

Relationship Lecturer-Student as An Determinant of the Teaching Effectiveness

*Jolanta Bieńkowska, Adrian Karpiński, Małgorzata Soltysiak, Katedra Zarządzania, Wydział Zarządzania
(Department of Management, Faculty of Management, University of Lodz)*

Abstract: The aim of the paper was to search for an answer to the research question: does the relationship between teachers and students have an impact on the effectiveness of teaching? The means used to obtain the answer was a confrontation of two positions: of a student and a lecturer, which was developed on the basis of literature studies and participant observation. The issue researched was based on the assumption that the learning process should be used to satisfy the educational needs of students. The problem is presented from the perspective of observing the functioning of Polish universities.

In order to operationalize the concept of the educational needs of students A. Maslow (1990) theory of needs was used. Out of seven needs mentioned in it, five were selected based on the analysis of the problem: the need for security, belonging, recognition, self-fulfillment and the knowledge and understanding. The structure of the text consists of five main parts for the description of the sources of meeting these educational needs. Each of them presents the expectations of students and a way proposed by the teacher to satisfy them. Thanks to that it was possible to confront the two positions.

Key words: education, human's needs, master-student relationship, motivation

1. Introduction

The model of passive transfer of knowledge limiting techniques to verbal message — spoken or written (Woźniak, 2009) has firmly established itself in Polish universities. Little attention is still paid to the psychological and social determinants of effective education. Severely impoverished in this field are academics who do not receive training in methodology for teaching work (OECD, 2007, p. 62). In contrast, no doubt academic education process should meet the need of the demanding client, which is a student, and be perfected in the direction of providing conditions for the efficient acquisition of knowledge (Vermunt, 1998, p. 150) and competencies expected in the labor market (Jaruszka, 2011, p. 2).

One of the factors that determine the effective teaching are social relations established between the lecturer and students (Boateng, 2012; Shaari et al., 2014; Williams, Williams, 2011), which is strongly underestimated in Polish practice (Śnieżyński, 2007), while strongly emphasized in many developed countries, especially in the USA (Ostrowski, 2014). In addition, the mass character of higher education has led to the depersonalization of the ties between the parties of the learning process (Guliński, 2012), as well as to the marginalization of direct

Jolanta Bieńkowska, Dr., Department of Management, Faculty of Management, University of Lodz; research areas/interests: human research management. E-mail: jolabien@orange.pl.

cooperation (Ernst & Young, 2009) underlying the stimulation of involvement in the implementation of the objectives of teaching. Therefore, the following question was posed in this study: is effective acquisition of knowledge conditioned by the relationship between teachers and students?

The path to seek answer to it was delineated by the assumption that fulfilling of students' needs related to the educational process is conditioned by their greater involvement in the acquisition of knowledge. To identify the type of needs critical for the effectiveness of the studying was used A. Maslow's theory (1990). From the list of needs described by the psychologist and based on literature studies and participant observation, five were selected: security, belonging, recognition, self-realization, knowledge and understanding. Under each of these needs the students' expectations were formulated, indicating the preferred behavior of teachers in order to meet the needs as well as patterns of behavior were presented, from the perspective of teachers, that should apply in the educational process, so that they stimulate young people to explore the knowledge and to develop skills necessary to gain it. It is assumed that in the analyzed problem the needs of students are dependent variables, whereas the patterns of lecturers' behaviors are independent variables.

Thus, the present study is an attempt to confront the two positions. It has been prepared in the form of a dialogue between a student and a teacher. The choice of this form was dictated by the existing in Poland deficit of articulation of expectations and on the other hand by the deficit of the argumentation of the style of the educational process, as well as the observed low awareness of objectives and effects of the participation of both parties in the process.

2. The Need for Security

2.1 Student's Perspective

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, a necessary condition for the development of higher needs is the fulfillment of the lower needs. On the list proposed by him the second place in order takes the need for security (Maslow, 1990, p. 76). In general, it can be defined as a certainty, stability, support, care and freedom from fear, anxiety and chaos (Maslow, 1990, p. 76). It is essential for building of the teacher-student relationships, because the student unsure of his situation and the actual rights granted to him will not be able to achieve educational success.

Security should be provided to the student in several areas. The first one is an objective assessment (Daszykowska, 2012) issued in accordance with the criteria defined on the forum. It should not be dictated by the emotional bond but only by the achievements of individuals in the given area. At the time of presentation of the conditions the student should have the right to submit suggestions, so that the current system of assessment does not discriminate against anyone (Śnieżyński, 2007). The same rule should apply when dealing with a single task in the classroom as well as those that will be dealt with individually outside the classroom. With clear rules of assessment the student will have a sense of justice, and thus his motivation to learn will increase (Prinstein, 2012, p. 179).

Another important factor which has an influence on meeting the need for security is the teacher's care about the friendly atmosphere in the classroom. This is related to the freedom of expression and permission to make mistakes. Not only the teacher, but also a student should have the right to start a discussion on the current topic (Śnieżyński, 2007). There should be no humiliation from peers in a situation where a statement is inconsistent with the beliefs of the majority (Callahan, 2010). The lecturer should be the guardian of democratic rules

governing the execution of tasks and feel obliged to give warnings in case of emergency (Ediger, 2010, p. 54), which should always be spoken in a balanced way, giving reasons for non-acceptance of the behavior.

During the classes it is therefore important to adopt appropriate leadership style. The balance between issuing commands, and thus authoritarian style, and constructive conversation possible through the adoption of a democratic style may prove a great way to meet the security needs of the students. The lecturer in his behavior should be flexible — evoke respect on the one hand, remain open to suggestions of students on the other hand.

The last factor that should be provided by the lecturer in the classroom to motivate pupils to learn is the directness. Defined in two aspects, verbal and non-verbal (Frymier, 1993, p. 455), it should manifest itself in such behaviors as appropriate gestures, sense of humor and the use of such phrases as “we” or “our” while explaining the material. In Western culture, it is customary to address other people by their first names (Ostrowski, 2014), thanks to that the students are not afraid to speak, because they feel that they can treat the teacher as a friend. It is easier for them to give examples from their own experiences, as well as to share controversial views.

2.2 Lecturer’s Perspective

Satisfying the need for security in terms of ensuring a clear and objective criteria for assessment requires from the lecturer rethinking the effective ways of verification of the expected learning outcomes (MniSW, 2010, p. 9), as well as a large self-discipline for the entire duration of the course (Williams, Williams, 2011, p. 117). Indeed, prior to the implementation of the program of the course it should be clearly communicated, or discussed all the elements of the assessment and the conditions of their acquisition. It should be the duty of the lecturer and consistently respected throughout the duration of the course. However, if the need to change arises, the lecturer should inform about it before it enters into force. With such a system of assessment the student gains the right not only to the objective evaluation of his involvement in the realization of the program of the subject, but also the right to know the argumentation for his assessment as well as to raise objections (Miller et al., 1998, p. 24).

Failure to satisfy the need for security will be distracting attention from substantive content covered in class (Crump, 1995, p. 6) and focusing it instead on the defense of the interests of individual students. Referring also to the assumptions of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1990) it should be acknowledged that it is difficult to expect the active work, the pursuit of knowledge and understanding of the world around if it is accompanied by uncertainty about the objectivity of the evaluation. It is certainly a primary and key determinant of active involvement in the process of studying.

3. The Need for Belonging

3.1 Student’s Perspective

Man as a social being, in most cases prefers activity in a group (Doliński, 2000, p. 494). With the opportunity to share with others their opinions, concerns and tasks, watch and advise one another, the actions become fuller, richer and their course seems to be more effective. That is why skillful building of relationships both between lecturers and students, but also those initiated by the lecturer between the students themselves is so important. This can be achieved through exercises conducted in the form of team work, by observing the activities of students, but also pointing out how one can achieve the result of work characterized by an above-average value (Long et al., 2014, p. 39). Such actions bind students together, generate a lot of discussion after class, and in many cases are the source of new long-term acquaintances.

Group exercises also allow students to find themselves in real life everyday situations by applying rehearsed patterns. During classes the sense of building up a group, which also includes a teacher, may induce the participants to resume previously refused directions of considerations leading to unexpected conclusions, so helpful these days. Moreover, the students while working in groups, feel part of the community, together achieve an intended goal, cooperate with one another, discovering the roles which they adopt, and thus discover themselves (Ashcroft & Foremna-Peck, 2005, p. 120). A good example would be the use of different types of games (Henderson & Nathenson, 1984, p. 145), the accompanying enthusiasm for the game, emotions, and the sheer fact of participation in the game and yielding to its rules motivates the student to learn — to win he must possess the necessary knowledge (Hyman, 1974). Thanks to that he also gains the ability of healthy competition, cooperation and empathy (Long et al., 2014, p. 39). At the same time, for the group work to allow satisfying the need for belonging, the task of the teacher is to prevent negative behavior, as characterized by the dominance of one of the team members, or excessive, unconstructive rivalry between the teams (Light et al., 2009, p. 64).

Another way to meet the need of belonging is the affiliation of students in scientific circles, creating of communities in which the teacher plays an important role as a binder between them. Typically, in a scientific circle the relations are less formal than during the regular classes, thanks to which the lecturer is perceived more as a friend than a person who stands higher in the university hierarchy. With the ability to establish partnerships with academics, the students have a sense of belonging to the scientific community.

3.2 Lecturer's Perspective

Effective working with people requires shortening of a distance. In the science of managing a democratic leadership style has been regarded for several decades as conducive to the involvement of subordinates in the implementation of the set goals (Daft, 2014). In such a model the leader abandons pedestal and becomes a member of the team, with whom he realizes the set goals. Thanks to that, the relationship is strengthened. In addition, all members have a sense that they are building their own group in which everyone can count on the support of others (Crump, 1995, p. 9).

This style of leadership should also be present in the relationship teacher-student (Woods, 2005, p. 9), thanks to which the student will have a sense of belonging to the academic community. However, it should be noted immediately that the fulfillment of this postulate is not an easy task for the teacher. A prerequisite for this is his internal identification with the role of a teacher, a guide to the world of knowledge and science, as well as having social skills: empathy, assertiveness, ability to communicate and reward effectively (Starostka, 2008). In contrast, in the way to effectively build social relationships stands the lack of mandatory training in methodology of teaching (Hativa, 2001, p. 23), as well as the duality of the university position — in most cases, employees have the status of research-and-academic staff, which implies the need for the division of responsibilities between preparing scientific papers and teaching. In principle, these two tasks are not antagonistic in relation to each other, but very difficult to implement with the necessary emotional involvement.

Building in the student the sense of belonging to the academic community is made possible by the open attitude of teachers in the classroom, the encouragement of free discussion and free expression of the opinions. However, it is equally important to maintain this standard of conduct also after school through the availability of not only during the consultation hours and answering the questions related to the realization of the subject, but through encouraging informal talks indirectly related to studying, where the lecturer appears as a regular attendee (Long et al., 2014, p. 39).

Striving to satisfy the needs of belonging in the manner described above meets the expectations of today's youth who among the professors is not looking for the authorities (Czajkowska, 2013, p. 102), but for the partners who would accompany them and support them in the process of intellectual development (Czarnecki, 2013, p. 15). This state of affairs is difficult to accept especially by representatives of the older generation, however we should not expect that the authoritarian attempts to change this attitude will be successful, but we ought to shape the situations in which the partnership and respect go hand in hand.

4. The Need for Recognition

4.1 Student's Perspective

The success of the student is something most motivating to study. The lecturer should notice the student's efforts in the pursuit of knowledge acquisition — the more frequently the student is praised, the more motivated for further action he becomes. Any comment from the person of higher rank — regardless of the situation in which it is spoken — both in the classroom for giving the correct answer, or after class when discussing the written essay or after the completion of additional task, is very valuable for the student (Crump, 1995, p. 15), often being a decisive factor about the next steps taken (Miller et al., 1998, p. 23). It can encourage interest in the issue even after the completion of the course. Receiving positive support from teachers is a stimulus to the consistent pursuit of the goals (Callahan, 2010).

It should also be noted that students (consciously or subconsciously) expect recognition not only from teachers, but also from their class mates, which would be expressed by appreciation for the level of completed tasks. Therefore, the daunting task of teachers should be to provide an opportunity for each student to achieve some success (Williams & Williams, 2011, p. 107). People differ in skills; therefore, each student should have the opportunity to present his predispositions and strengths in front of the group. In this way, he has a chance to gain recognition in the eyes of other students.

In terms of satisfying the need for recognition the students expect from the teacher also the ability to adequately assess the situation, and the benefits of expressing praise. This is important because not every environment, every moment is appropriate to express approval in the group. Behavior of certain groups of people is not conducive to distinguishing the outstanding individuals due to the prevailing atmosphere of the ostracism. The role of the teacher in these situations is essential so that the attempt to award somebody for his achievements does not become a source of problems in relationships with other students. Also, the lecturer should always maintain objectivism and due restraint so as not to direct the praise towards only one person. This can have fatal effects on other members of the group and close their potential. So acquired bad experiences can induce the low level of involvement during the classes, decline of motivation, and finally the deterioration of learning outcomes.

4.2 Lecturer's Perspective

The basic gratification which the student can expect from the lecturer is the issue of objective assessment of the achieved learning outcomes. Therefore, the students' need for recognition should be addressed by a properly designed system of assessment (Martin & Loomis, 2006, p. 10). However, satisfying the needs for recognition should also be done through providing direct verbal messages not only expressing satisfaction with their work, progress and development, but also of involvement in the implementation of tasks (Preinstein, 2012, p. 179).

One of the basic conditions of the ability to satisfy in others the need for recognition is the social competence

of reward (Starostka, 2008), whose development largely depends on the culture in which the individual operates. Poland does not belong to societies generally appreciating others. On the contrary, it has a tendency to negate. Therefore, satisfying the need for recognition poses a lot of problems. Instead, efforts should be made to break this norm of behavior since having self-esteem is crucial for the development of the capacity for self-realization. Therefore, students should be strengthened on their way to professional development.

5. The Need for Self-Realization

5.1 Student's Perspective

This need, referred to as self-actualization or self-realization, and is the need to continually surpass the current state of development (Kostarczyk, 2012). According to this approach, the student starting his university education should in the course of learning want to deepen his knowledge in the given area, discover new talents or advance in the social sphere. Not always, however, studying is the same as searching for one's destination. In recent years there has been a change of values which future graduates follow when going to college — more and more frequently decisive is the necessity to obtain a diploma as a basis to getting a lucrative job. So how do we address this need in order to awaken the desire to find a job not so much profitable but one which allows self-realization? Can the relationship between the student and the lecturer contribute to this?

Students' motivation can be spurred by setting goals in the classroom (especially during exercise), and point the way to achieve them. Certainly, though minimally, it will mobilize students for setting the goals in life. Satisfying the need of self-realization should be associated with satisfaction resulting from the combination of dreams and actions. The role of the teacher in this case is fueling the curiosity of the world and posing increasingly difficult challenges (Willimas & Williams, 2011, p. 108). However, it should be made sure that these targets are ambitious enough to require from a student allocating the right amount of resources such as energy, effort and commitment in order to carry them out, on the other hand realistic enough to be realized with only a little assistance (Hootstein, 1994, p. 477). In this way, the student is formed with the view that only by working on himself will be able to be fully happy and thus - fulfilled.

Young people coming to the university are not always fully aware of the object of their self-realization. Often they do not know what they want to do in the future, and the choice of field of study is conditioned by the environment or family. Therefore, students should have an opportunity to explore and perfect their talents so that they can more accurately determine their path of development. Therefore, they also expect from lecturers the help in finding their own way and hints as to the choice of direction (Brown et al., 2013, p. 11).

With the assistance come creative ways of teaching that encourage the exploration of knowledge (Gros Davis, 2009, 2015). These methods not only help to faster memorize the material, but also show the teaching subject from another perspective. Through all kinds of games, drawings or role-plays the student engages in considerations and may take them as a starting point for of his future career. What is often referred to as "creative solutions" does not need to be colorful or theatrical. It is enough to show students how the theory works in practice. And so instead of encouraging students to read the lecturer's textbook, e.g., on the characteristic features of a leader, a managerial game can be proposed which will allow diagnosis of the leadership capability (Rzońca, 2002, p. 104). In this way, participants can assess their behavior in such a situation and on this basis decide on the further development of their career compatible with their predispositions.

5.2 Lecturer's Perspective

When considering the issue of the need for self-actualization, the question should be posed, to what extent teachers consciously awaken that need in students? Is this effect of education at all taken into account? Designing the expected results of education is oriented at a pragmatic approach, which is to enable the student to acquire the necessary professional skills. Self-realization is not one of them. So, should programs for individual courses include developing of the need for self-realization in the process of study? It seems that it should continue to be in the pool of side effects, not major ones. However, both students and lecturers should be aware of this objective.

Self-realization in students should be developed by encouraging students to actively participate in the academic community, of which the most popular form are scientific circles that implement various projects. Thanks to this, the need for self-realization can be satisfied by taking actions that are consistent with the student's skills and which help to develop the new ones.

The issue of the need for self-actualization, considered as a conditional of the student's involvement in the process of studying, should be addressed also from the perspective of satisfying it by the lecturer. The quest for self-fulfillment at work triggers the motivation to strive to maintain the highest level of performance and to build a favorable climate (Hativa, 2001, p. 26). Fulfilled academic teacher can afford a more informal conduct thus leveling distance resulting from his status. By contrast, unfulfilled researcher in this role will build the distance between him and the students (Woźniak, 2009), thus contributing to the frustration of the needs for belonging and recognition in the students.

6. The Need for Knowledge and Understanding

6.1 Student's Perspective

The need for knowledge and understanding should be understood as curiosity, the search for knowledge, truth, and constant striving to solve the mysteries of the world (Maslow, 1990, p. 89). However, not every student manifests it and not in relation to every subject. In this situation, the role of the teacher is to stimulate and encourage the students to gain new experiences. On the other hand — should we not consider the student's choice to undertake tertiary education as a way to satisfy these needs? The answer to this question should be affirmative. In contrast, the question of how students can strive to meet it and what is the role of teachers in this can be answered by analyzing the various manifestations of these human needs.

Curiosity should be reflected in the quest for answers to intriguing questions (Ediger, 2010, p. 56). Just as in the case of setting the goals, those questions should not be too simple, but at the same time not discouraging. The lecturer should find such questions that cannot be answered definitely (Méheut, 2004, p. 519); and the search for the answer and the desire to satisfy this curiosity should result in discussions, even turbulent.

The search for knowledge and truth is, in the simplest terms, looking into the books recommended by the teacher (Prinstein, 2012, p. 181), finding interesting articles concerned with the issue discussed or enquiring about given aspects after class. The teacher should have the patience and forbearance and indicate the sources of knowledge, and recommend interesting materials. In the search for truth helpful can also be a subjective opinion expressed in the classroom.

Constant striving to solve puzzles of the world is probably the most difficult aspect of the discussed need. It can be understood by the continuation of studies in order to obtain the PhD degree. It then becomes possible to investigate a problem from the unknown yet perspective and perhaps — draw new conclusions. It is also the

perfect opportunity to transfer knowledge onto now own students. Transfer of knowledge is also a component of the need for knowledge and understanding.

Nowadays, it is not enough to teach “the class” or teach “syllabus” — in this day and age people should be taught (Woźniak, 2009). Students to be able to use their abilities, and at the same time to be aware of what they are still able to achieve, they need for their development not so much the teachers as mentors who through the skillfully selected range of activities can also, in addition to conveying knowledge, listen to their students and give them the possibility to choose their path of education and thus inspire them to further action (Coles, 2011, p. 3). Mentors-lecturers are able to alleviate the motivation declines in their mentees or even prevent their occurrence (Prinstein, 2012, p. 181). Such friendly and inspiring relationships are also conducive to the exchange of views, which supports the process of intellectual development of the student.

6.2 Lecturer’s Perspective

The development of the need for knowledge and understanding should be carried out primarily through an effective combination of knowledge transfer and indication of the ways of its practical application, and solving all kinds of cases. The above issue is the voice in the debate on the usability of science and breaking up with the Humbolt model of university (Wissema, 2009, p. 14). Developing the need for knowledge and understanding has a pragmatic justification; thanks to that a graduate leaves the college prepared to take up employment (Hativa, 2001, p. 23). He has the competence expected by employers (Płoszajski & Mierzejewska, 2004). Therefore, a break with the transferring of theoretical knowledge on behalf of conducting practical exercises and implementing projects, or open discussions is a means for satisfying this need.

Developing the need for knowledge and understanding becomes possible also thanks to the creation of conditions for self-reliance (Henderson & Nathenson, 1984, p. 264), non-imposing of rigid expectations of work results and the rejection of the assessment system based on the answer key, all of which limit cognitive space. It is also possible thanks to the opening of physical space, resulting from the introduction of teaching techniques that require leaving the benches arranged in neat rows in front of the lecturer (Czarnecki, 2013, p. 23). Delving into science cannot be limited to building databases of information, but it should move towards acquiring skills to formulate questions, investigating facts and adopting and arguing the position, ability to critically respond to the existing knowledge (Trigwell et al., 1997, p. 608). Therefore it is important to introduce the techniques of activating students, allowing students to be familiar with the literature on the subject and the formulation of substantive comments.

The importance of the need for knowledge and understanding can be appreciated in this age of the knowledge-based economy (Light et al., 2009, p. 8). There will be no opportunities for economic development if at the stage of education there are no effective systems to stimulate and satisfy this need (Miller, 1998, p. 10). Skills which the man develops thanks to satisfying the need for knowledge and understanding underlie creativity and innovativeness so much expected nowadays.

7. Conclusion

From the above findings come conclusions which give presumptions to formulate an affirmative answer to the research question — there is a relationship between the nature and quality of relationship between teachers and students and teaching effectiveness. Arguments which support this are the students needs connected with the formation of the teaching environment (Martin & Loomis, 2006, p. 88).

Young people expect above all professionalism in fulfilling the role of a teacher who will allow them to satisfy the last of the above-mentioned needs, but the most important from the point of view of the effectiveness of the educational process, that is the need for knowledge and understanding, manifested by striving to build and update individual and organizational knowledge resources, a factor necessary for building a knowledge-based economy (Daszykowska, 2012). However, achieving such a state would not be possible without ensuring the basic conditions of effective learning, which include: objective assessment, putting challenges, stimulating curiosity, providing a sense of belonging to the academic environment, enabling gaining recognition for educational tasks completed, assisting with the search for a professional career path, which will in future lead to self-realization.

Thus, the conclusion of the discussion focuses on the role of the teacher, which is poorly articulated in Poland, both in theory and in practice. The scope of its fulfillment cannot be confined to the theoretical and practical knowledge transfer, but should also include the tasks of creating for the students favorable conditions conducive to the acquisition of competences (Shaari et al., 2014; Glickam, 2002) by meeting their educational needs. This requires a large commitment of time and emotional involvement (Light, Cox, Calkins, 2009, p. 15) in the teaching process, which is, however, necessary for the effectiveness of teaching.

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