Input - Process - Output
Model of Communication

I - Introduction

Group communication is one of the most effective ways to share information between members. There are different ways group members can carry about circulating ideas (What is Group). The best way to express these ideas are through the input process output model. This round robin theory deals with members circulating ideas and brings ideas forward. The steps of this theory are input: what information is coming into the group, process: what happens within the group, and output: how the information will be circulated back to the group. What makes this theory so effective? Each step plays a vital role in group communication and a complete understanding of the theory will influence the perception of the group.

II - Where does it come from?

The input process output model is a cybernetic system. This means it is a closed circuit theory that concludes with feedback. Cybernetic systems are best utilized in group communication. Practitioners of cybernetics use models of organizations, feedback, goals, and conversation
to understand the capacity and limits of any system (technological, biological, or social); they consider powerful descriptions as the most important result (What is Group). Two ideas we can learn from cybernetic tradition are group actions and the sum of individual actions (Littlejohn and Foss 274). Group outputs always provide feedback that affects group performance (Littlejohn and Foss 274). The input process output model falls under this category because of its roundabout discussions, bringing new ideas only makes the group stronger.

III - Input

The first step of the model is input. This is where communication begins. It consists of information and influences that come into the group. The task has a function and it starts with initiating the task (Small Group Skills). Initiating the task is where all the group members start working towards their purpose (Small Group Skills). The group members can suggest ideas and brainstorm. They can create a chart and gather information (Small Group Skills). Groups begin to fully understand the purpose of the group. They share information, ideas and group concerns (Small Group Skills). Group members may become confused so other members may need to help clarify
the situation. This is achieved by saying things such as “Do you mean that”, “Is that the same as”, “I don’t get that, can you explain some more” (Small Group Skills).

There are obstacles that affect group dynamics. There are three types of variables that affect the outcome of the group decision. The input variable affects the heterogeneity of the group.

**IV - Individuals in a Group**

Group members can be part of different backgrounds; this may alter the perception of the group based on their level of dependence. The process variable deals with how the group gets to the decision. It shows who the socio-emotional leader is to the non-dynamic members (What is Group). In a group, each individual may be assigned roles. The devil’s advocate elaborates on the task and pushes for a better decision (Small Group Skills). It is good to have a devil’s advocate because it keeps the group honest and avoids a “cheap” decision (Small Group Skills). Consultants in the group may be assigned. Consultants take a leadership position, focusing on design and research (Small Group Skills). Consultants keep the group up to date, being an individual in a group, there are personal functions you should maintain (Small Group Skills). Self-understanding is
a complete understanding of the task and the already perceived perception of the group (Small Group Skills). It is important to be an active listener in the group. Communication is two-sided: It is important to wait until the other group members say what they want to say (Small Group Skills).

**V - Input Variables**

Each member of the group is important to the overall function, and should begin to complete the goal of the group. Task always starts with analysis (Modeling Data and Process Quality). The output variable is based on member satisfaction. In the input process of the model, there are two types of problems that effect communication (Littlejohn and Foss 268). Task obstacles are the difficulties encountered by the group in finishing the goal of the group. These can vary from approval of policy and planning an event to the inability to acquire funds for a project (Littlejohn and Foss 268). When the group is together, interpersonal obstacles arise. This can be anything that disrupts the message of focus of the group. It will affect the productivity of the group. When both obstacles occur together, it is called the “assembly effect” (Littlejohn and Foss 268). The assembly effect
occurs when the conversation has many participants and many different ideas.

**VI - Synergy**

When groups are together, certain energy is portrayed in each group member. The energy can go towards the task or to an interpersonal obstacle. Raymond Catell used the term “synergy” for this group effort (Littlejohn and Foss 268). The two main types of synergy are called intrinsic synergy and effective synergy. The intrinsic synergy is energy that deals with interpersonal tasks, and effective synergy is energy focused on the task at hand (Littlejohn and Foss 268). The level of focus on the task and the attitude of the group decides if the group is strong. Dealing with problems and conflicts in the group brings separation and intrinsic synergy to the group. Managing conflict is a big part of group communication. It is important to have good group cohesiveness. Conflict occurring in a group can be disruptive. The leader must keep the group focused on the task. Conflict occurs when the group is not motivated or challenged enough to produce creative ideas (Small Group Skills). When conflict occurs, it is best to attack the problem and not the person (Small Group Skills). Avoid blaming at all times because it will create long-term
tension (Small Group Skills). If you are the group leader, you should display how you feel to avoid escalation of the problem (Small Group Skills). If the group is developing a strategy and conflict occurs, refer back to the task and remind the group what they are there for (Small Group Skills). As a group leader, you should ignore the members in conflict (Small Group Skills). When in a group, there are disruptive behaviors you want to avoid. The group member must be open to hear that they are being disruptive and change it (Small Group Skills). You do not want to block and divert new ideas. Group members should not try to fight with the leader (Small Group Skills). Avoiding strong ideas and excessive talking will only defer the obstacle (Small Group Skills). If the group member becomes too disruptive or confrontational, it is up to the leader to decide whether or not they should be removed from the group in order to maintain harmony and productivity.

VII - Process

The process is how the group gets the objective. When we process information we must be able to re-arrange and calculate the information given to us. There may be policies waiting to go through and events that slow down
the process of the group. It is the medium of the message that will decide how effective the message is.

VIII - Communication Process

There are many ways to get to the intended message. Many types of mediums can fill the process part of the model. In a restaurant, process begins with the hostess and continues with the way food is made. The goal of the communication process is to have the customers relay positive feedback about their experience. There are four components of the communication process: Encoding, medium of transmission, decoding and feedback (Sanchez, “Communication Process”). When encoding the message, you break the message down into packets of information. The transmission medium is the way in which the information is given. For example, television and charts are transmission mediums because they relay information through visual or auditory devices. Decoding is when the receiver is given the information through the medium and interprets said information. Feedback is when the receiver responds to the message of the sender.

IX - Processing Stage

The transmitting of the message is versatile. The message must be decoded by the receiver (Sanchez,
“Communication Process”). It shows how much the individual knows about the task at hand. In the processing stage, the receiver begins to interpret the symbols sent by the sender, translating the message to their own set of experiences in order to make the symbols meaningful (Sanchez, “Communication Process”). The final part of the processing stage is feedback, being the most important part of the process.

**X - Output**

Feedback is a vital role in group communication. It demonstrates how effective the group was at the task. Feedback can be verbal or nonverbal (Public Communication Campaigns). For instance, a person may tell you they do not like your message, or they may just walk out of the room, both of which send a feedback message to the receiver saying “Your presentation was no good.”

Feedback is the response to the initial task. Something as small as a smile is considered output. Without understanding if the change you made was successful, you cannot be an effective communicator (Public Communication Campaigns). Feedback is critical in group communication (Public Communication Campaigns). It can be useful in measuring the contributions of group members. You should
always consider all feedback to avoid a crisis. It is measured by the emotional effect of the task.

Output produces useful information usually in the form of documents and reports (It Management, "Input, Process, Output, Feedback"). Output can usually turn into a new input. Output is produced in many ways. You can have computers and other devices to measure data, or it can be hand written (It Management, "Input, Process, Output, Feedback"). With the completion of output, you have created the closed circuit also known as “Cybernetic systems of communication.” (Littlejohn and Foss 272).

**XI - Fishers Interaction Analysis**

Within the input process output model there are two variations. The first variation, Fishers Interaction Analysis, focuses on systemic models. The human system model looks at the individuals’ behavior of the group (Littlejohn and Foss 270). Also, there is a system of interactions model which focuses on the interactions of the group (Littlejohn and Foss 270).

The interaction has two dimensions, content and relationship (Littlejohn and Foss 270). The content dimension deals with information related to the tasks. Relationship dimension are factors such as attitudes and
known perceptions in the group. These can relate directly
to the task, or they can block the goal of the message. In
decision emergence, there are four phases: Orientation,
conflict, emergence, and reinforcement.

In the orientation phase, this is where the task is
presented and individuals understand what they need to do.
It clarifies and allows individuals to express ideas.
During the conflict phase of decision emergence is where
attitudes are displayed. Individuals begin to persuade
other members toward their feelings. There are
disagreements and arguments that happen, but only make the
group stronger when related to the topic (Littlejohn and
Foss 270). Some individuals values are solidified, it is
difficult to break the perceptions. During the emergence
phase, group objective and direction are clear. Emergence
is how groups get through the task. There is not much
persuasion that occurs in this phase (Littlejohn and Foss
270). The final part of discussion emergence is the
reinforcement phase. This is when the group decides on the
solution and begins working towards that solution.

Decision modification can happen during the process
section of the model (Littlejohn and Foss 270). Obstacles
get in the way of task goals. Members of the group can
overcome obstacles by discussion. Obstacles may be severe; groups may have to return to the conflict phase of decision emergence to fix task goals.

**XII - Effective Intercultural Work Group Theory**

Effective intercultural work group theory is another variation of the input process analysis model. It focuses on group culture and one’s diversity. The most important cultural difference found in a group are individualism, collectivism, self construal and face concerns.

Individualist group members think of themselves as an independent (Littlejohn and Foss 272). Collectivists tend to focus on group goals and not on individual goals (Littlejohn and Foss 272). This is important in group communication because you want the task to be focused on the group and not themselves.

Self construal is how group members think of themselves (Littlejohn and Foss 272). They can be either independent or interdependent. When you are an independent individual, you think of your self as someone who stands out. Interdependent member will focus on how you are connected with the ideas of others (Littlejohn and Foss 272). Problems can occur when personal goals interfere.
Face concerns also can effect the group, and how individuals manage their personal image. Self-face deals with one’s image. Other-face involves the image with other people (Littlejohn and Foss 272). Mutual-face involves concerns about the relationship between the individual and the group (Littlejohn and Foss 272).

Cultural differences make group communication harder, but a heterogeneous group that can agree is the most effective type of group. In order to have a successful group, equal participation of the individuals is needed to allow for creative thinking (Littlejohn and Foss 272). The group needs consensus based decision making and cooperative management (Littlejohn and Foss 272).

Group members need to be able to overcome obstacles. In a successful group, everyone must be respectful to each other (Littlejohn and Foss 272). With effective communications comes success. When there is equal participation, cooperation, and respectful communication, members will be satisfied and be more likely to participate in a group effort (Littlejohn and Foss 274). Variations of the input process output model are used in group communication in a myriad of tasks.

XIII - Input Process Output Example 1
The input process output is a theory that can be applied to many experiences we encounter in day-to-day activity. For example, it can be applied to a couple going out to dinner. The input can be anything to get the couple to the restaurant, such as advertising, promotions etc. Once in the restaurant, the process begins. The hostess takes the couple to their seats, the waiter comes, food is delivered, and the couple enjoys their meal. Everything in-between is known as the process.

When the couple leaves talking about the food, discussing if they will go back, this is known as the output. During the output, feedback occurs. This is where the process is tested. The couple might not come back to the restaurant if their suppers were bland, and they may also tell their friends not to go there, as to avoid having a disappointing dinner. This is negative feedback.

There are many things that affect the process, known as task obstacles. Task obstacles avoid the process. In a restaurant, it can be an inexperienced staff, new staff members, or running out of food. What the couple says the restaurant needs to improve upon can become new input for the restaurant.
This new input will affect the next process. The restaurant will need to make new changes to ensure all necessary areas addressed will be fixed. This will bring out a better experience, process, and a new output. Positive feed is what you want to achieve: The better the process, the better outcome will be.

XIV - Input Process Output Example 2

In an education model, the input process output can be used to explain cybernetic systems in the classroom. The professor assigns many projects and papers. The students are required to complete the variety of tasks the professors give. The students take time to study, prepare, and discuss the assignment. When the student start the assignment the process step begins. The process can be anything from creating the slideshow to show to the class to studying for a exam. Anything to complete the task is the process. When the students turn in an assignment, the professor grades them. This is the output. It can be measured in some instances; in this case, the student’s grades are the output. Output communicates to the professor the student’s participation and dedication to the assignment. The professor can use these grades to change the lesson plan, allotting more in-class time to focus more
on where the students struggle. This is new input for a professor to continue to deliver powerful lectures. The higher the grades, the more confident the classroom is. Even in education, there are many task obstacles that occur to avoid the process. Cybernetic systems are a continuing set of processes to have a closed loop. This occurs in the education model and many other experiences we go through in the day.

**XV - Strength / Weakness**

Input process output theory of communication is dynamic and versatile. It can be applied to many places. It is occurring all the time, and you may not realize it. The only weakness in the input process output theory is the ability or inability of the sender and receiver to understand symbols used in communication. The theory is primarily a group theory, but it can be applied to interpersonal communication. When you wake up realize its cold out your brain process’s information telling you what to wear. Understanding this theory will help you be more prepared for different situations. This theory can be applied to a lot of experiences throughout the day. The benefit of understanding this theory is that it helps you set a goal, and fight to reach it, as well as improving on
what the task originally was. With the input process output, communication is organized in a clearer way. When a theory is organized, it leads to a clearer and more perfect understanding of the goals of the group.

**XVI - Conclusion**

The importance of the input process output is an active role in our daily life. Understanding this theory and applying it will help you in organizing the steps to complete a task. The input process output theory can be measured, allowing one to build on and improve upon one’s communication skills.
WORKS CITED


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