EMERGENCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING THROUGH DEVELOPMENT OF A COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

By

BEVERLY D. HILL *   **ALICE T. LEDFORD ****

* Instructional Systems Specialist, Department of Defense Service Component Organization, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA.
** Adjunct Professor, School of Education, Capella University, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this action research study was to create an organizational communications plan to enhance a Department of Defense (DOD) adult education institution's capability to communicate with its course writers and others internal and external to the organization. It sought to answer the question: how will an organizational communications plan be developed to convey course development duties, responsibilities, and submission requirements clearly to its course authors? The rationale for the study was the institution perpetually missing course activation dates. Qualitative data were collected, using Argyris and Schön's (1996) double-loop learning concept in addition to Eoyang's (2007) transforming feedback loop, inclusive of an organizational communications data collection tool, archival organizational information, a seven member focus group, as well as meeting minutes and a researcher journal. The findings concluded that by using action science, theory and practice can be successfully merged as in the development of a comprehensive organizational communications plan.

Keywords: DOD, SWOT, Organizational Learning.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is commonly described as a channel that requires a sender, receiver, and message; however, organizational communication has seemingly been the most prevailing challenge organizations currently face. Since communication is essential at all levels of civilian and military hierarchies, an organizational communications plan was developed at a Department Of Defense (DOD) adult education institution by applying the concept of double-loop learning, as ascribed by Argyris and Schön (1996). Further, Argyris (1994) posited that, an organization would not succeed in the 21st century unless communication was enhanced; hence, when single-loop learning emerged into double-loop learning.

The purpose of this study was to create an organizational communications plan in an effort to enhance the DOD adult education institution's ability to communicate with course writers specifically, and others internal and external to the organization generally. Approximately 110 course writers met the sample population criteria.

1. Theoretical Significance of this Study

Typically, there are descriptively synonymous meanings of communication. Spaho (2013) stated that, "communication is transfer of information from sender to receiver, implying that the receiver understands the message" (p. 104). Moreover, Nordin (2013) indicated that, leaders should adjust their communication techniques when customers or employees are remote, as with the DOD adult education institution studied. Additionally, Kolcum, Teodorescu, and Gifu (2014) noted that, communication is an interrelated system consisting of a source or producer, containing a message, including the consumer or for whomever the communication is intended. Conversely, communication has varied meanings, particularly as organizational and strategic communication are compared and contrasted.

1.1 Organizational/Strategic Communication

Organizational and strategic communication are typically viewed differently depending upon the type of

organization. According to Christensen (2014), organizational communication pertains to the attitudes, feelings, relationships, and skills of people. Indicative of organizational communication is the application of double-loop learning, as noted by Argyris and Schön (1996), by the data collection tool used in this study, which sought to understand some of the same attributes conveyed from course writers. The authors emphasize double-loop learning as modifying an organization's norms and policies. The DOD's view of organizational communication is known as strategic communication; however, The White House (2009) study elucidated the necessity of having a clear meaning of strategic communication as well as the need for methods to guide and coordinate communication efforts. The White House (2009) described strategic communication as synchronized speech and actions to deliberately communicate with, and engage specific audiences, which included a determination of how the audience's perception of the words, actions, activities, and programs were viewed. Further, organizations beyond those who manage communications add worth and influence to communication (The White House, 2009), as with this DOD adult education institution. Yet, Nordin (2013) contrasted corporate and organizational communications and noted how organizational communication can be unclear and often not articulated. In addition, Norman, Avolio, and Luthans (2010) stated organizational communication involves strategies that are planned and developed to achieve specific results or goals. Organizational and strategic communication not withstanding, others have surmised the consequential effects.

Bakar and Mustaffa (2013) observed that, how organizational communication affected other organizational outcomes, such as being committed and having job satisfaction, as reported in the Malaysian organization studied. The authors measured 13 communication variables that included dimensions such as the characteristics of messages, flow of information, and the climate for communications. Likewise, the 12-question organizational communications data collection tool in the current study used similar components to aid in assessing organizational communication. Researchers of organizational communication suggested that, organizational communication can also link formal and informal information as well as vertical and horizontal relationships (Bakar & Mustaffa, 2013). Preferably, resulting in Eoyang's (2007) transforming feedback loop with its emphasis on lasting changes resulting from open and honest dialogue; subsequently, have an enduring impact on all participants. Bakar and Mustaffa (2013) also noted how Malaysians preferred group work to individual work. Although the sample was 24 individuals, the authors ascertained that culture seemed more prevalent; therefore, group bond and mutual respect were preferred over communication. This attribute seemed to surface in the focus group bond that appeared during this study in addition to renewed respect gained and enhanced perspectives of others and their roles; accordingly, Eoyang's (2007) transforming feedback loop. Yet, organizations' level and methods of communication is seemingly industry dependent.

While corporate and military organizations may view communication from differing perspectives, there seemed to also be differences in how communication is measured. Perhaps if available organizational members are used to measure corporate communication, missions may be performed more effectively, especially if an organization's leadership considered and addressed employee feedback, utilizing double-loop learning - a particularly important consideration when undergoing change (Argyris, 1995).

1.2 Organizational/Leader Communication and Change

The effects of communication and organizational change have been measured. Tang and Gao (2012) studied the effect of employees' emotional intelligence, described as having social skills and abilities that related to interpersonal relationships, and its relation to intra-departmental communication as well as employees' reaction to organizational change. The authors observed how employees exhibited more commitment to organizational change with effective communication; this reduced the stress and uncertainty typically induced by change when communication with supervisors and peers in the same departments existed during the change process. Subsequently, organizational learning is likely beginning to

prevail. In addition, when communication and other organizational changes occurred, one way to cement those changes was to use influencers.

Grenny, Maxfield, and Shimberg (2008) discovered that, executives who effectively influenced change, on issues such as a lack of collaboration and the adherence to quality standards, used multiple change strategies at any one time. Yet, according to Grenny, et al. (2008), less than five percent used four or more influence strategies at a time, while the difference made in combining strategies proved most effective. Various executives' actions were also measured during their study, which found that some executives attempted to link behaviors to mission and values by transforming attitudes toward mission attainment. Similarly, the DOD adult institution's organizational communications plan has enhanced mission accomplishment as one of its goals. Closely related to communication, organizational learning is a determination of the methods leaders use to make effective changes.

An organization's readiness for lasting change seems dependent on the manner in which a leader communicates. For example, when Argyris (1994) described leaders who looked for answers to long-standing problems without the benefit of having employees reflect on how or why they, nor leaders, may have contributed to the issues; the result was less desirable single-loop learning. Conversely, double-loop learning would have likely prevailed if questions were asked about objective facts in addition to reasons and motives behind those facts that may have contributed to long-standing problems. Similar studies were also conducted in the DOD adult education institution to help ascertain the source of activation/ production problems; however, solutions were recommended without input from some external and internal stakeholders, which tend to stifle organizational learning. None the less, for this study, the organization's leadership was responsible for approving the communications plan, not determining its contents; this role alone differed and required changing the direction of how decisions were made. Had organizational archives not been referenced to aid organizational change and

organizational learning, the organizational communications plan may not have been unequivocally accepted.

1.3 Organizational Learning

The concept of organizational learning is also viewed from varied perspectives; but the practical view (Argyris, 1995) took seemed most appropriate, especially from the standpoint of addressing issues germane to organizations. Specifically related to action science, Argyris (1995) noted that, organizational learning occurred when mistakes were discovered and corrected, or when an intent and action initially acquiesced. Action science has as its tenets cyclical implementation, observation, and Model II behavior to change the underlying program. Organizational learning can also be examined from Argyris and Schön's (1996) viewpoint, as they distinguished it by acquired information, perhaps via practices, knowledge, or even techniques. As the authors described, organizational learning can be either internal or external to the organization, as well as be derived from the information itself.

Correspondingly, archival information from previous institutional initiatives was imperative and greatly informed this study as well as other germane features. Furthermore, Nordin (2013) indicated the creation of frequent employee communication networks to promote collaboration and shared knowledge as one way to urge organizational learning. Using a focus group with this adult education institution study furthered this viewpoint. Additionally, Chen, Hung, and Tseng (2010) conducted a study of 202 manufacturing companies in Taiwan that were geared toward learning within organizations, specifically inter-organizational learning. Inter-organizational learning is the transfer of knowledge from one organization to another, or the creation of new knowledge resulting from interactions with other organizations (Chen, Hung, and Tseng, 2010). Chen, et al.'s (2010) study concluded that, the quality of relationships was crucial to the transference of either already known or new knowledge. Likewise, intra-departmental communication, its relation to emotional intelligence, and organizational change seemed interrelated, as were investigated by Tang and Gao, (2012) and Chen, et al., (2010). So, how does organizational

change and organizational learning relate to a communications plan?

2. Study Background

A DOD service component adult education institution, located in the United States, is responsible for developing over 220 courses for members assigned worldwide. It appeared the DOD adult education institution did not communicate course development requirements to its stakeholders well; primarily to the course writers who are responsible for providing the distance learning course manuscripts to the institution for development and subsequent activations. This was seemingly and partly attributed to single-loop learning. Nevertheless, courses were perpetually activated late; thereby, adversely affecting job training. This dilemma seemed to exacerbate over the years, despite multiple unsuccessful improvement initiatives; therefore, new measurement tools were implemented to better assess overall communication needs.

It was essential for the institution to receive more adequate course content produced by course writers, because it resulted in curriculum specialists devoting an inordinate amount of time for revisions; subsequently, causing late course activations. The intent of a comprehensive communications plan appeared vital. As well, it seemed apparent the DOD adult education institution thought the course writers received adequate information to aid course development efforts since the writers' personal opinions and perspectives were not sought beyond the training they received from the institution.

3. Method

There were two qualitative evaluative tools and two participant groups used in this action research study: an organizational communications data collection tool sought feedback from course writers, and a focus group was assembled and the organizational communications plan was developed, which included expert reviews for feasibility. To guide the work of action research, Coghlan and Branick's (2010) cycles of inquiry proved useful, which include diagnosing the problem, planning the action, taking action, and evaluating the action. According to Stringer (2007), "action research is a participatory process

that involves all those who have a stake in the issue engaging in systematic inquiry into the issue to be investigated" (p. 6). The focus group and study participants who met the organizational communications data collection tool criteria were not only indicative of action research, but presented an opportunity to apply Eoyang's (2007) transforming feedback loop. Each participant group primarily consisted of members affected by the DOD adult education institution's less than ideal communication and methods thereof. The data collection tool was used to aid the DOD adult education institution in understanding the course writers' experiences and viewpoints while the archival data considerably aided in the communications plan development.

According to Hilal and Alibri (2013), qualitative data is widely accepted in the educational arena, largely due to participants' experience that also allows problems to be addressed more completely since multiple themes typically emerge. Relatedly, a review of the organization's archives proved invaluable to retaining changes that worked well and eliminating less successful efforts. Further, Golafshani (2003) described the qualitative data method as a means to help understand an occurrence in a natural environment. As studied here, the remote course writers completed the organizational communications data collection tool via an online survey program while the communications plan focus group met at their work site. However, research methods seemingly vary, with broad latitude in industries' acceptability, and seemed to differ on the basis of topics studied.

Similarly, Jensen (2003) reported that, varied research methods were acceptable in the organizational communication realm, including the use of study participants to measure attitudes regarding communication and events therein, such as with the administration of the communications data collection tool to course writers, which invariably addressed training methods and effectiveness. As the author also related, the systematic nature of ascertaining reliable data on communication, such as coding and categorizing responses, not only assist in ascertaining accurate conclusions, but in the development of an appropriate

communications plan, as performed in this study.

Argyris (1994) indicated that, leaders have utilized a number of communication data gathering tools to obtain information required to implement organizational change, including focus groups and organizational surveys. Regarding the use of qualitative data, Gall M.D, Gall J.P, and Borg (2007) asserted that, "…researchers….are usually interested in the average response of the total group rather than the response of a single individual" (p. 229). Course writers were asked to provide input into processes and procedures that have a considerable impact on how information is conveyed, and ultimately on their performance. In addition, course writers' input exemplified what Argyris and Schön (1996) referred to as Model II behavior, which has a reliance on quality data that include the views and experiences of others. The authors also shared how Model II behavior is exhibited when leaders routinely seek and employ appropriate feedback, which the DOD adult education institution leadership sought via previous improvement initiatives albeit with limited success. The foregoing assertions organically led to organizational communication being assessed through the use of a communications data collection tool as one method of advancing organizational learning.

Collaboration and information formed the basis for the organizational communications plan development. Feedback was garnered on the contents of the communications plan from internal and external colleagues due to the importance of ensuring varied viewpoints were considered and reflected to help ensure the communications plan's comprehensiveness. Collaborating in this manner seemed a true application and essence of double-loop learning (Argyris & Schön, 1996). In addition, the communications plan focus group was made up of employees who were also affected by, and must adhere to the plan's compulsory language, which furthered a tenet of double-loop learning as posited by Argyris (1994). In an attempt to rectify the oversight of excluding course writers' feedback, the organizational communications data collection tool was developed.

4. Study Participants

All data collection tool participants were course writers collocated with their training detachment elements at military installations and were either between the ages of 30 and 45 years old or younger/older, as long as they were assigned as course writers. Polkinghorne (2005) stated that, "individuals who can provide relevant descriptions of an experience are primarily those who have had or are having the experience" (p. 140). Nevertheless, the organizational communications plan focus group participants were internal and external to the organization whose duties required daily interaction with course writers and who had previous experiences with viewing issues from myriad perspectives. These were valuable attributes to the development of a communications plan with focus group members who were between 30 and 58 years old. However, accurately determining eligible course writers to complete the data collection tool proved most challenging.

5. Recruitment

There were differing recruitment methods for each participant group: a database and spreadsheet were used in determining assigned course writers and subjective criteria were noted for focus group members. Subsequently, all suitable military course writers were invited to participate in completing the voluntary, anonymous data collection tool via an email. There was a disclaimer on the first line of text to disregard the request if they were not assigned as course writers on May 26, 2015. The email also detailed the topic of the study, its purpose, and the intended outcome and included an excel spreadsheet containing their names and assigned participant numbers. Concurrently, the local focus group was assembled by asking specific individuals, in person, to participate on the basis of their observed readiness to move the organization forward, initiatives previously led, sound judgment, innovativeness, and experiences. Each focus group member was then sent an email containing a copy of the informed consent letter with detailed information including regarding the study, the length of their participation and rationale for selection. Finally, those who agreed to participate were asked to sign and return a communications plan informed consent letter.

6. Setting

The data collection tool was contained within the DOD component campus database and the course writers accessed the link electronically from their disparate locations. Focus group members met at the local work site.

7. Data Collection and Analysis

The organizational communications data collection tool and focus group seemed most practical for this qualitative action research study of developing a communications plan that addressed the issue of enhancing communication with the course writers. As Polkinghorne (2005) related, a qualitative research study is data resulting from the lived experiences of individuals and requires an extensive exploration of participants. Further, the author indicated that, data gathering is needed as an evidence for the experience that is being investigated and any claims should be made on the basis of a population studied; hence, organizational learning intended via the data collection tool. In an effort to gather a depth of experiences, feedback from course writers also reflected homogeneous participants.

Additionally, several studies with similar participants and goals not only informed this study, but also related closely. Namely, Bjørnstad's (2011) questionnaire was completed by military personnel whose duties and responsibilities changed, including technological advances, as with this DOD adult education institution. Furthermore, Harp's (2011) study assessed how managers communicated during change, while Aaberg and Thompson (2012) used focus groups to aid in conducting accurate program assessments. Each study served to coalesce and aid in answering the question posed in this study.

7.1 Data Collection

Qualitative data collected during the study included an examination of the DOD adult education institution's archived documents inclusive of previous process improvement efforts and meetings. Especially noted in the artifacts were recommendations that aided in the development of the organizational communications plan. As Kelly and West (2011) highlighted, survey design is extremely important, especially tying the questions to the overall purpose. Further, the selectively chosen seven-

person focus group gathered via regularly scheduled meetings to aid in the development of a comprehensive communications plan, which Herr and Anderson (2005) referred to as "insider in collaboration with insiders"…"insider(s) in collaboration with outsider(s)" (p. 31). These information sources led to fairly comprehensive datasets.

Data were obtained in myriad ways. Information discovered in the organization's archives was summarized in a table and presented to the focus group for background and to inform them of the need for the study. Further, it was emphasized to the focus group that they were obligated to not deviate from the specified research plan data collection procedures unless permitted by the institutional review board. As well, the data collection tool responses were recorded in a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet where each of the 12 questions were placed in individual columns with exact responses copied from each respondents' comments, then the responses were saved in a Microsoft word file downloaded from the campus-wide survey program. Course writers' feedback from the organizational communications data collection tool questions (Appendix A) was also presented to the focus group as guidance in the organizational communications plan development. Data gathered in this manner also aided in ensuring the information was conveyed clearly.

7.2 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used as a method to analyze the results and derive findings. A constant comparative method was employed to develop themes that resulted from the communications data collection tool. Bogden and Biklen (2007) indicated that, analyzing data requires a system of codes used to organize, manage, and synthesize information. However, as listed in Phillips and Lumpur (2002), analytic codes, as opposed to descriptive, were applied to the researcher's journal, emails, and meeting minutes to document the focus group details.

As Phillips and Lumpur (2002) indicated, thematic coding is a method of examining phrases, words, or sentences from raw qualitative data and ascribing codes or labels. The journal, emails, and meeting minutes were examined to ascertain what Phillips and Lumpur (2002) listed as including

activities and participation, which connoted the inclusion of others over a period of time in a specific setting and the adaptation to a new setting, respectively, as in the communications plan focus group composition.

Subsequently, the journal, emails, and meeting minutes were reviewed in an effort to observe focus group team members' feedback and participation; whereas, emails and meeting minutes documented the focus group decisions and initiatives used in the organizational communications plan development. Thus, organizational learning and Eoyang's (2007) transforming feedback loop succeeded. Consequently, the writers' themed responses were also included in the plan. Resultantly, everyone responded to requests to review data and meeting minutes, as well as provided input to the communications plan expeditiously and with seemingly sound judgement, whether in person or via email. Furthermore, each focus group member participated equally, resulting in a truly collaborative communications plan. However, thematically coding the data collection tool was entirely different.

7.3 Data Collection Tool

Course writers' responses were openly and axially coded (Phillips & Lumpur, 2002). Open coding occurred by highlighting words and phrases from the course writers' responses to each question. Axial coding, which is sorting data into groups, consisted of additional hierarchical divisions and subsequently grouped by types, such as training. The focus group agreed to incorporate the course writers' seemingly most salient feedback into the communications plan. To augment open and axial coding, Nvivo (version 10) was used as an electronic means assist in identifying any codes that may have been overlooked.

Resultant themes emerged from each of the 26 course writers' data collection tool responses. Then, the respondents' feedback was reviewed and coded with three emergent themes: training communication, administrative communication, and communication media. As a result, components of the communication plan organically surfaced.

7.3.1 Organizational Data

Developing the organizational communications plan required a focused approach, which included the incorporation of appropriate feedback from former and current organizational leaders and members. Further, the communications plan focus group analyzed the adult education institution's SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, process improvement implementation plans, and the course writers' three major themed responses from the data collection tool; hence, enhanced organizational learning. Specifically, the SWOT analysis was used to answer these questions:

(1) where are we;

(2) what do we have to work with;

(3) where do we want to be; and

(4) how do we get there?

The before mentioned research and analysis aligned with some of Kodlick's (2010) communication planning elements, which included the plan's intent and specifically stated "decide in advance what effect or end state it wants to achieve. A statement of intent can capture the desired-level outcome of the communication effort or the desired end state" (p. 20). The author also noted how researching a topic deepened understanding. Because it was imperative to determine stakeholders' knowledge and level of awareness, varied documents at the DOD adult education institution were researched, developed, and maintained in an effort to ensure the communications plan was appropriate and comprehensive. Additionally, several other record keeping measures were used to document the communications' plan formulation as aforementioned.

7.3.2 Journal, Emails, and Meeting Minutes

Namely, a journal, emails, and meeting minutes proved resourceful. A researcher journal was used to document the actual development of the plan, to record the systematic nature of the planning, and as evidence a focus group participated in developing the communications plan. Emails and meeting minutes served the twofold purpose of documenting the proceedings and as additional evidence of team involvement in developing the communications plan.

Moreover, a DOD service component regulation's template was used, which guided the development of all communications plan components. Beyond those measures, the organizational communication data collection tool and organizational communications plan underwent a level of rigor before being presented to the organization's leadership.

7.3.3 Field Test

Golafshani (2003) indicated that, the goals of a pilot test were to guard against bias and to ensure the questions and procedures produced valid findings. As a result, the 12-question organizational communications data collection tool was field-tested by three content experts: a program evaluation and assessment chief; a nurse practitioner who served as a principal investigator for a health study; and an education and training course director/strategic planner. A personalized field test template was sent to each of the experts via email and contained background on the rationale for the study, its participants, and a copy of the original organizational communications data collection tool. They provided fairly extensive feedback, resulting in the data collection tool being extensively revised, which produced very relevant results.

8. Findings

In this study, the course development communication process with stakeholders, especially course writers, required enhancement so the overall mission of producing timely and accurate courses could be realized. The conceptual view was primarily based upon Argyris and Schön's (1996) double-loop learning concept as well as the authors' view of organizational learning that could be also examined from the perspective of acquired information attained via practices, knowledge, or techniques. Moreover, the authors described the learning as either internal or external to the organization; consequently, an organizational communications data collection tool and communications plan focus group were employed, which reflected internal and external viewpoints. Furthermore, organizational learning also transpired by reviewing past process improvement efforts through the DOD adult education institution's archival data, which noticeably reflected only internal views. Additionally, the focus group

thoroughly analyzed the relationship of the communication plan components to the course writers' feedback on the data collection tool to ensure inclusiveness.

Successively, the DOD adult education institution's communications plan was approved and will be institutionalized to aid the manner in which organizational members communicate with customers. Ultimately, everyone should perform the course production mission considerably better. The communications plan will hopefully have an enduring impact, regardless of leadership.

9. Implications for Future Research

Additional research on developing industry-specific communications plans accessible over the worldwide web could be very beneficial for organizations seeking to develop stakeholder-and organization-centered communications plan, particularly during organizational change. Further, standard industry communication channels, networks, and resources could result. In addition, it could aid DOD organizations in preparing and publishing communications plans at unit levels to enhance mission success and to gain insights on effectively communicating. However, if good message themes and engagement strategies are crucial to success, the nexus of any communications plan must include public affairs or organizations' internal communication agencies, whether in the DOD or civilian sector. Finally, the research should measure a communication plan's effectiveness by comparing organizational communication before and after its implementation, which could be particularly helpful in measuring mission effectiveness.

Conclusion

To answer the research question on how to develop an organizational communications plan to convey course development duties, responsibilities, and submission requirements clearly to course writers is to use an appropriate, comprehensive communications plan template. In addition, by developing and administering a data collection tool, reviewing applicable archival data, instituting/leading a focus group, and other administrative data, organizational learning should be maximized by instituting Argyris and Schön's (1996) double-loop learning

concept. This study addressed ineffective organizational communications at a DOD adult education institution that had a documented, pervasive issue of not meeting customers' course need dates due to a myriad of issues including the condition of courses received at the institution, whose production averaged over 300 courses annually.

References

[1]. Aaberg, W., and Thompson, C. J. (2012). "Infusing two Models of Evaluation into a Military Environment: A Case Study". *Performance Improvement,* Vol. 51, No. 1, pp. 17-25. doi:10.1002/pfi.2137

[2]. Argyris, C. (1994). "Good Communication that Blocks Learning". *Harvard Business Review,* Vol. 72, No. 4, pp. 77-85.

[3]. Argyris, C. (1995). "Action Science and Organizational Learning". *Journal of Managerial Psychology,* Vol. 10, No. 6, pp. 20-26, doi: 10.1108/02683949510093849

[4]. Argyris, C., and Schön, D.A. (1996). *Organizational Learning II: Theory, Method, and Practice.* [Electronic Version] (2nd ed.), Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc.

[5]. Bakar, H.A. and Mustaffa, C.S. (2013). "Organizational Communication in Malaysia Organizations". *Corporate Communications: An International Journal,* Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 87-109. doi:10.1108/13563281311294146

[6]. Bjørnstad, A.L. (2011). "Exploring Network Organization in Military Contexts: Effects of Flatter Structure and more Decentralized Processes". *Military Psychology,* Vol. 23, pp. 315-331.doi:10.1080/08995605.2011.570595

[7]. Bogden, R.C., and Biklen, S.K. (2007). *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theories and Method,* 5th Edition, Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

[8]. Chen, T-Y, Hung, K-P, and Tseng, C-M. (2010). *The Effects of Learning Capacity, Transparency and Relationship Quality on Inter-Organizational Learning.*

[9]. Christensen, M. (2014). "Communication as a Strategic Tool in Charge Processes. *Journal of Business Communication,* Vol. 51, No. 4, pp. 359-385, doi:10:117 7.232988414525442

[10]. Coghlan, D., and Brannick, T. (2010). *Doing Action Research in your own Organization,* 3rd edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

[11]. Eoyang, G.H. (2007). *Coping with Chaos: Seven Simple Tools.* Circle Pines, MN: HSD Institute Press.

[12]. Gall, M. D., Gall, J. P., and Borg, W. R. (2007). *Educational Research: An Introduction.* Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

[13]. Golafshani, N. (2003). *Understanding Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research.* The Qualitative Report, Retrieved from http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR8-4/golafshani.pdf. Vol. 8, No. 4, pp. 597–606.

[14]. Grenny, J., Maxfield, S. and Shimberg, A. (2008). "How to have Influence". *MIT Sloan Management Review,* Vol. 50, No. 1, pp. 46-52.

[15]. Harp, A. L. (2011). "Effective Change Communication in the Workplace?". Master's Thesis. University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee. Retrieved from http://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_gradthes/975

[16]. Herr, K., and Anderson, G.L. (2005). *The Action Research Dissertation: A Guide for Students and Faculty*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

[17]. Hilal, A.H., and Alibri, S.S. (2013). "Using Nvivo for Data Analysis in Qualitative Research". *International Interdisciplinary Journal of Education,* Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 181-186.

[18]. Jensen, M.T. (2003). *Organizational Communication: A Review,* Report No. 1/2003. Kristiansand Norway: Agderforskning.

[19]. Kelly, T., and West, D. (2011). "And the Survey Says…Designing and Collecting Surveys to Optimize Program Outcomes". *Symposium Conducted at the Meeting of Association of Pediatric Program Directors Annual Meeting,* Miami, FL.

[20]. Kolcum, M., Teodorescu, B., and Gifu, D. (2014). "Elements of Organizational Communication". *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences,* Vol. 35, pp. 66-73.

[21]. Nordin, E.J. (2013). "Exploring Effective Communication for Organizational Change". Doctoral Dissertation Available from ProQuest Dissertations ad Theses database. (UMI No. 3564580)

[22]. Norman, S.M., Avolio, B.J., and Luthans, F. (2010). "The Impact of Positivity and Transparency on Trust in Leaders and their Perceived Effectiveness". *The Leadership Quarterly,* pp. 350-364.

[23]. Phillips, J.A. and Lumpur, K. (2002). *Qualitative Research Methods in Education.* Retrieved from http://www.learningdomain.com/PhD/Qualitative INTROD.html

[24]. Polkinghorne, D.E. (2005). "Language and Meaning: Data Collection in Qualitative Research". *Journal of Counseling Psychology,* Vol. 52, No. 2, pp. 137-145. doi:10.1037/0022-0167.52.2.137

[25]. Spaho, K. (2013). "Organizational Communication and Conflict Management". *Management,* Vol. 18, No. 1, pp. 103-118.

[26]. Stringer, E.T. (2007). *Action Research,* 3rd edition. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

[27]. Tang, C., and Gao, Y. (2012). "Intra-department Communication and Employees' Reaction to Organizational Change: The Moderating Effect of Emotional Intelligence". *Journal of Chinese Human Resource Management,* Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 100-117.

[28]. The White House. (2009). *National Framework for Strategic Communication.* Report No. 000990. Washington, DC.

Appendix A

Organizational Communications Data Collection Tool Responses

1. Have you received training on your course writer duties?

2. Of the training you received, which method(s) were used?

3. On the basis of its effectiveness as a communication method, which type of training method listed above do you think should be mandatory to help you understand your course writer duties? If you did not receive training, which method listed above would you prefer? Please explain why.

4. If you received training, how do you feel the training, from any of the above sources, could have been better communicated to aid you in understanding your duties?

5. If you have received training, rate your level of agreement with each statement using the scale below:4 – Strongly Agree 3 - Agree 2 – Disagree 1 – Strongly Disagree 0– Neither Agree nor Disagree Answer Group 1

6. What communications method(s) do you prefer the DOD adult education institution use to provide information relating to your duties and any other procedural updates/changes? Please rank order, from 1 to 4, with 1 being your top preference.

7. What can the DOD adult education institution do in terms of communications to help with course writer duties?

8. What constraints do you have that the DOD adult education institution should consider that might prohibit you from receiving information or responding to requests as we communicate with you? Select all that apply.

9. What internal or external agencies, offices, or individuals should the DOD adult education institution communicate, or coordinate, with to assist you in performing your duties? Please justify your response.

10. The DOD adult education institution's main communications objectives are to convey timely and relevant information. Are additional objectives needed? If so, what?

11. What recommendations, if any, do you have for the DOD adult education institution to enhance its communications organization-wide?

12. Please provide any other comments, issues, or concerns you have that might enhance communications between the DOD adult education institution and you that were not addressed.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Beverly D. Hill is an Instructional Systems Specialist at the Department of Defense Service Component Organization, where she prepares distance learning course materials, examinations, and perform course statistical analysis. Dr. Hill received a Doctor of Education degree in Educational Leadership and Management at Capella University. She is a 25 year retired military member who served in varied administrative, instructional, and leadership and management positions. Dr. Beverly Hill was recently recognized by Worldwide Branding for Excellence in Education.

Dr. Alice T. Ledford is an Adjunct Professor in the School of Education at Capella University, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA.