



Contribution of Effective Communication in Educational Settings: A Critical Review

MOHMAD ALTAF DAR
(JRF Education)

HANIEF MOHMAD DAR
M.Ed. student, CUK, Kashmir

Abstract:

*Syllables govern the world.
(George Bernard Shaw)*

Educational Institutions from very beginning face variety of problems, one among them is Effective Communication. The Effective Communication is an ever valid instrument to face the regular challenges of change, diversity and continuity that confront the Educational System in the modern digital world. The more effective the communication, the more successful the organizational relationships; better the relationships, higher will be the Educational achievements. Thus, Effective Communication acts as a soul in the body of Educational System. But it is pity that, while the Government and Policy makers of education focus on different issues, less attention is given towards Effective Communication in Educational settings. So, the need of the hour is to transform the architecture, ideologies, gadgets and strategies in educational institutions to build effective communication to enhance Educational Achievements and attain Educational Goals. The present research paper tries to explore the need and importance of Effective Communication in educational settings, obstacles in its way and strategies to overcome those obstacles to make educational communication effective.

Keywords: *Communication, Effective Communication, Barriers in Effective Communication*

1. Introduction

Communication is the base of all interactions and relationships in life. No interaction and relation ever exists without communication. And it is very difficult, if not possible, to have successful relationships without effective communication. Communication is a thread by which the members of an educational institution are interconnected. The stronger and more effective the thread is, the stronger will be the connection among the members. The stronger the connection among the members, the more efficiency will be in the educational outcomes. Effective communication attracts the team members towards the collective goal of the team. If the communication is ineffective we have to pay a very heavy price.

Every educational institution represents a set of hierarchical, organized, well-defined and goal-oriented relationships. The educational goals of any educational institution can be achieved only if there are better and successful relationships in the institutions. Only if there is motivation cooperation, trust, tolerance, patience, recognition, team-spirit, professional-commitment, job-satisfaction and goal-orientation, the educational institutions will strive smoothly and steadily to achieve the set educational goals. Effective communication is a key to stimulate, initiate and maintain successful relationships in educational settings.

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relationships, higher will be the Educational Achievements. Thus, Effective Communication acts as a soul in the body of Educational System.

MacBride commission (1980), appointed by UNESCO to study and report Communication Problems, states that "Communication maintains and animates life .It is motor and expression of social activity." W.R. Spriegal observes that "most of the conflicts in any institution are not basic but are caused by misunderstood motives and ignorance of facts. Proper communication between interested parties reduces the points of friction and minimizes those that inevitably arise."

2. Defining the term Communication

The term communication is much wider and broader in its connotation. It does not constitute merely a transfer of message, but a conscious, intentional, comprehensive and continuous process of sharing (receiving of and responding to) of ideas, emotions, feelings, thoughts and knowledge through a shared set of signs and symbols.

Marriam-Webster dictionary defines communication as "a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior". Ugbojah (2001) defines communication as "the process which involves all acts of transmitting messages to channels which link people to the languages and symbolic which are used to transmit such messages. It is also the means by which such messages are received and stored. It includes the rules, customs and conventions which define and regulate human relationship and events".

Communication refers to the exchange of information between a sender (source) and a receiver (destination) so that it is received, understood and leads to action (Obamiro, 2008).

Communication is a tool for exchanging of experience and values as well as transfer of meanings and knowledge (Miroslavljević, M., 2008).

3. Types of communication

Goldhaber (1990) has categorized the essential types of communication as:

1. On the basis of organizational structure;
 - Formal communication and
 - Informal communication.
2. On the basis of direction;
 - Downward communication,
 - Upward communication and
 - Horizontal communication.
3. On the basis of expression;
 - Oral communication
 - Written communication and
 - Non-verbal communication

4. Operational Meaning of Communication

The term communication here means the communication within an educational institution and it constitutes all the three forms of communication, including written, oral and non-verbal communication. It includes exchange of information, knowledge, values, thoughts, emotions and ideas between:

- a) Administrator and teacher
- b) Teacher and teacher
- c) Teacher and student
- d) Student and student

5. Importance of Communication in Educational Settings

Communication is the lifeblood of the organizations (Mc Kenna, 2006).

Communication is the essential ingredient of every sort and kind of interaction taking place in educational settings. Any educational process involves communication as its core component. So, better the communication, higher will be achievements of an educational system. According to Obamiro (2008), communication is important:

1. To achieve coordinated action
2. To express feelings and emotion
3. To share information regarding:
 - a) Organizational goals
 - b) Task directions
 - c) Results of efforts
 - d) Decision making
4. To achieve effective control
5. To encourage staff participation in decision making
6. To create a good public image and reputation for an organization

6. Various Patterns of Communication in Educational Settings

In educational institutions, there exist various communicational patterns, as

1. **Vertical communication:** It is flow of information from top to bottom and from bottom to higher level along the organizational hierarchy. It is of two types:
 - a) **Downward communication:** It is top-down approach flow of messages, along the organizational hierarchy in educational institutions. That is, the message flows from the head, through teachers, to students. It includes instructions and guidelines given by the Head of the institution to teachers, non-teaching staff members and students.
 - b) **Upward communication:** It is bottom-up flow of information, along the organizational hierarchy in educational institutions. That is, the information flows from lower to higher hierarchy. It is essential to generate new creative ideas from the lower hierarchical members to make the educational policies more compatible and advanced.
2. **Horizontal communication:** Horizontal communication, also called lateral communication, is the flow of information between individuals of same rank. That is, communication between teacher and teacher or between student and student. It may be quite helpful in case the head of the institution is on leave.

Thus, the educational institution should not be rigid so far as communication in the educational setting is concerned. Yet there should be proper laws and ethical guidelines to govern the communication process in educational settings. The ethical code will act as a permeable membrane to facilitate the flow of positivity and morality.

7. Proposed Modals of Communication

A Communication Scholar, Jason S. Wrench, in his book '**An Introduction to Organizational Communication**' has mentioned various models of communication, as;

1. Linear (where message travels in a straight line from its source, through a channel, and to its receiver).
2. Interactional (communication travels in a circle as a sender transmits a message and then the receiver responds with feedback; thus both parties become sender/ receivers).
3. Transactional (sending and receiving of messages/ feedback occurs simultaneously).

Though the most effective model of communication, among the above mentioned, is the Interactional Model of Communication, yet context and situational factors matter a lot. So, a communicator must adopt appropriate model at appropriate time to make the communication effective in educational settings.

8. What is Effective Communication?

Communication is said to be effective if the message is clear, simple, easily understandable and precise in both content and meaning. The message contained in the communication should not be ambiguous. An effective communication attracts, satisfies and motivates the receiver. Effective communications does not create confusion, but removes the doubts.

The process of communication is effective if it creates a bond, builds rapport, bridges gaps, removes misunderstandings and strengthens relationships. Communication is a two way process, the message needs to be understood by the receiver in terms of the intention of the sender(s). Greater the understanding of the message by participant, higher is the effectiveness of the communication.

Effective communication is contextual, that is, effective communication is effective at specific time, place and situation. A same communication, effective at one time, may be ineffective on the other time. Thus, the situation determines what should be spoken. Therefore, the dynamics and contextualization of communication must be taken into consideration while communicating. So, before starting communication, it is a pre-requisite to think about:

- Why to speak
- What to speak
- Whom to speak
- When to speak, and
- Where to speak

Educationally speaking, an effective communication is one which motivates, mobilizes and aligns different stakeholders of education (teachers, students and others) to attain educational goals. The term “Effective communication” here refers to “the process of communication which will leave an impression on the minds of educational stakeholders and will motivate them to perform their respective roles efficiently and will also build trust and resolve conflicts among them.”

9. Why Effective Communication Matters In Educational Settings

Every educational institution faces many internal as well as external challenges. The challenges may be related to change, adaptation, strategies, planning, diversity, continuity and so on. Effective Communication is one of the most potent tools to face these challenges.

Communication gap has a strong affinity to break bonds, create mistrust and degrade the relationships. Effective communication can bridge the gap and re-establish the distracted relationships. So, the kinetics of communication has to be understood by the educational authorities.

Organizational communication is a central binding force that permits coordination among people and thus allows organized behavior (Myers, G. E., 1982). Fundamentally, relationships grow out of communication, and the functioning and survival of organizations is based on effective relationships among individuals and groups. In addition, organizational capabilities are developed and enacted through “intensely social and communicative processes” (Jones et al., 2004). Moreover, effective communication is critical for employee motivation and job satisfaction (Kinicki & Kreitner, 2006). In modern days, communication is one of the most dominant and important activities in organizations (Harris & Nelson, 2008). Communication is a critical factor in directing and mobilizing the workforce towards the accomplishment of the organizational goals or objectives (Stephen, 2011). Communication plays an important role in determining whether an organization succeeds or not (Miriti J. Karimi, 2013). Effective communication enhances organizational relationship and minimizes strikes and lockouts. Organizational purposes and goals are sometimes defeated when communication is not effective. Wastes and costly mistakes have been made due to gaps in communication (Lovlyn E. Kelvin, 2016). Communication makes backbone of an organization and has significant relation with employee

performance. An organization can perform efficiently if communication strategies are clear and system is maintained in a way that everybody has a chance to share ideas, feelings and thoughts (Bilal A. Stanikzai,2017).

Thus, effective communication in educational settings is a pre-condition to create and maintain positive work environment, contributive mindset, competitive outlook and mutual respect and understanding among the various stakeholders of education to proceed collectively towards excellence.

Effective communication is a key to productive organizational performance of educational institutions. It is needed to avoid confusions and misunderstanding which ruin the relationships in educational settings. It is essential to build a cooperative culture and create accountability among the individual members. It provides a purpose to the existence of educational institutions.

10. Principles of Effective Communication

Effective communication acts as a cohesive force to induce and sustain motivation, creativity, consistency and commitment among the various stakeholders of education to contribute towards achievement of set goals in the stipulated period of time. But the communication will be effective only if the communicators follow the principles as given by various communication scholars and educational experts.

Mangal and Mangal (2009) have mentioned the following principles for a communication process to be effective:

- Principle of Readiness and Motivation: Both the sender and receiver should be ready and motivated to communicate the ideas, feelings and information.
- Principle of Possession of competent communication skills: both the sender and receiver should be enough competent in listening, speaking and understanding the language to be used as the medium of communicating thoughts and emotions.
- Principle of Sharing and Interaction: Communication is not a non-stop one-way trafficking of sending messages to the receiver, but a two-way process in which both sender and receiver are equally important.
- Principle of Suitability of the Communication Contents: The content to be communicated should be relevant, precise and suitable according to situation, time, place and person.
- Principle of Appropriate Media and Channel: For a communication to be effective ,it is equally important to choose an appropriate channel of communication for communicating the information and knowledge.
- Principle of Appropriate feedback: Communication will never be effective if there is no appropriate and timely feedback. It is essential to understand and get understood.
- Principle of Facilitators and Barriers of communication: While communicating, facilitators and barriers of communication must be taken into consideration. It will be of great help to make the communication effective.

11. Barriers to Effective Communication

There are many barriers in the way of effective communication including psychological, cultural, social, emotional and technological barriers.

Etuk (1991), Inyang et al (2003) and Mullins (2006) identified the following barriers to effective communication;

1. Noise
2. Perception
3. Emotions
4. Source Credibility
5. Information Overload

Some others barriers that lead to ineffective communication include lack of linguistic competence, lack of consciousness of sender and lack of attention of listener.

All these barriers need to be eradicated by modifying the systems, approaches and gadgets. These barriers must be eradicated in order to make communication process effective in educational settings to meet the expected educational outcomes.

12. How to overcome the Barriers

It is a pre-requisite to overcome all possible barriers that come in the way of communication in order to make it effective. The barriers can be removed by adopting suitable strategies, tools and techniques.

Hambagda (2000), Hybels and Weaver (1992) have suggested the following points to overcome the various obstacles that come in the way of effective communication .They include:

1. Information overload should be discouraged. Message should be transmitted in the quantity the recipient can decode and interpret.
2. Messages should be repeated to prevent misunderstanding. Lawson (2006) advised that problems should always be communicated quickly; because delays cost money.
3. Appropriate channels of communication should be selected for transmitting information.
4. Timely feedback must be given.

Further, the Language contained in Message to be provided to the receiver, should be simple, precise and unambiguous. There should not be any cultural, religious or emotional bias. Also, the communicators need to use modern ICT tools and gadgets to permit effective communication to take place. More importantly, communicators must think twice before speaking because words possess magical power and more lasting influence to guide and govern the behavior of individuals. Negative words will disrupt the emotional setting of an individual. So, positive words containing courage, zest and empathy, should be used.

Further, researches have shown that the decentralized communication networks are effective and productive for the success of an organization .A decentralized communication network exists when information is shared widely among flows through many individuals within an organization. Decentralized networks are well suited for managing turbulent and complex environments because organizational members can communicate the changes they perceive in their working environments and each member can contribute ideas and knowledge for managing these changes (Miller K., 2005).

13. Conclusion

Effective communication acts as a force of attraction to build bonds and ineffective communication acts a force of distortion to break bonds. Whereas effective communication acts a cohesive force to bind together the different individuals with different tastes, perceptions and attitudes, ineffective communication acts as a repulsive force to scatter the individuals by creating confusions, mistrust and hopelessness. So, an organization should polish the routes of communication to facilitate effective communication. Effective communication has a magical potential of sublimating the odds into evens. So, the educational institutions should always opt for the green (right) button and avoid the red (wrong) button of communication. Effective communication acts a heart in the chest of an educational institution; as soon as the heart will stop its pulsation, the educational institution would stop its functioning. So, to keep the educational institutions alive and functioning, the concerned authorities must divert their attention to make communication process effective in educational settings. Effective communication acts as a lubricant to facilitate the free movement of the wheel the educational institution and there by mobilize the different components of the institution to work in coordination and collectively to perform the organizational tasks and achieve excellence in the performance of the system as a whole.

14. Suggestions

1. Attention should be paid towards effective communication in the educational settings as it is the lifeblood in the veins of the institution.
2. Effective communication should be encouraged in the institutions by adopting multiple approaches, strategies and media.
3. Appropriate tool and channel of communication should be used at appropriate time to make the communication effective.
4. Equal importance should be give to bottom-up and lateral communication along with top-down communication in the educational settings.
5. Modern gadgets like ICT tools should be used to make the communicational system of the institutions effective.
6. Modern modes and approaches like tale-conferencing, video-conferencing, e-lecturing open-learning and online submitting of assignments should be facilitated in the educational institutions.
7. Educational institutions should be located in a calm area, away from market and industries to prevent disturbance and facilitate effective communication.
8. Noise controlling mechanism should be adopted in the educational institutions.
9. There should be adequate and timely feedback in the communicational system of the educational institution.
10. Communication gap should be bridged in the educational institutions by building rapport and using multi-media approaches.
11. Parental-meet, Students-meet and Teachers-meet should be arranged monthly by the organizational management of educational institutions to facilitate circular flow of information from parents, teachers and students regarding educational programmes, policies and outcomes.

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