

**EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS  
IN THE TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS**

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***Abstract***

*This article is a theoretical-scientific research of the different conceptual approaches to emotional intelligence and communication skills in the teaching-learning process, carried out mainly in the online environment. Thus, we shall list and describe the key elements of emotional intelligence, highlighting, among others, communication skills. This paper axiomatically acknowledges the importance of emotional intelligence in the process of didactic communication, where many communication barriers can easily occur, and in this sense emotional intelligence plays a fairly important role in achieving communication goals and obtaining feedback appropriate to communicative intent.*

**Keywords:** *emotional intelligence, didactic communication, communication barriers, interpersonal skills*

**DOI: 10.24818/SIC/2021/02.04**

***1. Educational communication online***

Communication is a dynamic process and lays the foundation of social interaction. The basic elements of communication are represented by the sender, the receiver, the message and the channel through which it is transmitted. However, if we refer to the current educational process, this model shows some flaws as both students (pupils) and teachers have had a difficult task to achieve a qualitative and effective education process in the online environment, where mere digital skills are not enough. Preparing courses, adapting learning messages and content according to the characteristics of pupils and students, selecting online communication tools and engaging in another form of dialogue are not easy tasks, and communication barriers are likely to affect the teaching-learning-evaluation process more than ever. In order to prevent any difficulties that may arise in online communication, developing critical thinking skills online is essential. Educational communication is instrumental in nature, as it displays a number of features, such as: a clear purpose, a certain effect on the receiver's behaviour (at the perlocutionary level). Didactic communication aims to introduce a change in the receivers, and in this sense, it must be adapted to the characteristics of the intended audience. Admittedly, in a more inclusive definition, didactic communication is "a complex, multi-phase and multi-channel transfer of information between two entities (individuals or groups), which simultaneously and successively assume the roles of receivers and transmitters. involved in supporting a systematic learning process" (Pănișoara, 2006: 78).

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Communication in the online environment takes different forms for people to access information, and some of them are: blogs, video blogs, podcasts, vodcasts, forums, social networks, discussion groups, online stores. Given the special context caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, formal online learning modalities have been developed, hence, a large part of the teaching-learning and communication activities have moved to alternative channels of the online environment.

In didactic communication, teachers must arouse the interest and empathy of students and pupils, breaking away from the traditional patterns of teaching and learning, and students and pupils will be more involved, interested and responsible. Human beings are social beings - we spend most of our lives communicating, i.e. verbally (and non-verbally) interacting with other people in meaningful ways. Therefore, one of the most important facets of our lives is to learn how to interact with others and how to cope with all the challenges we face in society. Intra- and interpersonal communication is a cornerstone of society, as it is the method by which we not only improve our interpersonal relationships but also achieve our goals. Teaching communication is an essential element in the learning process, representing above all an exchange of knowledge and (informed) decision-making. It contributes to the transfer and construction of knowledge and to the development of a functionally autonomous individual, also able to build cooperation and collaboration skills. Seen in this light, the interaction established through didactic communication allows for the implementation of new methodologies, methods and strategies with the aim of boosting the motivation and focused readiness of students/pupils, in order to achieve meaningful and collaborative learning, i.e. the teacher must innovate the way he/she transfers knowledge.

Communication and emotional education are the foundations of meaningful learning for all types of learners, and communicative competence and emotional intelligence should be seen in a dialectical relationship. In order to help learners in the process of managing their own emotions, teachers need to individualise each student to identify the right paths of learning, as the general emphasis so far has been on teaching focused on the group and not the individual (somehow justifiable due to the large size of groups). Today's teachers need to go beyond classroom issues and seek to improve themselves to ensure that students achieve meaningful learning, gain confidence in their own strengths and manage their own emotions so that they avoid or manage communication barriers in the teaching and learning process. The language of communication and the success of the act of communication are directly related to the degree of emotional intelligence, as seen in the ability to find or not to find solutions to complex problems, in the assertive, non-assertive or even aggressive way in which they express their opinions, etc.

## ***2. Emotional intelligence and communication skills***

*Emotional intelligence* has to do with problem-solving, critical thinking, understanding and interpreting abstract things, but above all with how the individual chooses the language of communication appropriate to each context. The most important aspect shaping emotional intelligence is given by communication skills. Emotional intelligence in conjunction with communication skills are essential to start building personal and professional relationships. *Emotional intelligence* is defined as a set of skills that a person acquires or learns throughout his or her life, such as empathy, self-motivation, self-control, enthusiasm and emotion management. This type of intelligence is not about altering one's ability to generate emotions in relation to different stimuli in the environment, but is more about one's reaction to them, which are often more shocking than the emotions themselves that trigger this action.

Psychologists agree that there is no test or quiz that measures how emotionally intelligent a person is, such as the classic IQ tests. This is because of the different aspects of this type of intelligence, which is very difficult to classify. More than just a numerical score, people with a high degree of emotional intelligence tend to have the same reflections in adverse situations.

Cognitive development includes basic functions, reorganises mental processes, reinforces experience-based behaviours, drives emotions, strengthens personality, communication of experiences, expression

of feelings, reaction management, acceptance, self-control, ability to resolve difficulties. At the same time, learning is a process that guides and orients teaching, directing new skills, transforming the teacher's methodology, the teacher being the guide in the knowledge of the learner. Thus, with the passage of time, education has been confronted with changes in pedagogical, didactic and methodological terms, which has led to improvements in training practice, personal and interpersonal relationships, socialisation and coexistence (Sutton, 2007).

The education of the human being includes knowledge, skills, faculties and potentialities, components that lead to autonomy, self-esteem, self-control in externalizing thoughts. From a psycho-pedagogical point of view, it analyses the educational reality in order to detect difficulties and respond to educational needs within a framework of respect, responsibility, equity and commitment.

*Critical thinking* is an element that contributes to the development of new attitudes and ways of thinking that reinforce the acquisition of knowledge with particular emphasis on the emotional dimension, the student/student being the active protagonist of his/her reflections, analysis, application of the values of responsibility, fairness, respect and inclusion that link theory and experience in problem solving. In this sense, academic performance includes, components of cognitive, procedural and attitudinal development, based on intuitive pedagogy, constructionism and emotional intelligence, encourages the acquisition of value judgments, concrete expressions and meaningful criteria and, as mentioned, teachers must incorporate new teaching strategies that allow for the improvement of skills to achieve meaningful learning. Student and learner performance is linked to teacher motivation, curriculum content planning, lesson plans, resources and materials, which can regulate empathy, self-awareness of emotions and feelings. The repercussions of emotional education can be felt in interpersonal relationships, classroom climate (physical or online), discipline, academic performance, etc. From this perspective, emotional education is a form of non-specific prevention, which can have positive effects in preventing acts of violence, drug use, stress, depressive states, etc. (Bisquerra, 2001: 11). Bisquerra (2001: 87) explains that the answer to the need for emotional development as a complement to cognitive development is emotional education, which enables education for life and whose objective is to learn about emotions, the development of emotional awareness, the ability to control emotions and to adopt a positive attitude towards life. The concept of *emotional competence* is understood as the set of competences and skills related to emotions that a person needs to mobilise in order to cope with a changing environment, to strengthen their identity, to adapt better and to strengthen their sense of personal efficacy and self-confidence.

According to mainstream literature, recognising emotions requires a reflective, analytical and interactive view of oneself and others. Looking at what is happening to us and to other people, at the manifestations, the feelings, the causes and effects of such interaction, because those who do not do so are missing out on valuable information to understand what is happening and thus be able to react in an effective and coherent way. Bisquerra (2001) states that the word *emotion*, as indicated by its Latin origin, "movere", means to *move outward*, implying that each emotion leads to a specific action. He presents the definition as follows: "A complex state of the organism characterized by an arousal or disturbance that predisposes to an organized response. Emotions are usually generated in response to an external or internal event" (Bisquerra, 2001: 61).

This is a multidimensional concept, as it refers to a variety of states with different contents and that is why we speak of emotions in the plural. In this sense, emotions are positive or negative not because they are good or bad, but because what has happened is congruent or not with the personal goal set. This author points out that if the emotion is very intense, intellectual dysfunction or emotional disturbances can occur, giving rise to phobia, stress, depression, among others. He clarifies that emotions manifest themselves on three levels: the *neurophysiological* level: when a person feels anger, they may experience tachycardia, blood pressure, altered pulse, sweating, among others; the behavioural level: a person's behaviour allows us to infer what they are experiencing emotionally; and the cognitive level: this is what is commonly referred to as a subjective feeling or experience and is determined by the rating the person gives to the emotion or emotions experienced.

Goleman (2001: 98) argues that "emotions are our inner engine and manifest as an energy encoded in neural circuits located in our brains" that drive us to live, in constant interaction with ourselves and others. Emotional reactions are automatic because they occur in response to a stimulus, in the shortest possible time. When people become aware of their emotions, i.e. are aware of a particular emotional reaction, feelings arise. These are what make us reflect on what is happening, and human beings achieve more flexible behaviour in the face of different emotional situations. In this sense, Bisquerra (2001: 65) explains that a feeling is an attitude generated by an emotion, but which lasts longer than the stimulus that gave rise to it. That is, it is an emotion filtered by reason and, with the participation of the will, it lasts over time. Drawing on Mann's (2004: 56) description of the main functions of emotions, it is necessary to point out the following:

- Emotions are motivating, in the sense that they help us defend ourselves from harmful stimuli or move towards beneficial ones;
- Emotions promote flexibility in the body's responses (behaviours) to different stimuli;
- Emotions perform an alerting function, activating the brain, endocrine and metabolic systems;
- Emotions maintain interest and curiosity;
- Emotions perform communicative functions by creating emotional bonds;
- Emotions store and retrieve memories more efficiently;
- Emotions are involved in the reasoning process because there are emotional meanings that construct our thinking.

Thus, we can say that emotional intelligence represents the aspects that directly influence the well-being of the individual and underlie the way human beings think and perceive things (the perception of things and the way human beings think). In general, but also in the learning process in particular, in order to achieve one's goals, being strong in emotional intelligence leads to the understanding that achieving success is not synonymous with acquiring material goods, but rather with achieving emotional happiness/stability by effectively controlling one's emotions in order to be well with oneself, others and the events in which one is involved.

Research on emotional intelligence shows that it is directly related to effectiveness in the world of work as well as in the educational process (Chu and Murrmann, 2006: 99). At both the individual and collective level, emotional intelligence is a key factor of individual accountability for the work they do. Likewise, there is a strong link between leadership, emotional intelligence, work environment and a person's performance (notably, Goleman, 2001:103).

Thus, when we discuss the application of emotional intelligence, we refer to emotional education (Zapf, 2002: 89). *Emotional education* is a broader concept than *emotional intelligence*, as it receives contributions from neuroscience, human well-being research, etc. Thus, the importance of developing emotional competencies through education emerges, and emotional education can be defined in the following terms: an ongoing educational process that aims to promote emotional development as an indispensable complement to cognitive development, both of which are essential elements in the development of an integral personality. To this end, it aims to develop knowledge and skills in the field of emotions to enable individuals to better cope with the challenges that arise in everyday life. All this aims to increase personal and social well-being (Bisquerra, 2001: 243).

We can identify the importance of managing emotions among students, which is why it can be inferred that emotional education is an ongoing process and complementary to purely cognitive education, and in this sense, it should be included in the curriculum, as cross-cutting and present in all proposed areas. It is the most beneficial way of getting to know ourselves and living in a balanced relationship with others, learning to get to know ourselves and to coexist in a peaceful and orderly way with others, optimising our potential for the proposed objectives.

In managing emotions effectively, the following factors should not be overlooked in the emotional education of students:

- The paramount role of verbal and non-verbal communication in learning and expressing emotions;
- The importance of setting an example, as the first thing they learn is not language, but the example they receive;
- Verbal appreciation of learners – a pupil or student does not learn if they know they are not appreciated or noticed from a distance, and this system of reward is very important in motivating them.

In general, we can say that education is more emotional than curricular, because the knowledge learned in the classroom will then be transferred in real life purpose situations. Emotional intelligence and communication skills underpin all teaching and optimal psychological development, which is why it is necessary for both teachers and students or pupils to develop it and internalise theory and practice.

### **3. Conclusions**

In the sphere of interpersonal relationships, social skills consist of behaviours, thoughts and emotions that generate satisfying relationships with others and are helpful in achieving personal goals. Thus, emotional intelligence, or the intelligent use of our emotions, primarily involves a rational, purposeful process. In this sense, the management of emotions in the didactic communication process (and not only), involves using them in a beneficial way to guide behaviour and to help learners think in different ways that allow them to improve performance.

To achieve these effects, emotional intelligence should be used firstly in intrapersonal form (how to develop and improve our relationship with the self) and later in the interpersonal form (how to be more effective in our relationships with others). The most important aspect of emotional intelligence is the potential to understand and control our own emotions and feelings, which allows us to improve the way we communicate with others. Without emotional intelligence we cannot communicate effectively with each other, as it encompasses all the elements described above that manage and establish relationships to achieve certain goals, using tactful teaching, diplomacy etc., to solve some problems, situations that arise and to resolve conflicts. Effective communication in parallel to emotional intelligence allows: expressing thoughts, needs, feelings correctly, influencing others, improving the listening process, managing conflicts.

With regard to the didactic communication process, an important dimension of emotional intelligence is also represented by non-verbal language. Thus, emotional intelligence is directly related to the strong ability to process non-verbal signals with which individuals interact. Last but not least, we should point out that the emotionally intelligent person knows how to use the techniques of paraverbal communication, knows ways of synchronising his / her message in accordance with his / her intention, through the elements of the voice: volume, tone, pitch of voice, rhythm, accent, pause, diction, factors that are particularly important especially in the educational process based on online communication. The voice is associated with emotions and feelings - for example, those who are enthusiastic or angry speak loudly; those who lack confidence or security have low volume; a low-pitched voice can create the impression of authority and control, whereas a high-pitched one of emotion or insecurity. Lowering the volume of the voice at the same time as slowing down the pace of speech can capture attention or threaten. Needless to say, in order to create an impression of confidence we emphasise positive words. Therefore, we can conclude by saying that emotional intelligence plays a pre-requisite, having an important share in the manifestation of communication skills in the educational process. If emotional intelligence is not well developed, both teachers and learners may react to situations in different ways - without controlling their verbal responses, tone, mimicry, inappropriate body language, etc., which may result in an ineffective or even distorted message.

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