INTRA-PERSONAL / INTERPERSONAL / GROUP MASS COMMUNICATION

Within the framework of a social set-up, human beings interact with each other through communication. So 'communication' has been termed as the fundamental social process. Any discipline or field of study that deals with human society and human behaviour is necessarily concerned with this process. The sub-system of education functions within a broader system - that of society. To understand human behaviour for effective teaching and learning, it is necessary to understand the processes of human communication.

Education is also a process of communication between the individual and society, communicating desirable social standards and human knowledge from the latter to the former over a period of time. In distance education too (though it takes place outside the classroom) teaching-learning takes place between the distance teacher and the distance learner through the process of mediated interaction and other means employed by the system. So, to understand and improve upon this two-way communication for effective learning, it is important to study the processes of communication and a few theories that have direct or indirect bearing on the disciplines of education and distance education.

Communication

The earlier meaning of communication (derived fiom the Latin word 'communicare'-means 'to make common') has undergone many changes, which have made its meaning broader and more complicated. For example, Theodorson and Theodorson (1969) stated that communication as a process of transformation of information ideas, attitudes or emotions from one person or group to another or others premarily through symbols. Schramm, (1 97 1) conceived of communication as a process of transferring feelings, motivations, ideas and knowledge from one mind to another, in a way in which the receiver was seen as a passive agent.

But the latter concept of the audience as passive listeners appears tosbe baseless, since as some of them may well refuse to accept what is forced on them. And it is actually only the message and not the idea or thought that passes from the sender to the receiver. At times the message may result in change of behaviour in the receiver which was not intended by the sender.

However, the meaning that we want to derive from this definition is that communication is a process of conveying and imparting ideas and knowledge whereby there is a transfer of messages as well as ideas from one mind to the other(s) with the help of signs (through sight) and sounds (through hearing).

Another set of definitions stresses the influence of a system and/ or mind on the destination and/ or another mind. This influence is carried out by manipulating the alternative signals that are transmitted through the channel. The sender is free to use any signal which she thinks would influence the receiver. These signals not only cover speech - written and oral - but also pictures, music, theatre, and almost all human behaviour. For example, in a theatre show, the characters/artists manipulate various signals (e.g. speech, postures, gestures, etc.) to both entertain and influence the minds of the audience. In a broader sense, communication is the procedure by means of which one mechanism affects another mechanism. The stress here is on influence rather than a transfer.

The human relationship approach views communication as the mechanism through which human relations exist and develop. Schramm (197 l), a noted communication theorist, views it differently saying "it is the sharing of an orientation towards a'set of informational signs". Information refers not only to facts/ news or whatever is taught in the classroom, but also any content that reduces uncertainty or the number of alternative possibilities in a situation". It includes 'facts, opinions, guidance, persuasion and even emotion communicated through 'silent language'.

This communication is based on a relationship between at least two bodies - humans, animals or even machines - that are 'in tune' with each other. This relationship may not be a face-to-face one. For example, in the case of mass media there is no direct contact between the two agents of communication. I But the quality of communication in direct contact differs from that in indirect or mediated contact. Communication makes connections between persons through various forms or media. We shall touch upon these connections in sub-section 2.2.4. You will find that communication is an activity which is not limited to any static condition. We 'learn' how to communicate, and for this learning we use communication itself. This is the process that goes on in schools and colleges everywhere.

**Types of communication**

The experience of communicating can be divided into four categories based on the number of people involved in this act, viz., intra-personal, interpersonal, group, and mass communication.

Intra-personal communication

This refers to a process when one communicates with one's own self. Such communication is within the selfand to the self, e.g., thinking, working out a problem, writing diaries, etc. (Holmberg, 198 1).

Inter-personal communication

This is the communication that takes place when at least two people interact, whether face-to-face, e.g., an interview, talking to friends in a cafe, or otherwise, as with a telephone conversation etc. In this case, emphasis is laid on speech as well as on non-verbal forms of communication.

What is of Interpersonal Communication ?

Interpersonal communication is communication between two persons or between one person and a group. When communication takes place between two persons it is called Dyadic communication. Interpersonal communication is direct and not mediated by media technology. Interpersonal communication is needed for the maintenance and development of personal relationships as well as social systems. It is difficult to think of any social group functioning as a unit or group without interpersonal communication. A community or group is not merely an assortment of individuals, but a cohesive unit. It gets a sense of unity and identity as a result of communication. Relationships are created and maintained by interpersonal communication.

Basic Elements in Interpersonal Communication

Interpersonal communication may be verbal or non-verbal. In this process, both the sender and receiver are aware of the process of interaction by which messages are sent and received. We may identlfy two kinds of interpersonal communication -transaction and interaction. By transaction we mean private taUc between friends, family members, lovers etc. This kind of communication is more informal and do not need to confirm to public or social rules. In interaction, on the other hand, people relate to each other within the framework of certain established norms and rules of behaviour. These include social etiquette, religious or social norms that govern conduct, speech etc. Most relationships begin with interaction and move on to the level of transaction.

In interpersonal communication the process of sending and receiving takes places almost simultaneously, so much so it is not always easy to say when a person is sending or when one is receiving a message. For instance, the one who is talking to another individual or a group besides sending messages, searches for the reaction of his audience. He adjusts the message according to the feedback he is getting from his listeners. If the listener is seen to be bored or disinterested, the speaker may skip some portions of what he wants to say, or change topics or stop speaking altogether.

The one who communicates must constantly adjust his or her message according to the reactions of the listeners-attention, ability to grasp, approval. He or she must constantly monitor the facial expressions, gestures, sounds etc. of his audience. In interpersonal communication, there is constant interaction and both the parties speak or communicate. The interpersonal communication process is flexible. For instance, a grandmother who tells tales or sings lullabies to put a child to sleep. The grandmother stops the story or the song even before it is completed, if she sees the child has already fallen asleep.

We receive most of the information about ourselves and other people through interpersonal communication. The amount of information we receive and its value will depend on the degree of our willingness to enter into communication with others and our willingness to share information with them. Interpersonal communication involves choices. It calls for making decisions. We can communicate or chose to ignore persons or groups we encounter.

For instance, in travelling in a railway compartment, we may be in the midst of strangers. We may travel a long distance without any communication, or we may strike up a conversation, and then begin to build relationships by means of interpersonal communication. Many of our acquaintances and friends are the result of efforts we have made or willingness we have shown in order to enter into interpersonal communication.

Interpersonal communication calls for skills in order to interact effectively with others. Knowledge of social norms and behaviour and etiquette, ability and willingness to listen, concern and respect for one another, willingness to share about oneself etc. are also important components which make for successful interpersonal communication.

Barriers to Interpersonal Communication

There can be several barriers that block interpersonal communication. These include I social or cultural prejudices, superiority- inferiority complexes that affect people because of religious affiliation, cultural notions about oneself, economic status, ethnic identity. In India the caste system and caste hierarchy can prevent effective interpersonal communication between people belonging to Werent caste categories. Even though such barriers block effective communication, interpersonal communication can be used as an effective means to overcome social differences.

Cultural biases constitute another barrier in interpersonal communication. The idea of racial superiority promoted by Hitler led to the killing of millions of Jews. Social barriers include prejudices against women, discrimination against the socially marginalized, the economically disadvantaged etc. Bamers in communication include also communication gap due to differences of age, mentality, and attitudes; lack of communication between mamed partners, members of a family etc. These can lead to boredom, frustration, loneliness, dejection and other personality complexes. Failure to interact effectively at the interpersonal level leads a person to be withdrawn, cut of from society. More aggressive forms of such maladjustment can even lead to violent behaviour, suicide etc. Success in interpersonal communication would mean overcoming these and other barriers. It involves both partners in the process. Inability to communicate effectively on the interpersonal level is the root cause of I many social and family disorders.. Effective interpersonal relationship can build a family and community, build up I qocial cohesion. Effective social communication equips individuals and groups with what David Riseman refers to as " internal radar": which enables one to adopt and adjoin oneself to fit into society.

Merits of Interpersonal Communication

One of the benefits of interpersonal communication is that it establishes and sustains our social moorings. When people communicate with each other effectively, they find others with whom they can associate. They develop identities, such as friends, lovers, colleagues, bosses, neighbours, family members.

* Interpersonal communication helps people fit into society and receive 'acceptance, thus get rid off loneliness and boredom. r
* It assists in accomplishing one's goals with others. Interpersonal conmunication may serve as the ground for cooperation and collaboration in achieving what we want our goals.
* It helps people to identify and follow rules of social interaction.

Our society is governed by rules. Violation of rules or our inability to follow social norms may lead to rejection and isolation. Interpersonal communication calls for skills. Skills can be acquired or learned. The ability to acquire skills and to become proficient in their use depends on several factors such as:

* Drives and needs, rewards and reinforcement,
* Perceptive and cognitive faculties, aptitudes, attitudes and environment,
* Personality of the individual: Psychological, Biological factors,
* Sociological factors,
* Learning abilities of the individual motivation and willingness to learn.

Interpersonal Communication Skills

Speech, Language

Though the origin of human speech remains obscure, with reasonable certainty we can assume that human beings were born with an instinct of speech. Vocal communication has been a siwcant step in the history of human civilization. The development of language, through its primitive form and over several centuries, contributed substantially to enhance the process of interpersonal communication. In order to use communication effectively, one needs to have effective speaking skills. Oratory or rhetoric, mastery of language and effective use of vocabulary, which form important elements in communication, can be acquired by learning and perfected by practice. Body Language: In some cultures people use their hands and face a lot to convey messages. The body language or gestures are important in order to keep the attention of the receiver. A magician or puppeteer or a clown in a circus shows how body language is an important component in effective interpersonal communication. Identification with people, empathy and understanding: Interpersonal communication can become a very creative form of reaching out to others by bringing comfort to people, alleviating their sorrow or suffering, helping them overcome loneliness and boredom. The counsellors, religious leaders, relief workers and sometimes media persons who visit people in adverse circumstances as in an accident or natural disaster do this.

Listening

Interpersonal communication involves two or more individuals and it provides a congenial atmosphere for communication. It should be two way, interactive, and mutual. Listening is an essential element of such communication. Though listening is an important element in communication, this skill is often neglected in training programmes in communication skills. Listening skills can be developed by means of training. Listening is more than just hearing the words of the speaker, but trying to grasp the meaning. Meanings are constructed by the listener, and this calls for paying attention to factors like: gestures, facial expression, silences or pauses, voice modulation etc.

Listening can improve the performance of families, industry, business etc. In a company where the supervisors and managers are poor listeners, there can be many problems. Effective listening can reduce tension, conflict, and improve the morale and motivation of the staff.

**Interpersonal communication is participatory.**

The chances of communication I breakdown are much less as the communication partners are face to face and the words and symbols are picked up and interpreted in the presence of each other. The feedback is instantaneous as expressed in the form of body language or verbal assent or dissent. ) Subir Ghosh narrates how in the days before microphones came into use, Gandhiji addressed vast multitudes in open spaces where the people in the front conveyed his words to those sitting or standing behind them. Gandhiji chose his words and timed them so as to help this process. It was extremely effective because it involved receivers of the message in the act of communication. In spite of the rapid progress in the information and communication technology 0, the most powerful and persuasive, the most effective means of communication continues to be the one in which an individual speaking to another. Recent developments in teleconferencing and electronic chat or widespread use of mobile and cellular phones are only limited expressions of the warm, intimate, personal communication. Interpersonal communication can also be used to build cooperation and resolve conflicts. Many of the social conflicts today can be traced back to poor knowledge of others - be they members of a family, religious group, political party or other social organisation. Conflict resolution and promotion of peace can be effected through interpersonal communication. In international relations and global efforts to resolve conflicts between nations, the process of interpersonal communication is being used effectively today. Persons representing the governments or the countries or other organisations, need good communication skills in bringing about the desired results. Check Your Progress I Note: a) Space is given below for your answer.

Group communication

By group communication we mean communication within and between groups of people. The groups may be small, such as a family, or large, as in the case of a committee meeting.

GROUP COMMUNICATION

What is Group? A group is a form of social organisation composed of a number of individuals identifiable by their physical proximity within recognizable 'boundaries'. An individual may belong to more than one group simultaneously. Since the large majority of us do not live alone, we consequently live in groups - all kinds of groups. (Robert Bierstedt). We have friends, acquaintances, we live in a particular place, and we have a distinct address. We have biological differences like being male or female, young or old. Our educational background, profession, economic status, religious affiliation etc. distinguish us and make us belong to one or more groups at the same time. According to Baker, a group is a number of people who have a common goal, interact with one another to attain the goal, recognize one another's existence, and see themselves as part of the group.

Kinds of Groups

Groups are divided into Primary and Secondary Groups. According to Charles Horton Cooley, primary groups are those which are composed of individuals with ntimate, personal relations and who interact face to face, figuratively and not literally. It is the degree of intimacy or social distance rather than physical distance that I determines the primary group. The family is considered a primary group. Other examples of primary group are: play groups, kinship groups, labour groups, clan , etc.

Secondary groups are all those in which individuals have formal, impersonal and I status relations. All other groups, which are not primary, are considered secondary. : In secondary groups, emotional affinity and personal involvement are less. They I have goal oriented relationship rather than person related relationships. Political parties, associations, labour unions, religious groups etc. are considered secondary i group.

Every individual is a member of primary as well as secondary group at one and same time.

Groups may be:

Statistical: According to demographic arrangements.

Societal: Composed of people who have a common consciousness of kind who are aware of the similarity or identity of the traits or characteristics that they all possess.

Social: Those in which people are actually associated with one another and have social relations with one another.

Associational groups: Members of various associations organised into groups having a formal structure. People who are conscious of common interests, who join together in order to pursue those interests.

Group communication is interpersonal communication by genre, but differs from it in form. In group communication the partners interact face to face. The persons in the group may belong to homogenous or heterogeneous group depending on their social context. Group communication can take place at formal and informal levels.

**Characteristics of Group in Relation to Individual**

There are several factors that characterise an individual's relation to the group. These include:

1. Membership: One of the ways of belonging to a group is through membership. Membership may have different implications: duties, privileges, benefits etc.
2. Dependence: Membership in a group may make a person dependent on the group for many of his needs. Members of a labour union depend on the group to improve their economic condition. Members of a political party may have thoughts of attaining power.
3. Acceptance, attraction: Individuals join groups to get a sense of acceptance. They are attracted to a particular group because they feel attracted to it due to the manner in which the members behave and interact with one another: sense of belonging, acceptance, job satisfaction, sense of fulfillment etc.
4. Volition: A member may belong to a group on a voluntary basis (as in the case of sports' clubs etc.) or may be innate (by birth) as in the case of citizenship, caste, religion etc. Even if they are imposed, one can exercise certain amount of freedom to break out of the group.
5. Pressure of groups on individuals: The groups apply pressure on individuals to belong to and to confirm to certain standards of the group. Though they may imposecertain restrictions on the individual's way of behaviour, he or she can also expect certain benefits. Thus the group and the individual mutually benefit from such conformity.
6. Change and tkxibiity: No group is rigid and static. All human groups undergo change. There is flexibility in the manner in which the group functions. Change and flexibility, however, are not arbitrarily imposed, but are evolved as a result of communication.
7. Leadership: The way the group exists and functions will very much depend on the kind of leadership it has.

**The Role and Function of Leader in Group Communication:**

Leadership is explained a process by which activities of the group are coordinated, members are motivated and certain tasks are accomplished. The leader may exercise power or position to enforce these or persuade the compliance from the members. The role of a leader is pivotal in the functioning of a group, setting up goals, attaining them, improving the quality of communication and interaction among the members, building cohesiveness of the group.

The leader leads the group in task oriented roles which include:

- Initiation of discussion

- Giving and receiving information

- Elaboration and clarification

- Orientation and summarization

- Tests of consensus

A leader also exercises maintenance roles such as:

- compromising

- Supporting and encouraging

- gate keeping

- standard setting and testing

**Group Discussion and Communication**

Group meetings and discussions have become part and parcel of seminars and conferences. They are used to increase participation by which everyone is involved in the process of evolving ideas and plans, planning activities or problem solving. When a group discussion is conducted effectively, a variety of points of view emerge. In general people prefer the democratic and participatory process of decision making and governance. People tend to accept more easily a decision taken by a committee or a group rather than one individual. Individuals accept more easily decisions arrived at through a process in which they have participated.

The process may be time consuming and expensive. The process of arriving at a decision may necessitate several sessions, much time as well as cost.

A discussion may be conducted in various ways depending on the purpose and the participants.

**Committee**

A committee may be a small group appointed for a purpose and is expected to study a problem, collect facts, make decisions, report to the general assembly, propose recommendations, effect changes etc. as the mandate given to it may indicate. A committee may be appointed for a short period of time to investigate or study a particular problem. (the government sets up committees to study corruption charges, crime, accidents etc.) Committees appointed or elected to govern or oversee the functioning of organisations may be given stipulated period of time, one year or more. (managing committee of a school, the parliamentary committee for revision of salaries, the constitutional review commi4 'ee etc.) A committee is normally headed by a chairperson or a president.

**Conference**

A conference is a much larger group than a committee. Hence it is also more formal. A conference may affect a wide variety of people and cover issues of importance to the participants. A conference may last longer than a meeting. It may have experts to present papers, guide discussions and propose suggestions. If the number of participants are too large to have proper interaction, sessions or discussions ma) be held in smaller groups.

**Group Meetings**

One can master the basic skills and techniques for organising a meeting and conducting a group discussion. Those who are inexperienced should begin with small groups.

**The Composition of the Group**

The composition of the group and the ability of individuals in the group are the most important factors that determine the quality of communication in the group. The members should have some kind of common objectives, homogeneity in terms of the issues discussed. However, the group should have a good representation of the various sections of society or audience which is concerned with the issue. The group should also be briefed ahead of tirne about the agenda of the meeting, the objectives and the goals to be achieved.

**Chairperson of the Meeting**

The chairperson of the meeting or the group leader has certain responsibilities towards the group. He or she should have a good and clam temperament and skills and knowledge to conduct a meeting well. We list below some of the qualities that he or she should have:

* Encourage discussion and ensure everyone is invited to share his/her views and opinions.
* When a member wishes to disagree, it should be done without offense.
* Create an atmosphere where each one can express himself/ herself freely, audibly, concisely.
* The chairperson must make sure that everyone pays attention and that order and decorum is maintained while someone is speaking.
* Ensure brevity and conciseness.
* Time management is a skill the group leader ought to master. The sessions should not be unduly long. If the issues being discussed require more time, a break could be taken. If required, another meeting could be fixed. It is better to get a consensus of the group members for taking such decisions.

The leader of the group or chair person should, in other words:

* Promote informality in the group.
* Display calm and patience even when things may go out of controL
* Invite members to listen to the views of others.
* Restrain from commenting on what each one has said or add one's views too frequently.
* Avoid taking sides or indicating in any way that you are partial.
* Praise and comment everyone, especially the timid, the less forthcoming persons.
* It is the duty of the leader to see that the group do not deviate from the main topic. However, some warming up exercises or informal interaction may be allowed, especially at the beginning, in order to help build better intimacy and a climate of sharing.
* The leader or someone else should write down the minutes of the proceedings especially the important ideas discussed.
* Before the meeting is wound up, it is good to summarize the main points discussed, and the chairperson could briefly address the group.

If the meetings are a routine event, it is customary to start the meeting with the reading of the minutes of the previous meeting and approving it. If there are communications to be made, it could be done at the beginning of the session or at the end.

**Physical Arrangements**

The physical setting for the meeting is important to ensure effective participation. The setting may vary according to the number of participants and the nature of the meeting. In a large conference or meeting the members may be seated as in an auditorium. Even if each member is given a mike to speak, such meetings tend to become formal and the statements each one makes become isolated. Though the setting may be useful for a formal session, it is less suited to an informal discussion. There is little face to face communication or eye contact.

Hence, in order to have effective participation, the seating should be circular rather than linear. When the members sit in a circle, it enables them to have better eye contact and follow the body language and can listen to the views more effectively. Round tables, movable chairs arranged in a circular way with the possibility of movement is the best. The room should have good ventilation, lighting etc.

Visual Aids

A group meeting can be made more alive with the help of visual aids like writing boards, over head projects or slide projectors, LCD projectors, charts, maps, diagrams, figures etc. if they can contribute to better discussion.

Concluding a Meeting

The leader of the meeting should be able to summarize the major points of discussion, conclusions arrived it, if any. He or she should thank the group members for their presence and active participation.