminate the mental and emotional blockages.

Neuro-linguistic programming is probably best known as a personal development tool and a self-empowerment program, but it has also gained much importance in the world of education in recent years. Teachers have discovered that NLP principles and methods have real outcomes in working with students. NLP has become an important tool in education where professional trainers and teachers create their NLP presentations and where school counselors and parents improve their relationships with their children and students.

It has become essential for a teacher to keep up with the demands of the students, to meet their needs, to stimulate their interest in learning and to guide them in developing the skills necessary for their success in life. Teachers will have to understand that they are the partners of the students in this educational process and that they are equally responsible for the outcome of education. Today, more than ever, young people need models, they need new and attractive learning methods, they need identity recognition, encouragement and not criticism, support and dedication.

All the abilities and abilities that define, but also the favourable or unfavourable habits, follow the same path of learning: repetition, association and emotion. The more you repeat a certain behaviour, the more you will keep repeating it because your subconscious develops a route for that behaviour. It is important to remember that actions are stronger than words.

Emotion is the main form of communication of the subconscious. Just as reason and thoughts are the pillar of resistance of our conscious mind, so is the emotion for the subconscious mind. Emotion is the factor that helps the mind to differentiate between important information and experiences in life and those that have no value. By understanding these subconscious learning patterns, we have the ability and power to use our conscious mind to change, shape and direct the path of the subconscious towards the path we want. The long-term benefit of NLP is that people assume certain procedures that they can use at any time in their lives.

NLP is centred on communication and change. In everyday life, each of us finds that, in order to best integrate into the environment in which we want, we need a great deal of flexibility to be authentic. The quality of what we do and the difference between how much we succeed in life is closely related to how much we manage to use our nervous system. So much of what NLP does is about how to learn and think efficiently and useful to us and how to communicate effectively with us first and then with others.

Being a new way to approach brain and human behaviour, in studying the Model of Human Excellence, NLP starts from new assumptions by considering them as true. These principles give human beings greater freedom of choice, more opportunities, such as developing and adopting a positive mental attitude.

One of the fundamental principles of neuro-linguistic programming is *the map is not the territory*. Mental map is our way of thinking, and what happens in our minds in connection with an event, only includes our perception of that event and does not include the event. The map refers to the fact that we each see, hear and feel the world in our own way, building our own reality, but another can interpret the same thing in a different way. These maps determine our behaviour. People react and respond according to their inner maps and no individual map is more real or better, more appropriate, more objective than another map. In relationship with others, we are all right, because each responds according to their own mental map. Every man lives according to his mental map that the parents first set up, then the teachers and all those who have authority over us. We gain more by changing our form in which we represent reality than by changing the content of our experiences.

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And so, we come to another NLP principle, namely, *the way in which a particular situation is perceived determines the significance that is given to it and the actions it causes*. For example, a student got a bad grade. Imagine what a mother, a teacher, a priest, a friend, a psychologist, a colleague who also got a bad grade would say about this situation? Surely different reactions will be triggered depending on the map of the recipient. Teaching communication can be defined as a message exchange, with specific content, between teacher and pupils. It is done orally, in writing, by visual means and even by gestures. *It's impossible not to communicate* is another important principle of NLP. In a continuous form we convey behaviours. Even in those moments when we choose not to communicate, we convey to our interlocutor what we feel without expressing it explicitly. We communicate by words, by the tone of voice, posture, gestures and expressions. The excellent people in communication use everything available to them from the vast range of manifestations of the communication.

The meaning of communication is given by the answer received. The answer that teachers receive is an indicator of the effectiveness or inefficiency of the communication process. We are responsible for messages coming from us. Responsive communication means always having the ability to change the way you communicate until you get the desired result. In order to establish a good connection between our inner map and that of the interlocutor, we need to first establish a good emotional connection with that person. This is the aspect that NLP defines as Rapport and represents the establishment of a deep connection with others.

In any communication relationship it is vital the existence of a relationship, an empathic resonance relationship between the teacher and the student, as the basis of a mutual trustworthy climate in which the two can feel and manifest themselves freely. It is difficult to imagine a good evolution of the communication process in the circumstances in which the discussion partner lacks confidence in the other, or if his presence makes him feel insecure, interrogated or judged. Thus, one of the essential skills in NLP is to know how to create a relationship with the other, or the other people we come into contact with. The repport is an important pillar in NLP and it is essential in effective communication. In this regard, NLP provides a wide range of applications and exercises to develop the ability to create and maintain the rapport. “In NLP language, we call this process mirroring or matching” (Robbins A. - *Unlimited Power* 1986, 233)

The purpose of the rapport is to convey subconscious messages to the other as we are, think, feel and behave alike. The report can be initiated by adjusting our behaviour with subtlety to that of the person or student we want to get in touch with. The report is the ability to penetrate into the other’s world, "the ability to move completely from the map of our own world onto the map of his world." (Robbins A. - *Unlimited Power* 1986, 236)

This process is called pacing (synchronization) with the purpose of understanding the student's model of the world and creating the premises of guiding that pupil to a certain destination by matching the breath with the other, the posture, the movement, the tone of the voice and the tempo. It's like a dance where each partner responds to each other's movements through their own movements.

Another component of the rapport is the *leadership*, which involves the attempt to influence a person to make a decision in order to change. In practice, this leading is never taken apart from pacing, which is an important part of the rapport. When the teacher is doing pacing, he tries to enter the student's skin, experience how it is to live in his model of the world, to communicate with the student through his language, and to think like him. When the teacher leads, he tries to influence the student towards new behaviour and a new thinking. According to Anthony Robbins, “the best teachers instinctively know how to pace and lead. They are able to establish rapport, so their message gets through. But there’s no reason why all teachers can’t learn the same thing. By learning to pace their students, by learning to present information in the forms their students can effectively process, they can revolutionize the educational world.” (Robbins A. - *Unlimited Power* 1986, 250)

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NLP challenges us to look beyond the behaviours that irritate us and to find the positive intention behind them, according to the principle that *behind each behaviour there is a positive intention*. At first glance, such an assertion may be unthinkable, and teachers certainly have in mind a series of memories that they can put in the balance against the principle. For example, the fact that a student lied about solving a project. Taken ad litteram, this principle may seem radical and idealistic, but viewed from a wider vision, it could gain strength in the personal development of teachers and not only. To fully understand this principle, we need to understand every aspect, as well as the entire context it belongs to. The intention is positive in that it brings the student a benefit and more or less consciously, it satisfies him a personal need. Therefore, the positive intention refers to the person who performs the behaviour. It's interesting and strange at the same time to notice that we react to the behaviour and actions of others, and when we relate to our own, we react to our intentions. Do you remember when you lied the last time? You've probably considered that it's much better for you to behave like that, because it brings you more advantages or because it was a more convenient situation. What was your reason for which you lied? What was the positive intention behind it? But how did you react the last time someone ever lied to you? Were you angry? Did you feel affected? What emotions did you have? Even the other one had a reason for choosing to behave so. What was the intention behind the behaviour? Did you react to the reason he had or rather to the behaviour? This does not mean that from a behaviour used in a certain situation will benefit everyone. Every person reacts according to the mental map and the way he reacts has the most meaning to his own map. These are the best choices the student has at his disposal. Students with good intentions may have strange behaviours because they have a limited map of the world. The problem begins when a map has only a few ways to satisfy the intention. As strange or unacceptable as it may seem to a student at a certain point, the student satisfies a need in his own way.

By assuming the positive intention behind the behaviours, the brain is much more open and willing to look for alternatives and solutions in exchange for issuing labels and judgments. The principle of positive intention puts us in a position to ask ourselves a question before we judge. What is the reason that he has in order to say or do that? What is the positive, conscious or unconscious intent behind the behaviour? Let us remember that the images we have in our mind about the intentions of others lie between our own ears, in our minds and we react to them. Sometimes it seems to us that students behave inappropriately, strangely, but that only means that they meet their needs in their own way. For example, behind a violent behaviour may hide the desire to receive more attention, behind cold behaviour can hide the fear of being hurt, behind the smoking can hide the desire to be accepted in a group, etc.

Another basic principle in NLP is that *people are not one with their behaviour*. This principle helps us to avoid labelling, identifying and drawing some hasty conclusions about conflicting situations in and out of class. From the perspective of NLP, we try to think less in terms of good-bad, and more in terms of efficient - inefficient and ecological - artificial. The personal ecology in NLP reflects the degree of harmonization of the elements of a person's system and systems to which that person belongs. In appreciating personal ecology, it is important to keep in mind that a person can be part of several interdependent systems (family, school, social). Ecology is the understanding the consequences of our actions, now or in the future on ourselves in different contexts such as home, school, life. Ecological proof is implemented as a distinct step in most NLP techniques. The technique itself is built to allow the subject to ecologically verify the changes he wishes to make. Many of us, both teachers and students, are almost always concerned about the way in which we plan, prioritize, organize and unfold what we have to do. But at the same time, we face the inability to either act or postpone actions for shorter or longer periods of time. Indeed, it is our condition that determines our actions. It is our energy that produces action in the external environment. And if this energy is either not enough or dispersed in too many directions, then the action we want to do cannot be initiated.

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There is a NLP technique developed by Robert Dilts that can allow us to access a resourceful state when it is needed. This technique is a useful tool that can help anyone achieve harmony between rational mind and behaviour. Thus, when someone is confronted with a life situation in which he or she feels a blockage or does not have all the inner ingredients necessary to succeed, he can access the resources and emotions he needs by using past experiences and incorporating them into the present circumstances. This exercise gives us access to our own affective resources wherever they are needed: an exam, a presentation, a discussion, an interview, etc. The technique is called the *Circle of Excellence*. To make things more practical, we will take the case of an exam:

1. Is there any behaviour that you want to improve or change in a certain kind of circumstance?
2. Identify what would be that emotional state / resource that would help you a lot in an exam. You may think, which would be the resource that, if I had it with me during the exam, I would succeed? It can be self-confidence, passion, presence, energy, you know best. Choose a resourceful state wisely.
3. I invite you to check if, with this resource, the situation changes. Is this the right resource for this situation? What are the consequences? Are they beneficial to you? But for those around you?
4. Now that you have identified the resource you want, let's see where we can take it. Think of a moment in the past, when you have experienced this resource very intensely. A moment in the past that you can see and you can say: If I am in this state at the exam, I will surely be able to pass the exam! Also, if you find it difficult to find this moment in your past, there is another option: What if? What if you already had this emotional resource? How would you behave? How fast would you move? What would be your thoughts? What would be the rhythm in which you breathe?
5. Well, you know where you can get this state resource. Now, how can this be amplified? Identify the place where you feel it in your body and let it spread all the way to the head, to the toes of your toes and toes, and to the top of your head.
6. Now, I invite you to imagine that in front of you, on the floor, about a step away, there is an imaginary circle. I invite you to step inside the circle.
7. Think about the state of the resource you chose. Allow yourself to live the moment again. Remember the time when you fully lived the resource of your choice and rebuild the situation as if you were living it at the same time then. See what is around you. Hear the sounds around you. And now turn your attention inside. Feel what you felt then and go to where you feel the most intense resource. Identify where you feel in your body. Allow yourself to give it a shape, a colour and let it grow in intensity and flood your whole being.
8. And when you are ready and pleased, I will ask you to come back here and now.
9. Break-state. Get out of the circle, shake hands and feet. Think about your reverse phone number.
10. Now I invite you to take a step forward in your circle of excellence.
11. Go back to that situation where you felt the resource state most powerful. Get into that situation, see what you saw, listen to the surrounding sounds and feel what you feel then. Take a step forward in your circle of excellence. Then, amplify the state by letting it spread throughout the body. When you feel that you have reached a peak of intensity, take a step backwards.
12. Break-state. Shake your hands and feet. Think about the last pleasant activity you had. As soon as you remember it, leave it aside.
13. Now, having the circle of excellence in front of you, think about the exam you are going to take. While you imagine what if you go there and get what you want, take a step forward in your circle of excellence. Let that emotional state embrace you and enrich your experience. Just feel and live all the transformations that take place in you and in this situation. When you are fully satisfied, I invite you to get out of the circle of excellence.

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14. Break-state. Tell me, how many green objects do you see in this room?
15. Future-pace. Once you have achieved what you want from that exam, imagine that you will go into similar situations in the future and see how you behave differently and get what you want with this resource state. Allow yourself to feel at the most appropriate intensity the resource and when you feel that change is enough for you, come back here and now and take a step backwards.
16. Now stay with yourself and let the things sit inside you. Leave aside any thinking about the exam and take some relaxing and refreshing activities for both mind and body.

If we understand these principles correctly, we realize how much influence we can have in shaping our students. NLP techniques offer us the means to heal and strengthen the most neglected, but the most important relationship in every person's life - the relationship with himself! Change involves knowing the thinking structure of those we communicate with. The most flexible person exerts the greatest influence on the system, so let us be the change we want in the educational system. We can teach our students that self-esteem, trust, motivation, creativity are traits they can learn in school. Students have all the resources they need to enrich their mental maps and to discover the difference between failure and success. NLP is both a way of life for successful people by which we independently acquire emotional intelligence and through which we communicate persuasively, and also a path to human excellence in every field!

"An excellent educator is not a perfect human being, but a person who has enough inner peace to empty himself, as well as sensitivity to learn." (Augusto Cury - *Parinti straluciti, profesori fascinanti* 2007, 1)

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