

COMMUNICATION SKILL FOR TEACHERS: AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract

Effective communication skills are really important to teachers in their delivery of pedagogy, classroom management and interaction with the class. Communication is the process that occurs between two or more people in which a message is delivered and received by the other party. Communication happens everyday in the workplace. In management, communication is a mixture of personal attributes and organizational aspects. Good communication is necessary for all organizations as management functions in organizations are carried out through communication. Managers give direction to workers, coworkers communicate to plan a project and employees communicate information to customers. For instance, the sender may not express what s/he wants to say clearly; or the room may be noisy; or the receiver may not understand the words the sender is using. To be effective, teachers have to try to minimise these barriers to communication. Poor communication leads to misunderstandings and poor customer service. Effective communication is the key to successful outcomes. Teachers must be trained in the discipline of effective communication. This paper presents a step-by-step approach to the discipline of effective human communication.

Keywords : Communication, skill, teaching , pedagogy.

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Introduction

Communication is the glue that holds our relationships together and it can be the very thing that tears us apart. – Stacey Huish

Teachers need excellent communication skills to succeed in their profession. Listening, interpersonal, written and oral communication skills are required by teachers to facilitate understanding of teaching findings and the ability to accomplish their responsibilities effectively. Communication, derived from the Latin word 'Communi care' which means, to share; is the process of transmitting information and understanding. It is the transference of meaning between individuals and the means of reaching, understanding and influencing others. Skill to communicate depends on the capacity of an individual to convey ideas and feelings to another to evoke a desired response. In management, communication is a mixture of personal attributes and organizational aspects. Good communication is necessary for all organizations as management functions in organizations are carried out through communication. Effective management is a function of effective communication. Communication is the process by which information is exchanged between individuals. It requires a shared understanding of symbol systems, such as language and mathematics., Communication is much more than words going from one person's mouth to another's ear. In addition to the words, messages are transferred by the tone and quality of voice, eye contact, physical closeness, visual cues, and overall body language. Experts in child development agree that all babies develop skills for spoken and written language according to a specific developmental schedule, regardless of which language the child is exposed to. Although the milestones follow one another in roughly the same sequence, there is significant variability from child to child on when the first word is spoken and the first sentence is composed. Language employs symbols—words, gestures, or spoken sounds—to represent objects and ideas. Communication of language begins with spoken sounds combined with gestures, relying on two different types of skills. Children first learn to receive communications by listening to and understanding what they hear (supported by accompanying gestures); next, they experiment with expressing themselves through speaking and gesturing. Speech begins as repetitive syllables, followed by words, phrases, and sentences. Later, children learn to read and write. Many children begin speaking significantly earlier or later than the milestone dates. Parents should avoid attaching too much significance to deviations from the average. When a child's deviation from the average milestones of development causes the parents

concern, a pediatrician or other professional may be contacted for advice. *According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary* the word means ‘the act of imparting, especially news’, or ‘the science and practice of transmitting information’. *Hubley* has shown us that communication is a complex process. At any stage of this process things may go wrong, making the communication less effective. For instance, the sender may not express what s/he wants to say clearly; or the room may be noisy; or the receiver may not understand the words the sender is using. To be effective, teachers have to try to minimise these barriers to communication.

Communication in organizations has the following role

- Helps in fostering motivation
- Aids in the function of control
- Provides information for making decisions
- Gives vent to one's feelings
- Helps in the satisfaction of social needs

Means of Communication

Communication happens through many channels. Messages can be spoken face to face during conversation. They can be delivered to a group in a meeting room. Or, they can be delivered over the telephone. They also can be written in a letter or e-mail, but these forms don't allow the listener to hear the tone of the message that can be heard if the message were spoken. Face to face communication offers many benefits because the listener receives the spoken message, but it is enhanced by the subtleties of facial expressions and body language.

Communication as a KEY

- Communication is the KEY that will unlock all the doors
- Communication is the KEY to cooperating with other people.
- Communication is the KEY to understanding one another.
- Communication is the KEY to resolve conflicts effectively.
- Communication is the KEY to let others know what our needs are and how best to meet those needs.

- Communication is the KEY to fewer conflicts.
- Communication is the KEY to more self-confidence.
- Communication is the KEY to listen to one another.
- Communication is the KEY to mutual respect.
- Communication is the KEY to less resistance and more cooperation.
- Communication is the KEY to feeling safe to be yourself.
- Communication is the KEY to everyone having more fun.

Styles & communication

In organizations we often encounter people possessing difference styles of management. Each style has to be dealt with in a way such that the desired response it achieved.

- **Result Style :** Officers possessing this style are action oriented and make quick decision with available data. While communicating with such people, use concrete words as much as possible; be brief, state what you want precisely, supply necessary information and wait for an answer.
- **Reasons Style:** Officers with this style are very logical and rely on rational decision on making. While communicating with such people, introduce the topic in a rational manner with all supporting information.
- **Process Style:** Affiliation orientation forms the basis of this style. Officers with this style are informal and try to find solution that is agreeable to all parties concerned. Be as informal as possible, introduce the topic with ample information regarding the background and motivate for an answer.

Making Communication Effective

- Use concrete than abstract words wherever possible.
- The content has to be made meaningful to the receiver
- The message should be framed according to the capability of the receiver.

- There should be a proper blend of verbal and non-verbal communication
- Eye contact should be maintained
- Speak at a moderate rate
- Create rapport with the receiver
- Select appropriate channel
- Encourage listening & feedback
- Avoid communicating in extreme emotional states
- Make the message ; Attractive ; Brief & Clear

Teachers and Good Communication Skills

The art of communication involves listening and speaking as well as reading and writing. Teachers need to be highly skilled in all these areas to excel in their profession. Proficient communicators receive information, understand and synthesize it and express themselves at a high level. They make excellent teachers because they are able to transmit knowledge, skills and values at the same time they communicate their caring for the students entrusted to their care. They help motivate students to learn.

- **Teaching Individuals and Groups**

Communication is both receptive and expressive. Teachers must be skilled at listening to their students as well as explaining things clearly. Teachers need clarity of thought to present the material. They must be able to break down complex ideas into simpler parts and smaller steps to transmit to their students.

- **Communicating Caring**

In addition, good teachers communicate concern and caring by their tone of voice and use of body language. They transmit genuine commitment and affection for their students. Good teachers care about their students' progress and let their students know it at all times. They learn their students' names early in the school year and use their names when addressing them.

- **Communicating to Parents**

Teachers must be able to express themselves both verbally and in writing in order to report student progress to parents. They need to explain the strengths and weaknesses of their students so that parents will understand the message and be receptive rather than defensive.

- **Interacting with Colleagues and Supervisors**

Although teaching is often done in the isolation of a classroom without the presence of other adults, good teaching involves consultation with colleagues. Schools that see themselves as professional learning communities encourage teachers to plan lessons together and learn from one another. They take a team approach when problem-solving, especially for difficult students.

The importance of communication skills for teachers

Communication skills can be defined as the transmission of a message that involves the shared understanding between the context in which the communication takes place (Saunders and Mills, 1999). Communication takes place through channels. Within the teaching profession, communication skills are applied in the teachers' classroom management, pedagogy and interaction with the class (Saunders and Mills, 1999). In addition, teaching speaking skills is important in teacher education (McCarthy and Carter, 2001). Despite this, there was little literature and research identified on the communication skills of teachers and for this reason, this study was conducted. Communication skills are important for many professions but are crucial for teachers. Teachers communicate with students, parents, colleagues and administrators every day. Whether communicated face-to-face, on the phone, in print, electronically or through the public address system, the message must be constructed carefully and delivered clearly to be properly received. Good handwriting, spelling and grammar are very important in all forms of written communication.

- **Students**

Communication skills involve listening as well as speaking. Teachers who listen attentively to their students' questions and complaints are better equipped to meet individual needs and adjust

lessons where necessary. Students are also more likely to be receptive when the teacher's body language and tone of voice indicate openness and encouragement.

- **Parents**

Teachers should communicate frequently with parents and not wait for scheduled parent-teacher interviews. Reporting good news regularly strengthens the teacher-parent relationship and makes it easier for the parent to hear bad news when necessary.

- **Colleagues**

Although teachers spend most of their working day surrounded by 20 or more students, they often become flustered when speaking in front of their colleagues at staff meetings or conferences. Communication skills improve with practice, and preparing in advance what to say also helps

- **Administrators**

Teachers who are skillful communicators have a better chance of being heard by administrators when making a request, such as for a transfer, special leave or permission for a student event or field trip. Good communicators clearly state the reasons for their request, anticipate possible counter-arguments and are prepared to refute them.

A Framework for Teaching Communication Skills

Teaching effective communication starts with very basic tools to establish a sound foundation, which is built upon and reinforced with increasingly challenging lessons. In the often scary realm of public speaking, it's vital that we move step-by-step from talking about easy subjects, things we know about, to subjects that demand thought, introspection, and spontaneity. Here's where we start:

Introductions

Knowing how to introduce oneself with an appropriate handshake, proper eye contact, and a fitting demeanor is a foundational skill. It's the way we begin most interactions with others and likely sets the tone for a brief conversation, a meeting, or a life-long relationship. You can't say the first thing twice!

The Elevator Speech

The ability to make a short presentation (in the time of an elevator ride in a relatively short building) that appropriately informs a friend/client/collaborator/boss of who you are and what you do. It's one of the very basic elements of oral communication.

- Studies show a direct correlation between vocabulary and success. The point here is not just learning new words but to developing in our students a curiosity for the power, nuance, and proper application of our rich language.
- Active and engaged listening is an essential, but often neglected part of the communication spectrum. It's essential to showing, and to having, respect.
- Start with the basics: "Thank you," "please," and, "I'm sorry," then move to rules of etiquette involving communication devices and situational needs.
- The fear of public speaking ranks right up there with death as our number one fear. Students must master proven methods of dealing with and overcoming this fear from the very beginning of their public speaking careers, including relaxation exercises, visualization techniques, and most importantly knowing what they're talking about before they speak.
- We ask for many things each day: "May I be excused from class today?" "Will you give me this job?" "How about a raise?" "Will you go on a date with me?" But it's not just asking, timing and tone figure importantly.
- The skills deployed in a successful interview apply well beyond securing employment or entrance to advanced education. An interview is taking place when you ask for a loan or try to put a work team together, or when you're choosing a contractor to paint your house. Do you know who's in control during an interview?

- Networking has always been a challenge for even the most accomplished of communicators. Knowing how to work a room, make connections, and establish and maintain relationships, are the skills that mark a successful person.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR TEACHERS

Following are some of the communication skills that a teacher must possess so that they interact properly with the students -

- **Positive Motivation**

This is one of the important things that a teacher must possess. In a class, students always have different kinds of taste and preferences over subjects. So it is the job of the teacher to create enthusiasm and interest in the minds of the students towards a subject. It is also a teacher's role to remove any fear and inhibitions that a student may have towards a subject.

- **Effective Body Language**

This is the most powerful communication skill that a teacher must possess. Good presentation skills include a powerful body language supported by verbal skills. This can create a long lasting impression in the minds of the students. Thus, a teacher's lecture will inevitably become more interactive and interesting for the students. Besides, a teacher should maintain the volume, tone and rhythm of their voice during a lecture

- **Sense of Humor**

The importance of this factor has been regularly underestimated. A good sense of humor keeps the students active and interested in the teacher's class. A teacher who is dour and lacks humor does not contribute to the overall well being of the students.

- **Understanding the Students**

Teachers should encourage students to communicate openly. There should be emphasis on cultivating a dialogue rather than a monologue. So while solving any kind of problems in the classroom, it is always wise to hear the opinions of the students also.

- **Team Formation**

This is a good method where you can divide the classroom into small teams and ask them to solve different problems or complete assignments. This practice will increase not only the interaction among the students but also among the teacher and students.

- **Technical Skills**

It is also important that teachers should be up to date with all the latest teaching aids like computers, video conferencing and especially the use of internet. This will also help the students to keep up their interest in the learning process

Paraeducators interact with many different people during the day, including administrators, teachers, parents, students and other paraeducators. The ability of paraeducators to contribute to the special education program will depend on his or her communication skills. For example, communication is essential for:

- understanding roles and assignments,
- planning and carrying out learning activities,
- coordinating approaches with students,
- providing information to teachers on student progress and behaviors, and
- building a positive relationship with students, teachers and other staff.

Powerful speech indeed, communication skills include not only reading, writing, and listening, but also an often and paradoxically neglected part of our language arts — speaking. Paradoxically because speaking is what most of us do most! Notwithstanding the wonders and efficiencies of technological and electronic communication — e-mailing, texting, twittering, etc. — there's nothing more powerful and effective in the hierarchy of human communication than face-to-face verbal communication. Without a sound foundation of oral communication and presentation skills, core 21st Century Skills goals would likely go unrealized. Students need to know — need to be taught — among many other things, how to introduce themselves properly, how to make meaningful eye contact, how to start and maintain conversations, how to interact with all kinds of people, how to give a successful interview, manage relationships, and eventually stand up and address a live audience with authority and confidence. Students must learn to create rapport, trust and respect.

Conclusion

“The most basic of all human needs is the need to understand and be understood. The best way to understand people is to listen to them.”

Communication involves a number of skills and no one is a complete – effective communicator. Each individual can become a better communicator by sharpening his skills through learning and practice. Preservice teachers’ reflection of their communication strengths and weaknesses will ultimately have implications in their self-confidence when they stand in front of the class. In addition, the multilingual environment within and outside the classroom has an impact in the language choice and language use of teachers.

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