

Organizational communication

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INTRODUCTION

- *“The discipline of communication studies how people use verbal and nonverbal messages to generate meanings within and across various contexts, cultures, channels, and media”* (Keyton 2017; p. 502).
- Communication is a wide area of study that includes many fields such as feedback, information exchange, emotion management or groupwork (Keyton 2017) and it is tailored to interrelated and overlapping organizational functions (McPhee & Zaig 2001).
- Main area of communication is the feedback that can be generally divided on feedback-seeking and feedback-giving. Feedback-giving possesses more robust evidence.

HISTORY OF ORG. COMMUNICATION

- 1914: the non-profit National Communication Association (NCA) is founded in the US
- 1917: the field begins with a focus on speech instruction and the study of persuasion.
- 1921: the departments of speech departments in the University of Iowa and the University of Wisconsin offer doctoral coursework.
- 1920 – 1940s: communication scholars study personality and its relation to speech, groups and teams (influence of Sigmund Freud and John Dewey)

Reviewed in Keyton (2017)

HISTORY OF ORG. COMMUNICATION

- 1940s – the field of org. communication emerges in the US. It is driven by concerns about organizing people in work settings effectively and efficiently.
- 1950: the non-profit International Communication Association (ICA) is founded
- 1950s - 1970s: organizational communication research focuses on improving organizational life and organizational production. Humans are believed to be rational beings and communication is examined as a mechanical process.

Reviewed in Keyton (2017)

HISTORY OF ORG. COMMUNICATION

- 1980s: the field moves away from a business-oriented approach and shifts towards the constitutive role of communication in organizing. Scholars start using qualitative methods (how knowledge is socially constructed from the point of view of participants within organizations, as well as between organizations and the larger society. Main areas of research are superior-subordinate relationships, organizational culture, communication skills, cross-cultural communication and communication networks. The 1987 is the origin of the journal Management Communication Quarterly (MCQ).

Reviewed in Keyton (2017)

FEEDBACK-SEEKING BEHAVIOR

- Feedback-seeking behavior (FOS) entails “*the conscious devotion of effort toward determining the correctness and adequacy of behavior for attaining valued end states*” (Ashford, 1986, p. 466).
- The whole conception is based on assumption that organizational members do not wait for receiving the feedback through formal channels but proactively seek for it (Ashford et al. 2016).

FEEDBACK-SEEKING BEHAVIOR

- FOS can be expressed by (Ashford et al. 2016):
- **1) Inquiry:** direct asking for feedback
- **2) Monitoring:** indirect observation of cues in one's environment in order to infer information from others
- **3) Indirect inquiry:** indirect stimulation of others in order to receive information from them without direct asking

FEEDBACK-SEEKING BEHAVIOR

- **Negative and directly obtained feedback has been repeatedly shown as the most beneficial (Ashford et al. 2003).**
- **However, organizational members generally tend prefer using indirect feedback-seeking methods (monitoring, indirect inquiry) and also seek for situations, which provide favorable or positive information and avoid negative or threatening ones (Tsui & Ashford 1994).**

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS OF FOB

- Engagement in particular feedback-seeking style is influenced by psychological factors.
- The most significant factors are (reviewed in Vich & Kim 2016):
- **1) Relationship between feedback-seeking behavior and attachment style**
- **2) Relationship between feedback-seeking behavior and goal orientation:**

Relationship between FOS and attachment style

- Individuals higher on attachment anxiety or avoidance tend to prefer negative feedback (Hepper and Carnelley 2010), but seek feedback less frequently than more secure individuals (Allen et al. 2010).
- Individuals higher on attachment avoidance avoid feedback situations. On the other hand, individuals higher on attachment anxiety initiate those situations, but more for the sake of receiving attention rather than feedback itself (Wu et al. 2014).
- Individuals higher in attachment anxiety also tend to be more engaged in direct feedback-seeking process than individuals higher in attachment avoidance (Wu et al. 2014).

Relationship between FOS and goal orientation

- Goal orientation represents the degree and style that one attributes to tasks.
- Performance-goal orientation (PGO) entails rather narrow-minded focus on attainment of goals that makes individuals concerned about gaining favorable judgment of their competence or avoiding negative judgments of their incompetence (Dweck & Leggett 1988).
- On the other hand, the learning goal orientation (LGO) is related to the actual development of competence, because it encourages individuals embrace new aspects of their work and perceive failures as a valuable feedback (Button et al. 1996).

Relationship between FOS and goal orientation

- Individuals driven by PGO tend to focus on positive feedback and prefer indirect feedback-seeking methods (monitoring, indirect inquiry).
- Individuals driven by Learning Goal Orientation (LGO) seek for both positive and negative feedback mostly through direct inquiry (Parker & Collins 2010; Gong et al. 2014).

FEDBACK-GIVING BEHAVIOR

- Feedback-giving is less examined area of research than feedback-seeking behavior.
- Feedback-giving can be defined as a two-way process between two or more organizational members (Leung et al. 2001; Vich & Kim 2016).
- The key point of feedback-giving is to deliver it in the constructive manner. It supports the motivation to use the feedback for improvement of job performance and to increase the perceptions of interactional justice, creation of favorable reactions to feedback source, and organization among receivers (Leung et al. 2001).

OBSTACLES OF FEEDBACK-GIVING

- **1) Defensiveness of receivers:** that is dissatisfaction or denial of the feedback (London 1997).
- **2) Rejection of feedback-giver:** means that particular feedback is followed by negative impressions about the feedback-giver as being biased or insensitive (Argyris, 1991).
- **3) Avoidance, delay or distortion of delivering negative feedback** (Benedict & Levine 1988)

OBSTACLES OF FEEDBACK-GIVING

- **4) Destructive criticism:** represents feedback style that contains threats, sarcasm, lacks considerate form and fails to promote better behavior among receivers (Baron 1988). It is an opposite of the constructive feedback (Leung et al. 2001).
- While receiving the destructive criticism, the individuals may feel anger, perceive feedback as harmful, blame and distrust the feedback-givers, express lower self-set goals and lower self-efficacy and tend to refuse to change or make excuses (Raver et al., 2012; Baron 1988).

RADICAL CANDOR

- Radical candor (RC) is the informal feedback method that can be defined as *“the practice of giving criticism while showing genuine concern”* (Scott, 2015).
- RC represents reaction of businesses on increase for more vivid, spontaneous, direct and practical forms of negative feedback (Wilkie, 2016; Feintzeig, 2015). The area has been partially predominated by work of Jack Welch (Welch & Welch 2005).
- Contemporary companies tend to use RC in order to support direct and kind communication, address poor performance and unethical behavior and face the unpleasant aspects of cooperation (Scott 2015; Wilkie 2016).

RADICAL CANDOR

- Vich & Kim (2016) redefine radical candor as a “*proactive and compassionate engagement in an unpleasant and direct feedback process*” (p. 11). Main reasons for main definition are: 1) involvement of both feedback-giving and seeking in the construct; 2) main focus on unpleasant feedback rather than on criticism only, because the pleasant feedback can be also challenging in some situations; 3) explicit statement of the RC as a proactive behavior similarly to feedback-seeking behavior; 4) explicit involvement of compassion in the construct.
- Although the RC has much to offer to organizational practice, there its empirical evidence is very limited (Vich & Kim 2016).

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