

INCLUSION OF COMMUNICATION AS A SUBJECT IN SCHOOL EDUCATION: A STUDY IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT

*Dr. Kaushik Mishra *Padmaja Tamuli

*Assistant Professor, Amity School of Communication, Amity University, Newtown, Kolkata

ABSTRACT

This study backs up the argument that communication is an important subject in school and can have a big impact on students' personal and professional development in the future. Today, at all levels of India's educational system, communication disciplines are in high demand. This claim requires proof to indicate that communication courses can increase the quality of communication in society, which can be extremely beneficial to the success of many of the government of India's development-related projects and policies.

The centrality of communication in developing the whole person, improving the educational enterprise, being a responsible social and cultural participant in the world, and succeeding in one's career is demonstrated in this conceptual paper, which is based on a study of paper and daily newspaper, articles, and reports.

Keywords: *Communication, Communication Education, School Education, Career Growth, Development*

1.1 Introduction

The origin of the word 'communication' can be traced in two Latin words, *communicare* and *communico*, and both words imply the same meaning, that is, to share. Hence, from this etymology, we can well appreciate the idea that communication is the act of sharing of ideas, thoughts, feelings, beliefs between/among the various parties involved. The word 'communication' also has relevance to another Latin word, *communis*, meaning common. Following this aspect, let's throw some light on **Denis McQuail's** definition of communication in his book the **Mass Communication Theory, 1983**, where he writes, "communication is a process which increases commonality, but also requires elements of commonality for it to occur at all." **Louis Allen (1958)** notes, "Communication is the sum of all the things one person does when he wants to create understanding in the mind of another. It is a bridge of meaning. It involves a systematic and continuous process of telling, listening, and understanding." **Newman and Summer (1977)** write, "Communication is an exchange of facts, ideas, opinions or emotions by two or more persons."

Apart from these, there are several other scholarly verdicts of the definition of communication as well. In its simplest and most comprehensive form, communication can be defined as a two-way process that involves the sharing or exchanging of information, ideas, thoughts, signs, symbols, feelings, and emotions between/among the people performing the act. Being a two-way process, feedback forms a crucial component of communication. Also, successful communication is one that helps the communicator/s achieve their goals and objectives for communicating in the first place.

Communication can be both verbal and non-verbal. Verbal communication is when communication takes place usually through the exchange of words and language in written as well as oral forms.

Non-verbal communication, on the other hand, makes use of non-verbal or visual cues like body language, facial expressions, hand gestures, eye contact, and signs and symbols for putting across our thoughts and feelings for the listener.

Also, one needs to understand the difference between communication and plain talking. One cannot simply blabber about things to himself or people in general with no specific objectives or relevance in mind and expect to communicate. Communication is rather goal-oriented, something that has an outcome for the communicator, and relevance and significance for the sender and receiver of the messages.

We are communicating when we talk to ourselves while preparing for the possible replies to the interviewer's probable questions in our mind, we are communicating when we are discussing the latest fashion trends with our friends, we are communicating when we pet our dogs, we are communicating when we are addressing a group for some mutually exclusive benefits. Thus, it could be asserted that communication is that one aspect that connects the whole of the universe together.

Communication is at the centre of all the things happening around us. All the activities that we do, all the knowledge that we acquire, all the chit chats and gossips that we indulge in, the relationships that we build, all the goals that we pursue and the assumptions and expectations that we surround ourselves with. Communication has a lot to do with the ideas that we generate, the thoughts we process and the beliefs we treasure. It influences our understanding of this universe, the people, the nature and the things in general. It could be rather asserted that communication is the binding force that has helped us nurture and delve on the connections that we, as human beings, share with and among each other. With communication, we learn, we grow and become the contributors or say, the potential masters, of building up successful human relations that will ensure that we are a step forward in realizing our dreams and weaving inspirational stories for others.

We express with the help of art, we pursue various artforms like singing, dancing, painting, sketching or maybe filmmaking to showcase the world our thoughts, perceptions, and presumptions. Now in the same manner, consider communication as an art too, an art that relies on the usage of words, numbers, signs and symbols, the art that has a lot to do with your eye and body movements and gestures, basically the body language.

A dancer, for instance, must keep practicing and perfecting her moves and expressions over time for putting forward an enthralling show for her spectators so that they are mesmerized by her performance and give her the due applause, the appreciation that she, for sure, is deserving of. Similarly, when a person is well-adept with the art of effective communication through the acquisition and practicing of required skills over time, that person becomes capable of garnering attention and appreciation, and becomes the possessor of the power to persuade and influence the audiences and the people around him/her in general to move them and make them think as per his/her conviction or in his/her favor.

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1.2. Communication and Career growth

Sherwyn P. Morreale & Judy C. Pearson in their article **Why Communication Education is Important: The Centrality of the Discipline in the 21st Century, 2008**, provide us with a rationale supporting the claim that communication education and instruction is critical to the personal and professional success of a student.

With analyzing and interpreting 93 journals and newspaper articles, reports and surveys, this study conducted by Morreale and Pearson arrives at concluding with the following established themes, thereby citing reasons and explanations for each of them. The themes are discussed as below, Sherwyn P. Morreale & Judy C. Pearson (2008):

1. "Communication education is vital to the development of the whole person."
2. "Communication education helps to improve the educational enterprise."
3. "Communication education encourages being a responsible participant in the world, socially and culturally."
4. "Communication helps individuals succeed in their careers and in business."
5. "Communication education enhances organizational processes and organizational life."
6. "Communication education addresses emerging concerns in the 21st century (Health Communication, Crisis and Communication, and Crime and Policing)."

However, these themes were suggested based on the U.S. educational system and yet a read through them calls attention to the much-needed awakening among the people regarding the importance of communication education.

In another article called "**Communication culture should be an obligatory High school subject**", **Martina Matejas (2018)** talks about how an inventive and unexpected yet so useful introduction to an obligatory new two-semester subject called the Theory of Knowledge (aka TOK) by the International Baccalaureate in their curriculum effectively added to his skills set. "TOK is a blend of logic, philosophy, history of ideas, systems thinking, pragmatics and epistemology."

Taking inspiration and realizing from his work experience, Matejas felt the importance of introducing a new subject in the dimension that would prepare people for their careers, and life in general. She feels, "there is a missing link in equipping young people with discernment and ability to decide what to say, when and how." Hence, she suggests the introduction of the interdisciplinary subject, Communication Etiquette or maybe, a fancier name like Contemporary Interaction or CI, where he desired to train people on how to communicate across different channels of communication, like an official email or WhatsApp text or even a Skype call. She believes that 'communication' remains one of the crucial aspects of a person's progress and it is high time that we reject the outdated education system paving way for subjects and innovations that have relevance for the 'post-millennials', as she points out. Components of giving effective feedback and writing CVs, for instance, would make up for the advanced skills of her subject course.

Noting down the very significance of learning the art of communication in the above lines, let's now talk about the field where this art finds the maximum application and utility.

When we think and talk of careers, occupation and businesses, there's a shared objective among all our minds, i.e., success. Yes, all of us are constantly putting in our efforts and working hard and consistently to make sure that we end up successful in the pursuit of our professional ventures while at the same time making money that's good enough to support our survival. However, the path to this ultimate objective has been rather grinded and elongated thanks to the current scenario of the job market. The job markets have become more competitive than ever, the unemployment numbers are soaring, and the present situation indicates to the story of the "survival of the fittest". We are essentially living in a rat race where each day we are struggling against others to acquire the best jobs, and eventually better living conditions. Our

performances are evaluated at every step and marked upon consistently to decide our fates in these ever evolving, taxing and challenging work environment of the contemporary world.

But let's not be disheartened about this competitiveness for only accepting this trend as a part and parcel of our career struggles, we can move ahead and become the best version of ourselves. Not to forget, how equally fundamental it is to also present or rather express the same best version to our audiences whose feedback and reviews matter. And in this extensive process that demands both time and the persistent quest for learning as many new things as possible, I cannot emphasize enough what crucial role good communication skills have to play to make sure that every impression that we create among others counts for the good. With good communication skills, the advancement and progression to the attainment of our career goals becomes smooth, if not easy. Yes, the cultivation of good communication skills is a prerequisite to building up and presenting the best version of ourselves to the world for it makes us aware about what to communicate and how exactly so that the others who matter are hooked onto appreciating us and our work.

Effective communication skills are imperative to one's survival in whatever and whichever industry that he/she wants to be a part of. And it has a lot to do with identifying and guiding the career graph for that person. Building up careers and managing businesses require a constant interaction with our fellow mates, associates, colleagues, and customers, and to score well in there, our communication skills are everything that can save and help us move the ball to our court.

To put it simply, in the present competitive world that we are a part of it becomes critical for us and the younger generations to understand the significance and practice good communication skills as one of our priorities for the successful accomplishment of our set goals and objectives.

1.3. Indian Education Scenario

As our parents enroll us in schools, most often we are provided with a booklist which mentions the books for our various school subjects in accordance with the syllabus prescribed by the respective school boards. And all through these years in school, we study English Literature, English Grammar, Hindi, or any other vernacular, along with Science, Social Sciences, Mathematics and General Knowledge as our basic subjects. Of course, we learn a great deal from all of these. We gain partial and effective knowledge and understanding of things with the help of these subjects. And eventually we become a part of the literate section of this society. But it is also to be kept in mind that not all members of this literate section make it to the employable lists.

As we grow, with the progression of our classes from Nursery to Class 12, each year we learn a new and different and advanced aspect of the base subject. This is also the time when the students discover their interests, daydream about those perfect and fancy jobs and set their ultimate aspirations for the long run. While this academic learning, we get to know about things by reading up on them, discussing or debating them, but the focus is hardly on interactive learning, meaning the absence of applying the notions of practicality and subjectivity to concepts.

In most cases, it is after Class 10, considering the Indian schooling system, that the students tend to narrow down the scope of these subjects and become more focused on pursuing subjects that are in tandem with their career interests.

Now here's another consideration to be made. No matter what subjects you pursue for your career, it's significant that you know how to communicate it. It's always desirable to pass onto

and rather share your knowledge and ideas with the people around only to produce the maximum impact and for achieving the relevant goals. Now one must understand that good communication skills are obligatory irrespective of what you are studying and doing and preaching ultimately.

That being said, let's now discuss some relevant examples where we will how good communication skills are required for every prospective professional irrespective of their career fields. An architect is one who is involved with designing the blueprints and plans for the construction of buildings. But do you think that as soon as this architect is done with designing the blueprints, he can pass it onto the clients and expect them to decipher the planning all by themselves? No! That's certainly not what is expected out of him. He would rather need to explain and communicate about the plan effectively to win over his client's acceptance and applause.

Let's now talk about teaching. Well, we consider our teachers and professors to be the most eminent lot who have the prime power of influencing our behaviors and our understanding of concepts, be it academically or ethically. They are the knowledge powerhouse for us. We expect them to have answers to all our queries. But do you think teaching is just about telling the students routinely and monotonously about whatever is mentioned in the textbooks already? No, right! Teaching is rather about effectively communicating with the students, prompting them to think and question the norms and help them hone their problem-solving skills. The teachers who are also effective communicators are the ones who ignite the flame of efficient learning among the students, thereby influencing their lives in a manner to eventually create masterpieces out of them.

Coming back to where we were, since the Indian education system emphasizes less on skill-based training and learning while only appreciating the theoretical aspects, it could be asserted that this kind of teaching is not sufficient to prepare the students constructively for their professional lives.

More specifically, it could be noted that our basic education system focuses more on teaching students what to say, whom to say, when and where and maybe covers the 'why' part too. But what it lacks majorly is the relevance of understanding 'how' to say and respond to certain things.

1.4. Effective Communication – Verbal & Non-verbal Aspects

This "how" part is what we are concentrating on here, and let me tell you again, it is about communicating your ideas and thoughts in a way that will help you obtain favorable outcomes. But do you think that it's the words alone that can help you communicate effectively with your audiences?

When we talk of communication, we are not only indicating to the usage of right set of words, phrases or sentences, be it spoken or written, that comprises the essential verbal aspect of communication, but we are also referring to the non-verbal cues. The non-verbal aspect of communication includes factors like eye contact, facial expressions, hand gestures and body postures and movements. The correct sense and timing of the body language has a lot to do with creating and managing one's impression on others. They say, "the most important thing in communication is hearing what isn't said". **Peter Guber** notes, "Language is a more recent technology. Your body language, your eyes, your energy will come through to your audience before you even start speaking."

Our body language reflects our personality, our confidence and in most cases, the interviewers rely on understanding this body language when planning to hire new recruits. The good part is

one can control tame his/her body language by cultivating good communication skills. Yes, there's a possibility to manage our behaviors in front of others while also complimenting them with appropriate words with learning and mastering the art of communication.

Reading through the above lines, one must wonder what an amazing of a weapon is effective communication. It is not wrong to believe that communication is the most powerful weapon of mankind if persuading and influencing strategically is what you seek to achieve.

1.5. Importance of Communication learning at School Level

We learn languages, we learn the sciences of things and yet students are seen facing difficulties in expressing and executing their thoughts and ideas, and this is exactly where I think that the modern school curriculum must fulfil the requirement of including a new subject in their dimension, a subject that will guide the students appropriately while also providing them with the necessary training to help them effectively with controlling their behaviors and expressively showcasing and putting forward their opinions and views. The subject is called **communication**.

Most often people confuse communication studies for mere understanding of English Grammar. Specifically speaking, for most of them it's just about the ability to write and speak English with the usage of proper grammatical rules. Well, it's only obvious for me to break this myth through this study. Good communication, for sure, has to do with utilizing good grammar sense and this component is applicable across pan languages. Meaning, effective communication is not just about the language English in particular, it's just that mostly we are preached about it in English. But you see, you also are taught how to use the correct grammar and write letters in Hindi and any other vernacular to accelerate a smooth flow of communication and avoid any discrepancies. To ease out the understanding, let's think about one of the most efficient communicators of our country. Narendra Modi. Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India, is touted to be world's one of the best communicators when it comes to persuading the masses with his words and actions, and tell you, this man mostly addresses his audiences in Hindi. And this clearly proves why communication is not limited to writing or speaking English.

Effective communication is also the art of organizing your words in congruent with your actions. Learning communication as a separate subject or a training facility is believed to extend the students the opportunity to become excellent communicators in general while also helping them become active listeners.

1.6 Employability and Communication

It has been observed that a person's degrees or say, academic qualifications alone can do nothing about his/her happening career opportunities or an appealing personality. There are many of them who are graduates and postgraduates and yet they are unemployed, lack good interpersonal skills or maybe fail to exhibit attractive persona.

Like we know, there are two sides to everything. And hence, one should remember that there are always plentiful of opportunities for truly deserving candidates. Of course, interviewers have become more demanding than ever, but if you are one who has the right combination of talent and skills, communication skills, there's no way that you'll be declined of that dream job opportunity of yours. So, if we say that India is a country with an alarming unemployment rate, even the unemployability factor of the candidates must be paid attention to. But discussing it right now is not what this research is about.

On the upfront, we'll rather study and focus on finding out what benefits can communication as a subject can yield for the students and how can it significantly contribute to developing and shaping their personalities and overall development. They say, modern problems require modern solutions, and this research project will help us find whether the introduction of communication as a school subject can make any difference for the better.

1.7. Communication helps to develop the Personality

“Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustment to his environment”. (Allport, 1948), So, if we talk about the personality then according to the Google Dictionary, “personality is the combination of characteristics or qualities that form an individual's distinctive character.” Personality is a characteristic way of thinking, feeling, and behaving, unique to everyone. Our personality has a major role to play in deciding how others are perceiving us, what they think of us, or what extraordinary qualities they can relate to us. Now the question remains, can this perception be influenced?

One can enhance his/her personality traits and control how others might be judging or apprehending him/ her by acknowledging and incorporating good communication and interpersonal skills. People love natural communicators and get highly fascinated by confidence when reflected in someone's behavior. Good social skills and confident body language are principal to curating attractive personalities. Thus, it could be concluded that effective communications skills are directly proportional to enhancing amazing personality traits.

1.8. Conclusion

Effective communication is the primary prerequisite for success in any kind of career. And, we have reached a time where one's inherent talent alone can't make him/her stand out or be celebrated, the focus is rather more on what and how one is expressing or sharing his/her knowledge, ideas, thoughts, and that talent.

On the basis of this study we can say that communication should be made a subject in school, and this change can drastically help the students cultivate better skills and ethics when it comes to communicating thereby, creating impact every time.

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