

**Social Communication in a Technology-Driven Society: A Philosophical Exploration
of Factor-Impacts and Consequences**

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Abstract: This paper takes an exploratory approach in examining the construct of a communication crisis stemming from the “communication effectivity gap” created by modern technology devices, contemporary communication devices and strategies, and the emphasis on speed and efficiency ideas over effectiveness and quality concepts in valuing communication as a social interaction tool for building individual and societal well-being, contributing to social progress, and understanding. The author discusses the nature of the modern communication crisis as one which is intricate, interconnected, and complex, and overlapping several areas and then discusses several factors impacting communication effectiveness and outcomes in our modern society. Finally, the author makes several recommendations for increasing communication effectiveness for individuals and organizations.

Keywords: Communication effectivity gap, communication, modern technology, effective communication, communication crisis, economical communication, Internet-driven culture, Instant messaging.

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Introduction

Definition and Importance of Communication

Communication is the most important factor shaping human destiny. Our existence would perhaps be meaningless without the ability to communicate since it is through communication that we understand self and others, our environment, our behaviors and actions, and are able to describe our purpose, feelings, and view of the world. Emanuel (2007) attempts to describe the important role communication plays in our lives: “Communication is the vehicle that allows us to recall the past, think in the present, and plan for the future. It enables us to manage our relationships with others, and to interpret and interact with our environment” (p. 1). The majority of us are born with the ability to communicate, and eventually become exposed to the tools of communication. However, we must learn how to communicate and the ways in which we learn can determine how good we are at communication, since there is a great difference between simply communicating and communicating effectively. As Emanuel (2007) notes, “Communication is a learned skill. Most people are born with the physical abilities to acquire necessary communication tools, but such potential does not guarantee that they will learn to communicate effectively” (p. 1). According to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, State of Washington [OSPI] (2010), “Communication is defined as a process by which we assign and convey meaning in an attempt to create shared understanding. This process requires a vast repertoire of skills in intrapersonal and interpersonal processing, listening, observing, speaking, questioning, analyzing, and evaluating. Use of these processes is developmental and transfers to all areas of life: home, school, community, work, and beyond” (p. 1).

The “Communication Effectivity Gap”

Communication in our modern technologically fast-paced society suffers from “social myopia” because individuals now desire fast and brief communication with less emphasis placed on appropriateness in linguistic forms, respectful and orderly expressions, and quality effectiveness which is a time-consuming venture. Time spent in social interaction which is part of the communication process has decreased dramatically in all familiar settings and social institutions; from the family to the school. As a result there is a gap between efficiency in terms of speed, and effectiveness in terms of quality communication. This can be called the “communication effectivity gap” which manifests itself in increased social and intercultural conflicts, increased misunderstandings among individuals, groups, and organizations, and many individuals at various levels with the inability to communicate effectively both in writing and speaking. Effective communication takes time and requires consideration, thought, and quality time for clear and appropriate construction which incorporates the affective and cognitive elements of spoken language. Unfortunately, in this society as in many others across the globe, there is an increasing and constantly evolving demand for speed – and our technological advances are in mass emergence dedicated to meet this demand. For example, the invention and development of the cellular phone, instant messaging, text messaging, and other forms of telecommunications networks and systems both for individual personal

and business organizational uses. While such devices and newly discovered and emerging technologies are serving us and have served us well, the very nature of who and what we are become sacrificed in the process – social beings who develop mainly through communication as the most instrumental form of social interaction and development – lose the opportunities to cooperate, share, work together harmoniously and live harmoniously as communication becomes stifled in an age where social conversation is expensive – where time means money. Given this understanding, a communication crisis emerges in our society wherein individuals and groups are not able to effectively and succinctly express themselves to each other in order to arrive at consensus and avoid and clarify misunderstandings that can lead to conflicts.

The Differences between Efficient and Effective Communication

In order for communication to achieve its purpose it must be both efficient and effective. “Efficient” means with minimum waste of time, skill, or effort, while “Effective” means having the intended effects. Efficient communication means communicating economically, while effective communication means that communication must do exactly what a communiqué intends to do. The problem with efficiency in communication in our modern society is that efficiency is synonymous with speed; saying things fast, summarizing where details would perhaps be better, delivering a 20 minute speech in five minutes, using a PowerPoint presentation to present an extended essay to a class, thus, ignoring some relevant details, etc. Efficiency, while it means with minimum waste or effort, has come to mean “be brief”, “summarize”, and “say it very quickly”. Such an approach often results in omission of relevant details, and at times curtails understanding through a lack of relevant statements or expressions. When thousands of professors and business leaders gather at a conference entitled, “How to Say Anything in Less Than 3 Minutes” the result is an over-emphasis on economical communication in terms of speed and what suffers is quality and tolerance. In addition, this need for swift communication results in individuals curtailing language by disregarding the rules of grammar, increase usage in slang, and contracted forms of speaking, and sub-standard forms of address.

Effective communication requires effort, skill, and careful construction which all take time and require individuals to invest in processes such as listening, enunciation, proper pronunciation, appropriate effortful grammatical construction, repetition, reflection, and feedback. The need and demand for speedy or economical communication constrained by time and intolerance in our Internet-Driven Culture and technologically-leaping society affect the degree to which quality effective communication is a part of our chattering away or social interaction. At a time when the entire world seems to be moving on the global electric train, the gap between ineffective communication and effective communication widens. The aim should be not to increase this gap, but to eliminate ineffective communication beginning at an individual level. Educational and other social institutions can play a critical role in this endeavor by striving to place greater value on language and the ways in which individuals communicate with each other.

The Modern Communication Crisis

There is a modern communication crisis despite the excess in information and communications technology assisted devices and advances in modes and methods of communicating across groups, organization, and cultures. This modern communication crisis is a highly interrelated, interconnected, and intricate one, overlapping with and a part of the modern leadership crisis identified by leadership authors such as Northouse (2002; *Leadership Theory and Practice*); Kotter (1996; *Leading Change*), among others. Communication is vital across all fields and especially in our globally interconnected society where a decisively business leadership model or approach has become the established way of contact for many seeking opportunities for growth and survival. With this recognition Corporate America and business leadership have significantly impacted and influenced the development and direction of communication across all facets of society. Leaders are especially influential in affecting communication modes and mannerisms through their ability to pioneer new trends through various media.

In a democratic and capitalist society where freedom of speech and expression serve as strong basis for commerce and entertainment across media channels and communications devices that transmit information and data at lightning speed, the fundamental premises of human social communication have shifted to accommodate speed, efficiency, effectiveness, and quality defined in accordance with a fast-paced society and economic costs. The emphasis placed on the socio-psychological aspects of communication has been undercut by the modern emphasis placed on time-efficiency. People nowadays value communication that is more efficient than effective, that is, speed is valued over quality points for the sake of instant impact and brevity. For example, many individuals, especially in the business world, often require communication to be “brief and to the point” and thus, seminars dedicated to “brevity” in corporate and social organizational settings became popular in the 1990s, which ironically was the value-decade.

The need for efficiency in terms of time constraints on communication by individuals and social groups has resulted in contracted language and manner of speaking, and has contributed to sub-standard idiomatic expressions in our society. This is especially true among the younger generations highly influenced by technological advances and their increasingly assimilative roles in social life. For example, the advent of Instant Messaging (IM) and Text Messaging (TM) via personal computers and cellular phones has contributed to ineffective communication as new jargons and corruptive manners of speaking affect the English Language, and certainly, the same goes for other “natural languages” across cultures. The field of education which itself has become highly adaptive to the fast-paced technological environment and the demands for swift turnover in training has contributed to the modern communication crisis; defined as a deficiency in truly effective and functional social communication that bridges the gap between and among differential groups with significant differences in opinions, perspectives, approach to understanding, and potential for inter-cultural and social conflicts. Many educational institutions must keep up with the market demand for “qualified” graduates, and yet many of these graduates lack essential communication skills and etiquette. For example, many graduates today lack the communication skills both verbally and in terms of writing skills to effectively and efficiently meet the responsibilities given to them in the workplace. This results from schools, professors, and courses which shun communication as a fundamental philosophical pillow around which

to build their training and programs. In educational settings where emphasis is placed on “saying it in as few words as possible” and students receive comments and complaints from professors and instructors such as “Your language is too ostentatious for the social sciences” or similar there is indication of a communication problem bound in institutional or individual approach to communication and understanding of the power of communication through the totality of language development and expression. “There is mounting evidence that students may not be getting the kind of communication training needed for success in today’s rapidly changing world” (Emanuel, 2007, p. 1).

Problems communicating effectively do not solely stem from institutions and individuals, but are further derived from a societal cultural problem. In American society slang has become so popular for example, that the underdeveloped English Language remains frozen in time. When the Oxford Dictionary decided a few years ago to include slang terms in its volume it became a clear indication of the power of subcultural language influence on communication. In American society where R&B music; hip hop and all sort of modern slang-cultural art forms have dominated subcultural groups and media, the impact on communication effectiveness has been extremely negative in terms of quality perception. As a society we are no longer “preoccupied” with taking time to communicate in grammatically and respectfully correct language because this simply takes too much time, and besides, many fear being seen as “old-fashioned” or “nerdy” while others simply lack the ability and training linguistically, socially, culturally and educationally to communicate competently according to standard proper language and proper expected modes of expression.

The communication crisis in American society and across the globe exhibits itself in several forms, ranging from intercultural and social conflicts, negotiation failure, lack of cooperation among individuals and groups, the inability of leaders to positively influence and motivate followers to meet organizational mission and goals, misunderstanding overlapping issues of culture, religion, politics, economics and environment, and failure in education and industries. Failure in education is one of the most serious issues that fundamentally complicates, sustains, and increases the communication crisis and its effects and impacts. According to Emanuel (2007) “Although faculty, administrators, and potential employers express concern about students’ lack of good oral communication skills, few universities have implemented campus-wide requirements to develop these skills” (p. 1). When individuals are not taught to recognize the importance of communication and develop their communication skills at the basic levels of the formally and informally established institutional levels, these individuals venture into the corporate and global world with the same deficiencies that become the sources for ineffective and failed communication or become weak communicators, hence adding to a world already packed with so many factors and “reasons” for misunderstanding. We need effective and effortful, respectful and quality communication since “It is through communication that collaboration and cooperation occur” (OSPI, 2010, p. 1).

While leadership and business literature and writings have dominated much of the academic literature of the past two decades 1990-2010, the recognition of the need for understanding the role of communication in business and leadership, and in our globally competitive society predominantly built on ideals of the educated business manager or MBA has been underemphasized. However, Raines and Ewing (2006) recognize the need

to “overcome difference, build rapport, and communicate effectively with anyone” through “The Art of Connecting” and this art is basically one which is, and involves communication and communicating. Many leaders in both public and private organizations fail to recognize one important fact because they view human communication as natural and do not see the need to place emphasis on managing communication as they do knowledge. This simple fact is that communication is extremely important to the success of any organization (DeWine, 2001). Given this understanding, communication failure has been instrumental in familial conflicts and breakdown, corporate failure, as well as political failure in American and other societies. There are several factors that impact communication effectiveness. These are: technology, leadership, entertainment, language and subcultural change, values and attitudes, and education and intellect (*Figure 1*).

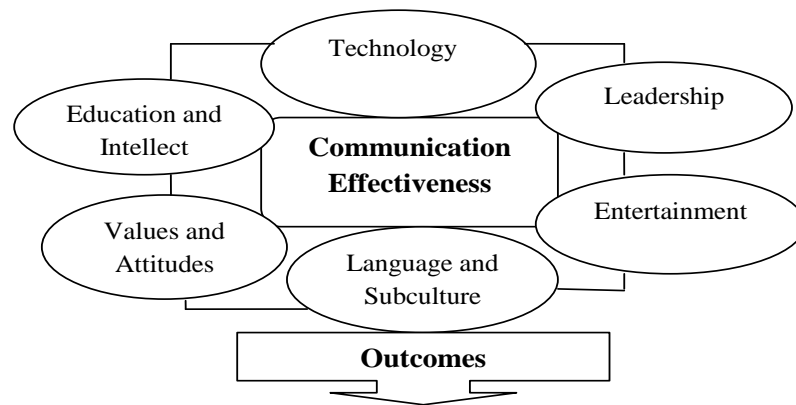


Figure 1: Factors Impacting Communication Effectiveness and Outcomes

Factors Impacting Communication Effectiveness and Outcomes

Technology

Technology drives progress and communication is one of the major factors which drive us to create more and better technology. In order to progress and survive in a changing world we must find better ways of expressing ourselves - communicating - and modern inventions have been instrumental in aiding this process. From the computer and the Internet to our radios, televisions, satellites, cellular phones and cellular-like devices, we are able to communicate across the globe in an instant, sending email, IMs and text messages, and other sophisticated electronic cues. However, technology has also had a negative impact on communication by motivating us to value speed – fostering instant gratification and even impatience in communication. We have become so accustomed to having things quickly that we are becoming more and more intolerant to what we often see as “long-windedness” in others who take time and effort to communicate properly and respectfully. Technology should serve us as an assistive tool to increase communication efficiency and effectiveness rather than as a means of “bypassing” correctness in form and compromising quality. When individuals allow technology to

absorb the human element in communication they are misusing technology and affecting their own personal growth and development and those of their dialogical counterparts.

Most of us encounter examples of the deficiency impact that available and emerging technologies have on communication and communication quality. For example, the absence of the natural or human voice in the communicative process has become the norm as artificial devices from a simple beep to a sophisticated melody replace the voice of the person or persons on the other end. We are bombarded with text messages with broken language – the new kind of shorthand evident in messages such as “Wassup?” (How are you doing; What is going on?) and “Ttyl” (Talk to you later), which are in themselves a bit far off from the caring traditional and passionate ways of inquiring about others’ well-being in courteous and caring ways. These are not restricted to the technologically-oriented communicative speed devices such as IMs, iPods, and cellular phones from which they come fueled by convenience, but are brought over into our writing, and have even become a part of many regular English Language dictionaries and ways of speaking even in professional and academic settings. The ideology behind promoting such vagaries rests on the idea of adaptation, change, acceptance, and progress. However, the major question is, “How are we absolutely progressing on a social and intellectual level when language as the very instrument of human conscious progress is being degraded to primitive and basely expressions from sources neither grounded in learning or culture?” Many will argue that it is the “new culture” of things that matters. However, for many who are educators, they have fully seen the effects of the negative impact of convenient and misused assistive technology on human learning and social communication. Many students are deficient in their ability to write, effectively use college textbooks, express themselves clearly, and interact on an emotionally intelligent level because language and communication deficiencies are the consequences of being able to perform technical functions such as “copy and paste” “IM-ing” and “Text messaging”. Recognizing this, responsible educators are in a position to foster changes that will improve communication at the school-level by restricting the degree of technological usage and counter-cultural modes of expression in writing and speech during task performance involving communication on all levels.

Leadership

Leaders are individuals who inspire shared vision, model the way, encourage the heart, challenge the process, and enable others to act (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). They influence and motivate their followers through effective communication. Leaders who are unsuccessful have not mastered “The Art of Connecting” or communicating effectively with their followers. They fail to understand the core principles of human communication and have not taken the time to effectively communicate their visions to followers or to fulfill the other actions of the communication process such as listening, speaking, repeating, reflecting, and providing adequate feedback, etc to their followers and partners. Effective communicators will more likely make effective leaders because they understand the need to place quality effort in communicating with their followers. When leaders do not value communication and lack the ability to listen to their followers and speak in ways that connect with others they are unable to influence their followers to achieve organization goals. Most leadership failures can therefore be linked to ineffective

communication. Leaders influence communication trends by the way they act and communicate. For example, a leader such as Barack Obama, the 44th president of the United States is technology savvy and his use of the Iphone and Ipod has influenced many Americans in their communication technology use and appreciation for electronic communication. However, leaders of his kind and profile must also communicate to followers the importance of the human-side of communication and the “assistive” rather than “dominating” role of technology in social communication.

One group of leaders with great responsibility in positively changing and influencing communication, especially in the younger generations or generations X and Y, are educators, including superintendents of school districts, principals, professors, and teachers who must impress upon their pupils with maximum authority, the importance of communication as part of the teaching and learning process. In many educational settings the quest for multiculturalism and diversity has produced some negative effects that we are unaware of in our bid to accommodate everyone. We no longer aim for a singular proper standard on what constitutes appropriate and respectful communication because we must embrace cultural relativism as the new deal of a global society. With this perspective, leaders no longer need to be excellent orators, listeners, and writers who can use communication as a social mechanism to inspire and encourage their followers to share their visions. This perhaps explains why so many Americans were impressed with Barack Obama during his campaign and after, thinking that he is probably one of the greatest orators of all times because they are used to hearing and interacting using the emerging and current “techno-driven language” of a culture and society that have forgotten the link or connection between thought expression and action or behavior that influence and impact change on a deeper conscious level. Leaders of yesteryears were strong and the strength of their arousing passion and influence was mainly derived from communicative fluency that touched our hearts. Understanding this connection requires us to reflect on some of the greatest speeches that have influenced the American journey, from the “I Have A Dream” of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to the John F. Kennedy “1961 Inaugural Speech”. Leaders of today must make the effort to put both heart and a spirit of pride in language and communication that will inspire their constituencies to follow their actions as they model the way.

Entertainment

Entertainment has never been more diverse and globalized at any other times in history than in our present time. With technology and various media to broadcast our programs and events around the world the various forms of entertainment from sports to movies, from stand-up comedies to R&B songs are shared with the rest of the world. Part of this sharing is the sharing of language and expressions; communication becomes universal through satellite television and other telecommunications tools. The downside of this is the sharing of substandard expressions through our art forms. When this happens we spread communication ineffectiveness as “corrupt informal expressions” with variant meanings become ingrained in the psyches of individuals learning the English Language, as well as those yet to be proficient in its usage. This holds for other cultures and their languages as substandard expressions affect communication across their various social and cultural groups. Entertainment has had a significant effect on the

trend in communication by promoting the types of technology we use in communicating, the modes of expressions we employ, how we respond to and address others, and how we value time, speed, and quality in communication. We sometimes emulate actors and other celebrities in the way they communicate when oftentimes they may not be good examples of effective communicators. For example, young children and teenagers often emulate many rap artists and “thugs” in the way they speak and express themselves in their songs and speech, and this affects their ability to communicate effectively to others speaking and understanding standard English or who are second language speakers.

The counter-normal or countercultural seems to do extremely well in the entertainment world and social creativity no longer lies in the proper rhythm of elegant, respectful, and patient communication, but in personal styles that are based on a kind of defiance to what is or was once defined as proper and respectful. The idea is to give each individual proprietary right to develop and create his or her unique linguistic expression that emerges in popular media culture to become the new way of saying things; a kind of poetic licensing in language and communication that surpasses even the credence and latitude given to some of the greatest masters of language and communication in our history. The most disturbing aspect of this poetic licensing process is in recognizing the values and educational levels of these entertainers and “artists” who are changing our modes of communication and expression. Some are often without significant levels of formal education and lack any understanding of how they are impacting young minds by curtailing their capacities for mental expansion as language becomes the major deficiency in their ability to learn and extend their understanding through dialogical processes. For example, many African American youths even after extensive periods of formal education and language training are still unable to develop reasonable fluency in English Language speech and writing because entertainment in the forms of rap music and movies, clubs, and daily interactions predicated on Ebonics or the paralinguistic social dialects of the entertainers and media that impact their communicative capacities prevent this. Thus entertainment depending on type and socio-cultural elements can significantly impact communicative intelligence both positively and negatively.

Language and Subcultural Change

Language must be progressive rather than regressive when it comes to development. Language must continually evolve and advance to facilitate conscious growth individually and collectively. However, what we see happening in 21st century society is a case where languages are struggling to maintain themselves free and uncorrupted of the influences of sub-social groups whose abrasive expressions have seeped into our homes and schools through entertainment and various media outlets and technologies. The English Language has an extraordinary breadth for development and expression at an advanced affluent level of eloquence. However, the value being placed on eloquent expression in contemporary American society is not notably high, and this perhaps stems from an anti-intellectual cultural atmosphere prevailing among the average majority which prefers corny jokes over hearing a profoundly written academic essay. The change from a mother culture once developed by learned men and women to subcultural elements geographically dispersed across states and cities has resulted in language deviation among groups and classes of people. This act as a barrier to effective

communication where some individuals are able to express themselves eloquently, while others are only able to marginally express themselves. The formulation of a communication barrier acts as an obstacle to understanding and can result in conflicts between different classes of people as far as education level is concerned. Thus, language and subcultural changes are factors that affect communication effectiveness by affecting modes of expressions and how certain groups adapt themselves to culture and change.

Subcultural changes have been dominating the American and global landscapes as intercultural mergers and assimilations change the dynamics of communication. Language is a facilitative medium which enables understanding among individuals. The degree to which this medium becomes facilitative should depend highly on moral-philosophical and legal thresholds. For example, language in its proper and respectful form as human communication relative collective definition according to a culture or group, should not facilitate decadence or profane expressions that subject its users to abuse, harm, ridicule, or restrict their ability to transcend consciousness and mind beyond a certain level because that language has failed to evolve beyond what can be thought of as basely and perfunctory. Subcultural impositions on language should be restricted to the degree where a language lacks the capacity to express socially and culturally entrenched ideas and thoughts, which otherwise than in a standard and appropriate respectful mode of expression per the standards of correctness and progress, cannot be expressed otherwise without regressing to a less evolved or intelligent mode and manner of communicated output.

Values and Attitudes

Our values and attitudes affect how we communicate and whether or not our communication is effective or ineffective. When we have positive attitudes stemming from values that recognize others and their needs we are better able to shape our communication to respond to them. Values which stem from beliefs that communication is one of the most important tools in human growth and understanding will motivate us to want to listen and speak in ways that allow us to convey information clearly and effectively to others. Those who do not value the opinions and feelings of others are more likely to expect communication to be speedy and will place less consideration on communicating effortfully with others. Effective communication demands motivation and positive thinking and an attitude of tolerance to deal with differences. Valuing communication means that we value human feelings and respect others enough to take time and effort to communicate in ways which bring optimum results in understanding and agreement. Negative attitude creates an air of hostility and contempt, and both hostility and contempt are natural barriers to communication, and moreover to effective communication.

Effective communication requires time and patience, and values and attitudes affect how much time and patience we are willing to spend in the communication process. Individuals who, for example, value listening, understanding, and respecting others' perspectives and who care about the well-being and appreciate others' feelings are more likely to spend more time in communicating with effort and sincerity. The attitudes of such individuals will most likely be positive and supportive and they strive to develop effective messages and provide effective feedback in the communication process. On the

other hand, individuals who place less value on listening and are more concerned about expressing their own perspectives than understanding others, and who have little to no respect for their communication counterparts, will rush communication and establish and foster artificial and social barriers to understanding. For example, such individuals would be more apt to using technology devices such as cellular phones, IMs, email, and the like which are artificial or distancing communication or social barriers. In this way, they maintain control of the communication or conversation and can rudely or abruptly end conversations where they find displeasure or disagreement. Communication is not supposed to be an easy process, but a process that facilitates differences and fosters understanding. The most effective communicators are often individuals who have learned how to deal effectively with differences and the conflicts that arise between individuals in the social dialogical process.

Education and Intellect

Education and intellect are factors that can affect communication and individuals' capacities for effective communication. Highly educated individuals are often effective communicators in both oral and written expressions; they are able to say and write what they need to convey to others in beautiful ways. Literacy is an important factor affecting progress in our society and there are varying levels of literacy among individuals which can affect their ability to communicate effectively as well as efficiently. Many uneducated individuals or non-literate individuals are unable to communicate effectively orally, and are unable to write to express themselves. Such individuals can still communicate effectively to a limited audience and in a limited way. While writing is an effective and enjoyable method of communication, speaking or the ability to speak is the most basic form of communication. However, not everyone has this fundamental or basic ability. Some individuals who are unable to speak are limited in how they communicate and must use symbols, sign language, or technology-assisted communication devices. An example is the famous Physicist Dr. Stephen Hawkins who uses a computer-audio device for speech. Here we see technology acting in its intended role, as an assistive device in communication.

Communication aids are valuable in educating individuals by conveying knowledge over distances as well as in face-to-face interactions. Professors and teachers, trainers and managers use various technology communication tools to reach their students and employees. In a society where intellect is highly valued communication will advance through continuously advanced developments in language and the value placed on fluency and eloquence. The alternative also stands true in societies where both academicism and intellect are not valued. Individuals who are intellectuals strive to advance the ways in which they communicate and will place value on being understood. Therefore, they communicate with adequate details and effortfully.

The degree to which education and intellect affect communicative skills can be seen in individuals with differing educational levels and capacities for intellect. For example, differences in the ability to communicate effectively can readily be seen between and among individuals at the various stages of Piaget's theory of human development. That is, we can clearly observe differences in communicative skills and abilities among individuals in the Sensorimotor (birth - 2 years old), Preoperational (age

2-7), Concrete Operations (age 7-11), and Formal Operations (beginning at ages 11-15) stages of development based on educational and intellectual differences. In the same way, we should expect to see differences in the communicative skills and abilities between an undergraduate student and a doctoral student, a professor and a graduate research or teaching assistant, and between a scholar and a miner, unless that miner is of course also a scholar or a miner with superior learning, education, or refined intellect.

In American society and many nations around the globe a trend toward declined interests in intellectual values and the fast-paced delivery modes and methods of formal education are eroding eloquence and communicative skills, especially at a highly interactive and emotionally intelligent level, since we are now more connected by technological devices and wireless communication technologies than by social bonds of respect, trust, and understanding. Furthermore, the declining or changed requirement in quality and quantity of writing between the past and present in educational institutions is also an important factor which impacts communicative skills. Nowadays many individuals are used to computer-based standardized tests, while in the past, essay writing or compositional models were highly used across school levels to assess knowledge and the ability to use language. Communication was a curriculum-wide initiative in the pre-technology education system where individuals' proven understanding and learning were only evident in the ability to succinctly express such through written and spoken language.

Conclusion

Communicating effectively requires us to understand "The Art of Connecting" with others. We must understand that we are social beings and that communication is the major process of social interaction through which we grow, learn, and experience the world and each other. Raines and Ewing (2006) believe that being effective at connecting with others, who are unique and different from us, requires "far more of us than a set of skills" (p. 39). It requires us having certain beliefs, expectations, and assumptions – in other words – we must have a philosophical understanding of the purpose and importance of communication to individuals and based upon this understanding, shape our attitude and value toward the communication process. Understanding that communication is a dialogical process requiring listening, repetition, reflection, tolerance, etc, and whose totality affect individuals' state of being and outcomes, we will then make greater efforts and take more time to communicate without the unnecessary emphasis placed on speed that impedes understanding and clarity.

Effective communication is within our grasp as each of us can learn how to communicate effectively by overcoming our differences, building rapport, and understanding the philosophy and essence of communication as a social tool which builds us socially and intellectually. Communication bridges the gap between and among peoples and cultures and the many sources which are cause for conflicts. We must understand that technology brings unprecedented opportunities and advantages to communication, but can also bring disadvantage when we overvalue technology and undervalue the human social elements in the communication process. Effective communication must be efficient, yet must not be based on the need for economy, but more on the need to foster clarity and understanding between and among individuals.

Recommendations

In order for organizations and individuals to grow and survive they must value communication and make extraordinary efforts to communicate effectively with their members and partners. Leaders in 21st century society play pivotal roles in fostering effective communication by influencing trends in communication and modes of acceptable expressions. Many individuals are influenced by the media and various television and other personalities in how they respond and react to others during the dialogical process of social interaction. Effective communication requires careful planning, understanding of human behavior, motivation, positive attitude, valuing others and the processes of listening and speaking, time and effort, and technological know-how in an age of globalization and technology advances. Individuals and organizations can develop and foster effective communication through the following methods:

- (i) Putting the focus on the other person or group during communication;
- (ii) Creating an atmosphere for unhurried conversation;
- (iii) Respecting other individuals by valuing their perspectives;
- (iv) Accepting different beliefs, values, and lifestyles;
- (v) Listening carefully and thinking before responding to others;
- (vi) Having a clearly defined purpose in communication;
- (vii) Responding to communication cues and relating to others' experiences;
- (viii) Building trust and being responsive to the other party's needs;
- (ix) Constantly developing their capacity and threshold for language and communicative skills;
- (x) Practicing effective communication skills through increased reading and writing activities;
- (xi) Becoming part of groups and organizations dedicated to the practical and academic study and advancement of communication, for example, the American Communications Association (ACA), debating and language groups, etc; and
- (xii) Understanding the full impact that language and communicative skills have on individual experiences, development, and progress both socially and intellectually.

Effective communication will help us in resolving conflicts and in being more successful at negotiations in a society where business is everybody's business. We encounter individuals from different cultures and social backgrounds with differing values and beliefs and must know how to communicate effectively for our own personal growth and survival. Effectively communicating with others fosters harmony and progress and is a part what we call success. Effective communication is needed for collaborative leadership to address our common problems and to create peaceful transitions into a future characterized by understanding and cooperative efforts to promote both individual and collective well-being. Communication is the key to effective and successful change!

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