

Analyzing Dialogical Communication in Organizational Change (Pilot Study in A Private University)

Allia Pramiyanti, a lecturer of Telkom University, Bandung
Martha Tri Lestari, a lecturer of Telkom University, Bandung

Abstract

Focus of this paper is to analyze Kent and Taylor's (2002) five principles of dialogic communication which are mutuality, propinquity, empathy, risk, and commitment. This paper used descriptive method to explain five principles of dialogic communication during the change in private university. Respondents for this research are the university grassroots. Results from this paper showed that organizational change in this private university was not involved dialogical communication.

Keywords: *dialogic communication, organizational change*

Introduction

Communication is a basic factor that determines management process in achieving its goals. The organization has a complex activity structure of and through communication these activities can be managed in order to achieve organizational goals. It is therefore necessary to make organizational communication united and functioning.

Communication within the organization should be dialogical. The establishment of dialogical communication is one of the important things in a process of learning organization. By engaging dialogue organization can improve corporate images, collect and analyze public opinion, set corporate agendas to reflect the needs of the public, and increase corporate accountability.

Changes will always occur in a growing organization. These changes should be on the agenda in organizational communication. Daft (in Frahm and Brown 2006) defined organizational communication as the process of information exchanged and understood with the intent to motivate or influence behavior. This perspective represents an instrumental, information-processing view of communication that complements the planned model of change.

Frahm and Brown (2006) also explained that in planned change, change communication involves exchanging and transmitting information to influence changes. Communication is widely acknowledged as important in management development programmes, but there is less recognition of the intricacies and nuances of communication during change such that it is the neglected 'specialist knowledge' of change (Buchanan et al, 1999). It is argued that it is the delicate and often subjective interplay of communication styles, expectations and competencies that can unhinge a change program (Frahm and Brown, 2004).

Literature Review

Communication in Organization

Muhammad, in his book, *Organizational Communication* (2004:29) explained that beside in every organization had a common elements, organization had a common organizational characteristic, such as:

1. Dynamic, coming if there's an economical changing, social condition and technology
2. Need some information from communication process
3. Have some meaning and speciality goals
4. Organizational Structured, to made some goals, make some rules and hierarchy for organizational relationships.

Qian and Tom (2008) studied a model of employee cynicism toward organizational change from the communication perspective in a higher education institution. They suggested three variables, perceived quality of information, cynicism of colleagues, and trust in the administration, would predicted change-specific cynicism, which, in turn, lead to intention to resist change. *The management* as an initial attempt to explain employee cynicism toward organizational change in higher education settings, this model inevitably has loose ends. The research provided administrators with strategies and advices to cope with employee cynicism during organizational change.

Dialogical Communication

The shift to dialogue is not merely terminological, rather it is based on an interpersonal model of ethical and effective communication whereby dialogue is the simultaneous fusion with the other, while retaining the uniqueness of one's self interest (Taylor et al., 2001).

Kent and Taylor (2002) argue that there are key differences between monologic and dialogic communication. These differences are illustrated in Table 1 .

Differences	Monologic Communication	Dialogic Communication
Process	Seeking to instrumentalise receivers by engaging in goal directed, feedback orientations	Both parties have genuine concern for each other, rather than seeking to fulfill their own needs. Creating meanings by means of dialogue
Purpose	Achieving a relationship characterized by 'power over people and viewing them as objects for enjoyment or as things through which to profit	Move a discussion up or down between levels of abstraction
Style	Command, coerce, manipulate, exploit	Authenticity, inclusion, confirmation, supportive climate, a spirit of mutual equality.
Focus	Communicator's message	Relationships and attitudes that participants have toward each other

Table 1. *Differences between Monologic and Dialogic Communication*

As a first step toward articulating a public relations theory of dialogue, Kent and Taylor (2002) developed the following five overarching tenets that encompass the implicit and explicit assumptions that underlie the concept of dialogue: mutuality, or the recognition of organization - public relationships; propinquity, or the temporality and spontaneity of interactions with publics; empathy, or the supportiveness and confirmation of public goals and interests; risk, or the willingness to interact with individuals and publics on their own terms; and commitment, or the extent to which an organization gives itself over to dialogue, interpretation, and understanding in its interactions with publics (Kent & Taylor, 2002).

1. **Mutuality**

Mutuality refers to an acknowledgment that organizations and publics are inextricably tied together. Mutuality is characterized by an "inclusion or collaborative orientation" and a "spirit of mutual equality." Today, with globalization, what happens in one nation may affect organization-public relations in other nations. Thus, organizations must extend the communication perspectives that they take when they plan, conduct and evaluate the effectiveness of their communication efforts. A much broader framework, accounting for culture and ideology, is needed. A collaborative orientation is one of the central features of mutuality.

2. **Propinquity**

At the most basic level, propinquity advocates for a type of rhetorical exchange. It is an orientation to a relationship. For organizations, dialogic propinquity means that publics are consulted in matters that influence them, and for publics, it means that they are willing and able to articulate their demands to organizations. Propinquity is created by three features of dialogic relationships: "immediacy of presence," "temporal flow," and "engagement." These features of dialogue clarify the process of dialogic exchanges.

3. **Empathy**

Empathy, also called "sympathy" in the literature, refers to the atmosphere of support and trust that must exist if dialogue is to succeed. This feature of dialogue is characterized by "supportiveness," a "communal orientation," and "confirmation or acknowledgment" of others. Empathetic communication is important because practitioners can improve their communication by "walking in the shoes" of their publics.

4. **Risk**

Risk involves vulnerability. It is contended that vulnerability is a position of strength, rather than being detrimental in dialogic processes. When the participants involved in a dialogic communication acknowledge what they do not know, only then are they able to build and construct new understanding that benefit the organization. Unanticipated consequences are another consequence of risk. With continuous change comes a high level of ambiguity and uncertainty, and accordingly it is difficult to script an exact plan. Risk in dialogic processes is one of the more difficult concepts for change communicators.

5. **Commitment**

Commitment is the final principle of dialogue to be discussed. Commitment describes three characteristics of dialogic encounters: "genuineness" and authenticity, "commitment to the conversation," and a "commitment to interpretation."

Dialogic communication can be recognized as an inimitable resource, and one that creates competitive value (Peteraff, 1993). Emphasis on principles of communication rather than understanding communication in terms of tactics and tools suggests an intangible asset, and thus it is difficult to replicate. This approach supports the argument of dialogue being a key driver of learning organizations in managing the demands of continuous change.

Regardless of the benefits in developing managers' skills in dialogic and monologic competences, there are some important caveats. Whilst a dialogic approach offers a sustainable business practice, it is difficult to institutionalize. Transformation of a bureaucratic organization into a learning organization in this context is particularly challenging, as asymmetry of power is central to considerations of bureaucracy.

Dialogic communication processes take time, and many organizations need short-term responses. Kent and Taylor (2002) acknowledge that not every stakeholder should be expected to participate in dialogic exchanges and that dialogic communication is not required in every change agenda.

Organizational Change

Based on International Journal "Perspectives on Organizational Change in Asia" (2010) if organization would be developed, they should make Organizational Change Management. Organizational Change management (OCM) is a framework for managing the effect of new business processes, changes in organizational structure or cultural changes within an enterprise. Simply put, OCM addresses the people side of change management.

This journal discussed about an Organizational Change especially in Asian countries. There were some highlight about the conclusion drawn by both Bruton and Lau (2008) and White (2002) in their reviews of Asian Management Research. In page 636, Bruton and Lau said that despite the rapidly changing global economic environment, management research has tended to neglect Asia. They describe this lack of focus on Asia as "particularly startling" given that economic influences exerted by countries such as China and India and also the opportunities that countries in Asia offer to researchers seeking to extend and revise management theories through the exploration of new contextual variables.

A systematic approach to OCM is beneficial when change requires people throughout an organization to learn new behaviors and skills. By formally setting expectations, employing tools to improve communication and proactively seeking ways to reduce misinformation, stakeholders are more likely to buy into a change initially and remain committed to the change throughout any discomfort associated with it. Journal Asian Management Research (2008) talking about Successful OCM strategies include:

1. Agreement on a common vision for change, no competing initiatives
2. Strong executive leadership to communicate the vision and sell the business case for change
3. A strategy for educating employees about how their day-to-day work will change
4. A concrete plan for how to measure whether or not the change is a success and follow-up plans for both successful and unsuccessful results
5. Rewards, both monetary and social, that encourage individuals and groups to take ownership for their new roles and responsibilities

The third step, it said that "A strategy for educating employees about how their day-to-day work will change". If some organization had change management, automatically it made some impacts too for many things in the organization, even a good or bad impacts. In a transition company, many peoples have a different things in their mind. Davidson (125: 2005) said that there are some questions which came from an employees who worked in a transition organization, such as :

1. What will a new management brings to our "new" organization?
2. Are there an expansion, growth, and a new chance for us?
3. Are there a bad explosion (perang), like a perampangan/pengurangan karyawan?

All of that questions is coming from employees minds. The management should've answer many questions from employees that related to change management in Private University. Before the organization changed to Private University, management should have make an open communication with all of employees, told them about the reasons why should this organization change to Private University, what's benefits for employees, what does the effects for all employees, Is it good effects or bad effects, and many more.

Methodology

This pilot study used descriptive method to describe five principles of dialogic communication during the change. Respondents for this research were university grassroots. Data was collected from 30 respondents as a pretest. All questioner item in this research were valid and reliable.

Result & Discussion

Pretest showed that 92% of respondents feel that the organization does not follow the principle of mutuality in dialogue about organizational change.

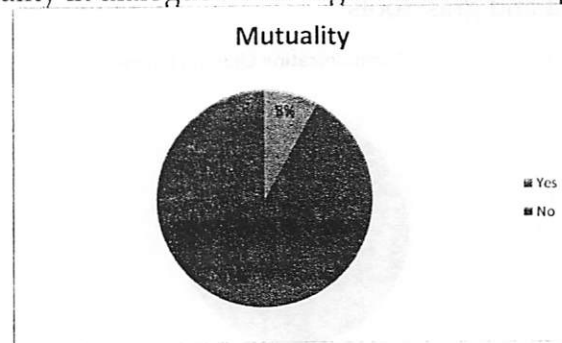


Figure 1. *Mutuality*

The mutuality principle is not applied to the dialogical communication can be viewed from the respondents opinions about information accuracy. Figure 2 showed 90% of respondents believe that information about the organizational changes they had received is not accurate. Information could become accurate just for some grassroots. It usually grassroots who became part of university change or grassroots who has propinquity with management.

Accurate information is required when changes occur the organization because it can reduce the wave of rumors or gossip. Rumors or gossip often arise from informal communication channels. Though the organization should maximize the formal communication channels to establish dialogical communication with grassroots. Russ, Daft and Lengel (1990) said if communication with managers is perceived to be ineffective, employees may switch to informal channels which may involve colleagues or grassroots driven communication media.

Information accuracy would create trust that may affect information flow. Adequate explanations and timely feedback on decisions are also associated with higher levels of trust, as is communication that is accurate and forthcoming. Trust has been considered critical to patterns and choices of information processing in an organizational context mainly because of its impact on communication and on choice of media (Ellis & Shockley-Zalabak, 2001).

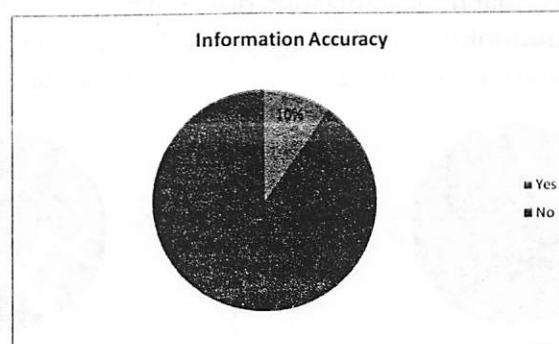


Figure 2. *Information Accuracy*

Inaccuracies in the information stated by respondents was caused organization is not using all communication channels effectively. This is explained by Figure 3. Communication channels within the organization could be an intranet, internal media, sms broadcast, etc. The communication channel function as a means to provide complete

and accurate information. Information disseminated through various channels of internal communication could reduce the perceived uncertainty grassroots level when changes occur. Maximum utilization of the communication channel could encourage openness between management and grassroots.

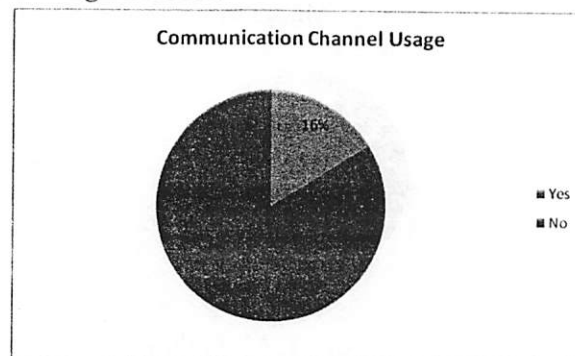


Figure 3. *Communication Usage*

As well as mutuality, almost all respondents gave 'No' answer on propinquity. This means that the organization was not established closeness and familiarity with the grassroots. If organization did not create propinquity with grassroots, organization could not get encouragement from grassroots.

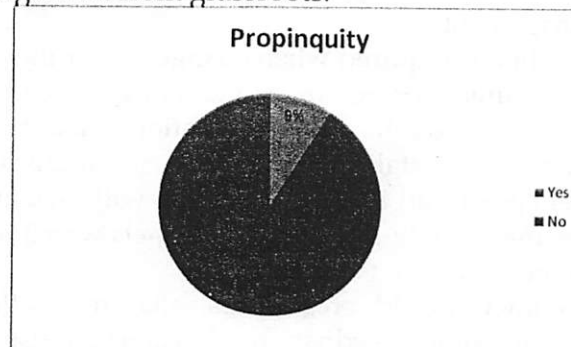


Figure 4. *Propinquity*

Principles in propinquity is organization conduct dialogical communication before and after the change. In connection with the pretest conducted by researchers, the majority of respondents stated that the organization does not perform communication dialogical both before and after communication. This result was shown by Figure 5 below.

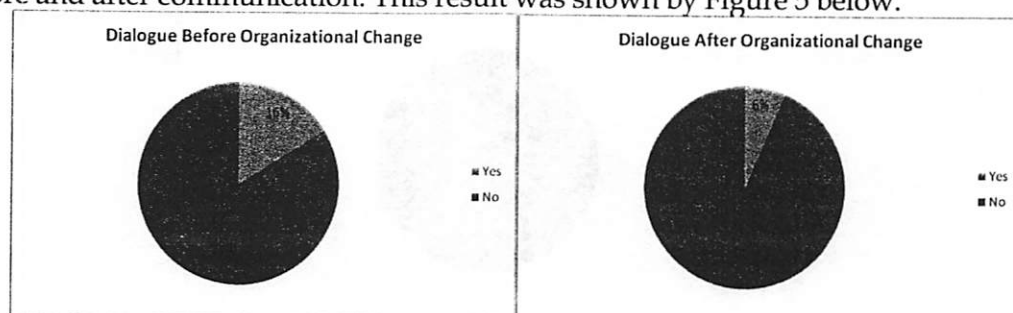


Figure 5. *Dialogical Communication Before and After Organizational Change*

Another principle in propinquity is engagement. Engagement shows the level of closeness between the grassroots organizations. When the respondents were not involved in dialogical communication before or after the change, then respondents will showed that the organization failed to establish engagement. Figure 6 showed 94%

of respondents answered 'No' to the question "Are you involved in a dialogue about organizational change?"

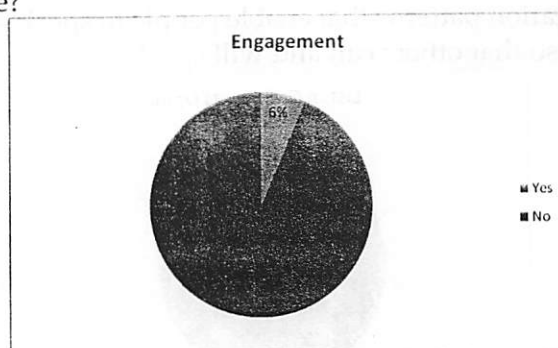


Figure 6. Engagement

This result were distinguished from the teoritical strategies of OCM. This theory said when the company want some change for a better future, the first step that the company must to do is make a same vision, one mision from the lowest level until the highest level of employees. After that, the organization also must share all the information about changing management to all employees. It is because an agreement from all the employees in a company become the most important things in change management process. This agreement would support engagement in dialogical communication. The well shared information would help change management process as good as organization expectation. The more effective information sharing, the more effective organization achieving their goals.

The third principle in a dialogical communication is empathy. Empathy is how the management of the organization put itself in grassroots position. Only 25% of respondents agreed that the organization has empathy.

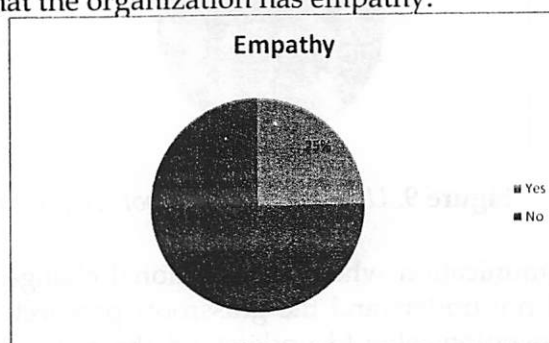


Figure 7. Empathy

Empathy in dialogical communication demonstrated through the organization ability to listen the grassroots opinion. Unfortunately 74% of respondents feel their opinions about organizational change are not heard. It means that grassroots did not have a chance to speak. They were rather to being silent is a gold. That could be one of fatality that management act to their employees.

What often happens in communication is that each side waiting for the opportunity to talk to each other without taking the time to hear what the other party because he/she was busy preparing for what will be delivered. Often, many problems could resolved because it is not a reliable person to be a speaker, but because she/he was willing to understand other people by listening carefully to what the (complaints, problems, desires, expectations). The information that can be heard is the basis for determining the next steps to resolve the problem.

According to Pearce and Pearce (2000:162) dialogue is a form of communication with specific 'rules' that distinguish it from other forms. Among the effects of these rules are communication patterns that enable people to speak so that others can and will listen, and to listen so that others can and will speak.

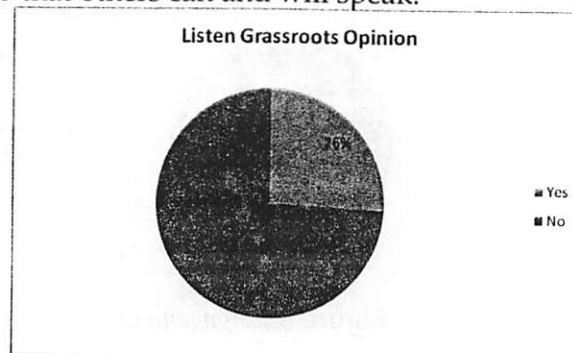


Figure 8. *Listen Grassroots Opinion*

Besides listening, organizations must be able to understand the aspirations of the grassroots when it will showed a sense of empathy in dialogical communication. Similar to the point above, on this pretest, respondents stated that their aspirations are not understood by the organization. If organizations can handle all the aspirations of the grassroots, it should be good for organization which is in changing process become larger organization.

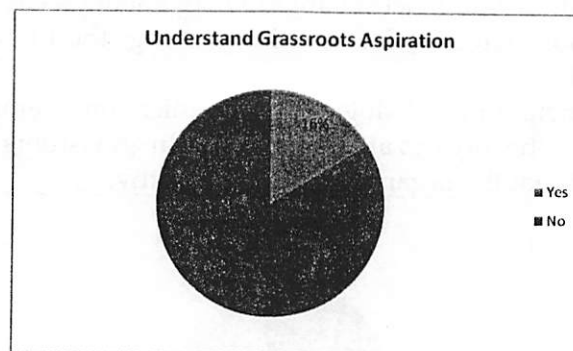


Figure 9. *Understand Grassroots Aspiration*

Two-way communication when organizational changes would be hampered if the organization did not understand the grassroots perspective and perception to the changes. Thus, organizations should understand the rationale of the ideas presented by the grassroots. If an understanding is reached, the two-way communication will be easier to flow.

Risk principle is how much the organization prepared to accept the risk of changes. Seen in the figure, 58% of respondents thought that the organization prepared to accept the risks. 84% of respondents stated that the organization did not ready to face a negative response. When change was occurred, organization must be ready to face a variety of responses that expressed by the grassroots.

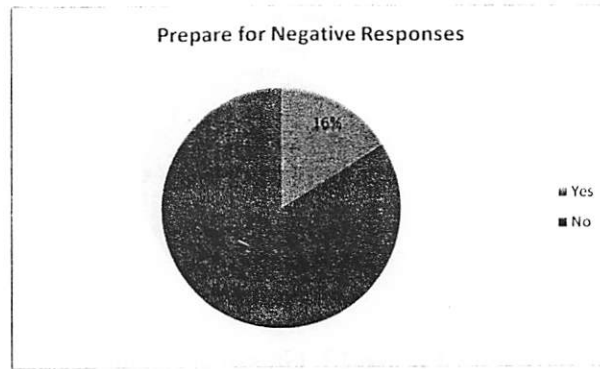


Figure 10. *Negative Responses*

Besides prepared for the response, the organization also must swift in responding to grassroots complaint. Unfortunately, 68% of respondent judge that the organization did not responsive in dealing with organizations of grassroots complaint.

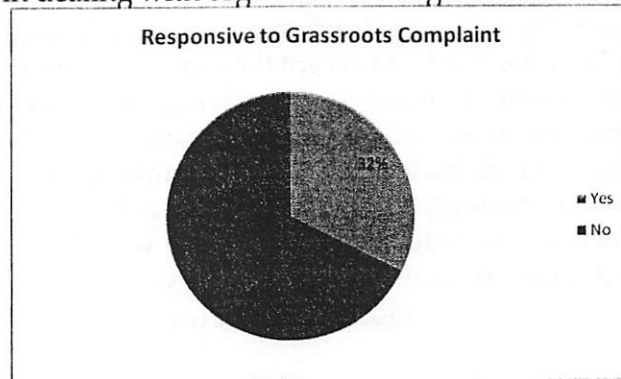


Figure 11. *Responsive to Grassroots Complaint*

Commitment is the cornerstone of dialogical communication. A change in the organization will work maximized if all parts of the organization has the same commitment. Commitment to the interpretation is the same interpretation of commitment to change. Figure 12 showed that 65% of respondents felt they did not obtained the same understanding.

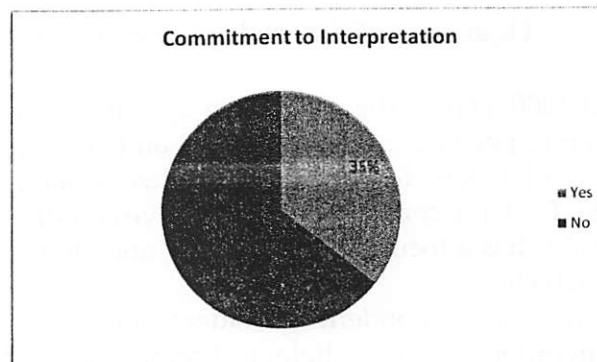


Figure 12. *Commitment to Interpretation*

Although management could not give commitment to interpretation, but the grassroots has good faith to commit to organizational changes. This commitment can be shown by Figure 13 below.

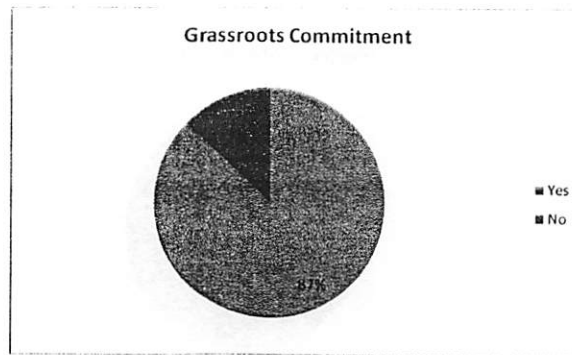


Figure 13. *Grassroots Commitment*

Based on the five principles of dialogical communication, it can be concluded that the organization does not run communication efficiently and effectively. Only 19% who recognize the efficiency and effectiveness of communication when organizational changes.

Great leadership is required for communicate the change efficiently and effectively. Grassroots would understand and accept the change if their respect their leader. It means that if organization want to make a better change, their must have a strong leader, so their could communicate and build the organization based on same vision and mision. Strong leadership, include building two-way communication with grassroots and being open minded to grassroots aspiration, would give a chance to all employees to sounding their opinion about organization changing. And it would give a chance to all employees to join a forum discussion about changing process.

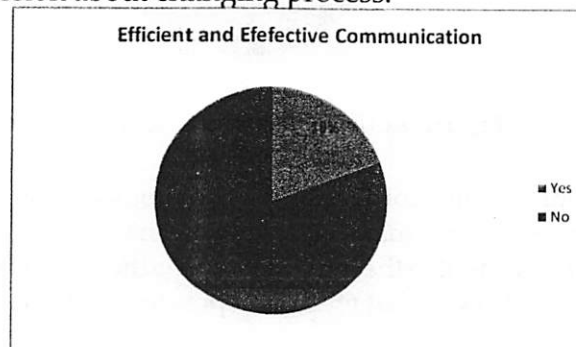


Figure 14. *Efficient and Efective Communication*

Taylor et al. (2001) argue the shift to dialogue is not merely terminological, rather it is based on an interpersonal model of ethical and effective communication whereby dialogue is the simultaneous fusion with the other, while retaining the uniqueness of one's self interest. Dialogic communication involves an understanding of the past and the present, but also has a focus on a continued and shared future for all participants Kent and Taylor (2002).

Whereas almost all respondents considered that the grassroots requires effective communication in order to achieve dialogical communication.



Figure 15. *The Need of Effective Communication*

Communication is traditionally viewed as a vital instrument for obtaining employee support for change through providing information that reduces anxiety and subsequent change resistance (Jick, 1993; Schweiger & DeNisi, 1991). Beyond these information adequacy approaches, a discourse-based view of change calls attention to the subtle meanings underneath texts and how they affect and frame members' experiences (Heracleous & Barrett, 2001). Focusing on both how and why these texts are disseminated, and interpreted, reveals important power struggles in organizations (Hardy & Phillips, 2004) and illuminates how change processes unfold (Heracleous & Barrett, 2001).

Dialogic communication requires sophisticated communicators, that is, people who are comfortable relinquishing their power bases, suspending their beliefs and committing to alternate interpretations in order to build a relationship. This implies an organizational commitment to learning and upskilling of all employees.

Conclusion

This pilot study shown that grassroots were not involved in dialogical communication. The information about changing management was not well delivered to grassroots.

Based on this result, we also could analyzed that toward organizational change so many things become vulnerable, such as perceived quality of information, cynicism of colleagues, and lack of trust. Organizational Communication is one of important things to build relationship between employees to employees, employees to management and all the peoples who have been worked on it. An effective communication is one way to minimize noise in communication, made a good conditional work environment, minimize bad competitive between employees and other negative things that can happen all the time.

But we could not generalized the result from this pilot study. We should get more data from more respondents.

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