

RESPECTING PROFESSIONAL ETHICS PRINCIPLES WHILE FACING CHALLENGES IN TEACHING ASSOCIATED WITH BEHAVIOR DISORDERS

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Abstract

Our educational system puts teachers in the position of the leader in early childhood education and in primary and secondary schools. As much as it is evaluated, this position comes with great responsibility and even bigger obligations. Respecting professional ethics principles is a must. If it is well cultivated since professional practice, implementing these principals in one's daily work becomes natural, but not without challenges. Facing students with behavioral disorders is one of them. This paper focusses on to the role of the teachers as an aid for the students to overcome the difficulties of learning and socializing while ensuring the general well-being, emotional and social stability of the students. In order to help teachers to achieve this, I suggest different strategies that academic staff can easily implement during teaching to positively affect effective education. These strategies include: implementing a simple and well-structured regulation, rewarding positive behaviors, taking short breaks during the lesson, encouraging progress through motivation, adaptation of teaching according to students' needs, focusing on the causes of behaviors, creating a learning routine, individual assessment, establishing mutual relations, adapting the teaching methodology according to the learning capacity.

Key words: *academic achievements, difficulties in learning, implement positive behaviors.*

Përmbledhje:

Sistemi ynë arsimor i vendos mësuesit në pozicionin e udhëheqësit në edukim në fëmijërinë e hershme dhe në arsimin parauniversitar. Edhe pse vlerësohet si profesion, ky pozicion shoqërohet me shumë përgjegjësi dhe madje dhe me detyrime të mëdha. Në profesionin e mësimit, respektimi i parimeve

etike profesionale është i detyrueshëm. Nëse kultivohet mirë që në periudhën e praktikës profesionale, implementimi i këtyre parimeve në punën e përditshme vjen natyrshëm, por jo pa sfida. Përballja me nxënësit që paraqesin çrregullime të sjelljes krijon një situatë të tillë. Ky studim fokusohet në rolin e mësuesit si mjet ndihmës për nxënësit që të kapërcejnë vështirësitë e të mësuarit dhe socializimit me nxënësit e tjerë, njëkohësisht duke siguruar dhe mirëqënien mendore dhe emocionale dhe stabilitetin social të nxënësve. Në ndihmë të mësuesve për të arritur këtë qëllim, sugjeroj disa strategji që stafi akademik mund t'i implementojë me lehtësi gjatë mësimdhënies. Këto strategji përfshijnë: implementimin e një rregullore të thjeshtë dhe të mirë rregulluar, shpërblimin e sjelljeve positive, nxitjen e progresit me anë të motivimit, përshtatjen e mësimdhënies sipas nevojave të nxënësve, përqendrimin në shkakun e sjelljes, krijimin e një rutine gjatë të mësuarit, vlerësimin individual, vendosjen e mardhënieve të ndërsjellta, përshtatjen e metodologjisë së mësimdhënies në përputhje me kapacitetin për të mësuar.

Fjalë kyçe: arritje akademike, vështirësi në procesin e mësimit, implementimi i sjelljeve positive.

Introduction

All teaching is based on ethics. The code of ethics for educators emphasize four basic values: dignity – teachers must respect every person regardless of gender, appearance, age, social standing, origin, opinions, abilities and achievements; truthfulness – honesty with oneself and others and mutual respect in all communication; fairness – promotes equality, non-discrimination and avoids favoritism; responsibility – teacher's work is tied to legislation and curriculum. Applying these principles while teaching is a must. Unfortunately, there are different situations that make teaching a challenge. One of them is dealing with students that manifest behavioral disorders.

The term emotional or behavioral disorders (E/BD) refers to a variety of conditions and symptoms that impair the learning, social functioning, safety, and behavioral health of children or adolescents.

Behavioral disorders in schools can appear in many different forms. They become apparent when the student exhibits a pattern of repeated and persistently influential behavior that results in disruption of other students. Such disorders can cause significant impairment in academic, social, or occupational functioning. In 2023, Mia Clinic Albania enlisted the characteristics displayed by a student with behavioral disorders:

- Hyperactivity: uncontrolled and frequent movements on the bench and around the classroom.
- Impulsivity: frequent outbursts of anger.
- Initiation of harassing, aggressive and threatening behavior towards others.
- Physical abuse of others.
- Low sensitivity and concern for the feelings, wishes and well-being of others.
- Lack of feelings of guilt or remorse.
- Interrupts classroom activities
- Low concentration and lack of attention
- Resistance to change and disregard for classroom instructions and rules
- Often speaks with irrelevant information or without regard for the right of speech and opinion of others
- Low self-esteem and confidence
- Lack of social interaction with others and difficulty working in groups
- Cannot follow social rules related to others' personal space and belongings
- Manipulators of situations
- Non-acceptance of criticism and avoidance of responsibilities
- Immaturity (inappropriate crying, anger, low ability to cope with different situations in the classroom)
- Difficulty in learning
- Difficulty in completing class assignments and paying attention when explaining the lesson.

But there are also some students who show other less obvious signs of behavioral disorders. Some students with conduct disorders are not aggressive and tend to have very little social interaction with others. They find it difficult to make friends and have fun, are more withdrawn in their world and dreams, create irrational fears of things around them, and limit their chances to participate in school activities. Students who exhibit these behaviors and characteristics tend to be less distracting and disruptive to teachers and classmates. Because of this, they risk not being identified and being neglected, because in most cases when teachers ask about these students, they can pass the situation with positivity, saying that they are wise students and that they do not cause problems. As a result of this lack of exposure, from which they

do not receive the necessary help, these students can go on to other severe forms of behavior disorders such as depression, abuse of certain substances and even self-harm. Therefore, early identification and effective treatment of all students who exhibit the above characteristics is very important.

Literature review

In 2021, Institute of Statistical Data (INSTAT) in Albania published Children, Adolescents and Youth-Focused Wellbeing Indicators, data from 2016-2019. This publication states that the enrolment of children in high school, expressed as percentage of the theoretical age group of the population that corresponds to this level of education decreases: from lower secondary education to upper secondary education; from 2016 to 2019 within the level of education (**table 1**).

YEAR	Enrolment ratio in lower secondary education	Enrolment ratio in upper secondary education
2016	96.7	94.7
2017	97.4	93.9
2018	96.5	95.6
2019	96.2	90.7

Source: INSTAT 2019

Table 1: Enrollment ratio, by level of education

Explanation vary from social status, economic factors, increasing level of difficulty in learning subjects, increasing level of bullying, other.

Although Albania does not have statistical data on adolescents that manifest emotional and behavioral disorders ore even emotional disturbances, it is a fact that the level of aggressivity, difficulty in learning, anxiety, mood swings, social isolation, and bullying present in high school students is increased. In 2019, in order to deal with the situation, Ministry of Education and Sports in Albania implemented different policies that protect and sustain students with different abilities in learning and even promotes positive behavior interventions at schools (PBI). PBI based policies help students to understand

and implement positive behaviors and guide teachers toward a better classroom management and how to obstruct problematic behavior. Paper published by Lehr & McCornas in 2023, show that such policies play a significant role in improvement of social and economic state of students and even upgrade their academic achievements.

Analysis and discussion

As main actors in education, teachers play a fundamental role in shaping students in their early life. They provide students with tools to use in order to enlighten the surrounding environment, to explore their capacities, but also can be used as steps toward introduction to the social life. This is the reason why a good teacher is also seen as a mentor for the adult life (Leggio & Terras, 2019). Considering that teaching impacts students' personal development and interpersonal relationships among peers, time spent within the school environment is very important. Based on 20 years' experience in teaching, we suggest different strategies that academic staff can easily implement during teaching to positively affect effective education. These strategies aim to avoid unpleasant situations where students are misunderstood or their life is in danger (from aggression).

1-It is really important that the regulation of the school cites clearly what is considered as bad behavior (from the students and from the staff), why they are unacceptable, and what is the punishment for performing such behavior. This step is very important as many mistakes come from not understanding the situation and not knowing the outcome.

2-Many students with behavioral disorders tend to take the teacher's behavior, words or any element of discipline towards them as a personal attack. Because of this, they tend to reinforce negative behaviors as a way of self-defense against the teacher and classmates. Therefore, what would be best in these situations is that, in the framework of all the bad behaviors of these students, the good behaviors should be highlighted and encouraged more, highlighted in the eyes of the whole class and rewarded.

3-Many students with behavioral disorders lack the emotional balance and attention span to stay focused on learning for long periods of time, so the best thing teachers can do in these cases is to take short breaks and you allow these students, but also the whole class, to move a little from their seats to calm

down and discharge all the stress, negative energy or fatigue accumulated during the lesson. In this way, the students would feel calmer mentally and ready to continue the lesson, because sitting for the whole hour in the chair prevents the students from acting by forcing them to, or distract the friend from the bank, or perform inelegant movements or interrupt the teacher with questions unrelated to the lesson as a way to take a break and take their mind off the lesson. But this would distract the rest of the class. Therefore, it is good to plan short breaks with the planning of the lesson, providing that there is no lag in the explanation.

4-Another important element that teachers should keep in mind is to activate all students equally in the lesson, giving you the opportunity to make everyone feel included and useful during the lesson. They can do this by planning group work more often, by pairing students with behavioral problems with good students from whom they can benefit from their help and knowledge and better understand the lesson or tasks. This way would serve students with behavioral disorders as a way to socialize more with the rest of the class.

5-Often, students try to get the attention of the teacher and the class by performing behaviors such as talking without permission, interrupting classmates when they are speaking, asking unnecessary questions related to the lesson or performing movements that can disturb the rest of the class thus interrupting the lesson. In these cases, teachers can use the tactic of deliberately ignoring these behaviors and use the tone of voice or body gestures to communicate and imply to the students that they should stop. For example, they can raise or lower the tone of their voice, draw the student's attention by approaching the bank or looking seriously into their eyes. As a result, students not getting the teacher's attention and implying with gesticulations that what they are doing is not the right behavior, they will start to minimize these typologies of behavior and will be forced to concentrate and listen calmly to the lesson.

6-Teaching should not become a monotonous process, as this would be tiring and the students, knowing how the lesson will work or continue, begin to lose interest and get bored with the same methods used by the teacher. Therefore, new didactic methods and tools should be used, adapting them to the interests of each of the students in the class. Only in this way would curiosity be aroused and everyone's attention would be drawn. It is also necessary to take stock and observe carefully what is not working, where learning is lagging, what the

difficulties students encounter are and what are their needs. In order to better understand these things, teachers can also consult with the students themselves, how they can solve the situations, what they can improve, what they can do more and how they can help them to overcome a difficulty. Based on these, teachers can adapt the methods and strategies needed to overcome or improve situations. Teachers must first identify the needs of each student and, on their basis, later design instructions that meet these individual academic and behavioral needs. So a good and effective teacher should individualize the lesson, which means, in the classroom, the teacher should not only focus on the part of the students who have interest and the best academic results, but should also stop at the rest of the class, to students who find it difficult to acquire and learn the teaching material.

7-Behavior is a form of communication, especially for students with behavioral disorders (Gage, 2013), so the teacher should consider finding what can cause inappropriate behavior in the classroom. Determining the cause can help them directly meet the needs of students by keeping them under constant observation and control, to avoid reinforcing bad and inappropriate behavior at school. Behaviors can vary, but their function usually serves one of two purposes: students either behave in a certain way to get something, mostly attention, or to avoid something, mostly a task. For example, a student who constantly interrupts class may be communicating a need for attention. Instead of reinforcing this behavior by responding to the student in the same way, the teacher should try to anticipate the behavior and meet the student's need in advance, always adapting the necessary methods and strategies, to give them the right time to express themselves and for everyone to interact in the classroom without problems.

8-Students in general, and especially those with behavioral disorders, are distracted, so it is good for teachers to create a routine of explanation in the classroom, which means, it is good for the teacher to tell the students how to proceed with the learning process. That way they would be ready for what was to come by preparing to give their best. Stability in this case is very important for students with behavioral disorders, to avoid any surprises and not to put them in difficult positions for something they had not experienced before. If the teacher were to carry out tasks, tests or other unannounced work, he would place students with behavioral disorders in such conditions that they would begin to increase the feeling of fear, anxiety or stress about what would happen next with them.

9-Students who have behavior problems are often unwilling to participate in school activities or in various tasks within the class, those in groups or in certain tasks and projects. This happens as a result of their low academic progress and behavioral problems. This step is also reflected in the teachers who tend to give their greatest commitment to the students who are learning so that they can be realized to the maximum and their best work with these students can be highlighted.

However, effective teachers should never realize these differentiations and always in their planning of lessons, but also projects at the class level and those at the school level should include as many tasks and choices as possible so that all students have the opportunity to find themselves and students with behavioral problems to have the opportunity to show something of themselves and reveal their best abilities. Therefore, teachers should always give tasks to students with behavioral disorders and they should check and ask about their implementation, because it is precisely these cases that can be overlooked as unimportant for teachers, but for these students are of great value, as it is an opportunity to show themselves and gain the necessary confidence regarding academic progress.

10-An important element that affects the progress of students with behavioral disorders is assessment. Often teachers tend to compare these students with the rest of the class, making you think that their progress is low, that they are not doing their best, they are lagging behind their friends, mentioning this fact to you from time to time. However, this thing is unintentionally considered as a kind of pressure from the teacher, making them feel even worse and more demotivated to move forward, because by often mentioning the low progress, they start to get disappointed with themselves and get involved in thoughts that, whatever they do, they will still not succeed and will not succeed like others.

Therefore, teachers should be careful with the way of expressing the progress of students with behavioral disorders, always considering the fact that they have a slower and more difficult progress than the rest of the students. Consequently, their assessment should be carried out on the basis of progress at the individual level and not at the level of the general progress of the class. Their assessment should be done in such a way that it turns into a form of encouragement for what little progress they may have made. The importance in these cases is that they have progress, however slow it may be, it is enough to be effective in the framework of their academic progress.

11-In many cases, teachers find it difficult to interact alone with students with behavioral problems, therefore they must seek the help of other members of the academic staff, specialists or psychologists in the field and not only other students in the class to better understand the circumstances, causes and nature of the behaviors of these students. A very important element in these cases is the involvement and cooperation with the students' parents, due to their mutual influence regarding the emotional and behavioral well-being of their child.

The teacher-parent relationship must be continuous, where the teachers must regularly inform the parents about the development, progress and behavior of their children in the classroom, but also parents must communicate and let the teachers know the strengths and weaknesses of the children, interests and needs, the deficiencies they show at home, the progress they achieve outside of school and the problems they may have encountered in the family, which have a chain effect on the students' behaviors. In this way, the teacher will make it easier to understand their behavior and what they need to improve in themselves and in the explanation to have the appropriate effectiveness in each of the students.

12-Students with behavioral disorders have slower learning progress. They show difficulties in absorbing learning materials and in mastering and reproducing them successfully. For this reason, teachers should start explaining the lesson with the simplest possible terms, possibly including examples to reinforce. This is a very good opportunity for these students to memorize things. Also, they should be given easy tasks at first, so that they have the opportunity to complete them. When students with behavioral disorders begin to do a task on their own, they gain the confidence that they can successfully complete any subsequent task.

An important part of this process is also the moment when they start to read the tasks in front of the class, showing the teachers and friends that they too have managed to solve a task and that they are not just the problematic ones in the class who stand out only for their non-professional behavior. In this way, by solving an easy task once, they start asking the teacher for other tasks with a higher degree of difficulty, to try and challenge themselves to see how far they can go. In these cases, teachers seeing the progress of these students should not be satisfied with that but, normally, they can start to increase the degree of difficulty of the tasks based on their performance and capacity. The dose of difficulty of the tasks should be increased according to the progress of

the students. Tasks should be given depending on the level, where special attention should be paid to the low level of students, where students with behavioral disorders mainly belong.

13-Students with behavioral disorders, especially those who show the non-visible forms of these problems, i.e. students who are withdrawn or have a complex to express themselves in front of the class and who do not actively participate in the lesson, are often reluctant to ask the teacher questions about something they don't understand, as a result of prejudices from the rest of the class, and for these reasons they prefer to avoid a fragment of the lesson, don't bother to learn it at all, than to ask about certain concepts or terms that they can't understand, know and become the object of conversation or ridicule from the rest of the class. There are many cases when students hesitate to ask their questions, because they are afraid that the rest of the class will make fun of the fact that they do not yet know some elementary terms or concepts of the lesson.

Conclusion

Being a teacher is a challenging job. Applying ethical principles like dignity, truthfulness, fairness and responsibility during daily work is possible. Sometimes all it needs is just a different point of view. Understanding what disorder behavioral are and how they manifest in adolescences helps teachers to manage the classroom better and to achieve e more effective education. It also helps students to self-regulate and construct a better relationship with each other. Better education today means better adults tomorrow.

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