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ISSN: 1857- 8888
DOI: 10.20544/teacher.29.11

SOCIAL PEDAGOGUE INTERVENTIONS AS A TOOL FOR IMPROVING SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

Social communication is a fundamental part of human interaction, through which people exchange thoughts, feelings, and information. In modern society, social communication plays a key role in personal development, maintaining interpersonal relationships, and achieving common goals. In a multicultural and dynamic society, where groups can differ according to age, cultural context, social status, or needs, the interventions of the social pedagogue have an important place in improving social communication. In this direction, he uses different strategies and methods to stimulate social communication, which are key to creating and maintaining healthy and effective relationships. The principles of intervention through social communication are the basis for creating productive interpersonal relationships in different contexts. Communication based on these principles creates strong and sustainable bonds, encourages cooperation, and ensures the development of positive social changes. Respecting these principles allows the social pedagogue to be more effective in his work, build positive and trusting relationships, provide students' support, and create conditions for their personal and social development. This is important for the quality of communication and maintaining his professional and ethical attitude at work. Intervention through social communication implies the strategic use of communication methods and tools to achieve specific goals. Social communication is much more than a simple exchange of information because it can also be a powerful instrument for intervention, enabling problem solving, changing behavior, and improving social conditions.

Keywords: *social communication, intervention, information, behavior, development*

1. Introduction

Social communication is a fundamental mechanism by which interpersonal relationships are established, developed, and maintained. It represents exchanging ideas, thoughts, feelings, and information that builds the foundation for healthy and sustainable relationships. In everyday life, social communication plays a central role in connecting people. Effective communication is the key to creating harmony and understanding, whether it concerns family, friendships, or professional relationships. In a modern society characterized by cultural diversity, economic inequality, and rapid technological change, the social pedagogue is crucial in building bridges between different groups. His work requires a high level of commitment, empathy, and professionalism and is aimed at fostering inclusiveness, understanding, and conflict resolution, with a special emphasis on improving social communication. The social pedagogue is a mediator, mentor, and trainer who understands the complexity of interpersonal relationships. He is an expert in identifying the social needs of different groups and developing strategies for connecting them. In his work, the social pedagogue helps individuals and groups overcome barriers that prevent them from communicating effectively. He engages in conflict resolution, helps create a positive environment based on respect and trust, and promotes the importance of empathy and active listening.

One of the most important aspects of a social pedagogue's work is enhancing communication among groups from diverse social, cultural, or economic backgrounds. To achieve this, the social pedagogue employs different strategies, methods, and approaches to

connect individuals, foster their ability to solve problems independently, and enable them to actively participate in building a more inclusive society. The commitment to improving communication across different groups is key to building a society based on understanding, tolerance, and collaboration. The social pedagogue is crucial in creating a more equitable and inclusive society as a fundamental part of social cohesion and integration.

2. Concept and meaning of social communication

Social communication includes exchanging information, ideas, thoughts, feelings, and meanings among people within a social context. It is a fundamental aspect of human life and functioning because, through communication, interpersonal relationships are created, maintained, and transformed. Social communication encompasses a range of verbal and nonverbal skills used to navigate various social interactions. Communication occurs within the family, at school, in the workplace, and throughout the community and larger social structures. Furthermore, strong social communication skills are essential for developing advanced language abilities, necessary for abstract thinking, deductive reasoning, and understanding the relationships between concepts (Barrow, 2023). Social communication is a broad term that describes how verbal and nonverbal communication is used in social situations. In its most basic sense, it is the way people interpret and communicate with each other. Namely, it goes by many names such as pragmatics, pragmatic language, social language, social skills, functional communication, and interpersonal communication (Therapy, 2022). Social communication development begins at birth through face-to-face interaction and leads to competent use of language and competent and flexible non-verbal communication. Social communication consists of:

- social interaction (style and context of speech, culture, problem-solving, social tasks - joining peer groups, cooperative games, etc.);
- social cognition (theory of mind - the ability to understand one's own and others' mental states and act accordingly, reasoning, inference, executive functions - organizing, planning, problem-solving);
- pragmatics (non-verbal communication - body language, gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, gaze, and verbal communication - requests, responses, comments, responsibility, maintaining the topic) and
- language processing (language comprehension, spoken and written language expression, morphology, syntax, semantics, phonological skills) (Dilberović, 2023).

Social communication is the creation, transformation, and flow of information between individuals, groups, and social organizations. Many dimensions of social communication could include the following divisions - horizontal and vertical communication; verbal (through language) and non-verbal communication (gestures and other forms of expression); formal (through official channels of communication) and informal communication, intentional and unintentional communication, centralized (in which there is a coordinator, who occupies a central position in the group) and decentralized communication (where all members of the group can communicate freely with each other) and personal and impersonal communication (Oleksiak & Warwas, 2023).

2.1 Social communication skills

Social communication skills are crucial in building and maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships in personal, professional, and social life. They represent a set of abilities that enable effective interaction with others, expressing one’s ideas and emotions, and

understanding others' needs and feelings. These include the following social communication skills.

Verbal communication refers to speech and how language is used in everyday speech. It involves clear and appropriate language in expressing thoughts and ideas. Content can be transmitted from one person to another using many means, including vocalization, writing, etc. Language skills are skills that everyone can and should develop for more successful personal development and improvement of relationships and interactions with other people. Given that the goal of verbal communication is the precise transfer of information, recognizing the way of thinking of the interlocutor and adapting to the way of expression of the other party are very important (Vladimirova, 2017).

Nonverbal communication refers to the understanding and use of nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions, gestures, body movements, eye contact, voice intonation, and body language. What is called body language is unconscious nonverbal communication. The body uses reflexive and nonreflexive movements to convey a message to anyone interested in receiving it. According to some research, 55% of communication is attributed to body language, gestures, and eye contact, 38% to the tone, color, volume of the voice, and 7% to the content of the words used in the communication process (Vladimirova, 2017).

Active or effective listening is a key social communication skill that involves paying attention to the other person without interrupting and showing interest and understanding in what is being said. This skill does not just mean listening to what the other person is saying, but also hearing what they have to say. Active listening leads to understanding what is being said and contributes greatly to motivation in any conversation. This skill includes paraphrasing, asking questions, and expressing empathy. The skill of active listening involves understanding both surface details and deeper meanings (Влашчева, 2011).

Assertiveness is a social communication skill that helps interlocutors learn how to express their thoughts and feelings clearly and respectfully, without being aggressive or passive. Assertiveness involves expressing thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in an honest and socially acceptable manner while respecting the rights of others. An assertive person respects the opinions and views of others, although this does not necessarily mean agreeing with them. As a skill, assertive communication can be helpful in unpleasant situations and is crucial in overcoming and avoiding conflicts. People who apply it act confidently and securely, with complete control over the situation (Станојковска, 2020).

Empathy is the ability to recognize, understand, and experience the emotions, needs, and perspectives of others. It is the foundation for building healthy interpersonal relationships and is one of the most important aspects of social communication. Empathy is an important social-emotional skill that requires self-awareness and active listening, which leads to improved communication (Јау, 2021). It plays a crucial role in nurturing meaningful connections with others and is a fundamental element of effective social communication. This skill helps to recognize the feelings of others, that is, to "get into someone else's shoes," without taking on the weight of the emotional state. Empathy is associated with reading signals, understanding the feelings, attitudes, and perspectives of the other person, as well as showing concern and understanding for their emotional state. Communicating in a way that fosters trust and support, genuine understanding, and sharing feelings increases the possibility of effective communication.

Conflict resolution is a skill that enables effective handling of disagreements, differences, and conflicts in a way that preserves communication, builds trust, and achieves constructive outcomes. This skill is essential in everyday social interactions, as conflicts are an inevitable part of interpersonal relationships. It also facilitates understanding, prevents the deterioration of relationships, and encourages constructive interaction. This skill creates harmonious

relationships and contributes to personal and professional growth, preparing people to deal with challenges in interpersonal relationships maturely and effectively (Radola, 2016).

Digital communication is based on interactions between potential Internet users and the information provider. "Digital communication" refers to any communication or marketing action oriented towards promoting products and/or services through digital media. Digital literacy is a set of knowledge, skills, and behaviors related to digital devices such as desktops, laptops, smartphones, and similar devices. For successful professional performance in any field, young professionals must master fundamental and advanced communication skills adapted to modern digital collaboration platforms and work tools, which are built upon traditional methods that have been used for decades. This integration fosters a culture that embraces digital development, promotes the use of productive digital tools, and encourages flexible communication practices. As a result, individuals gain access to new opportunities for more effective work and efficient communication in the evolving digital era (Киров, 2020).

2.2 Social pedagogue's contribution to the development of communication skills

Modern social pedagogy is the science, theory, and practice of preventing and alleviating the difficulties of social integration of people with behavioral disorders, especially by providing special educational assistance to individuals and certain social groups (Uzelac, 1995). The profession of social pedagogues is an integral part of the classification in which they belong to the group of experts in education and rehabilitation. The recognizable identity of this profession is determined by the competencies, based on specific theories and knowledge, and ethical and professional values. The very fact that the social pedagogue with his function plays an important role within society, is emphasized by the fact that "the study program for social pedagogy prepares experts for scientific research and practical work for primary prevention, detection, diagnosis, early interventions and treatment, processing and subsequent care for children, young people and adults at risk or behavioral disorders and their social environment, in the function of education, socialization, rehabilitation and social integration" (Kochoska & Anastasov, 2020). His role is also crucial for communication skills development among students and in the wider social environment. The social pedagogue has a wide range of activities, which include advising and mediating between the student, the teacher, and the parent, building bridges of cooperation and understanding. In the communication area, the social pedagogue focuses on encouraging and developing verbal and non-verbal skills, as well as listening and assertive expression skills. His approach includes individual work with students, group activities, and creating an environment with open and positive communication. One of the primary responsibilities of the social pedagogue is to identify barriers that hinder communication among students, such as low self-esteem, fear of public speaking, or lack of empathy, and to address these challenges through individual support and group activities, thereby helping students develop and strengthen their communication skills.

Developing communication skills has numerous benefits for students, including improving students' self-confidence and empathy; reducing conflicts in the school environment; encouraging open and constructive dialogue between all stakeholders in the educational process; and preparing for future social and professional challenges (Practice, 2022). To achieve these goals, the social pedagogue uses various methods for developing communication skills, such as:

- Workshops and interactive sessions that promote teamwork and enhance students' ability to collaborate through engaging group activities.
- Role-playing exercises where students practice diverse communication scenarios in a safe and supportive environment, helping them build confidence and adaptability.

- Individual counseling, where one-on-one sessions support students in overcoming personal communication barriers such as anxiety, low self-esteem, or past negative experiences.
- Inclusive programs that support students with special educational needs or students from marginalized groups (Team, 2024).

3. Social communication as an intervention tool

Social communication is much more than just the exchange of information, it can also be a powerful instrument for intervention, enabling problem solving, behavior change, and social conditions improvement (Njoroge, 2023). Social communication intervention involves using communication methods and tools to achieve specific goals. The most significant ones are the following:

- Transferring information to increase awareness of a particular issue, such as health problems, climate change, or social injustice.
- Using communication strategies to encourage positive changes in individual and collective behaviors.
- Using communication skills to calm tensions and find solutions to conflict situations.
- Encouraging communities to activate and participate in solving common problems.

The principles of effective intervention in social communication are the basis for designing effective communication strategies that can contribute to positive changes in individual and collective behavior (Ogbanga, 2024). The most important key principles for intervention through social communication are: the principle of relevance and transparency; the principle of inclusiveness; the principle of empathy; the principle of interactivity; the principle of cultural sensitivity; and the principle of sustainability. Their observance allows the social pedagogue to be more effective in his work, build positive and trusting relationships, support students, and create conditions for their personal and social development. This is important for the quality of communication and for maintaining his professional and ethical attitude in his work. The principles of social communication intervention are the foundation for creating effective, healthy, and productive interpersonal relationships in different contexts. Communication based on these principles creates strong and sustainable connections, encourages collaboration, and ensures the development of positive social change.

4. Communication strategies for working with different groups

Social communication is fundamental in human interaction, through which people exchange thoughts, feelings, and information. In modern society, social communication plays a key role in personal development, maintaining interpersonal relationships, and achieving common goals. Therefore, the social pedagogue uses various strategies and methods to stimulate social communication, which is key to creating and maintaining healthy and effective relationships. Communication strategies are fundamental in working with different groups because they enable effective interaction, understanding, and cooperation. In a multicultural and dynamic society, where groups can differ according to age, cultural context, social status, or needs, the key to achieving positive results is the application of appropriate communication strategies.

One of the most important strategies is to adapt communication to the specific characteristics of the group. The social pedagogue analyzes the needs and interests of the group to choose an appropriate approach. To lead a group successfully, he must create a safe and supportive environment where all participants feel secure, respected, and valued. This can be achieved through respect for diversity, active listening, and empathy. This strategy is important

when working with marginalized groups or people with specific needs. Also, working with multicultural groups requires respecting cultural differences and avoiding prejudice. To create an environment where all cultures and values will be respected, the social pedagogue applies culturally sensitive strategies that contribute to better understanding and integration in the group.

One of the main goals of communication strategies is to encourage the active participation of all members in the group. This can be achieved through interactive methods, such as discussions, group projects, games, and creative activities. Team activities and common goals further strengthen group dynamics. The social pedagogue motivates participants to express their opinions, share ideas, and participate in joint activities. In addition to these strategies, especially nowadays, technology is an indispensable part of communication strategies and assumes the use of digital tools (such as online platforms, collaboration applications, and virtual meetings) to improve communication with different groups. These tools allow for connection and interaction even when participants are physically distant. Conflicts or misunderstandings can arise in any group. In this context, the social pedagogue employs mediation strategies to identify the root causes of conflict and facilitate its resolution. This strategy involves listening carefully to all parties, encouraging open dialogue, and finding a common constructive solution.

Communication strategies are crucial in the work of a social pedagogue with different groups. They can relate to children and youth, children with disabilities, parents, and members of marginalized groups.

4.1 Approach to working with children and youth

Nonviolent communication training for children and youth is a program based on the principles of nonviolent communication, a concept developed by clinical psychologist Marshall Rosenberg. It aims to teach children and youth to express their thoughts and feelings while understanding and respecting the perspectives and emotions of others. It also aims to recognize and resolve conflicts constructively without using violence (verbal, emotional, or physical) in communication. Nonviolent communication is an approach to improved communication, understanding, and connection based on the principles of nonviolence and humanistic psychology. It is not an attempt to end disagreements, but a way to increase empathy and understanding to improve the overall quality of life. Nonviolent communication is used as a psychotherapy and is also offered in workshops for the general public, especially in terms of seeking harmony in relationships and the workplace (Rosenberg, 2003).

Promoting inclusive dialogues is essential for creating a positive school environment in which every student's opinions, feelings, and identity are respected. This approach can help reduce discrimination and build tolerant relationships between students, teachers, and the community. Namely, inclusive dialogues are open and equal communication processes where every person, regardless of their cultural, ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, or educational background, can express themselves and be heard. Their goal is to create an environment where students can express themselves without fear of judgment or discrimination; an opportunity for students to understand different perspectives and develop respect for others; to become familiar with techniques for peaceful conflict resolution, and to contribute to building social cohesion and better cooperation in the school. Promoting inclusive dialogues can be realized by:

- including topics in the curriculum related to diversity, cultural and religious differences;
- organizing workshops on human rights, empathy, and non-violent communication;
- teamwork between students from different backgrounds through joint projects, clubs, and activities;

- creating sessions where students, teachers, and parents can discuss important topics (mutual understanding, cooperation, or current challenges);
- developing policies for preventing and dealing with discriminatory or violent statements and behaviors (Patrick, 2023).

4.2 Approach to working with children with disabilities

Working with children with disabilities in social communication requires a structured, empathetic, and individualized approach. This involves using specific strategies and methods to help children develop skills for expression, understanding, and interaction with others. Social communication with children with disabilities is key to supporting, inclusion, and understanding their needs.

An individual approach to social communication with children with disabilities involves adapting the way of communication according to the children's specific needs, abilities, and learning styles. This strategy is the basis for effective communication and encouraging social development. Primarily, what is important for this approach to work is understanding the different types of disabilities in children and identifying their strengths, challenges, and interests. Disability can refer to the autism spectrum of disorders, intellectual disability, sensory disorders, etc., but it is important to understand its characteristics and how they affect communication. In adapting communication, it is necessary to use simple, clear language with an appropriate speed of speech. For children experiencing challenges in verbal communication, it is beneficial to utilize pictures, symbols, or gestures. Alternative and assistive communication applications or devices can also be of great help. Respecting the children's learning styles is particularly important for adapting learning methods to their current needs, such as learning through play, activities, demonstration, repetition of instructions, etc. (Koller & Stoddart, 2021).

Working with children with autism spectrum disorders in the area of social communication also requires a specific and individualized approach. Social communication in these children is often affected due to difficulties in understanding social cues, nonverbal communication, and establishing social relationships. To encourage social and communication skills, ABA therapy or Applied Behavior Analysis is used (Buchanan, 2010). The TEACCH method can provide a structured approach to education and support for people with autism and related communication disorders. Using visual and physical organizers can encourage independence in children with ASD and help them develop skills, increase independence, and cope with everyday challenges. Developmental individualistic approach to working with children with autism, DIR/Floortime is a therapeutic approach aimed at stimulating the development of social, emotional, and communication skills in children with ASD (Greenspan & Wieder, 2008). In addition to therapeutic approaches, devices and tools for alternative and assistive communication are also often used, and of course, play as a learning tool through which social interactions are practiced, sharing and collaboration are promoted.

4.3 Approach to working with parents

Encouraging positive communication in the family is an important part of building healthy relationships and creating a positive home environment for children. Parents play a crucial role in shaping their children's values, behaviors, and communication skills. Appropriate guidance and approach can foster open, empathetic, and constructive communication within the family environment. Basic principles of positive communication in the family are: actively listening and showing genuine interest in the child's opinions and feelings; using statements that express feelings; understanding the child's perspectives and emotions; focusing on the positive aspects

of the child's behavior and offering solutions; avoiding criticism; showing respect and engaging in constructive dialogue in everyday interactions with the child. Positive communication within the family can be achieved through activities that actively involve parents in the communication process (Kaiser & Roberts, 2013).

Parental conflict management counseling is a process that helps parents develop skills in recognizing, managing, and resolving conflicts with their children, partners, or other family members in a constructive and nonviolent manner. This approach aims to support parents in creating a harmonious home environment where conflicts are resolved in a way that fosters growth and understanding. The social pedagogue plays a key role in creating a positive environment where parents feel accepted and heard, and there is trust for open communication. In this process, parents have the opportunity to understand different points of view, especially those of their children, to avoid mutual misunderstandings. Counseling supports parents and encourages the development of emotional intelligence, i.e., the recognition, management, and positive expression of emotions (Sutton, 2021).

4.4 Approach to working with marginalized groups

Providing a platform for voices and rights for marginalized groups means creating conditions where these communities can express their views, fight for their rights, and receive support to become active participants in society. This approach to work requires sensitivity, empathy, and understanding of the social, economic, and cultural barriers they face. This approach to work is guided by the principles of: inclusiveness, which means including all voices, regardless of the socio-economic background, ethnicity, religion, gender, age or ability of marginalized people; empowering and encouraging marginalized groups to take an active role in advocating for their interests; respecting diversity and adapting the approach to the needs and traditions of the groups; partnering and collaborating with communities to create long-term and sustainable change; and promoting human rights, which means integrating the principles of equality, fairness and non-discrimination into all aspects of the work of these groups.

Supporting marginalized groups in the integration process through dialogue is based on creating open, safe, and constructive platforms where different groups can meet, communicate, and build mutual understanding. This approach emphasizes the importance of dialogue for fostering inclusion, reducing stigma, and building mutual trust. The main principles guiding this approach to work are: equality in communication, where all participants in the dialogue have an equal opportunity to express their opinions and experiences; recognition of diversity as something valuable, i.e. acceptance and respect for the cultural, ethnic, social and other differences of marginalized people; creating an environment of trust, where participants can speak without fear of judgment, discrimination or repression; focus on common interests by emphasizing common goals and values, rather than differences; and the principle of self-advocacy, i.e. encouraging marginalized groups to speak on their behalf and take an active role in integration processes (Kaur, 2020).

Conclusion

Social communication is the basis of human relationships and integration in society. It is the process of exchanging information, thoughts, feelings, and ideas between individuals or groups. Through social communication, people create connections, share experiences, and build communities. This form of communication is not only a means of transmitting messages but also a way of expressing cultural, emotional, and social aspects of human existence. It can also be a powerful instrument of intervention, enabling problem-solving, changing behavior,

and improving social conditions. Intervention through social communication involves communication methods and tools to achieve specific goals.

Through his functions, the social pedagogue has a central role in improving social communication as a mediator and trainer. As a mediator, the social pedagogue is a neutral party who helps overcome misunderstandings and conflicts, building trust and understanding between individuals and groups. As a trainer, he encourages personal development and strengthening communication skills, thus enabling people to interact effectively and assertively. He is also a guide who supports students in developing their social skills and building healthy and successful relationships. The social pedagogue has a wide range of activities, which include counseling and mediation between the student, teacher, and parent, building bridges of cooperation and understanding. In the communication, the social pedagogue focuses on encouraging and developing verbal and non-verbal skills, as well as listening and assertive expression skills. His approach includes individual work with students, group activities, and creating an environment that fosters open and positive communication. These roles position the social pedagogue as a key contributor to the positive social relationships, conflict resolution, and the education of individuals and groups in effective communication. His work is particularly vital in addressing the challenges brought by modern society and rapid technological change. Through targeted activities, the social pedagogue fosters stronger interpersonal bonds, enhances relationships, and promotes social cohesion.

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