Proposal for Sequential Study of Communication

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Abstract:This is a discussion paper offering a proposal how to in-build factors of effectiveness in curricula for study of communication. The paper proposes two types of parameters for the same. First six parameters are common in all lands while others are for success of trained communication specialists in given land with its own peculiarities.

Knowledge in any branch of studies is never gained in hermetically sealed boundaries of time, geography and culture. If the field is supposed to apply knowledge for practical application in society, its study would be a synthesis of theory and practical activities. Communication, a sequencing of noumenon and phenomenon is dominantly perceived as the process of information exchange or sharing idea between two or more entities. However the reality that the process is in fact ' a chain of events with message as the significant link' and a continuous happening is manifest in campaigns and diurnal and annual cycles of celebrations (festivals, carnivals and rituals). It is to be understood as phenomena of expression of human mind and consciousness. It leads us to the crux of communication.

Neither the process nor the chain of events can create a closure or finality in communication until the message by one is fulfilling for the other's mind and consciousness. This fulfilment may be alteration of one's perception i.e. logic of comprehending, emotion, sentiment and imagery preferences, or strengthening one's mental images or stimulating motor-nerve activities in 'the other'. This fulfilment or completeness in communication requires an extra-ordinary preparation for the communicator. The person should have an orientation which is same as that of the other . This is 'Swahridaya' in Sanskrit language referring not to heart or Hridaya in Sanskrit but to a deep desire to deliver message as per the context, affective orientation and cognitive capacity of the other. Ancient Indian concept of 'sadharanikaran' and the latin root 'communis' harp at this crux.

A closer observation further into the noumenon and phenomenon of communication brings the truth home that this is guided by scientific principles in inter-human transaction enlivening the society in all its expressions encompassing entire gamut of its activities. Both Shanon-Weaver theory and "sadharanikaran" of Sage Bharata of antiquity offer this observation in great depth. Any study of communication, for approaching closure for the time and people should develop an understanding of context, affective domain, cognitive domain, physical basis and neuro-physiological changes involved in communication.

On the basis of preceding discussion, few parameters are considered for universal and differential aspects of study of communication (SoC).

Assessing SoC for Common Needs

First parameter is accepting that like in any other area of learning and thinking i.e. processing of information, SoC should follow two basic patterns- one of rational and logical (critical intelligence), and the other of intuitive and creative (creative intelligence). For SoC, both patterns are sine-qua-non in making of a communication specialist (CS) as the fundamental to communicational success in all vocations and avocations in communication and media application depends upon creative, logical and technical competence. Any communication course, rather than being an extensive coverage of contemporary, classical and application area (political, cultural, social, marketing, development, religious, religious, gender etc.) knowledge, should identify core concepts and practice connect from logical, creative and technical needs of the occupation.

Second parameter is based on non-simultaneous functioning of two patterns in brain. SoC pedagogy following differential in methods for different requirements of information processing gets reflected in laboratory, class and field of observation and reporting. Brainstorming rules, and principle of deferred judgement are only two examples of norms governing how to instruct and

guide students for differing requirements of optimally learning different core sub-areas (advertising, corporate communication, editing, sourcing/reporting, law and ethics, culture-heritage-social context, research, writing, post-production, media organisation management, new media, cyber communication).

Third parameter is engaging whole brain in SoC instead of left cerebral hemisphere for the purpose of holistic training. The intuitive-creative right hemisphere of brain is as important as analytic and objective left hemisphere. The CS's training should be for both emotion and intelligence to attain mastery of content and procedure for the public good and private benefit.The media and amusement industry is creative; its human resource has to follow routine, yet offer creative service. From language to packaging content to planning delivery to campaign for acceptance, only persons having ability of whole brain utilisation are able to succeed in this sector. Therefore, SoC curriculum should reflect balanced load, which offers use of both hemispheres adequately.

Media industry is shifting from dominance of centre-periphery relationship between producer and audience to shifting-center-no-periphery relationship prevalence due to interactive, instantaneous, remediating, tele-action and co-creation based participation enabling media platform. This brings back traits of folk media and group communication in virtual mode. The role separation between media manager and CS is no longer valid. Therefore, the fourth parameter of SoC is to offer knowledge and practice based tasks to students which would make them understand and practice the role of executive-manager who would take decisions about sourcing-processing-packaging-delivery as well as create content and package. The pedagogy should reflect this field reality through virtual and non-virtual simulation techniques.

The fifth parameter is to assess how far SoC is able to train would-be CS in convergence mode so that the person becomes capable of doing work for multiple communication modes and media platforms with same generic content. While sourcing the content may take long research and capturing, the achievement of the same becomes the seed of packaged content, a practice highly valued in 21st century industry. How does pedagogy of production related core areas, such as print, audio, audio-visual, and cyber media, offer time and content sharing practical activities to ensure more thinking space is the challenge here. Once teachers come together to decide this for students, the time for other joyful and challenging co-curricular activities would be available to them. It would further enhance quality of internalising principles, informing every sub-area. This parameter demand a fine understanding of communication mode and media platform specifics and synergy, such as for radio programme using words, offering identification of visuals or images from listener's memory.

Next parameter, in an increasingly techno-dependent industry scenario. It is about co-ordination of 'hand, heart and head' where operational skill in media software is not mechanical but creative and handling equipment of capture are driven by visualisation of the essence of situations. Technology here is to be used as an aide to deliver essence of the happening or issue to the audience. How this is achieved? This leads us to in-depth understanding of communication design for every media production, which involves assessment of audience context. SoC curriculum must spell out how this is achieved.

Effective Communication Needs

Six parameters discussed above are common for assessing needs in SoC across the globe with minor variations in stress on types of media and communication modes prevalent. However, effectiveness in communication is not a matter of technology and inherent techniques and tools only. It is more the function of discovering personal meaning in behaviour and worldly phenomena by the CS and weighing how does the same impact members and systems in society, because the CS aspires to be an influencer, a change stimulator and an informant of deviances.

Such personal meanings are actually based on combinations of perceptual treasure of family, social and racial memory along with experience in classroom and through exposure to other environment. And for CS unlike students in other branches, the challenge lies in comprehending lowest common factors of personal and communitarian meanings of the others whom the

specialist wants to influence and change. For CS, most important competence is stepping into the shoes of the others.

The failure of many a communication policy and strategy prescriptions in media programming and development communication handled by CS proves divergence between target audience and communicator with respect to decoding the program or campaign encoded by the CS. While wrong selection of media and specific platform is often identified faulty, such divergence stems from more reasons. The reason may be failure of assessing appropriate goal of communication, message misfit for the phase of communication, inappropriate encoding or selection of communicators lacking common orientation with audience arising from perceptual disjunction and ethical mismatch.

Context Assessment

Against these pitfalls, the parameter of context offers course effectiveness assessment tool. The course offered for understanding context should essentially be a course of common orientation with society, in which CS is supposed to work for change with stability. It has an appreciation to action pathway ideally which is supposed to reflect in practical components across media and services such as campaigns. However it is often crippled by the zest of faculty to offer a distinct ideology in course treatment. Rather a fair comprehension of the civilisational strands helps much.

This offers a debate whether in SoC, from country to country or from continent to continent the curriculum should reflect variation based on civilisational realities. Reports of failure in campaigns or development communication strategies, which replicated others are not few and far between, indicating training of CS to lack in this quotient. Communication is unlike other studies because day in and day out communication is the trans-phenomenon behind every human activity, be it state craft, economy, relationship, health practice, literature, art, scientific exploration, music, education or informing and entertaining people. All such human activities have been carried through thousands of years in different hemispheres of the earth in distinct ways arising out of variations in nature, geography, human environment and degree of ease in conducting activities. Spectrum of human communication in societies, also differ in preferences of mode and media. The stimuli of situations and responses also differed. How does such nuances be factored in SoC to make graduates able to solve problems and issues facing their people leveraging peculiarities of the land?

Quotient of Culture

Metaphors (analogies and similes) are cultural creations, instruments of driving point home about relationship between different objects and situations. Same perceptual inference arises from shared given experience, in-group perceptions, judgements and actions stabilise under such situations through repeated occurrences. Exposure to series of events (occurrences of few presentational activities around an objective in time duration) in which correlating visual and bodily activities creates experience. Such experience offers recognition of spatial dimension of environment and body image. Such activities in specific environment make us learn perceptions and de-learn earlier perceptions over repeated negation of earlier environmental setting. How much of negation would help de-learn the culture of a specific environment and shared activities and thoughts therein is not certain. As we live life of short duration, intimate acquaintance with many culture is almost impossible. As the perceptual experiences in different cultures differ, so inferences ingrained in memory within one culture differ from other culture.. Difference between languages, rituals and in practising same occupation, invariably hint at differential in communication too. The perceptions, judgment and behaviour of one society or community thus stabilises, which can't be defied by CS.

Training for understanding cultural reality in communication application assumes importance in SoC. Hence every course must assess its relevance to the society on the basis of its plan of training CS for a cultural fitness. From laboratory and field work to books for reading, all should be assessed for such a fit.

Diversity and SoC

The preceding discussion brings a vital question to the fore- whether a country should copy another country's SoC lock stock and barrel or decide between universal and culturally-conditioned aspects? This question is difficult to answer completely within the so-called boundary of communication and media education. We have to search the answer in collaborating with philosophy, normative tendencies and culture of celebration, expression and representation within. A comparison between different cultures' differing orientation towards same phenomenon would illustrate the point. Three or four persons confiding in a close circle is viewed differently in India and USA. While in USA it would be perceived as a conspiracy in progress or planning wrong things, in India in-group intimacy and a moment of joy would come immediately in thought of the viewer.

The inherent structure of Curriculum

As communication often fails due to misfit between communication objective and message, so is true for an SoC curriculum. Whether a two semester or four semester program, sequence of introducing contents should be in sync with vision of the curriculum and objectives of each course paper. The holistic approach where the first semester components are for an overall understanding of integral nature of communication, and its diverse possibilities of expression and representation in different platforms starting from human as media may help in proper appreciation of the phenomenon and its field. Otherwise, segments first approach may hinder an appreciation and application orientation for harnessing convergence mode in media application and integral phenomenon of communication through multiple action level,,even if it is carried in one communication mode only.

Conclusion

Study of Communication, considering the nature of the phenomenon should be in a sequence of holistic to segmental to convergent in pedagogy and course, as well as course unit selection to realise full potential of communication in the interest of human condition improvement in sync with ecological balance orientation. All civilisations have some same core arising out of the Sapiens experience and biology. The same is true for SoC worldwide. On the other hand, civilisational differentials have made cultures through generations and ages. Destroying the same is equal to destroying biodiversity in nature with only peril in making. The same is true for SoC; it can serve human condition improvement by accepting this truth and reflecting the same in curriculum.

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