



Communication in ancient Greek teaching procedures: Interpreting images of Douris' kylix in comparison to modern pedagogical communication styles

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this paper is the examination of the relationship between the Protagoras' description about basic educational procedures in classical Greece and depicted ones on the kylix of Douris which is a unique and well preserved pottery revealing aspects of an ancient school interior. This study is based on bibliographical and phenomenological analysis. The depicted images are interpreted in comparison to written references related to Platonic thought about education. After that, teaching procedures of classical Greece related to communication styles are discussed comparatively (between) the ancient and modern instructional circumstances of primary education. Written evidence and painting analysis conclude that various differences exist in many educational levels including courses, teaching styles and instructional strategies. The roles of teachers, students and pedagogues are totally revealed. Those roles are comparable to the modern ones and relative to the procedures of individualization and personalization of learning.

KEY-WORDS: Plato, Protagoras, Douris, pedagogical communication, communication styles, teaching procedures, education

By adopting Socratic Method, one would begin this paper with the following key questions. What was the meaning of the terms *ἐκπαίδευση* (education) and *παιδεία* (paideia) in classical Greece? Some possible answers would claim that in classical Greek thought "Paideia" was not just the outcome of a long period of education and training of a person, usually a boy or a youth. Paideia was *ἀρετή* (arete), which was considered as the greatest moral virtue for every human being. Paideia was revealed every day by one's way of living, the way of speaking, the individual's attitude and behavior against the law, the country or the elderly, by the consciousness and cultivation of *ψυχή* (psyche), a word which meant the soul and the spirit together, unseparated. Actually, one could say that if education was the outcome of a long period of studies upon specific subjects, with private expenses and many procedures and activities, paideia was the cultivation of a person, not only by knowledge acquisition but also morality and virtues gain¹.

But if paideia was so valuable, then how one could acquire this great moral virtue? This is another good key question that could consist the basis of what this paper plans to deal with. The answer to this key question, even though it is not so simple, could be the family². According to some ancient writings³, mother was the first teacher while father was the second one. Consequently, parents and family was the first school for the children. In classical Greek society, especially in Athens' society, mother was the main responsible person for children's raising, feeding, cleaning and learning of good manners. She was supported by slaves or other female caregivers. Father was usually the second teacher who was mainly responsible for teaching his boys the secrets of hunting, constructing and fighting as well as various other techniques of surviving and gaining of the means for a life full of dignity or even wealth, health, strength and power. Furthermore, father was responsible for finding a good teacher for his sons in order to offer a qualitative education to them, ensuring the best vehicle to reach paideia.

All the above actually, compose the context of pedagogy, the complicated and long term procedure of education. Many people were involved in pedagogical

¹ Jaeger 1945, III 26.

² Sienkewicz 2007, 34.

³ Adkins and Roy 2005, 17.

processes, like educators, tutors, teachers and masters. All of them were playing the role of pedagogues, the men who were in charge of the education of children, teenagers and young men. Many of them were experts on a specific subject. For instance, grammatistes were the teachers of reading and writing. Kitharistes were mainly the teachers of playing the guitar or other musical instruments. Paidotribes were the teachers of gymnastics. Many of them were professional experts or sophists, especially those who used to teach the noble young men, the children of Athenian aristocratic class. In many cases, the role of pedagogues was given to educated slaves.

What has been written by Plato in his dialogue *Protagoras* about educational procedures in classical Greece, has been extremely revealed. Some quotations of the main text have been extracted. They clearly show the analytic description of Protagoras about education in his era. Protagoras was one of the most famous sophists of classical Greece, who appeared to disagree with Socrates about virtue, whether it could be teachable. He was well aware of the educational situation and teaching procedures. Accordingly to a translated writing⁴, describing those procedures Protagoras stated that:

“...They (parents) teach and admonish them from earliest childhood till the last day of their lives. As soon as one of them grasps what is said to him, the nurse, the mother, the tutor, and the father himself strive hard [325d] that the child may excel, and as each act and word occurs they teach and impress upon him that this is just, and that unjust, one thing noble, another base, one holy, another unholy, and that he is to do this, and not do that. If he readily obeys,—so; but if not, they treat him as a bent and twisted piece of wood and straighten him with threats and blows. After this they send them to school and charge the master to take far more pains over their children's good behavior than over their letters [325e] and harp-playing. The masters take pains accordingly ...”.

Referring in what was going in the school and what the subjects and the spirit of their studies were, he continued:

“... and the children when they have learnt their letters and are getting to understand the written word -as before they did only the spoken, are furnished with works of good poets to read as they sit in class, and are made to learn

⁴ Protagoras 325d-325e, 326a-e,
<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/artifact?name=Berlin+F+2285&object=vase>

them off by heart [326a]. Here they meet with many admonitions, many descriptions and praises and eulogies of good men in times past, that the boy in envy may imitate them and yearn to become even as they. ... Then also the music-masters, in a similar sort, take pains for their self-restraint, and see that their young charges do not go wrong: moreover, when they learn to play the harp, they are taught the works of another set of good poets, [326b] the song-makers, while the master accompanies them on the harp; ... and they insist on familiarizing the boys' souls with the rhythms and scales, that they may gain in gentleness, and by advancing in rhythmic and harmonic grace may be efficient in speech and action; for the whole of man's life requires the graces of rhythm and harmony. ... Again, over and above all this, people send their sons to a trainer, that having improved their bodies they may perform the orders of their minds, [326c] which are now in fit condition, and that they may not be forced by bodily faults to play the coward in wars and other duties. ... This is what people do, who are most able; and the most able are the wealthiest. Their sons begin school at the earliest age, and are freed from it at the latest. ... And when they are released from their schooling the city next compels them to learn the laws and to live according to them as after a pattern, [326d] that their conduct may not be swayed by their own light fancies, but just as writing-masters first draw letters in faint outline with the pen for their less advanced pupils, and then give them the copy-book and make them write according to the guidance of their lines, so the city sketches out for them the laws devised by good lawgivers of yore, and constrains them to govern and be governed according to these. The city punishes anyone who steps outside these borders, and this punishment among you and in many other cities, [326e] from the corrective purpose of the prosecution, is called a «Correction», because punishment keeps the offender in right way.”

Consequently, according to Protagoras' analytic description, one could summarize that each family and the city took care of the education of children, aiming at the development of their virtues, in order to become *καλοί και αγαθοί* (beautiful and gentle), responsible citizens and good men with wisdom, courage, moderation and justice, as Plato claims in his writing titled *The Republic*. That was the ideal *ἀγωγή* (agoge) in classical Greece. Actually, agoge was the outcome of *paideia* under surveillance of an eminent, famous and above all, moral teacher.

Even many centuries later the classical Greek thought seems to affect educational practices, procedures and habits. Evidence has been provided by Plutarch (45 AD-120AD) who was very revealing. In his writings one can see the influence of Plato's educational thought. For instance, one can read in this short quotation⁵:

“As I advise parents to think nothing more important than the education of their children, so I maintain that it must be a sound and healthy education, and that our sons must be kept as far as possible from vulgar twaddle. For what pleases, the vulgar displeases the wise”.

Furthermore, one can find these thoughts in the following brief, a little humorous but representative enough quotation⁶.

Aristippus on one occasion rebuked an empty-headed father neatly and wittily. For being asked how much money a parent ought to pay for his son's education, he answered, “A thousand drachmas.” And he replied, “Hercules, what a price! I could buy a slave for as much”. Aristippus answered, “You shall have two slaves then, your son and the slave you buy.”.

After what has been previously mentioned, one may wonder what was the exact role of communication in all educational procedures and practices? This question would not be totally pointless because it has referred only to the basics of primary education, like reading, writing, arithmetic, music, gymnastics and common moral rules. So, when had the studies of communication taken place? Sciences, mathematics, rhetoric, astronomy, medicine, architecture, geometry, shipbuilding and navigation, military issues and strategy, war machinery and weapons, the fine arts and sculpture, poetry and theatre acting been related to communication studies? Where had the studies of numerous great philosophers, orators, poets and inventors of classical Greece been conducted, the studies of real masters of ancient communication strategies? Without doubt, those studies had taken place in highest education and training of young men while attending eminent schools like Plato's Academy or Aristotle's Lyceum. Communication through Rhetoric, philosophical dialogues and didactic conversations was the basis of studies for such high level education. One could insist that a type of Open University had been established among aristocrats and their sons. Sophists and Orators had played the role of academic staff, using terms of modern academic situation(s). In a fresco sited in Apostolic Palace, Vatican City,

⁵ Painter 2003, 130.

⁶ Painter 2003, 129.

Raphael has wonderfully depicted within 1509-1511, the School of Athens. It represents Plato and Aristotle in the center, the two greatest philosophers of ancient - and even modern- world, among followers, eminent citizens and students, sons of rich fathers, ambitious, scholars or even curious or money wasted, seeking for glamour and pleasures in symposia.

So, more specific knowledge than that we have usually in mind about ancient Greeks was included in higher education such as philosophy, the knowing of laws, logic, poetry, rituals and mysteries, medicine and many others, as those already mentioned⁷. Among them, the effective communication was held at a significant position among higher education studies because each citizen ought to become *καλός και αγαθός* (beautiful and gentle), *ένάρητος* (virtuous), *ένπροσήγορος* (to speak with *παρηρησία*, courage and honesty). The cultivation of *λόγος* (speech) and *διάλογος* (interpersonal conversation in private or in public) was among the main purposes of education and *paideia* in classical Greece. All of them include many skills of communication. Thus, communication was the key for a successful life for anyone who wished to achieve the ideal aim of ancient life, to have *νοδς ύγιής έν σώματι ύγιει* (a healthy mind in a healthy body) or as Romans later claimed *mens sana in corpore sano*. Furthermore, communication was the main key for anybody who intended occupy public positions⁸.

Moving away from classical Greek to the present time, a new question may arise. Considering education and communication, what is the modern approach of this issue? What are the elements related to this interesting field of modern Pedagogy? Making a parenthesis, it would be appropriate to shed light on this interesting question. Communication Education is a scientific field of Educational Sciences that examines the styles and skills of communication developed in the classroom⁹, aiming to improve teaching procedures and focusing on three main aspects of communication¹⁰. The first one is Communication Pedagogy which refers to the teaching of pupils aiming to improve their communication competencies by the implementation of appropriate methods. The second is Developmental Communication which refers to the development of human communication skills. The

⁷ Dickey, 2014, <http://www.gresham.ac.uk/lectures-and-events/education-research-and-government-in-the-ancient-greek-world>

⁸ Rosalind 1999, 25; see also Worthington & Foley 2002, 48.

⁹ McCroskey, Richmond, and McCroskey 2006, 99.

¹⁰ Simonds, and Cooper 2011, 8.

third is Instructional Communication which refers to the ways that teachers utilize communication techniques throughout their instruction, how they use communication. This field has been surprisingly open to research just the last three decades starting mainly in USA. So, there is immense space for scholars to introduce new theoretical approaches and conduct research all over the world.

Many eminent scholars like H. Purkhurst, C. Washburne, E. Claparède, B. S. Bloom, F. S. Keller, H. E. Gardner, V. G. Hoz, W. H. Kilpatrick, D. Hargreaves, M. Fullan, have positively contributed to the theory of personalized learning improvement¹¹. Actually, this theory seems to originate from what was happening in classical Greek education and teaching methods where tutors had to teach just one pupil. Teaching was a private or personal case and never a public or massive procedure. According to this approach, each learner has a unique perceptive, mnemonic and mental ability. Also, he has a unique psycho synthesis, experiences and other particular personality features which lead to various learning styles. Thus, anybody who wishes to receive effective and specific knowledge has to seek for those potentialities and choose the most beneficial instructive method, accompanied by the most interesting subjects for his own learning condition¹².

These perceptions had probably inspired, many centuries later than Plato's and Protagoras' era, Friedrich Wilhelm August Fröbel, the father of kindergartens all over the world and one of the pedagogues who positively contributed to the establishment of modern Preschool and Early Childhood Pedagogy. The Lutheran Christian faith related with Platonism were pillars of Fröbel's own early education. As an expert on pedagogics, many centuries later, Fröbel who understood the different perceptual ability of each student and their unique competency for learning, had developed his educational theory, focusing on meanings of individualization and personalization of learning and self-expression of children¹³. Those ideas remain highly topical today.

In this framework, many scholars refer to Personalization as a synonym for Individualization of learning, despite the fact that these are distinct terms with different pedagogical meaning. Individualization refers to the set of didactic strategies, aiming to guarantee all students' mastery of the same learning objectives, by adjusting the pace to the progression of the learner. The teacher manages the best

¹¹ Hargreaves, and Shirley 2009, 84; see also Fullan 2009, 29.

¹² Stamatis 2015, 31.

¹³ Liebschner 2006, 52-53.

solution based on learner performance¹⁴. On the other hand, Personalization does take into account the pace at which the learner is progressing, but also aims to valorize the entire potential of the learner, the biography, the abilities, the sensibilities and competencies (including emotional ones) that characterizes each person, in order to reach a form of cognitive excellence, by developing all aptitudes, capabilities and talents. Learning objectives then will be different for each learner, and they will can't be foreseen at all from the beginning of the learning process. Not the kind of competences to be acquired will influence the outcomes, but the different degree of ability in the use of competences themselves. The learner, guided by the teacher, is an active co-designer of the learning pathway-experience.

Moving forward to the key point of this paper which is Douris kylix where scenes of classical Greece education are depicted, a brief reference to some biographical elements of Douris would be appropriate¹⁵. He was a Greek vase painter of the early Classical period, known for his fine draftsmanship and crisp, clear lines. He worked on both the red- and black-figure styles, and he decorated his vases with many themes. He frequently selected popular themes of the archaic period, for example, the Golden Fleece, but reinterpreted them to render them more relevant to his time. Douris was a prolific painter of the red-figure technique whose signature as either a potter or a painter has been identified on about 40 vases¹⁶. Furthermore, about 280 vase paintings -the vast majority on cups- have been attributed to him like “Eos Embracing Her Dead Son Memnon”, “Drunken Silenus”, “Ajax and Odysseus” and a “School Interior” or “School Cup” which is the main interest of this paper.

Within many collections, Altes Museum accommodates in Berlin the famous and unique kylix painted by Douris (ca. 480 BC) which is shown in picture 1 in excellent condition¹⁷. This kylix of Douris is the best known evidence of what Protagoras analytically describes referring to basic educational procedures of Classical Greece, represented by the city of Athens, just in four pictures. Paintings are depicted on two external sides of the kylix. On each side there are two pairs of teachers and students¹⁸.

¹⁴ Stamatis 2015, 32.

¹⁵ Buitron-Oliver 2005, 24-32.

¹⁶ <http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/artists/34/douris-greek-attic-active-500-460-bc/>

¹⁷ F 2285: School cup by Douris Antikensammlung Berlin. Daniels, M. (photograph).

¹⁸ Sider 2010, 541-554.



Picture 1. School cup by Douris. Berlin Antikenmuseen (F 2285).

To become more detailed¹⁹, on this kylix a music master (kitharistes) is depicted on the left part of side A with his teenage student in action, in a lyre teaching practice. They sit on cushioned stools facing each other, the bearded teacher on the left, the student on the right. Both hold their lyres on their laps and are playing. Their fingers spread across the strings. They wear their mantles pushed down around their waists to leave their upper bodies free. On the right part of this side it is also depicted a tutor (grammatistes) in a tutoring procedure. He sits on a cushioned chair facing right, his pupil standing before him with his mantle wrapped around him. The bearded middle aged teacher holds up a partly opened scroll on which something is written. His mantle is pushed down to free his arms and shoulders. It seems that teacher asks student to read the text. Another interpretation may be that he is checking student's work or most possible he is trying to force him uttering poems by heart. Behind the upstanding student a bearded man, a middle aged pedagogue is sitting on a cushioned stool. His legs are crossed at the ankles and his head turned to watch the school activities. He keeps a long wooden staff in his right hand, symbol of his authority and power on student or possibly, an indication of impending corporal punishment. He wears his mantle in the usual manner, covering one shoulder. Two lyres, two kylikes, a basket and a flute-case hang on the wall. There is an inscription along the upper

¹⁹ <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/artifact?name=Berlin+F+2285&object=vase>

edge of the scene: IPODAMAS KALOS means Hippodamas is beautiful. The box held by the central teacher carries the inscription, in four lines: ΜΟΙΣΑΜΟΙ/ ΑΦΙΣΚΑΜΑΝΔΡΟΝ/ ΕΥΡΩΝΑΡΧΟΜΑΙ/ ΑΕΙΝΔΕΝ (Muse to me, I begin to sing of wide-flowing Scamander). The line has been associated with Stesichorus the lyric poet²⁰.

Also, on kylix's external surface it is depicted, on the left part of side B, a young male music master who blows a flute during a tutoring procedure. The teacher on the left, seated on an uncushioned stool, plays a flute. His mantle pushed down to his waist. His upstanding young pupil stands facing him. He is depicted in front of him observing tutor's techniques in playing the instrument, wrapped in his mantle. Finally, in another scene, on the right side, it is depicted a tutor (grammatistes) who is writing a text or numbers, seated on a cushioned stool facing right. He holds a writing tablet on his lap, his stylus held in his raised right hand and probably teaches the upstanding student, who is depicted in front of him as usual, how to write. Student is wrapped in his mantle. Like the previous A side painting, a middle aged bearded man, a pedagogue sits on a cushioned stool behind the upstanding student. He is facing right while he is carefully watching the whole learning procedure. Despite he is facing right, his upper body and head turned toward the others. He holds a staff in his left hand. The two teachers on this side are very young and beardless. A scroll, a writing tablet, a lyre, a cross-shaped object, and a sack hang on the wall. There is an inscription along the upper edge of the scene: IPODAMAS [KA]LOS means Hippodamas is beautiful.

Despite the extended black spots, in the interior of the kylix is depicted a naked youth taking off his sandals²¹. His right foot propped on a stool. His left foot is still shod. The youth's knotty staff rests on the louterion behind him, and his mantle is draped over the stool. A sponge and aryballos hang above the stool. This picture depicts the learning activity of gymnastics. By adding this red figure, Douris had depicted on the surfaces of a Kylix all subjects of the basic studies of classical Greece following Protagoras' description: reading or uttering poems by heart, writing or arithmetic, music (lyre and flute) and gymnastics, namely all the necessary for mental exercise and physical training. Also, he depicted the involved persons (teachers,

²⁰ Sider 2010, 543.

²¹ Crane, 2010, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/artifact?name=Berlin+F+2285&object=vase>

students, pedagogues and perhaps teachers' assistants)²², communication styles, teaching procedures and materials. Thus, fairly this kylix has been named "school cup", even though a question may remain: why did Douris depict a school interior on a wine cup, putting his red signature in the interior on the left side of the tondo?: DORIS EGRAFSEN. Is the mentioned male name Hippodamas which is referred in the external A and B side's inscriptions related to the depicted student? It may be possible.

Having referred to many elements about the education of boys and youth, it would be interesting to add a few words about the education of girls and women to complete the description of the educational situation in classical Greek era. Despite the fact that education was mainly for males, literature review reveals two basic different educational situations, one for the Athenian girls and women and another for Spartans²³. Differences underline the separated role of women in each society²⁴.

In Athens, women were mainly responsible for familial and divine issues. Thus, they received training about housekeeping, mothering, corporal beauty and rituals. They rarely attended lessons for music, writing and reading. In Sparta, women were being trained to become good mothers of soldiers. Thus, except of housekeeping, they were well trained in singing, dancing and playing musical instruments. In parallel, they were very well trained in physical education such as running, wrestling, throwing of discus and javelin. They were interested in the cultivation of mind and body, in a similar way to Athenian men. They ought to be the best paradigm for their sons, encouraging them to be brave in the battle. When they were giving the shield to their sons ordered them $\eta\grave{\nu}\ \tau\acute{\alpha}\nu\ \eta\grave{\nu}\ \acute{\epsilon}\pi\iota\ \tau\tilde{\alpha}\varsigma$, which means that after a battle a brave son had only two choices: either to come back alive keeping his shield or been brought back dead by soldiers, laying on his shield.

From what has been previously mentioned, the communication context in classical Greek teaching procedures has become clearly understood. Referring to the ancient teachers, one could conclude that they used to teach with lectures (verbaly) and demonstrations providing paradigms. They were "stones of austerity" (sitting – upstanding figures of the kylix). As experts they were under fathers' choice and pedagogues' surveillance, while they were very well paid for their tutoring. With

²² Sider 2010, 541.

²³ Laurin 2013, 56.

²⁴ Blundell 1995, 147.

limited doubt, they had developed a closed (or typical) communication style²⁵ with their students telling them nonverbally, in their own manners: “There is no time to waste. Attend me carefully. Don’t make comments on what or how I teach you. Study hard. Learn quickly, your father is paying me, your pedagogue is watching us”. Under those circumstances, the most obedient pupils must study silently, attending carefully the lecture. Any reader can assume that they were talking only with the teacher’s permission and surveillance of a teacher, a pedagogue or a paidotribe, while they were forced to learn texts, musical rhythms and all learning matters by heart. Those who didn’t obey well, according to Protagoras, were suffering corporal punishments. Under these conditions, open communication among teacher and student would not only be an unknown word but it must have also been totally prohibited.

Comparing those situations within communication context in modern teaching procedures in public or private educational system, especially in preschool and primary school environments, one could conclude that teachers appear to adopt an open (non typical) communication style which is quite opposite to the ancient one²⁶. Literature claims that this style positively contributes to the improvement of interpersonal relationships among teachers and pupils, and increases teacher’s immediacy and teaching interactions during classroom activities. Thus, modern teachers use to provide cooperative learning strategies including communication (verbal & non verbal)²⁷. They are very friendly with children as they use less austerity manners and no corporal punishment. They are smiling and helpful while as experts they are under the surveillance of the state rather than parents' choice. Under these circumstances, pupils are participatively attending the lessons. They tend to speak whenever they wish to. Usually, they are under the surveillance of both parents and study either in school or home by using modern instructional materials. They are not suffering corporal punishments, especially in the school –except bullying cases. They often make teachers and parents work more for their benefits, and make them suffer or be proud of them.

Keeping in mind these basic differences on teaching procedures, further study is proposed to be developed and future research papers to be compiled upon many subjects of educational communication.

²⁵ Stamatias 2013, 51.

²⁶ Stamatias 2015, 255.

²⁷ Stamatias 2015, 266-270.

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