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THE IMPORTANCE OF TRUST IN TEACHER-STUDENT COMMUNICATION IN SCHOOL

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

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Abstract. The communication between teachers and students can be considered as an important type of communication since it naturally involves the topic of education, life, knowledge, etc., especially when it is conducted in the school scope. Trust has been an element in communication, which promotes understanding and collaboration between the parties involved. With the need of effective and proper communication, trust could appear to be the ultimate tool. It is then important to finally realize that trust is a powerful element for teachers and any senders of messages to achieve intended goals. This study aims to elaborate, share and emphasize that teacher-student communication in school can be deemed effective and proper, when trust is put as the main element inside it. This study leans on the methodology of literature review where the process of summarizing, synthesizing and/or critiquing the literature are combined, identifying the developments in the topic of trust, with focus on its use between teachers and students in school.

Abstrak. Komunikasi antara guru dan siswa dapat dianggap sebagai jenis komunikasi yang penting karena komunikasi ini secara alami melibatkan topik pendidikan, kehidupan, pengetahuan, dll., terutama ketika komunikasi tersebut dilakukan di lingkungan sekolah. Kepercayaan telah menjadi elemen dalam komunikasi, yang mendorong pemahaman dan kolaborasi antara pihak-pihak yang terlibat. Dengan kebutuhan akan komunikasi yang efektif dan tepat, kepercayaan dapat tampak sebagai alat yang paling ampuh. Oleh karena itu, penting untuk akhirnya menyadari bahwa kepercayaan merupakan elemen yang kuat bagi guru dan pengirim pesan mana pun untuk mencapai tujuan yang diinginkan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguraikan, berbagi, dan menekankan bahwa komunikasi guru-siswa di sekolah dapat dianggap efektif dan tepat, ketika kepercayaan ditempatkan sebagai elemen utama di dalamnya. Penelitian ini bersandar pada metodologi tinjauan pustaka di mana proses meringkas, mensintesis, dan/atau mengkritisi literatur digabungkan, mengidentifikasi perkembangan dalam topik kepercayaan, dengan fokus pada penggunaannya antara guru dan siswa di sekolah.

INTRODUCTION

As two parties engaged with each other in the scope of a place called school, teachers and students cannot avoid making contact and communicating with each other. The two-way communication conducted necessitates each party understanding one another (Priadi, 2020). The interaction between the two is quite intense as active hours of a school can range from morning to late afternoon. Additionally, types and topics of communication can be varied and different in many levels. For instance, students as the target of the communication must be able to understand all materials presented by teachers in the form of words used, intonation, body gestures and so on (Gunawan & Sulasmi, 2020); this also shows that students must use all their senses in the learning process. In this case, the term 'school' includes all places of studies such as regular schools for pre-teen and teenage students, colleges, and universities. The term 'teachers' and 'students' follow the same logical pattern for the places previously mentioned. The communication function between teachers and students contains self-interest and the interests of other parties. Self-interest is the student's own interest for the success of the teaching and learning process, and the interests of others are the interests of teachers as well as parents and society in the successful achievement of educational goals. After the interaction occurs, the result is to prioritize all the interests involved.

School or university is a center of information and purposes where many related parties gather and interact. In this place, there are a lot of situations for teachers and students to connect and share important or informal matters. Among the many potential communications at school, teacher-student communication can be guaranteed to be one of the essentials since teachers always teach students and students always study from teachers. With such reciprocal connection, the necessity of teacher-student communication cannot be underestimated.

With the need of effective and proper communication, trust could appear to be the ultimate tool. Logically, one can explore any possibilities of communication tools and features so that the so-called speaking partner can completely decode the message. Nevertheless, the help of some abstract qualities of good communication is mandatory. Trust, between the sender and receiver of message, can generate significant result in which the communication is conducted with good intention, aiming for message delivery and parties' satisfaction. Thinking of trust as a fundamental quality of the relationship between teacher and student makes us understand the important value of trust for academic education (Platz, 2021). Only if the relationship between teacher and student is trustful will the student make themselves vulnerable to the teacher by showing the teacher their intellectual weaknesses and asking for assistance and support. Trust is therefore a key component of a good teacher–student relationship and of a good learning environment. It provides a relational basis for cooperation and collaboration and an important resource for both teacher and student in the process of teaching and learning.

Then, to reflect more, how important is trust in teacher-student communication at school? This study aims to elaborate, share and emphasize that trust is truly important in teacher-student communication at school.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study leans on the methodology of literature review where the process of summarizing, synthesizing and/or critiquing the literature are combined. Literature study, as the

qualitative method, was used to answer the research question. Literature study was conducted in order to identify the developments in the topic of trust, with focus on its use between teachers and students in school. The literature reviewed include scholarly journals about the definition and elaboration of trust in general and finally how and why trust matters in the school context. At the same time, this study is trying to point out that trust is a type of capital that is generally essential for interaction between parties.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Trust In General or Trust As A Capital

Individuals need to depend on each other to engage in cooperative actions. Therefore, it's crucial for any group of people who live in society to have a fundamental term to signify this reality. Basically, trust fulfills this role.

Trust consists of some elements and interpretations. Many think that trust only depends on goodwill. Goodwill, i.e. friendly or helpful feelings towards other people, is indeed necessary for having a good relationship between the trustor and the trustee. However, in many cases, trust has another element. According to Karen Jones, trust is an attitude of optimism that the goodwill and competence of another person will extend to cover the domain of our interaction with that person, together with the expectation that the one trusted will be directly and favorably moved by the thought that we are counting on that person (Jones, 1994). Thomas W. Simpson (2012) stated his doubt about the true meaning of trust. He added that the ways that the word 'trust' is used are simply too various to be concluded into one definition. Sometimes 'trust' is naturally understood as referring to a sort of affective attitude ('I will trust my husband, I will not be jealous'); at other times to a conative one ('Whatever happens, I will trust you to the end'); and at yet others to cognitive ones ('I know you are an honorable woman, so I trust you'). Sometimes it is not a mental state but action which is described as trust ('The patrol followed the scout, trusting him to spot any ambush'). Likewise, trust is applied in scenarios where the reasons for being trustworthy vary significantly: whether it's driven by love, mutual benefit, or moral values, all these factors discourage betraying someone's trust. These elements collectively undermine the feasibility of dissecting trust through an inductive approach. Despite its flexible nature, trust and openness go hand in hand. Typically, being open in interpersonal connections cultivates trust among involved parties, and it's probable that interpersonal trust encourages openness in organizational interactions.

It has been suggested that trust is necessary for establishing effective interpersonal relations (Hughes, 1974), for improving communications (Zand, 1972), and for initiating successful change and creating effective organizational cultures (Ouchi, 1981). There have been some studies detailing how trust may affect investment in social, human, and physical capital. Bjørnskov (2009), for example, provides several ways in which education decisions are related to trust. Higher levels of social capital both within the family and outside the family are associated with lower high school dropout rates (Coleman, 1988). Firms typically hire workers with high levels of human capital to perform complex tasks. Monitoring costs escalate as the complexity of these tasks increase. Under higher trust levels, these monitoring costs are reduced increasing the firm's demand for human-capital-rich workers. Further, under higher trust levels, workers with high levels of human capital may be better able to cooperate, work, and share information with other workers, thus raising the firm's return to hiring workers with higher levels of human capital. There are also reasons to believe that the level of trust is positively related to the accumulation of physical capital. If trust

leads to improvements in both the quality and quantity of information, then businesses would not only become aware of a wider array of investment possibilities, but they could also better gauge the likelihood of success for each opportunity. With increased trust, there's less necessity for complex contracts and lower possibility of costly litigation, as agreements could potentially be finalized with a simple handshake. Higher trust levels would increase investment through trust-induced efficiency gains at the microeconomic level. Zak and Knack (2001) examined the aggregate impact of trust on physical capital using a cross section of 41 countries and find that trust increases investment.

Galindo, Foronda-Robles, and García-López shared three levels of trust (2014). Strategic trust is one of the first components in the generation of social capital, as it encourages the possibility of cooperation among individuals for mutual gain. This trust can be linked to a reputation that validates the quality and competence of individuals. Thus the variables included are related to the theory of rational choice and the calculation of gains and losses. Normative trust (also known as norm-based or value-based trust) appears where this trust is a mechanism that allows the actors to reduce uncertainty by adopting specific expectations about the future behavior of others and predicting their actions to a certain degree. The relationship between actors is essentially the aggregate of individual contributions, shaped by the collective accumulation and evolution of experiences, which are shared through cooperative processes. Even more widespread and abstract is cognitive trust. This tendency is based on a common behavior structure, regularities, social routines and shared meanings. It is a level of trust that is not dependent on interpersonal familiarity or a common past, but is based on formal structures that have been socially produced and legitimized, such as the justice system, the police force and public administration bodies.

Trust, as a social capital, is an inherent resource in community structure, but trust must be understood in its sociocultural and territorial context. In the process of transferring skills, knowledge and values, the past and future of any community play a key role in the transmission of social and cultural norms. Social capital can have a direct influence on territorial development, but should be dealt with alongside physical, natural and human capital, as none of these is, on its own, sufficient for the complete development of a territory.

Communication Between Teachers and Students In School

The connection between teachers and students in school affect and is affected by many factors. Teachers and students, respectively, are individuals who come from different factors, such as age, background, social status, life values, etc., which will influence how each party participates in the relationship. In school, such relationship must be affected by academic, social, and other types of responsibilities and factors.

Communication between teachers and students forms the foundation of teaching and learning practice. Effective communication can enhance learning by involving students with the subject matter and encouraging relevant thought processes. (Kinchin, 2003; Palincsar, 1986; Wubbels and Brekelmans, 2005). Open and honest communication between students and teachers can lead to pedagogical changes, which subsequently enhance learning (Harfitt, 2014). Communicating with teachers may also impact students' perceptions of teachers (Dobransky and Frymier, 2004; Raufelder et al, 2016), and may affect teacher-student relationship and classroom environment at large (Myers and Claus, 2012). Furthermore, the overall teaching and learning process is, among other factors, affected by teacher-student relationship (Sabol and Pianta, 2012) and classroom environment (Pawlowska et al, 2014). By seriously and sincerely listening to and

responding to students, teachers can learn about the challenges encountered by students and, thus, use this understanding to enhance their practice. Furthermore, they are able to learn about students' lives, as well as discover new aspects and ideas related to the lesson topic that they would not arrive at by themselves (Khong, 2021). Another thing is teachers can gainfully learn from students in situations where teachers acknowledge students as significant dialogue partners, remain open to learning opportunities during lesson time, and recognize the differences in their ideas and those of their students (Khong, T. D. H., Saito, E., Hardy, I., & Gillies, R., 2023).

When communication is truly how people create relationship, multiple student characteristics are also associated with the teacher-student relationship. Kevin McGrath and Penny Van Bergen compiled much research and concluded that there are several student characteristics that affect teacher-student communication and relationship (McGrath, K. F., and Van Bergen, P., 2015). Firstly, older students are more likely to encounter negative student–teacher relationships compared to younger students. Secondly, boys are more prone to experiencing negative student–teacher relationships than girls. Thirdly, students from minority and low socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to experience negative student–teacher relationships, perpetuating a cycle of disadvantage. Fourthly, although troubled students often desire a closer connection with their teachers, their poor behavior can instead put them at risk of forming negative relationships. This is especially true for students with difficult temperaments, externalizing disorders, or those who exhibit disruptive, antisocial, or aggressive behavior for various reasons. Lastly, low-achieving students generally have poorer quality relationships with their teachers compared to high-achieving students.

For students at risk of negative student–teacher relationships, having a positive relationship with a teacher can safeguard them from various negative influences, such as maladaptive behavior, adverse life events, poor child–parent relationships, and referrals to special education. It can also forecast various behavioral and academic outcomes, not only during school years but potentially into adulthood as well. For instance, individuals with unfavorable student–teacher relationships might have a higher likelihood of unemployment in adulthood, whereas those with positive relationships could experience greater success. The predictive and protective roles of the student–teacher relationship imply that just one positive relationship might be adequate to change the course of a student prone to negative outcomes.

The Role of Trust In School

Trust has a direct impact on school performance, but its influence through collective efficacy is significant. This finding supports the trust-as-lubricant metaphor (Bryk and Schneider, 2002; McAllister, 1995), which is evident in trust's relationship with collective teacher efficacy. Let us take students' parents into this situation. When parents are involved, mistrustful relationships between teachers and parents can create tension, which adversely affects teachers' understanding of their teaching responsibilities. Conversely, interactions built on mutual trust can act as a facilitator for collaborative and supportive engagements between teachers and parents, thus improving perceptions of teaching duties. This can occur because under high-trust conditions, individuals believe that other agents are committed to carrying out their expectations and responsibilities.

It was also found that trust shapes the social construction of motivation within the student role group. Students' identities are vulnerable to factors within the larger social environment of schools, but the relational environment within schools is a formidable variable in the construction

of motivation within student groups. Trust fosters a cooperative environment that eliminates the need for strict controls to guard against opportunistic behavior (Forsyth and Adams, 2008). When students perceive the relational atmosphere as supportive and nurturing rather than impersonal, contentious, and unjust, they find it easier to identify with the school's purpose. In the latter scenario, where the environment is perceived negatively, students are more inclined to seek fulfillment for their emotional and social needs outside the school setting, which could be detrimental, especially for students living in poverty.

In high-trust schools, positive evaluations of teacher, parent, and student conduct are expected to lead to collective beliefs among teachers that the school – as the territory of communication – has the capability, backing, and drive to influence student learning. The school's capacity for action might be more uncertain if the behaviors of teachers, students, and parents are seen as not aligning with socially established norms and fulfilling role group duties. Behaviors recognized by parents and teachers as meeting expectations can convey a mutual commitment to the significance of school within the student community. Conversely, actions that erode trust can have the opposite effect, sending conflicting messages to students regarding the role of school. (Adams and Forsyth, 2009).

Trust can create open classroom climate. An open classroom climate is characterized by students feeling comfortable expressing disagreement with teachers regarding political and social matters during class discussions. Teachers in such environments value students' opinions, encourage them to voice their thoughts, facilitate discussions on diverse viewpoints regarding political and social issues, and present multiple perspectives when addressing topics in class. (Fjeldstad and Mikkelsen, 2003). Additionally, students' perception of the level of openness in the classroom environment is positively associated with their civic knowledge and trust in government. (Fjeldstad and Mikkelsen, 2003).

A study in Sweden tried to see how trust in teachers is correlated with students' experiences of democracy in school (Robert Thornberg, 2012). The study highlighted different types of trust students have in teachers. One type of trust, especially among the younger students, could be called naïve trust, which means that they trust and believe in teachers just because they are adults and teachers. Naïve trust is a result of socialization processes in society in which teachers and other adults influence children or younger students to adopt such subordinating beliefs and approaches. This kind of trust can be considered as a fallacy of authority, i.e. claiming that something is true, good, or right simply because someone in authority says so, rather than because it is supported by good arguments or evidence ((cf., Fox and DeMarco, 2001). On the contrary, the other type of trust, grounded trust, is when students trust and believe in teachers because of good arguments and explanations from teachers, and/or fair negotiations and joint participation in decision-makings. Grounded trust can be understood as a relationship outcome produced by lived democracy (cf., Dewey, 1916) or informal democracy expressed by deliberative conversations (cf., Englund, 2000). Any discrepancies in teachers' methods of management and instruction seem to diminish trust. Without opportunities for student participation in decision-making and without clear, understandable explanations from teachers, the development of grounded trust among students is unlikely.

Monika Platz studied the role of trust between teacher and student, focusing on successful academic education at school. Monika (Platz, M., 2021) stated that a relationship built on trust forms the groundwork for students to absorb knowledge and the teacher's guidance, gain confidence in their understanding, and learn to rely on their own intellectual capabilities. It's only within such a trusting dynamic that students feel comfortable enough to open up about their

intellectual weaknesses, seeking guidance and support from their teacher. Thus, trust stands as a vital element in fostering a healthy teacher-student relationship and creating an optimal learning atmosphere. It establishes a relational foundation for cooperation and collaboration, serving as a valuable asset for both teacher and student throughout the educational journey.

LIMITATION

Trust, as a social capital, is an inherent resource in communication, but trust can be understood in its sociocultural and territorial context. Due to inevitable limitations of scope, this paper only investigates trust that is not related to any particular societal and/or traditional cultures, which could be interesting and insightful for future researches.

CONCLUSION

It is true that trust is of high importance for teachers and students in doing communication when they are in school. Despite its flexible nature, trust and openness go hand in hand. Typically, being open in interpersonal connections cultivates trust among involved parties, and it's very probable that interpersonal trust encourages openness in organizational interactions, such as in school. Without opportunities for student participation in decision-making and without clear, understandable explanations from teachers, the development of reasonable or grounded trust among students is unlikely. Trust is essential for cultivating a positive teacher-student relationship and an ideal learning environment. It forms a relational basis for cooperation and collaboration, benefiting both teachers and students throughout their educational experience.

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