Effective Communication for Teaching and Learning

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Abstract

Communication facilitates sharing of common experiences with others. To share feelings and to express information is the primary function of communication which ultimately helps to educate, to train, to socialize, to entertain, to motivate and to persuade. It is of various types – intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, mass, contiguous and non-contiguous, synchronous and asynchronous and direct and mediated. It is also speaking – listening, visualizing – observing and writing – reading types. Sender, receiver, medium and message are four elements of a communication system, though some educational technologists consider noise and feedback as elements of communication besides the above mentioned four. An effective communication is possible only if the different types of barriers are managed properly. Barriers may be physical, psychological, cultural, linguistic, and technical. It may also occur due to information overload. Barrier may be sender related, receiver related, channel related and message related. It may also be due to the joint effect of these elements. Effective communication is essential for quality teaching and better learning. An effective communication for teaching and learning is possible when we take certain measures as defining objectives of communication, strengthening sender's preparation & other related inputs and process of communication, minimizing every type of barrier, preparing receiver to realize the goal and utilizing the sense organs scientifically.

<u>Communication : How it works ?</u>

Meaning :

Communication generally means the exchange of messages with others. Human being communicates right from the moment they are born and it continues till her death. Communication may take place in many form, i.e. from person to person, from self, from group, etc. The word communication has its origin in the Latin word – Communis – means to make common. It means communication facilitates sharing of common experiences with others. It involves sharing of an idea, thought, feeling or information with others, which includes thinking, dreaming, speaking, arguing and so on. Communication is very wide in its scope.

Communication involves the usage of a channel. This channel could be signs, symbols or verbal/written language. In the process of communication one person communicates, other person receives and when the first person comes to know that the message communicated has been received by the second person, only then the process of communication completes. In brief, communication can be defined as a process of sharing or exchange of ideas, information, knowledge, attitudes or feelings among two or more persons through certain signs and symbols leading to a desired response as intended by the communicator. Even human behaviour and expression communicate messages.

Functions :

Without communication human being cannot survive. Communication starts with the birth when the child begins to interact with his environment. Mother starts to understand the unexpressed behaviour of the child and the communication process takes place. To share feeling and to express information is the primary function of communication which ultimately help to educate, to train, to socialise, to entertain, to motivate, to persuade. Besides above mentioned functions communication helps in preservation and transmission of culture.

Sharing of Information is essential for the survival of the mankind. Communication is important for information dissemination and these information helps in moulding our behaviour, opinion, decisions, etc. Without communication neither Education nor Training can take place. Right from childhood children are taught by teachers and parents at school and home through different means and modes of communication. Without communication interaction cannot take place and ultimately teaching and learning will be affected. Process of socialisation is based on the process of communication. Communication develops the need to share and understand the feelings, emotions, hopes, aspirations and expectations of different groups of the entire social system. We entertain through different means of communication and entertainment is one of the important function of

communication. Communication is essential for motivation and persuation. Motivation and persuation take place either through praise or through some motivating story or narrated evidence. Preservation is one of the basic characteristics of communication. Through communication, stories from the epics or old books are shared with the younger generation. Preservation of culture is an important function of communication. The transmission of values from one generation to another has been taking place orally as well as through written texts, over the ages. In the modern world different mass communication media have taken up this function. In brief, Sharing of Information, Education and Training, Socialisation, Entertainment, Motivation, Persuation, Preservation of culture, etc. are the important functions of communication.

Types :

Types of communication have been identified as (1) Speaking – Listening, (2) Visualising – Observing and (3) Writing – Reading. Its type has also been classified as (a) Intrapersonal, (b) Interpersonal, (c) Group, (d) Mass, (e) Contiguous and Non-contiguous, (f) Synchronous and Asynchronous and (g) Direct and Mediated. All these categories and types of communication are not contradictory to each other, rather they have some common elements in classifications and types. All the three types of communication – Speaking – Listening, Visualising – Observing and Writing – Reading, indicate that communication is interaction, a

sharing and circular or cyclic process. In Speaking – Listening type of communication, interaction is face to face as in the case of listening to a lecture. There are occasions when the listener can share the feelings of the source in the same way as in the case of eye-to-eye contact. Listening of radio programme may be an example of this type. In Visualising – Observing type the communication can take place more effectively by face-to-face contact with the source like in the case of dramatisation where facial expression and gestures produce greater impact. In Writing – Reading type of communication the decoder is physically separated from the encoder, even then the decoder is able to enjoy and appreciate the feelings of encoder (author).

Intrapersonal communication involves communication with oneself. It is usually in the form of introspecting, dreaming, imagining, analysing or thinking. In fact, Intrapersonal communication is a kind of Internal Dialogue. Contrary to it Inter-personal communication takes place between two persons. Our everyday formal or informal exchanges come under this type. Group communication takes place when people communicate in group situations. Classroom setting is an example of this type. In fact, this is an extension of interpersonal communication where more than two individuals are involved in the process of communication. Mass communication is a means of public communication reaching large audiences. Newspapers, motion pictures, radio, television and

magazines are examples of mass communication. This type of communication takes place simultaneously in which communicator is separated from the audience in terms of time and place. Feedback in mass communication is weak and delayed. Communication through Electronic media is interactive and provides feedback, but this is not true for print medium – Newspaper, Magazine, Journals, Self- Instructional Materials, etc. Self – Instructional Material becomes interactive in some extent with the help of Access Devices, but it is not enough.

In Contiguous communication there is proximity between the sender and the receiver. Classroom communication and Individual instructions in the formal education system can be placed under the category of contiguous communication. In contiguous communication usually teacher is the communicator and she/he happens to be in touch with the receiver, i.e., learners. The communication in contiguous communication is an unbroken sequence. In non-contiguous communication, the sequence of communication is broken and the communicator (teacher) is not in direct touch with the receiver (learners). In non-contiguous communication large number of dispersed learners are connected with the help of different media such as radio, television, internet, computer, etc. In non-contiguous communication the Sender (Teacher) is not in direct touch with the Receiver (Learners).

Learning from print material is also an example of this type of communication.

In Synchronous communication, the participants in the communication activity are present in real time at same and/or different locations. Classroom teaching, face to face tutorials, counselling sessions, work-shops, radio and television broadcasts, audio conferencing, video conferencing, telephone calls, etc. fall in this category of communication. In Asynchronous communication simultaneous presence of learners are not needed. It can take place from distance. The teacher and the learners do not have face to face contact in real time, but are connected through technology. In Asynchronous communication learners contribute at their own pace and time. In Asynchronous communication information can be edited, stored and retrieved. Letters, bulletin boards, electronic mail, mailing lists, etc. are examples of Asynchronous communication. Asynchronous communication may be difficult and time consuming, yet it has been found to be pedagogically effective.

In a traditional teaching situation, the teacher is in direct contact with students. It is considered that there is no medium to carry the message between the teacher and the learner and so the communication is direct. Face to face pedagogic communication is non-mediated communication, i.e., direct communication. Some scholars do not support the view as they consider that knowledge cannot exist or be expressed without some kind of symbolic

representation. In Mediated communication the teacher and the learners are indirectly connected by some means. In this communication content is shared with the learners through various media like print material, audio-visual programmes. Distance education system makes extensive use of mediated communication, which is at the core of teaching – learning process. Telephone – Mediated communication is quite common in Distance Education System in developed countries.

<u>Communication Process</u> :

Element :

Communication is always made with some purpose. This purpose of communication is encoded in the message and transmitted to its destination where it is decoded and response (feedback) is made. Communication without any audience or destination is not generally made by a normal person. There are essentially four components or elements of a communication process :

(1) Sender or Source or Encoder

(2) Message or Signal

(3) Medium or Channel

(4) Receiver or Destination or Decoder

Besides above mentioned four elements of a communication process, some educational technologists also consider Noise and Feedback as elements of communication process. They are of the

view that a communication process without noise and feedback cannot be imagined and hence these are elements of a communication process.

The Source of the communication is the Sender who uses various ways and means to communicate message. She/he encodes the message and select appropriate channel to transmit effectively. Message is a set of signs and symbols which are given by the source to create meanings for the receiver. Channel is the medium used to communicate a message from the sender to receiver. Receiver is the person for whom message is communicated. Noise is distortion in a message which affects the flow of communication. Noise creates barriers in communication and are of various types. The response given by the receiver to the message of the Sender is known as feedback. Communication being a two-way process, without the element of feedback any discussion on the process of communication is incomplete.

Barriers :

Barriers in the communication process may be Sender related, Receiver related, Channel related and Message related. It may be also be due to the joint effect of these elements. It may be also due to hazy impact of feedback mechanism. Barrier or Noise is a term used to express any interference in communication between Source and Receiver. A successful communication is one in which the message is conveyed undiminished and in which there is no

distortion. Barriers may be Physical, Psychological, Cultural, Linguistic, Technical or due to information overload.

Physical Barriers may take place because of too much distance between Sender and Receiver. Geographical distance also creates barriers. Physical barrier is mainly due to the distance between Sender and Receiver. Due to attitude, motivation, level of aspiration, individual differences, interest, we perceive things and situations differently. This perception is due to Psychological Barriers. Socio-cultural Barriers are due to social norms, custom, tradition, way of thinking, etc. If words and symbols used in communication process convey differently to different persons, this is due to Linguistic barriers. Poor quality of audio and video instruments is an example of Technical Barriers. Overflow of message is also a barrier in communication process.

Effective Communication :

From the above discussion it quite clear that the process of communication may be made effective by minimising the effect of barriers and conveying the message as per the specified objectives. Optimum motivation from the Sender's and the Proper Feedback from Receiver's end is necessary for the Effective Communication. A communication is effective only when the message sent by Sender is received by the Receiver in the way it was expected by the Sender. For effective communication Biswal, Ashutosh (2007) has correctly advocated for creating Media Culture and Media Fusion,

"This is the age of media crowd. Different media are rushing to our homes and institutions, but we do not have a proper media culture. It is either mis-utilised or under-utilised. It is the time to create a proper media culture. Media Culture is the fusion and utilisation of available media effectively and optimally to enhance the teaching learning process. A proper media culture can help each and every one to come out of media confusion and will lead one to media fusion. Media fusion is the dense interpretation of different media like TV, radio, fax, phone, computer, word processor, electronic network, satellites or other interlinked technologies that transform the individual media into a complete system." For quality teaching and better learning the process of communication can be made effective by taking certain measures as specified below :

(A) Defining Objectives of Communication Clearly :

Teaching and Learning cannot move properly unless or until the objectives are clearly defined. Instructional objectives provide direction to each and every activities of the teacher to make the communication effective. Behavioural objectives further motivate and direct the teacher how and what types of change they are expecting among the behaviours of the learners. Teaching or communication is effective only if the Objectives of Instruction and Behavioural Objectives are planned before the actual teaching/ communication. Kumar, Lalit (2001) has rightly concluded the importance of objectives for well-directed teaching, "Objectives

specification provides the teacher specific direction and if objectives are specified in terms of behavioural changes the task of teacher becomes easy because for him selection of teaching activities become more specific and purposeful."

(B) Strengthening Preparation of Sender and Other Related Input :

In the language of educational technology the teacher himself/herself is an input as the subject knowledge of the teacher; their expertise in communicating the learning material; their interest, attitude, motivation and inspiration level; their knowledge of different teaching methods, skills, strategies, language proficiency, etc. have its bearing on the effective teaching. Other related devices which make the learners capable to access the learning material smoothly are also important for effective communication as input. Verma, Ramesh (2007) has suggested to strengthen teacher education for better communication in Information age, "Teacher education in information – knowledge driven world, expecting a new set of skills (core, generic and professional) to be inculcated among the prospective teachers to contribute effectively in global society. Most of us feel that speed and flexibility are the key to survive and win in knowledge society."

(C) Strengthening Process of Communication :

Communication process needs proper material and scientific planning for its success. Teacher knows more, Learners

are conscious to learn, Medium is tuned and message is well structured even then the process may not be effective unless all these elements are properly coordinated and synthesised. Teacher, Supporting Material, Learner, every aspects of the process are strengthened, but communication may not be so effective if they do not act or work simultaneously. Singh, YP and Agarwal, A (2010) have suggested to use ICT to make learning process effective, "Today, a variety of ICT can facilitate not only delivery of Instruction, but also learning process itself."

(D) Minimising Every Types of Barriers :

As stated above barriers may be Sender related, Receiver related, Message related and Medium related. It may be Physical, Psychological, Socio-cultural, Linguistic and Technical. It may occur again if too much information is supplied simultaneously. It may be external and it may be internal. It may be material related, time related and human related. In every case, for better teaching the teacher/communicator needs to minimise the barriers and its ill effect. In minimising the ill effect of barriers teacher should try to increase pupil participation and pupil activities. National Curriculum Framework for School Education (2000) has clearly reflected, "Effective learning takes place when teachers are able to involve the students in the process of learning, by taking them beyond the process of listening to that of thinking, reasoning and doing."

(E) Preparing Receiver to Realise the Communication's Goals :

The concentration level, Level of motivation, Previous Knowledge of Content and Language, etc. of the learner is essential for effective communication. Without arranging the class, making the learners ready to learn, motivating the students one can fire the communication, but cannot target. If the learner is not prepared properly before the communication or teaching it may not be effective. Primary law of the learning theory Trial and Error, i.e., Law of Readiness, clearly states that learning cannot take place unless or until the learners have been prepared to learn. Suggestion forwarded by Koul, Pity (2007) may be useful in this connection, "One of the most significant innovation in distance learning methodology is the use of teleconferencing. Teleconferencing enables the institutions to extend the benefit of new knowledge by disseminating it through direct interaction between distance teachers and learners and helps to involve the students to learn and sustain interest in the process of learning. With this facility learners can be provided all types of information through illustration, graphics, demonstrations and experiments etc." Without preparing the learners and sustaining their active presence in the communication process goals of communication cannot be realised.

(F) Utilising the Nature of Sense Organs :

There is an old saying that I hear, I forget; I see, I remember; I do, I understand. The traditional teacher depends too much on verbal exposition. The pupil hears and forgets soon. It is quite natural that the knowledge gained through the sense of sight is more vivid, accurate and permanent. When the learners are engaged in any practical activity, involving physical work all the senses are used to perceive. Inflow of knowledge being through many channel is naturally quick, complete, accurate and effective. Educational Technology conveys we Learn $\Rightarrow$ 1.0% - Taste, 1.5% - Touch, 3.5% - Smell, 11.0% - Hearing and 83.0% - Sight. It again communicates we Remember $\Rightarrow$ 20% - Hear, 30% - See, 50% - See and Hear, 80% - Say and 90% - Say and do. NCF (2005) also supports this view when it writes, "Learning takes place through interactions with the environment around, nature, things and people, both through actions and through language. The physical activity of moving, exploring and doing things, on one's own, with one's peers or in the company of adults, and using language – to read, to express or ask, to listen and to interact – are the key processes through which learning occurs. The context in which learning takes place is thus of direct cognitive significance."

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