

M.ed 4TH sem. Course no: S.C.5.

Unit: 3: Theories of classroom communication.

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TOPIC: Theories of classroom Communication.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this topic, student will be able to understand following major theories of communication related to education.

1. Mathematical theory.
2. Information theory.
3. Free press and social responsibility theory.

Communication In The Classroom

Whatever age we are, we go to school to learn. And no matter the type of student, learning depends on good communication. Take a moment to think about your experiences as a student in the classroom. Did you ever struggle to understand or communicate with the instructor? What were some of the barriers in

communication? Perhaps the teacher was very strict and that made you fear punishment. Or maybe the environment in the classroom was too competitive and that made it hard for you to ask questions.

COMMUNICATION THEORIES

After having studied the meaning, the process, and the techniques of communication, it is reasonable to examine various theories of communication which are directly or indirectly related to education. As mentioned earlier education is a process of communication and to understand this process for its further development it is necessary to study the relevant theories of communication. We do not intend to propagate those theories nor shall we explain them from the viewpoint of the discipline of communication. Rather we shall touch upon such aspects of these theories as have relevance to educational practices. What follows is a brief description of four theories - two of which are directly related to education (viz. mathematical theory, and information theory), and two of which have only an indirect bearing on education (viz. free press theory and social

responsibility theory). Besides, we shall discuss their educational implications.

Mathematical theory :

The early theoretical bases of communication owe much to the views held by Shannon and Weaver (1949) known as the mathematical theory of communication, their views are based on developments in electrical systems and electronics. For them, the main channels of communication were telephone cables and radio waves. The communication process is divided into components like the source, the transmitter, the signal and the receiver. The channel is the medium that sends information from the sender to the destination by means of signals. For example, in a conversation the sender's brain is the source; the voice mechanism produces signals through spoken words and transmits it through air (the channel) and the receiver decodes the message from the signals.

Though originally applied to the fields of engineering and mathematics, this theory has been widely applied to the broader field of human communication. This mathematical theory of communication has greatly

influenced present day educational thought and practice. We may examine a few of its educational implications as follows.

Educational implications in classroom :

In the processes of teaching and learning, information is passed on from the teacher to the learners. Usually one teacher may communicate with 50-60 learners at a time. In larger classes she may communicate with 100 learners. Thus the number of people involved in a particular situation of educational communication could not be more than 101 persons. The mathematical theory of communication helped-in enlarging this number, as it helped in improving the electronic media through which information could be distributed to large populations and so the monopoly of a few in relation to educational transactions was successfully overcome. With the help of developed communication technologies, information became more widely used and effective. Besides print material, other mass communication technologies like radio and television broadcasting came to be used for quick transmission to the audience learners. Moreover, video and computer technologies have questioned the role of the teacher as the sole authority in the teaching-

learning process. Now, satellite technology has considerably overhauled and improved the process of instructional technology.

Information theory

The mathematical theory gave birth to the information theory of communication which views communication as the procedure through which one mind affects another mind or, to put it differently, the procedure for conveying a message meaningfully to the person for whom it is meant. It is a theory of transmitting signals, viz., written language, spoken words, body movements, etc. At the source one message is selected out of the many available ones in any of the available forms to be transmitted to the receiver. Provision is also made for feedback in many forms that flows from the destination back to the source, helping the communicator correct the subsequent output.

The term 'message' or 'information' is not confined to news or facts, or to whatever is taught in the classroom, but also covers any content that reduces the uncertainty and disorganization of a situation. It may even include opinion, emotion, motivation or persuasion. It even goes

beyond words to include silent gestures which are called 'forms'.

This theory emphasizes communication networks in which data are organized, ordered and related and such similarities and connections are shown as had previously not been perceived. Physical tests can be applied to verify predictions. This theory is heuristic, for it has led to new and previously unknown facts and methods.

Chute (1987) adapted the Shannon-Weaver model by adding examples of message transmission media. While retaining the basic form of the communication, Chute suggested that various media could potentially serve as the 'source' in a communication process. Chute's model is perceived as the initiator of interactive communication.

Wagner (1994) stated that the models developed by Schramm and Chute can be used to help distance educators to conceptualize the mechanics of interactive telecommunication.

Educational implications

The information theory of communication has greatly contributed to the process of teaching-learning in terms of the effect of the teacher (or even of print materials) on the minds of the learners, and the process of feedback being

provided by the learners to the teachers to improve teaching, and also by the teachers to learners for effective learning. Feedback in the classroom can take many forms including negative ones such as puzzled looks or signs of boredom like yawning which inform the teacher that the point at issue needs further clarification or that it is time to move on to another topic, or perhaps to stop teaching for the moment. Similarly, feedback in the case of distance education should be used to improve upon all the subsystems - administrative, academic and industrial.

Free press and social responsibility theories:

These theories indirectly influence the system of education in terms of the sociology of education. The free press theory originated from the libertarian theory of Siebert and others, which emphasized the freedom of printing press and its liberation from official control in the seventeenth century, and this is considered the main legitimizing principle for print media in liberal democracies. Simply, this theory says that an individual should be completely free to express himself, and should not be forced to suppress his/her feelings and emotions. She is free to give information to the press and to publish

whatever she likes. This is one of the fundamental human rights.

People are free to express themselves as long as that expression does not harm others, and the press is a means of arriving at the truth. Control of the press leads to the hiding of facts. On the other hand, the press is to be made free to the extent that it does not go against the nation. It should be free ' from unreasonable censorship but must be answerable to law.

Educational systems are indirectly influenced by this theory, in the sense that it helps the system of education through free press to bring the reality close to the learners in a learning society, and to make them aware of their rights as well as responsibilities. The aim of education is to bring about the socio-economic and political development of the nation, and a free press accelerates this process.

The social responsibility theory originated from the 'Commission of Freedom of the Press' in the United States. This theory demanded that the media - print and broadcasting - have a social responsibility and must be answerable to society through various kinds of democratic procedures. It reconciles three divergent principles, viz.,

- (i) Individual freedom and choice,
- (ii) Media freedom, and
- (iii) Media obligation to society.

Media is to be self-regulating within the legal framework of a nation along with its obligation to society, and it should avoid anything that might lead to violence or communal disturbances.

The contribution of this theory to education can be summed up thus:

Education tries to develop moral ideas and values among individuals, to provide more and correct information to them and to ensure progressive social development; and in this task the social responsibility theory of communication helps much in terms of media responsibility in transmitting correct information to all citizens who are learners and in the process of developing their moral values.

Conclusion:

Classroom communication is broadly divided into three major categories. The mathematical theory of

communication helped-in enlarging this number, as it helped in improving the electronic media through which information could be distributed to large populations and so the monopoly of a few in relation to educational transactions was successfully overcome. The information theory of communication has greatly contributed to the process of teaching-learning in terms of the effect of the teacher (or even of print materials) on the minds of the learners, and the process of feedback being provided by the learners to the teachers to improve teaching, and also by the teachers to learners for effective learning. Free press and social responsibility theory indirectly influence the system of education in terms of the sociology of education.

Self check:

1. The theory of classroom communication is mainly divided into how many categories?
2. What do you understand by mathematical theory in classroom communication?
3. How does free press and social responsibility theory affect classroom communication as per sociology of education?
4. What are the educational implications of information theory in classroom communication ?

Thank you..!

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NOTE:

Contact individually if required for Hindi explanation on Zoom video communications.

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