

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN DETERMINING EFFECTIVENESS OF ORGANIZATIONS

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Received:20/07/2018

Revised:22/09/2018

Accepted:25/09/2018

ABSTRACT

The noteworthy contribution of ‘Communication Skills’ has been considered central to building organizational success models. Several studies on this topic unanimously concluded that, ‘The Communication skills’ is a central parameter in deciding the effectiveness of organizations and there are studies which have proved that an appropriate intervention about intent and efficacy of communication increases the communication efficiency among the students. The objective of this review paper is to throw light on the intent and extent of linkage of effectiveness of communication skills with the organizational effectiveness. Organizational effectiveness emanates from the structure of hierarchy which is linked to the channelized communications among the teams and their managers by creating strategies of cohesive working with the team spirit. This has to be focused on the organizational goals and outcomes and enriched by the employment benefits to employee. Precision in the functional communication is a prerequisite of an institutional team leader and works as a catalyst in cultivating an efficient team and interpersonal relationship among the team members transcending to optimum outcomes. Many parameters other than communication skills influence the organizational effectiveness. Therefore, the art of communication cannot be overemphasized as a unidirectional process; it is contingent upon how people respond, interact with one another based on several other factors intrinsic to job like employment benefits, job security etc. that add to the job satisfaction.

Key words: Academic organizations, Communication Skills, Communication Structure, Organizational Effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

The scope of communication changes within various segments of society and fields of work and organizations. The study of scope of communication skills pertaining to effectiveness is an essential component.

Defining Communication and Describing the Process-

Communication can be defined as the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another. The word communication is derived from the Latin word, “communis”, which means common. The definition underscores the fact that unless a common understanding results from the

exchange of information, there is no communication.

(1)

Organizational effectiveness emanates from the structure of hierarchy which is linked to the channelized communications among the teams and their managers by creating strategies of cohesive working with the team spirit. Organizational structure influences communication patterns within an organization. The communication skills nurture the motivation among team members to understand, respect and implement the principles and values which their leader wants to inculcate in them. This enhances success and growth rate of organizations. In the challenging field of employment opportunities, the employers are assessing the overall strengths of the applicant graduates. The employers evaluate their academic credentials as well as calibre with the skillset while picking up a perfect fit for the position as well as the organizational team. Therefore, the employers are asking the academic institutions to cultivate a healthy learning environment enriched with the practical simulations of communication skills for the graduates with a progressive focus on graduation outcomes. However, it is observed that the academic institutions need to take steps to succeed in drawing adequate attention towards imparting communication skills among the students and creating and maintaining health of the learning environment.(2)

Elements of communication process -

Communication is the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another. The elements of the communication process are the sender, encoding the message, transmitting the message through a medium, receiving the message, decoding the message, feedback, and noise. Several barriers retard effective communication.(2)

Communication Process -

In the communication process, a sender (encoder) encodes a message and sends it through a channel to a receiver (decoder) who later processes the information, sends appropriate feedback through the channel once more and, the process repeats itself.

Significance and Components of Communication Skills -

Behavioral science is drawing adequate attention of the researchers as well as policy makers throughout the world towards the significance, requirement and utility of communication skills. Communication in the organizational structure, which is one of the important aspects of behavioral science, is proved to be an important behavior of human being in deciding the success of an organization. In today's era, communication is not limited to exchanging the thoughts and social interactions, but it has now become important aspect of business, trade, social cultural and political success of an individual as well as society. Management literature has widely documented importance of communication skills in organizational development and it has become an area of focus for research as well as development. According to NEBO, failure of communication leads to organizational disputes.(3) Apart from routine developmental theories; communication has become a vital parameter for imparting a successful change in the developmental process. The recent literature shows that, communication is strongly associated with many outputs like overall performance, commitment, citizenship, behavior of an organization and the job satisfaction amongst the employees.(4) Over past few years, institutional research and academic researchers have widely focused and re-evaluated the importance of interpersonal communication in the local as well as global organizations.(5,6) Academic institutions are involved in the process of graduating the students for the success in the competitive career environment. Hence, the level of communication skills in the graduates has a potential to decide the success of an individual as an employee as well as to decide the success of an employer. Hence, in recent past the focus of academic institutions is shifting towards imparting the communication skills among the graduates. The health care sector is thriving towards communication skills. Communication between health care providers and patients affects patient outcomes. Safe practices depend on effective communication. (7)

Communication Structure (8)

The communication is considered according to multiple aspects. The organizational communication

structure is defined as the ‘system of pathways through which messages flow’ or as ‘patterns of interaction among people who comprise the organization’. Communication is important in solving conflicts because it can increase understanding and reduces the risk of directly jumping to conclusions or making generalizations. It is primarily important to understand the sources of most conflicting situations.

Communications flow in three directions - downward, upward, and horizontally.(9) Downward communication consists of policies, rules, and procedures that flow from top administration to lower levels. Upward communication consists of the flow of performance reports, grievances, and other information from lower to higher levels. Horizontal communication is essentially coordinative and occurs between departments or divisions on the same level. External communication flows between employees

inside the organization and a variety of stakeholders outside the organization.

There are many types and forms of communication within organizations. Two of the most important ones are formal and informal communication, especially for the public institutions, where the degree of formality is (either by necessity or tradition) higher than in many of the other types of organizations (As demonstrated in figure 1).

Formal Communication- It is intended to happen among employees of organization on the organizational forum and modules with the specific agenda and outcomes. It is the type of communication that sends information through the officially designated channels between different organization positions.

There are three types of formal communication: downward, upward and horizontal communication.

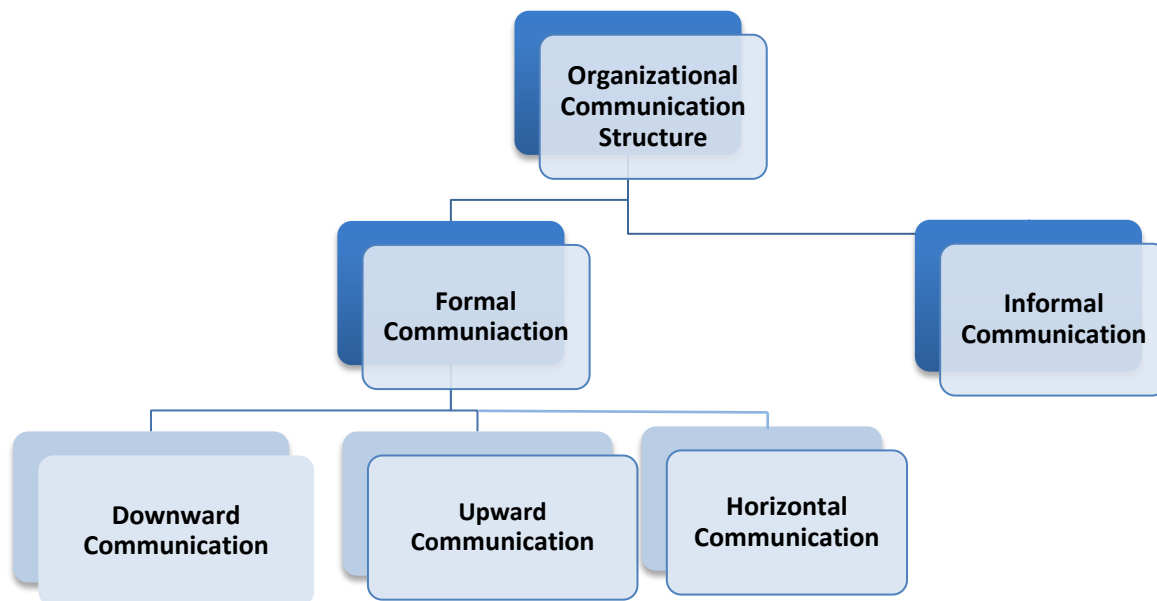


Figure 1: Organizational Communication Structure

Downward communication- It is the one that flows from upper to lower (from managers to their subordinates). The types of messages transmitted are job instructions, job rationales, information on procedures and practices, feedback, and indoctrination. It is considered to be efficient, but it is the expression of the managerial control and it frequently generates

vertical conflicts. The policy issues or conflicts are also addressed preferably via this communication.

Upward communication- It is the transmission of messages from lower levels to the higher ones (such as communication initiated by subordinates with their superiors). Types of messages sent through this type of communication could be, for example, about

performance on the job, about job related problems, about fellow employees and their problems, about subordinates' perceptions of organization policies and practices, tasks and procedures.

Horizontal communication- It is that flow of messages across functional areas at a given level of an organization (this permits people at the same level to communicate directly). The messages exchanged are those that facilitate problem solving, information sharing across different work groups, task coordination between departments and project teams. It is effective, but not efficient (time consuming) and of course it can generate horizontal conflicts.

Informal Communication- As indicated, it contains those episodes of interaction that do not have a place within the officially designated channels of communication. It could happen at various undefined and nonspecific criteria. It is a necessary and unavoidable aspect of organization life; it creates a relaxed, comfortable climate and addresses problems not accessible to the formal communication, thus aiding the functioning of the organization. Nevertheless, it should never substitute formal communication.

Significance of Communication Skills in Academic Organizations (9)



Figure 2: Significance of Communication Skills in Organizations

Though it is evident from the history that, 'the communication skills' is an important factor in deciding the success of an individual, initially it was limited to its theoretical acceptance and application by

all academicians in teaching pedagogy. 'The communication skills' was never a part of practical teaching in the academic organizations. It is only in recent past, when the communication skills have drawn the attention of academics and it is now covering entire academic world (As shown in Figure 2).

The Need for Imparting Business and Interpersonal Communication Skills to the Students through Academic Curriculum -

Employers emphasize on the importance of generic skills and personality while choosing potential employees. Hence, there is a need of imparting the communication skills among the university graduates.(10) The universities while fulfilling the market needs by producing the graduates in various fields can not only focus on accomplishments of academic competencies but also emphasize on soft or generic skills required to compete the global competitive market. Career goals are encountered with the competition and challenging economic and financial difficulties. For the new graduates, it is required to pursue the skills intrinsic to their academic discipline. The graduating students and any other potential job seekers should acquire essential soft skills, which can endorse them for better placements at competitive positions. According to Okoro Ephraim, the business school graduates hoping to succeed in the competitive organizations must communicate with internal, external, national, and global audiences of the organization in which they work.(11) Studies also indicate that effective interpersonal communication is essential for managerial and executive effectiveness, strategic organizational planning and implementation. According to a Workforce Skills Preparedness Report 2016, employers throughout the world are considering the soft skills of the new college graduates while employing them. (12)

Significance of communication in health care –

The students from health sciences must demonstrate appropriate communication all the time right from the day one of their academic span to the extent of working as a health care professional throughout life. The students from cross cultures are quite likely to face some issues when they communicate with the

diverse categories of patients. It is observed that they lack in confidence and they perceive more difficulty with their own communication skills. This affects the student's confidence and develops the tendency to deny the patients to have access to their own health related information. The encounters in cross culture health care are well reported by Jirwe M et al.(13) The receptive attitude towards the communication skills among the university graduates is high if they have an exposure and a healthy learning environment to facilitate their communication skills. This simply indicates that, it is easier for universities to develop the communication skills through the appropriate activities. The healthy and positive environment provides the opportunity for the students to practice the communication skills. It is important for health service providers to consider the communication needs of each patient because most of the complaints regarding health services are commonly associated with the inappropriate communication. According to the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, 60% of the population has difficulty in understanding complex healthcare concepts and information. The general population has a very little orientation to information related to most of the diseases as well as related to health.(14) Hence, the health care professionals must know how to communicate with the patients in order to increase the performance of health care delivery and the patient satisfaction at large. This also involves adapting the wide range of communication strategies to convey a due message to the patient in a suitable and acceptable fashion.

Need to address and impart 'communication skills' in academics –

To achieve high level efficiency by communication skill, all the academic institutions and particularly in health sciences must foster a comprehensive syllabus. It should be inclusive of consistent robust practice and critical evaluations of communication skills. The studies have proved that a proper intervention among the students about communication definitely increases the communication efficiency.(15,16) Sheldon LK et al also reported that, undergraduate program like nursing should incorporate more didactic communication skills training and simulation to

prepare nursing students and increase their confidence to provide safe care and consult with colleagues for help.(7) It is important that didactic, role-playing, simulation exercises as well as practical training in communication skills are incorporated with increasing complexity in all undergraduate curricula. The fact that the new graduate would be tested on their skills of communication during their job interviews, those should be addressed by the academic learning phase of their life. (17) Therefore, universities and faculty need to ensure that students are well equipped with the skill set to communicate confidently, clearly and effectively.

Recommendations:

The core requirement of any organization is an altogether different multidimensional topic. However, here are some generic recommendations based on the direct linkage of the significance of communication on that front. The core requirements of productive outcomes of any organization are competent employees and retention of employees as well. The periodical assessment of needs of employees by appropriate communications is an important strategy. Making policy decisions based on constructive discussions and taking due actions and periodic feedbacks to accommodate and fulfil those is an organizational responsibility. In academic organization, it has been established over the years that communication skills should be a basic aspect of teaching pedagogy. However, it is observed that an appropriate attention and actions are required towards implementation of this aspect. Hence, the graduating outcome in the form of communication skills lacks the presentation skills for managerial or administrative positions. Developing communication skills in the graduates should always be an ongoing process along with routine didactic lectures, simulations, classroom interactions, individual presentations, and clinical experience. The instructors should create as many learning activities as possible to stimulate and provide opportunity for students to practice and hone their communication skills. The evaluations and course work should include capstone projects and certain activities which enforce students for independently and jointly selecting the presentation topics, creating the presentation material on their own and present it to

variable audience. Therefore, it is essential that every faculty in an educational field comes forward and joins in with this campaign. By actively improving ourselves, we should take a sincere initiative to help our university students to develop and build their communication skills. The communication skills are essential towards their future career development.

CONCLUSION:

This review reveals that the communication skills do impact the effectiveness of all organizations including educational organizations working in all the fields of education, and health care profession as well. Therefore, it is worth to signify them in determining effectiveness of all the organizations with the generic approach. The employees are the key sources to bring about change in organizations. To keep up with the progressive enhancement in performance, and an inspiration to employees for desired change, organizations must address the apprehensions and issues related to them at the work place extending hand to their healthy survival and life accomplishments. The fear factor induced by Job insecurity seduces the working atmosphere hampering the accomplishment of desired outcomes. Only the art of communication cannot be overemphasized because communication is empowered by how people interact and work with one another within and outside of organizations. To embody broader approach of working for the community, country and mankind, the sense of 'community building' should be created, So that the employees may recognize their responsibilities and respect their employers. The academic institutions pave the foundations for upcoming generations of employees and health care professionals. Imparting communication skills in an academic learning is required via robust curriculum and improvements in pedagogy while cultivating communication efficient students' generations. The right communication plays a significant role to enhance the life force of an organization.

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How to cite this article: Chavan KD, Giri PA, Rajurkar S, Thitme SN. The significance of communication skills in determining effectiveness of Organizations. *Int.J.Med.Sci.Educ* 2018;5(4):472-478