

WE LEARN/TEACH TO COMMUNICATE

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VALENTA, M. *We Learn/Teach to Communicate: Methodology in the Framework of Personality and Social Education*. Kladno: Aisis, 2010. 215 pp. ISBN 978-80-904071-5-2.

Milan Valenta, the author of the book *We Learn/Teach to Communicate*, published by the Aisis publishing house in 2010 as the second amplified edition, aims to acquaint both the lay and the expert public with the issues related to teaching communication in the school environment.

It can be said that we perceive communication in our daily life as something taken for granted – ordinary – that accompanies and, to a great extent, also generates particular situations, our experience and our behaviour. The author himself adds: *“our success in various areas of life often stands or falls on communication...”*. Therefore, we can approach communication in various ways, we can analyse it as a whole or we can focus on its components or we can explore it in the framework of various scientific disciplines. One of the possible points of view of the given topic is to put it into the context of the school environment, as was done by the author of the publication. There is enough space for the given area in all education fields. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the greatest space for the topic of communication is opened in the sectional theme Personality and Social Education, which Milan Valenta focused on.

Before we pay attention to the publication itself, we need to mention few words about the author. Milan Valenta (1954) teaches at the Faculty of Philosophy and Art, Charles University in Prague and the Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts. Since 1998, he has been involved in the project “Can I do it?” which is focused on personality and social education. The book *We Learn/Teach to Communicate* is his umpteenth publication already, his numerous works include for example the following books: *Methods and Techniques of Drama Education*, *Personality and Social Education and its paths to the pupil* or *Training Manual of Body Language*.

The aim of the publication is to acquaint pedagogues and students of pedagogy with theoretical premises and practical approaches that can be applied in teaching of personality and social education. To give readers some kind of a notion about the book, we will outline its main chapters here.

The work is divided into six chapters. The first one concerns the definition of the term communication, which is presented in its broadest definition as “communicating and receiving information”. This conception makes it possible to perceive communication both as a phenomenon and a process at the same time.

The important chapter is the following one, where Milan Valenta presents five possible approaches of how to incorporate communication into school educational work. These approaches are based on how we perceive the particular communication:

- communication as a way of exemplary behaviour of the teacher towards pupils
- communication as a subject of reflection in school situations
- communication as a means of communication in the lessons of Personality and Social Education
- communication as a topic of Personality and Social Education that also permeates other topics of the whole
- communication as a independent topic of Personality and Social Education.

These five possible conceptions are subsequently gradually analysed. The author did not limit himself just to a description of the given manner, but he also points out possible problems during its realisation in teaching and he explains myths related to the individual possibilities.

The third chapter deals with myths and risks related to teaching of the given topic. Milan Valenta gradually analyses individual myths and risks and explains the cause of their emergence.

The following chapter addresses conceptual principles of teaching communication. This part is a follow-up to the previous one, when the very myths related to communication enable us to view the conception of teaching of communication from different perspectives. The author presents and analyses seven possible points of view:

- the best exercise of communication is working on a balanced self-conception
- teaching of communication can be performed virtually always when “some” communication occurs
- the pupil can learn communication only if the learning is practical, empirical, experimental and it concerns personally the pupil’s communication
- learning to communicate will become more effective, if we teach the pupil not only to communicate but also to ponder upon communication
- structure of the lesson should be composed on the basis of answers to the following questions (who chose the topic, according to what was the topic chosen)
- the lesson of communication itself should generally be structured according to a particular pattern
- if we choose the path according to the topics of communication, we will not find the manual how to exactly categorise individual partial topics.

The fifth chapter is dedicated to methods that can be applied in teaching of communication. We can mention for example monologic or debate methods that could be used in teaching.

The last section, perhaps the most interesting one for readers, deals with topics and examples of suitable techniques.

The publication is written as a tool for teaching of communication. As far as I am concerned, the book can really become an effective “tool” for teaching of communication at schools. Its benefit can be seen on one hand in the effort to grasp the topic of communication and to incorporate it into personality and social education in the framework of the school environment, and on the other hand, its benefits include particular examples of work that can help pedagogues apply given topics in their lessons.

Although the text is quite extensive with regard to information and examples of individual methods, it is well arranged and information is processed in a very comprehensible way. The data are presented in a logical order and the composition of the book is comprehensive. Individual passages are accompanied by other references to professional literature.

The name of the book *We Learn/Teach to Communicate* is fully accurate as for the content and challenge of the book. The pedagogue acts in the role of a teacher and teaches pupils to communicate, but on the other hand, we

need to keep in mind that the pedagogue himself/ herself is also in the role of a “pupil” and is learning to communicate as well.

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