A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION APPROACHES FOR IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

ABSTRACT

Communication affects the successful implementation of organizational change in these modern times. Yet the communication approaches involved in the change initiation, implementation and evaluation have received less attention. Implementation process is often fraught with problems that are communicative in nature. A great urgency exists to identify approaches for effectively bringing about planned change in organizational settings. As such, this article has sought to advance a stronger conceptual and empirical understanding of two communicative treatments for communicating change: linear and participatory. Therefore, this paper advances conceptual and empirical critical analysis of two change communication models (Linear and participatory) as applied to organizational change approaches and implementation. Separate examinations of these approaches will allow for theoretical critical analyses of each of their unique strengths and limitations. Specifically this work seeks to clarify the unique nature of these communication models and how they are related to the change approaches (planned and emergent) adopted by any organization. This paper also proposes the most appropriate communication approach in the modern times where organizations are operating in a turbulent, dynamic environment. The articulation of these two communicative frameworks lays the groundwork for future scholarship to measure the efficacy of these implementation approaches in applied organizational settings; a promising and fertile field of future academic research.

INTRODUCTION

Change has always been a feature of organization life, though many argue that the frequency and magnitude of change are greater now, than ever before. Both business and non-business organizations confront a world that is challenging in many ways. According to (Burnes, 2009) organizations today operate in a turbulent and continually changing environment. Nilakant, and Ramnaryan (2006) observes that managers today face three challenges: Increased competition for an organizations resources; Business firms today face increased competition in their markets and for their inputs. Non-business organizations face competition for their funds. Secondly, these organizations have to compete in a world that is constantly changing. Globalization, technological changes and unanticipated events have rendered the world uncertain and unpredictable. Over the years globalization has resulted in greater degree of inter-connectedness between markets, economies and countries. This means that events in other parts of the world have the potential to affect organizations resources. Revolutions in information and communication technologies have the potential to enhance or destroy an organization core capabilities. In addition there are unanticipated events such as wars epidemics and global terrorism that can have negative impact on organizations operations.

Thirdly, organization’s environment is also unpredictable; competition may arise from nowhere, customer preferences and community standards may shift in unexpected ways. New legislations that impact on business and non-business organizations may be introduced. Therefore, the only certainty in a changing world is that you cannot escape change. Change is inevitable and desirable in a progressive environment. Especially the strategic change that focuses on broad, long-term and organization wide issues, and takes place within the context of the external competitive economic and social environment, the organizations internal resources, capabilities, culture, structure and systems. Its successful implementation requires thorough analysis and understanding of these factors.

Overall, organizations operate in a dynamic and changing business environment presenting a number of challenges, opportunities and problems that demand new ways of dealing with them. According to Kurt Lewin’s force field analysis (1999) an organization must take into consideration the driving forces, and restraining forces for change. In order for change to occur the driving forces must exceed the restraining forces. In an organization environment the driving forces can be changing technology knowledge explosion, workforce diversity competition etc. Restraining forces can be ineffective organization communication, organizational culture and many others.

Faced with this dynamic business environment organizations must continually and synergistically adapt their internal practices and behavior in real time to changing external conditions. The ability to manage change effectively is a crucial component of an organization’s ability to compete successfully. The organization’s
ability to identify the critical environment factors and adapt to them in an appropriate way is of great importance. Appropriate response to change makes an organization to have a competitive advantage over other similar organizations. Porter (1987) noted that competitive advantage is the ability of the firm to outperform rivals on the primary performance goal profitability. The ultimate achievement of sustainable competitive advantage relies on the capacity of the firm to identify and understand the competitive forces in play and how they change over time and adapt to them appropriately.

Many organizations have either failed or succeeded in responding to the changing environment. Change receptivity embraces a number of responses to change, ranging from the negative to the positive. Table 1 classifies the different dimensions of change receptivity.

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Negative receptivity to change, which embraces a number of responses such as frustration, uncertainty resistance are the most unwelcome by many organizations. Negative response to change has been attributed to various factors such as management styles, external factors, resources and organization structures and processes. Organization change communication has been ignored as a factor that contributes to the success of change implementation.

Klein S. (1996) observes that change processes are non-inclusive at the start in that only a small fraction of the workforce is involved. Many organizational participants are only vaguely aware that changes are taking place and the ambiguity surrounding these changes provides a fertile ground for rumors and ultimately resistance. Change management emphasizes thoughtful planning and sensitive implementation; consultation and involvement of the people affected by the change.

Thus, the key thesis of this paper is that organizational change communication is a crucial element in employees' positive response to change.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM
Effective communication is a basic prerequisite for the attainment of organizational strategies, change and human resource management, but it has remained one of the biggest problems facing modern management. Ineffective communication is commonly cited as being the explanation for the failure of organizational change implementation by many researchers, managers and communication experts (Vuuren and Elving, 2008; Burns, 2009; Qian and Daniels, 2008).

The implementation phase is the most critical stage of change. As Real and Poole (2005) advice. “Without implementation, the most brilliant and potentially far-reaching innovation remains just that-potential. It is in the implementation that organizations perfect the promise of innovation. Communication plays a critical role during throes of the implementation phase, for at its roots organizational change is a communication problem. Organizations do not change through automation. Rather change is implemented and sustained through human communication (Russ, L. 2007). Despite many change management scholars (Axley, 2000; Doyle et al, Frahm and Brown, 2007; Russ, 2007; Burns, 2005) arguing that communication is crucial in the success or failure of an organizations change effort, organization change communication as continuously been given a backstage.

Therefore, this paper advances conceptual and empirical critical analysis of two change communication models (Linear and participatory) as applied to organizational change approaches and implementation. Separate examinations of these approaches will allow for theoretical critical analyses of each of their unique strengths and limitations.

Specifically this work seeks to clarify the unique nature of these communication models and how they are related to the change approaches (planned and emergent) adopted by any organization. This paper also proposes the most appropriate communication approach in the modern times where organizations are operating in a turbulent, dynamic environment.
**LINEAR COMMUNICATION MODEL AND PLANNED APPROACH TO CHANGE**

The linear view of communication is associated with information theory and usually traced back to Claude E. Shannon and Warren Weaver (1949). Shannon, an engineer at Bell Laboratories, portrayed communication as a mechanistic system. A key component of the linear approach is the dissemination of information, which concerns the downward dispersal of knowledge, ideas, facts, directives, and requests for action concerning the change. The assumption is that the message sent is identical to the one received. An implicit, normative assumption that communication is simply a linear process and a methodologically structured field characterizes the research on organizational change communication.

Planned approach to change is often analyzed using the linear communication model. Planned change is a term first coined by Kurt Lewin to distinguish change that was consciously embarked upon by an organization as opposed to unintended changes such as those that might come about by accident, by impulse, by misunderstanding or that might be forced on an unwilling organization (Burnes, 2009). It means that an organization identifies an area where it believes change is required and undertakes a process to evaluate and if necessary bring about change.

According to planned approach, change is a linear process or a one-off isolated event where time-tables are laid down objectives and methods in advance by the change agent. The role of the change-agent in planned change is that of a prime mover (i.e. the person who makes the change happen). The change-agent is assumed to have a full understanding of their actions and that their plans will be understood and accepted and can be implemented. Burns (2009) states that one of the strengths of the planned approach is that it not only offers a well developed change process but it also provides a blue-print for the behavior and attributes of the change agent.

Buchanan and Boddy (1992), suggests a model of the expertise of the change agents which identifies the skills and competences necessary to achieve successful change. Their model begins by listing the diagnostic skills required to identify the organization type, change category, personal vulnerability, agenda priorities and public performance and backstage skills. The model then goes on to list competences under five clusters. Goals, roles, communication, negotiation and managing up. What emerges from their work is a picture of the change agent as a highly skilled and well trained person. Jabri et al., (2008) argues that changes agents have viewed communication role in the change process as the presentation of reified plans for creating readiness and for change recipients to agree to. In this regard communication is viewed as being the instrument of change – where by the change agents strive to deliver effective messages about a predetermined change.

**APPLYING, LINEAR MODEL IDEAS TO COMMUNICATING CHANGE IN ORGANIZATIONS**

Most of the studies in management literature rely on the linear framework as a way of understanding organizational change communication. It is argued.

“Communication is the process on which the initiation and maintenance of organizational change depends…Ultimately the success of any change effort depends on how effectively the strategy for and the substance of the change is communicated to those who are the targets of change” (Witherspoon and Wohlert, 1996).

The linear model of communication describes what happens when an individual source/sender transmits a message to receivers with some desired and predetermined result. Communication is assumed to be one-way transmission of messages to passive recipients. The linear approach emphasizes the transmission of monologic communication about change in a top-down manner to generate stake-holder compliance and/or stimulate desired positive attitudes and beliefs about the planned change.

Consider the common situation in organizations. Change agents determine that a certain change is necessary. To facilitate implementation of the change effort, these change agents deem it desirable that everyone in the organization should agree that the change is necessary. Change agents create messages to persuade on audience to do something the speaker desires. Agree with predetermined action. Those people who question the change initiative are often seen as engaging in hostile activity or as willfully “Misinterpreting it.” Also understanding employees as “targets of change” suggests planned change, and does not consider the proactive and driver like roles those employees pursue in continuous change effort.

Communication activities classified under the linear approach include: presentations, general information meetings, memos, newsletters pamphlets/brochures posted information (e.g., posters, signs, bulletin boards) one-way media (websites, videos and podcasted). And informal small group information meetings as well as
word-of-mouth (interpersonal communication about change that informally trickles downward in the organization).

These types of communication activities are typically used to disseminate information in a one-way fashion—a linear transmission from source to receiver. This linear transmission creates a sense of monologic organizational communication where messages are sent downward to lower echelons but rarely if ever upward. The objective of using linear activities is not to solicit input, but rather to convince the target population to comply with the planned change and to communicate the implementers’ desired vision for the change.

**ANTICIPATED LIMITATIONS OF LINEAR MODEL ON ORGANIZATION CHANGE IMPLEMENTATION**

Figueroa, et al., (2002) observes that there are no right or wrong models, only appropriate or inappropriate given the circumstances and nature of the phenomenon to which they are applied. Given the turbulent and continually changing environment in which organizations operate today, is the linear communication model the most appropriate to inform organizational change initiation, execution, implementation and evaluation?

While implementers most commonly use the linear approach to bring about planned organizational change (Lewis, 1999, 2006; Nutt 1986, 1987) they are deemed less effective by implementers (Nutt, 1987; Jabri et, al 2008; Frahm, and Brown, 2007) than participatory approaches.

Two core limitations are associated with using linear implementation approaches. First, organizational change is not a one-way communication process. This one-way model has long been refuted by communication scholars who have underscored its neglect of negotiated meaning construction. Further, the downward transmission of information can also create monologic communication about change, thus limiting the level of interaction and participation between levels of an organization deemed less effective by implementers (Nutt, 1987) and stakeholders (Lewis, 2006) than participatory approaches.

Second, linear approaches may cause an avalanche or abundance of unnecessary communication; thus, overwhelming participants. Also, because traditional linear approaches typically disseminate information about change in a downward didactic manner they may disengage stakeholders and cause negative effects for the change, the implementation attempt, and potentially the organization itself. In this vein, traditional linear approaches are not likely to build consensus nor foster organizational engagement from employees since their experiences with and reactions to the planned change are often overlooked. Depending on the type of planned change and the way the information is disseminated (i.e., the source and channel), monologic efforts may backfire by fostering disengagement among employees who may resist the planned change and even become resentful of the change and the organization’s leaders. As a result, employees may distance themselves from the organization by expressing dissent or exiting the organization altogether (i.e disidentification). Because of these factors, it is questionable whether linear approaches actually help employees learn how to implement long term organizational change or simply elicit short-term compliance. Also, excessive dissemination may cause stakeholders to become flooded with information which may potentially lead to greater anxiety, confusion, uncertainty, and resistance about the organizational change effort.

**ANTICIPATED BENEFITS**

Several benefits are associated with linear implementation approaches. First, previous research has found that the dissemination of formal, quality information from organizational leadership is an important variable during planned change efforts. To this end, Fidler and Johnson (1984) maintain that employees’ ultimate acceptance of an innovation “often rests on the extent to which communication can act to reduce uncertainty by ameliorating such factors as risk and complexity” (p. 704). Specifically, communication about change from organizational leaders can decrease uncertainty and increase understanding about the change (Lewis and Seibold, 1996; Washington & Hacker, 2005), aid in the reduction of anxiety about change (K. I. Miller & Monge, 1986; Smeltzer, 1991; Washington & Hacker, 2005), decrease negative feelings about the change effort as well as expectations that the initiative will fail (Washington & Hacker, 2005), and lower resistance while increasing willingness to participate in planned change (Lewis, 2006; V.D Miller, Johnson, & Grau, 1994; Washington & Hacker, 2005).

In a related study, Covin and Kilmann (1990) amassed a list of 900 major issues that participants of organizational change believed to influence the success or failure of large-scale transformation efforts. They found that “failure to share information or to inform people adequately of what changes are necessary and why they are necessary were viewed as having a highly negative impact” (p. 239).
Third, linear approaches have the appeal of high communication efficiency. That is, they can be relatively quick and inexpensive to produce and disseminate throughout an organization.

**PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION MODEL AND EMERGENT APPROACH TO CHANGE**

According to this communication model, information is shared or exchanged between two or more individuals rather than transmitted from one to the other. All participants act on the same information; none are passive receivers of information. The information can be created by the action of any participant, or it may originate from a third source such as television or radio, or institution not directly participating.

The second feature of the model is that it stresses the important role of the perception and interpretation of participants, which treats understanding in terms of a dialogue or ongoing conversation. The model also represents a horizontal, symmetrical relationship among two or more participants that is created by sharing information. The outcomes of information processing by the participants are social-mutual understanding, agreement and collective action, as well as individual-perceiving, interpreting, understanding, and believing. And finally the model implies a continuous, cyclical process as participants take turns creating information to share with one another and then interpreting and reinterpreting its meaning until sufficient degree of mutual understanding and agreement has been reached for collective action to take place.

Information is preferred over the term message to allow for both verbal and non-verbal information unintended as well as intended information. Each participant perceives and arrives at his/her own unique interpretation, understanding and beliefs about information that is shared. Participatory communication model is applicable to the emergent approach to change. Emergent approach to change starts from the assumption that change is not a linear process or a one-off isolated event but is a continuous open-ended, cumulative and unpredictable process of aligning and re-aligning one organization to its changing environment (Burnes 2009).

Advocates of emergent change argue that it is more suitable to the turbulent and continually changing environment in which firms now operate (Weick, 2000; Falconer, 2002). Beer and Nohria (2000), argue that organizations must continually and synergically adapt their internal practices and behavior in real time to changing external conditions. Change is seen as emerging from the day-to-day actions and decisions of members of an organization. Therefore, successful change is less dependent on detailed plans and projections but is dependent on the active participation of stakeholders.

Participatory approaches invite input, using involving and empowering methods to gain the insights of various stakeholders to shape the change program and not merely to “receive it.” Participatory approaches involve stakeholders in the change process through the solicitation of their input. Hence the need to see how participatory communication model assumptions apply to communicating change in organizations.

**PARTICIPATORY CHANGE COMMUNICATION**

Participatory approaches are grounded in the basic assumption that employees should be active participants in the change process. The logic driving this approach is employees’ participation is perceived as the catalyst for implementing sustained organization change (Burnes, 2008; Johanson, & Heide, 2008; Russ, 2007). Communication is a means of giving more people a ‘voice’ in the change process. Communication creates a shared meaning that facilitates a particular change.

More so, the participatory approach necessitates more dialogic communication tactics whereby input is gathered and used to shape the change, the organization and the constituents (users/stakeholders). The objective is to build consensus and galvanize support for the change as well as to allow affected stakeholders to make improvements they feel are needed to ensure the successful implementation of the change.

Bakhtin, (1984) emphasizes that participants in the change process are involved in meaning creation. When Bakhtin (1986) speaks of creating “meaning” he is not talking about arriving at a static agreement. Rather, he sees meaning as a continual process. Participation involves having ‘voice’. A person does not necessarily arrive at the ‘meaning’ but continues to discover meaning as long as he or she interacts with others. For change to take roots, we must invite the interpretations of others in order to clarify our interpretations. Change agents and change participants become indistinguishable in the participatory approach to change.

Participatory change processes are sometimes reduced to monologic consensus (Jabri etal, 2008). In monologic consensus the invitation to participate extends no further than the call to agreement with a pre-determined outcome. In these circumstances dissension is not a viable option. The call to consensus is essentially a monologue. The change agent may communicate in apparently consultative/participative ways, including
holding forums for discussion but they do not necessarily break out of the monologic frame. What appears to be
dialogic communication can actually serve monologic ends.

Genuine participatory change communication emphasizes the dialogic nature of communication, whereby the
speaker and audience are perceived as co-communicators who participate in constructing meaning. This model
is characterized by varying levels of involvement and input from stakeholders from myriad organizational
levels. Participation is not reserved for individual in the top-management levels. Examples of participatory
communication activities include open forums (large formal meetings or smaller informal ones where feedback
is given and ideas are exchanged) working groups (problem solving teams, adhoc groups, committee), informal
conversations, focus groups and brainstorming sessions, morale attitude, and opinion surveys, formal
assessments and evaluations and unsolicited complaints or praise.

The core objective of participatory communication activities is to build consensus among relevant stakeholders
by fostering their involvement and soliciting their ideas and input. The communication activities range from
very formal to informal. These channels offer the potential to create a sense of dialogic communication in
organization where change messages flow up, down and side-ways.

Although seemingly versatile in nature, current research suggests that implementers typically do not use
participatory communication activities to solicit input from staff (Lewis, 1999; Johansson & Heide 2008; Qian,
& Daniels).

ANTICIPATED LIMITATIONS

Some limitations are inherent in participatory approaches. First, while traditional linear approaches can suffer
from rigidity, lack of holistic engagement, and excessive top-down control traditional participatory approaches
can lead to significant ambiguity where the original intent of the change gets lost in the rush to involve too many
actors. In a similar vein, some organizational stakeholders may prefer more explicit, parametered direction from
the formal leadership team. Such direction-oriented individuals may grow weary of, and possibly frustrated
with, the lack of focus and clear course of action and may, subsequently, evaluate the implementation process as
inefficient and unsuccessful. To this end, it is possible that participatory approaches may incite some
unintended consequences such as disengagement and other adverse feelings that at best, stall, and at worst,
reverse, progress toward the full implementation of organizational change.

Second, some participatory efforts may be perceived as insincere. Thinly-veiled attempts at creating
participation, such as solicitations that are executed for solely symbolic purposes (i.e no sincere interest in
employees’ opinions or no follow-up on suggestions) can be quickly dubbed disingenuous and spawn distrust
and resentment throughout the organization, potentially jeopardizing current as well as future change efforts.
Employees take a personal risk and invest a great deal when sharing their views on organizational change. Only
genuine calls for participation that actually value stakeholders’ input have the possibility of bringing about
practices (or lack thereof) will reveal whether claims by an organization to be democratic or to have meaningful
employee participation are valid” (p.224). Lewis (2006) established this link finding a positive correlation
between employees’ perceptions that their input was valued and their evaluations that the implementation was
“successful”.

Third, participatory approaches often exhibit low communication efficiency; that is, they typically require a
great deal of organizational resources. For instance, participatory approaches usually require employees to
spend time away from work reviewing planned changes and providing feedback, often in meetings. A great deal
of investment is also made by implementers who must listen to, compile, and sort through input, making agreed-
upon alterations to the change implementation process, follow-up with revisions to the involved parties, and
repeat this intensive process until the desired level of consensus has been reached. In addition to being time
consuming, soliciting participation and input from stakeholders can be a tedious task, complicated further by
organizational politics.

Fourth, participatory approaches assume that most employees want to be involved and are intrinsically
motivated to fully implement planned changes in the day-to-day operations of organizations. Perhaps for this
reason, previous research has found that some employees perceive negative relationships between their
involvement in change efforts and their evaluations of change success (Lewis, 2006). This limitations may seem
counter-intuitive to those implementers who may feel obligated to solicit input and please everyone.
Perhaps it is because of the aforementioned limitations that participatory approaches are often viewed as a “nice to have” by implementers while linear approaches tend to be the “strategy-choice” in bringing about planned change in organizations (Lewis, 1992, 2006). As previously established, evidence suggests that participatory change is used infrequently since most implementers emphasize downward dissemination about change programs versus soliciting stakeholders’ input (Lewis, 1999, 2006; Lewis, Richardson & Hamel, 2003). This research finding corresponds with reports of real-world organizational practice. Young and Post (1993) reported that the formal solicitation of input was inconsistent, even in exemplary companies (as identified by peer organizations). They noted, “In some cases, top managers should enumerate the types of upward communication available, but lower level employees could not. In other cases the commitment varied among managers with the same company” (p.36).

Anticipated benefits
Previous research has indicated that participatory approaches are likely to be perceived as more effective in implementing planned organizational change than linear approaches (Lewis, 2006; Nutt, 1986, 1987, 1989, 2002). As such, participatory approaches are linked to several anticipated benefits.

First, participatory approaches can help stakeholders achieve several desired “stakes” including “access to information, opportunities to participate in conversations about critical operations, involvement in decision making, and access to channels for influence” (Lewis, Richardson, & Hamel, 2003, p.401). In the context of planned change, the facilitation of employee participation and input has been predicted to be an important variable during planned transformation efforts (Cotton, 1993). Studies on this topic have typically found that facilitating participation among stakeholders is beneficial in minimizing resistance while enhancing motivation to implement planned change efforts (Argote, Goodman & Schkade, 1983; Edmondson, Bohmer, & Pisano, 2001; Lewis, 2006; Nutt, 1987; Sagie, Elizur, & Koslowsky, 2001; Sagie & Koslowsky, 1994), increasing accuracy in stakeholders’ perceptions about the rationale behind change initiatives and related goals (Brown, 1991), enhancing overall satisfaction with the change initiative (Coyle-Shapiro, 1999; Sagie & Koslowsky, 1994), reducing uncertainty while increasing a sense of control (Bordia, Hunt, Paulsen, Tourish, & DiFonzo, 2004 Mainiero & DeMichiell, 1986) and enhancing employees’ perceptions of implementation success (Lewis, 2006).

Second, on a more theoretical note, participatory change can enable leaders and their constituencies to socially construct the change together. Through participation, leaders and constituencies have the opportunity to collectively discuss their shared visions of the planned organizational change. This shared collusion or collaborative framing process can allow leaders to tap into the perceptions of the receivers of their change-based messages. In turn, employees can have the opportunity to provide feedback on the direction of the organization as well as discuss specific opportunities and challenges related to the change implementation (Ruben, Russ, Smulowitz, & Connaughton, 2007). Such interactions may have the potential to create metaphor organizational “dinner tables” where ideas are exchanged across levels and realities are co-constructed, fostering employee commitment versus compliance. This dialectical process may help frame the context and rationale for organizational change, the negotiation of change-related behaviors, as well as shared-meanings of successful and unsuccessful change implementation.

CONCLUSION
Change is often driven by conditions in the surrounding environment but it is also triggered by needs within organizations. The dynamic and global environment in which modern organizations operate is imprinted by increasingly keen competition. In order to cope with competition, technological developments and customer demands, managers seek different solutions and tools to manage the unstable, rapidly changing and never predictable situation.

Many writers have emphasized the important role of communication in change processes (Kotter, 1990, Lewis and seibold, 1998). Communication and organizational change are inextricably linked processes, according to Lewis (1999).

There are two perspectives on change which determine how communication is applied. A planned approach takes top management as the architects of a blue print for the organization. This approach is in line with the information approach/linear communication model where information on change has to be communicated without any possibility of alteration. The assumption underlying this approach is that the organization needs to provide information and has to persuade the organizational members to embrace the change. Management has for too long focused on monologic implementation of predetermined change. This paper argues that change agents need to ask themselves whether the people in their organization are the objects of communication or
subjects in communication. How one communicates depends entirely on whether one views people as participating subjects in the process or as objects of the process.

The emergent perspective on organizational change as an ongoing improvisation enacted by organizational actors trying to make sense of and act coherently in the world. Change is seen as an ongoing modification in everyday work. In this vein, Weick and Quinn (1999) request scholars to focus on changing instead of ‘change’ in order to appreciate that change never stops and that change is hardly determinate and causal. Any change is continually modified and adapted by organizational actors, who actively participate in the change process. In this way, there is support for considering change as a continually ongoing process. Emergent approach tenets are in line with participatory change communication assumptions. Participatory approach leads change agents to understand people (change participants) as social beings to focus change on dialogue and to embrace the notion that meaning creation is inseparable from communicating with others. This constitutes a very significant shift in change management a way from thinking about change as a planned event to be accomplished by linear communication activities to a conception of change as a genuine dialogue, that actively invites expects and encourages interpretive participation.

A key conclusion is to switch from the transmission model of Shannon and Weaver (1949) which places emphasis on the top-down organizational change communication to a participatory communication approach where emphasis is placed on the verbal dialogue embedded within systems that is dialogic. A change that is led through dialogue is more likely to take root because it is born at a point of contact among various consciousness. The ideas are living ideas, the people are free people interacting and continually learning.

A most significant implication of applying participatory communication approach to change is that to understand change we need to stop giving attention to arriving at a static consensus (outcome) and focus on utterances. That would shift change management from thinking of change as a series of change initiatives, to thinking about how people change their ideas and habits of action. Rather than seeing change as a prefabricated product that needs to be communicated, change management would focus on facilitating dialogues about issues. Such a perception would shift the focus from anticipation of responses to the change agent’s monologue to a real understanding of how people change their ideas through communicating with each other.

However, Burns (2007) observes that it is not easy to switch from one model of communication to another and neither the planned nor the emergent approach covers the broad spectrum of change events organizations encounter. Figueroa, et al., (2002) also argues that there is no right or wrong models, only appropriate or inappropriate given the circumstances and nature of the phenomenon to which they are applied. Given the turbulent and continually changing environment in which organizations are operating today, what is the most appropriate communication approach that is efficient and effective?

WAY FORWARD

The two organizational communication approaches addressed in this paper have got strengths and weaknesses. Thus a contingency perspective on communication needs to be adopted. Whereby organizational communication approaches used are tailored to the situation of the individual organization and the type of change it is undertaking. This is a suggestion that is central to change. Pettigrew and Whipp (1991) offers a very particularistic view of change whereby each change situation is different and must be approached and managed differently. For example not every change needs participation of the employees or is suitable for participation of the employees. For instance, implementing new accounting software by the finance department or moving a department to another building do not necessarily need to involve employees. In these kinds of changes, change communication needs to be mainly informative.

The distinction between the first order and second order changes is important in recognizing which communicative efforts the organization has to undertake to communicate about the change. The first order changes are minor incremental changes that living systems have to practice in order to avoid the more fundamental second order changes. To put it differently first order changes are adjustments in the organizations. Change communication in the first order changes are merely providing information about the desired end state, and the steps that will be taken to reach that state. Second order changes on the other hand, are those changes in which the end state of the organization is not clear, although all indicators show that the organization has to change.

Change communication in second order changes as to involve all the employees. It is a start of a process and success depends largely on the quality of the interaction processes and the extent to which mutual understanding is achieved.
Carnal (2003) and Hayes (2002) take a similar view, arguing that an organization's survival and growth depends on identifying environmental and market changes quickly and responding opportunistically by using appropriate change communication approach. Hence leaders and managers of organization need to apply contingency communication approach for successful and sustainable implementation of change.

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