

LECTURE 9

COMMUNICATION

Lecture overview

Welcome to our 9th lecture on communication in institutions of learning. Effective and efficient teaching/learning or working of an organization depends upon effective communication system. This lecture will therefore discuss the importance of communication, types of communication, barriers to effective communication and ways of improving communication in institutions of learning.

Objectives



By the end of this lecture you should be able to:

- i. Define communication and explain its importance
- ii. Explain the components of communication
- iii. Analyze types of communication
- iv. Discuss barriers to effective communication.
- v. Examine ways of improving communication in institutions of learning.

What is Communication?

Communication can be defined as a process of transmitting information, ideas, facts, opinion, attitudes, problems, difficulties etc. from top level to bottom level and from bottom level to top level as well as from person to person with a view of meaningfully understanding them so that activation and interaction can be achieved and ensured in proper direction.

Importance of communication

- (i) Communication helps in keeping the employees;
 - Informed about the things happening within and outside the organization- proper external communication helps to project a good public image of the institution/organization.
 - Informed about the company's problems, aims and objectives, policies, plans, targets etc.

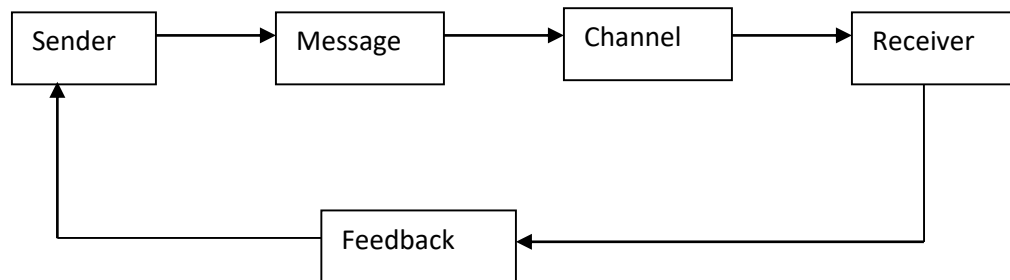
- The company as well gets knowledge about the employee's problems, difficulties, demands, likes, dislikes, interest, attitudes etc. This enables management to manage them properly.
- (ii) Smooth, stable and efficient functioning of the business organization:
- A learning institution can run smoothly, be stable and efficient with the help of communication network- through communication, every employee knows his/her role very well.
 - The employees become informed of the expectations of the organization through communication.
 - Communication motivates the workers towards better performance in the organization.
- (iii) Communication works as a tool of supervision
- It is through personal contacts or good communication that supervision of the subordinates is made. Next to personal observation is the communication system by which supervisors get report about the organization and the employees in general.
- (iv) Quick decision and its implementation:
- Communication helps managers to take quick decision and to implement them; the same can be done without any delay.
 - The decisions are based on factual and continuous flow of information through communication.
 - It is possible to take correct and timely decision only in the event of continuous flow of factual information.
 - The employees, also, are not hesitant in implementing such decisions as long as they are well communicated.
- (v) Communication develops better organizational relations:
- Because of communication system, all the disputes, conflicts, grievances of employees can be avoided and even if they crop up, they can be solved as early as possible.
- (vi) Communication ensures unity, co-ordination, co-operation etc.
- Communication seeks to unify, co-ordinate and combine all the problems of organization. After solving the problems, the attainment of predetermined objectives is possible only by co-ordination and co-operation of which communication is the tool.
- (vii) Communication is a tool of motivation
- It enhances morale of the employees towards better performance.
- (viii) Communication ensures high productivity at a lower cost:

- Through communication, executives get new ideas, views and suggestions from workers which are converted into higher production. The workers know their role and have better understanding, hence high productivity. Thus, it helps in reducing the cost of production.
- (ix) Communication binds the working group together in group activities.
- In a school set up, the head teacher, teaching and non- teaching staff can work together as a team through communication.

Components/elements of Communication

The components of communication include the sender, the transmission of a message through a selected channel, the receiver and feedback. The following diagram illustrates the communication process.

Communication model



i. Sender of the message

- Communication begins with the sender who is the source of the message. He/she has thought of an idea, which is then coded in a way that can be understood by both the sender and the receiver. While it is usual to think of encoding a message into a spoken language, there are many ways of encoding, such as translating the thought into computer language.

ii. Use of a channel to transmit the message

- The information is then transmitted over a channel that links the sender with the receiver. The message may be oral or written, and its transmission may be through memorandum, a computer, the telephone, a telegram, e-mail, television, other media.
- At times, two or more people may reach a basic agreement that they later confirm by a letter. Since many choices are available, each with advantages and disadvantages, the proper selection of the channel is vital for effective communication.

- In either way, feedback is expected to ensure that there is common understanding of information.

iii. Receiver of the message

- The receiver has to be ready for the reception of the message so that it can be decoded into thoughts. The next step in the process is decoding in which the receiver converts the message into thoughts.
- Accurate communication can occur only when the sender and the receiver attach the same or at least similar meanings to the symbols that compose the message.
- Thus, it is obvious that a message encoded into German requires a receiver who understands German language.
- So, communication is not complete unless it is understood and understanding is in the mind of both the sender and the receiver.

iv. Feedback in communication

- To check the effectiveness of communication, a person must have feedback
- One can never be sure whether or not a message has been effectively transmitted and understood until it is confirmed by feedback.
- Feedback indicates whether individual or organizational change has taken place as a result of communication.

Types of communication

The following types of communication will be discussed:

1. Organizational communication

- Organizational communication refers to communication which takes place among groups of people within organizations. In organizational communication, the organizational structure is imposed on the natural patterns of interpersonal relationships.
- In organizational communication, there are three general directions in which communication flows:

a) Downward communication

- Downward communication is used by superiors to direct and influence the activities of others who occupy the lower hierarchical levels.
- It is a superior- subordinate communication.
- Downward communication helps managers to:

- i. Give specific task directives about job instructions;
 - ii. Give information about school procedures and practices;
 - iii. Provide information about the rationale of jobs.
 - iv. Inform workers about their performance;
 - v. Help in the socialization and indoctrination of workers.
- Downward communication in an educational setting relies on both written and oral media for information dissemination.
 - The written medias include manuals, newsletters, bulletin- board, notices, posters, memos etc.
 - Media include; meetings, speeches, telephones, and direct verbal orders from superiors
 - To improve the effectiveness of downward communication, educational managers must combine both written and oral media in an appropriate manner.
 - The effectiveness of downward communication can also be improved by having an effective feedback mechanism which reduces the “filtering effect” which the message goes through when it passes down the various hierarchical levels.

b). Upward communication

- Upward communication can be used by managers to receive feedback from the workers or subordinates.
- It helps manager to know what the various people in the education organization, feel about their organization in terms of both progress and areas needing improvement.
- Upward movement is a subordinate –super ordinate communication.
- Some of the examples of upward communication include performance by heads of departments and others occupying lower cadres, grievance procedures for collective bargaining agreements, and participative techniques as in participative decision making, suggestion boxes and employee attitude surveys.
- Through upward communication subordinates can provide managers with information about their personal ideas, attitudes and performance. Subordinates also use upward communication to provide technical feedback information about the organizations performance in terms of meeting its objectives through the various human and material resources necessary for the operation of the organization.

c). Horizontal (lateral communication)

- Horizontal communication is the type of communication which takes place among members of work groups at the same level. It is used for coordinating activities or projects between departments or units.
- Horizontal communication, first recognized by Henri Fayol, in the Fayol' Bridge helps to increase the communication speed by short circuiting the formal hierarchical structure of an organization.
- Horizontal communication is about people and their behavior. Because of this, it is also referred to as interactive communication.
- People usually find it easier and more comforting to communicate with their peers, because these are people with relatively equal status and are on more or less similar levels in the organization. It is easier to turn to one's peer than to someone below or above one in the organization hierarchy for support.
- The horizontal communication may be good for an organization if the peer communication is for task coordination in order to achieve organizational goals, or it may be bad for the organization if the peer communication is concerned with things which negate the organization goals.
- Horizontal communication is very important in organizations because it helps departments or departmental heads to coordinate tasks, solve problems, share information and resolve conflicts.

2. Interpersonal communication

Interpersonal communication refers to communication which is primarily between two individuals. Through interpersonal communication, employees at all levels of an organization interact with others, secure desired ends, request or extend support, and make use of and reinforce the formal design of the organization.

Activity



Distinguish written from verbal communication.

Barriers to effective communication

Barriers can exist in the sender, in the transmission of the message, in the receiver, or in the feedback. Barriers to effective communication can generally be divided into five categories which include:

- i) Physical and technological barriers
- ii) Barriers among subordinates

iii) Semantic barriers

iv) Emotional / psychological barriers- involve the mind

v) Organizational barriers.

i) Physical & technological barriers

This refers to anything that may hinder the development of a clear thought for example noise, equipment failure e.g. telephone equipment or any other distraction.

ii) Semantic distortion

Semantic barriers arise from linguistic capacity of the parties involved. They include;

- Badly expressed messages due to lack of clarity and precision, poorly chosen and empty words and phrases, omissions, repetition and jargon.
- Faulty interpretations e.g. information from the head teacher that is poorly interpreted by the students, unfamiliar language
- Unclassified assumptions which may result to confusion.

iii) Emotional or psychological barriers

This refers to poor communication or failure to communicate due to:

- Lack of interest by the receiver
- Personality and appearance
- Loss of transmission and poor retention
- Poor listening- preoccupied mind hence non- listening.
- Prejudice or premature evaluation -tendency of evaluating communication before hand

iv) Organizational barriers

This refers to poor communication due to:

- Organizational rules and regulations which may restrict the flow of certain messages or delay
- Lack of time due to too much work
- Ignoring communication mainly by administrators
- Lack of confidence in subordinates
- Complexity in organization structure hence delay or distortion
- Status relationships- the greater the difference in status between people, the greater the possibility of communication barriers.

V) Barriers among subordinates

This refers to poor communication due to:

- Lack of interest and incentives to communicate
- Unwillingness to communicate

Ways of improving communication

Effective communication is the responsibility of all the people in the organization in working toward a common aim. The following guidelines can help overcome the barriers to communication;

Clarify the purpose of the message

- Senders of messages must clarify in their minds what they want to communicate.
- This means that one of the first steps in communicating is to clarify the message and to make a plan to achieve the intended end.

Use intelligible encoding

- Effective communication requires that encoding and decoding be done with symbols that are familiar to both the sender and the receiver of the message.
- Thus the manager and the staff should avoid unnecessary technical jargon, which is intelligible only to experts in their particular field.

Consult others' views

- The planning of communication requires consultation with members of the organization. It is important that other people be consulted and encouraged to participate, to collect the facts, to analyze the message and to select the appropriate media. For example, a manager may ask a colleague to read an important memo before it is distributed throughout the organization.
- The content of the message should fit the recipients' level of knowledge and the organizational climate.

Consult receiver's needs

- It is important to consider the needs of the receiver of the information.
- Whenever appropriate, one should communicate something that is of value to the other members of the organization.

Use appropriate tone and language and ensure credibility

- In communication, the tone of voice, the choice of language and the congruency between what is said and how it is said influence the reaction of the receiver of the message. An autocratic manager ordering subordinate or supervisors to practice participative management will create a credibility gap that will be difficult to overcome.

Get feedback

- Communication is complete only when the message is understood by the receiver.
- The sender never knows whether or not the message is understood unless he or she gets feedback. This is accomplished by asking questions, requesting a reply to a letter, and encouraging receivers to give their reactions to a message.

Consider receivers' emotions and motivations.

The function of communication is more than transmitting information. It deals with emotions, which are very important interpersonal relationships between the superior and subordinates in an organization.

- It is therefore important to create an environment in which people are motivated to work towards the goals of the enterprise while they receive their personal aims.

Activity



Describe non-verbal communication.

Self- Assessment Questions



1. With clear illustration, explain the communication model
2. Show how communication is an important feature of management policy
3. Outline communication barriers showing clearly how a teacher can improve communication in a class room situation.
4. Using a well labeled diagram, explain the communication process.