MANAGEMENT OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATION AND ITS RELEVANCE

TO LITERATURE AND SOCIAL STUDIES

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Abstract: *A comprehensive theory of communication involves the sensitivity and sensibility of human attitude at the interpersonal level. It has gained greater significance at the organizational level where the interpersonal functional transactions are executed basically through communication. In the present pattern of syllabus and pedagogy, classroom teaching of communication skills is far away from the industry requirement where most of the employment opportunities are communication and language skills centered. Communication skills are often comprehended as purely synonymous to lingual skills with no have direct implication on attitudinal factors. The ambit of communication extends to literature, human behavioral and social spheres, too. Literature deals with the fundamental subjects like interpersonal understanding, relationship, leadership, the dos and donts of human, organizational and social behavior vis-à-vis communication. In this backdrop, the paper deals with four human subjects like empathy, relationship, leadership and silence which are pertinent to behavior, attitudes and exercised through Communication. In the light of primary and secondary sources, each subject will be examined for its relevance with the above said issues vis-à-vis corporate communication. A view that emerges out of the analysis will be substantiated with illustrations from literature studies and of notable personalities from various walks of life to authenticate the findings. It will also touch upon the pedagogy of corporate communication subjects and its relevance to academics.*

OBJECTIVE: To identify the components of Human Resources, device their management through Corporate Communication and establish their relevance to literature and social studies.

METHODOLOGY: Four behavioral human subjects of Empathy, Relationship, Leadership and Silence are identified as relevant to Human Resource Management. They are analyzed from the perspective of communication for their better realization and substantiated with literary and live examples of noted personalities. The analysis and findings are based on the interactions held with various industry people, Psycho-lingual analysts, communication experts and sample surveys.

INTRODUCTION: 21st century has witnessed a new behavioral revolution through communication in all occupations and walks of life. The boom of corporate sectors has expanded the horizons of communication to make it corporate, too. As an integral part of human life, communication has enormous influence at the work place where most of the work is executed through it. It is a wide-ranging domain of study, which includes human nature viz. attitudes, thoughts, behaviour, relationship and organizational issues like leadership, teamwork, decision-making, motivation etc. Paul A. Argenti and Janis Forman (2002:4) give a totalitarian definition of corporate communication as: 'Ideally, corporate communication is an attitude toward communication or a set of mental habits that permeate

an organization and are present in all its communications with constituencies'. Cornellissen and Cornellissen (2008:5) quote Van Reil's definition as: Corporate Communication "is an instrument of management by means of which all consciously used forms of internal and external communication are harmonized as effectively and efficiently as possible'. The overall objective of creating a favorable atmosphere for communication and relationships is essential for any organizational life. With its pervasive influence on all human and organizational subjects, Corporate Communication holds key to Human Resource Management at the organizational level. The author of this paper has identified Relationship, Leadership, Empathy and Silence as the four constituents of HRM, which are analyzed in the backdrop of Corporate Communication.

RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION: From the viewpoint of organizational life, HRM rallies around the interpersonal relationship for its growth and sustainability. The content meaning of the message draws its communicative value from the nature of interpersonal relationship. Needless to say, communication is vital to spruce up relationship in order to build up trust, seek the participation of all personnel in the organizational life to achieve the goal and realize the vision. Mutual trust removes encumbrances of argument, disagreement and distortion of meaning in communication.   According to Jack Gibbs, as quoted by Dauten et al (1962:191), Relationship Communication aims to promote equality, bring in spontaneity, seek participation of all the personnel in decision making and resolve the crisis by seeking suggestions and confer due respect to others' perspectives. Strong interpersonal relationship makes the climate congenial for interpersonal communication on equal terms with proportionate space for speaking and listening. Julia T. Wood (2009:211) confirms the need of congenial climate to establish parity of relationship as: "Communication that conveys equality is confirming and fosters supportive communication climate". Citing the benefits of 'equality,' she says: "Equality communicates respect and equivalent status. We can have exceptional experience or ability in certain areas and still show regard for others and their contribution to interaction. The human resource managers have the arduous task of making everyone feel 'equal' in order to make the employees positive and proactive. A few words of acknowledgment for their contribution to the organization have the potential to win their hearts and narrow down the hierarchical difference between the superiors and the subordinates.

When there are constraints of hierarchy or fear to divulge the facts, the communicators evolve strategic communication to safeguard their interest. Contrary to it, spontaneous communication laden with internal emotions and sense of honesty can knit people in good relationship. The spontaneous message of President Obama addressed to the High School students in Virginia to exhort them to dare ask questions, not be afraid to ask for help as he does every day, that it was not a sign of weakness but a sign of strength establishes its communicative value. The emotional connotation of his address laden with spontaneous choice of informal words like 'afraid,' 'weakness' connected the president with schoolchildren in the Parent-child relationship. The best of Human Resource Management lies in knitting a familial sort of relationship at the work place with the finer elements of transparency and honesty, which are the ethos of corporate communication. Aristotle's ethos of "good sense, good character and good will" rationalizes Human Resource Management and fortifies relationship communication. The Self-Disclosure of N R Narayana Murthy (2009:162), former chief of Infosys, upholds the ethos of Human

Resource Management and Communication to sustain his relationship with the investors. In 1995, when the company incurred loss by investing in the secondary market, Murthy said: "We have lost this much money by investing in the secondary market. This was a mistake. We have learnt our lesson. We will not repeat this mistake". He rationalizes the ethos of self-disclosure as: "It was not mandatory to provide low-level details of loses in non-core business activities. But since we had made a commitment to our shareholders that we would bring the bad news early and proactively to them". He proceeds to say: "I want to be known to our shareholders as an honest person first, and then as a smart person". The "good sense, good character and good will" of Murthy authenticates the relevance of honesty of communication which is required to sustain relationship with the investors.

EMPATHY MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNCIATION: HRM is best realized through the empathic disposition to each other in the organization. The dividend of communication is more when the meaning of the message is understood from the perspective of the senders. In the process of empathy, Stephen R. Covey (1989:14) prioritizes it as to "seek first to understand and, then to be understood". Empathy is an interpersonal emotional process of understanding each other from the respective viewpoints. It influences the organizational performance of the personnel and establishes affinity across the hierarchical orders. Rogers. C. (1975:38) says: "Empathy includes communicating your sensing of his world as you look with fresh and unfrighten eyes at elements of which the individual is fearful. It means frequently checking with him as to the accuracy of your sensing and being guided by the responses you receive". When Mulk Raj Anand depicted the character of the sweeper boy Bakha, in "Untouchable" he was actually 'sensing his world' of sufferings, social subjugation and discrimination with 'fresh and unfrighten eyes'. Like the author Anand, a Human Resources Manager can empathize with the issues of the personnel in the organization by 'sensing' them as his/her own. Only then can he/she resolve them objectively to promote the well-being of the organization. As quoted by I. Jara. Director of Human Resources and Administration, Autoliv Safety Systems, India Pvt. Ltd. there were a good number of employees who wanted to shift over to other companies for the lack of empathy despite the hefty pay-package they draw in their present organizations.

In the hierarchical order of an organization, the assertive speaking authority of the higher-ups takes toll on the sensibility and sensitivity of the subordinates. The communication fear subdues the professional talent of the latter. Empathic listening provides communication balance, takes out fear and gives vent to the inner talent of the subordinates. Empathic listening is silent listening. It is not the physical silence of keeping the mouths shut but mental calmness of not interfering with the speakers' communication until they had said completely. It is an act through which the listeners restrain themselves from negating the views of the speakers and encourage them to open up through other means: "Listening does not mean sitting still with mouth shut. A corpse can do that" McKay et al (2009:17). Empathic listening has gained greater significance in customer care services where the Service Personnel have to prioritize the customers' problems, needs, concerns and feelings before they were resolved. It helps find a solution to their issues and establishes an emotional interpersonal relationship between the customer and the service provider. Stating the significance and function of empathic listening, Encina (2006:10) says it will "empty the large reservoir of emotion, anger, stress,

frustration and other negative feelings until the individual can see more clearly." These instincts and reciprocal responses demand positive attitude of the Human Resource managers to strike a functional balance in the hierarchical order.

Empathic listening directs the communication in an orderly way to take the instincts and negative responses away from the distressed subordinates and allow them to articulate their inner feelings without any inhibition. If they are not emptied, the distressed might turn out to be aggressive and offensive which imbalances the organizational behavior, relationship and atmosphere. McKay et al (2009) stress on the peripherals of communication like questioning, paraphrasing, verification etc. as the boosting factors of empathy. While listening to the distress of the empathy person, a verification statement like 'When you say you are depressed, what exactly do you mean?' provides the ownership of the distress to the empathizer. This empathy component is employed in the organizational counseling of the personnel which is the core of Human Resource Management. Stress is laid on the pronoun 'You' than on 'I' which endears the empathizer with the empathized.

LEADERSHIP MANAGEMENT AND COMMUCIATION: The scope of Human Resource Management extends to knit the personnel in a strong relationship, motivate and promote proactive attitude among them and on the functional side, resolve the crisis, bring in attitudinal change and seek the implementation of the organizational agenda. The leadership quality of a person can be realized fundamentally through communication along with virtuous concerted actions, which is crucial to the management of human resources between the leaders and the led. Mai and Akerson (2003:14) signify the role of leadership communication as: "Leadership cannot exist in the absence of dialogue with those who agree to be led. Command and authority are conferred (upon the leader), but leadership is created jointly, a product of the words shared and conversations held that together establish and develop relationship". Communication ability bears testimony to a person's future leadership qualities and the ability to connect with the people.

The crux of HRM lies in effecting an attitudinal change among its personnel. The pragmatic attitudinal shift from passive to expressive professionalism lies in leadership communication. Leaders achieve this objective with their *transformational* and *transactional* qualities which are central to the execution of human resource management. The transformational task is chiefly a 'leadership oriented' process which can be accomplished with the transactional communication between the leaders and the led. On the sidelines of 'transformational leadership' Harris and Nelson quote Bass (1985) who sees the role of 'transactional leadership' also to bring attitude change: "whereas transactional leadership can affect 'first-order changes' (e.g. employees working harder to achieve a promised reward; transformational leadership can affect 'second-order change' (e.g. unique changes in attitudes, beliefs values, motivation and performance). Both approaches can impact and improve performance; however; transformational leadership is likely to produce more dramatic results.

Transformational leadership motivates the (followers) beyond what is expected to provide new ways of training leaders and to more fully recognize the importance of leader-fellow interaction process" (p.356). The transformational leaders associate their communication skills with the efforts to

change the 'attitudes, beliefs, values' by winning the confidence of the followers. Anna Hazare is endowed with transformational and transactional leadership qualities to bring in attitudinal change among the masses to take on the fight against corruption. The people en mass are motivated to express their solidarity braving the cold and hot weathers and demonstrating protests all over India. The HR managers are supposed to be like a Winston Churchill to change the perspectives of the parliamentarians to approve the bill of coalition II World War plans, a John F Kennedy to motivate the space scientists to achieve the goal of moon mission, a Narayan Murthy to set a material vision for the organization and ethics visions for the employees to knit the men and the material into one comprehensive whole. He could be a Cassius to motivate Brutus to lead the movement against Caesar or Antony to influence the mob to revolt against the conspirators. There is transformational and transactional element about these great orator-leaders to influence their subjects to their respective goals.

COMMUNICATION EXAMPLES: Goal oriented communication of John F Kennedy on September 12th, 1962 about reaching the moon sums up the issues of goal and relationship discussed above as: "We choose to go to the moon. We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard, because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one which we intend to win, and the others, too."

Narayan Murthy's vision Statement: "If you seek respect, you will not short-change your customers, you will be fair to your colleagues in the company, you will be transparent with your investors, you will treat your vendor partners with care and understanding, you will not violate the laws of the land in whichever country you operate, and you will live in harmony in whichever society your operate in. My conviction is that such a pursuit will bring revenues, jobs, profits and market capitalization". (p. 159).

Winston Churchill's motivational speech to the Armed Forces: "Never give in - never, never, never, never, in nothing great or small, large or petty, never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense. Never yield to force; never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy." Commenting on the effectiveness of this communication, Cathryn Smith says: The address is "informal in style, almost conversational, appealing to our emotions. Again, the tone of the (speech) is set by the language used and even by the subject discussed". So goes analysis with the rest of two communication examples that sum up the transactional and transformational traits of attitudinal change, motivation, and vision and goal accomplishment required of the leaders.

SILENCE MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNCIATION: There is ample space for silence enforced upon organizational communication, though it is not a structured component of it. More empirical research is needed to define its precise influence on the contextual interpersonal communication to drive away the stereotype that it is ambiguous. Speech does have advantage over silence. But it would be prejudicial to say that silence does not have communicative value. Shirley Witt, the Iroquois anthropologist says: "For speech to have full meaning, it must also have silence. Silence is

half of speech; speech is half of silence. It is not pause. Neither is it an interlude of anxiety glowing red and vicious. It is not a time of frantic groping for thoughts and words to express thoughts". The functionality of silence is best established in the meditation where a person seeks spiritual unity with the Lord and feels the pulse of communication, though there is no verbal response from the later.

In the organizational set up, the choice between sounds and silence becomes specific when the subordinates choose the latter in the face of daunting words from the higher-ups. The rationale behind the choice could be to avoid the matter from getting precipitated or their defenselessness to counter the intimidating words, or to buy time to strike at the opportune time, or to regroup ideas and make proper sounds in an invincible situation and manner. On the other hand, the higher hierarchy might resort to silence when the words of the subordinates are undeniable, or they choose it as a strategic tool to establish status-quo of the situation by not committing to a new order, or as a maneuver to isolate the sound-producer from the mainstream. As a sequel to Baba Ramdev's protest of sounds and fanfare at Ramlila grounds, the recently concluded 'maun-vrath' of Anna Hazare bore indomitable influence on innumerable Indians to regroup themselves in their fight against corruption. The 'jail bharo andolan' is a sequel to the enormous influence exerted through his 'maun-vrath' in addition to his virtuous personality traits and communication acts.

The use of silence has been underlined in the study of literature, organizational functioning, interpersonal relationship and communication. It is portrayed in various forms as a mark of resistance, acceptance, rejection, defiance etc. In Harold Pinter's *Mountain Language* when the mother of the prisoner was not allowed to speak the mountain language, she resists the diktat of the sergeant by observing silence. Her silence was a mark of resistance. If a person keeps silent when the murder charge is leveled against him/her, it is accepting the crime of murder. When the dalits or marginalized women are silent to the atrocities hurled on them, it communicates their helplessness to oppression.

The 'what' and 'why' of silence is a stumbling block to the receiver. The 'what' of silence is the message of silence in the given context and the 'why' of silence is the reason the sender is silent for. In the organizations, the managers have the arduous task to understand the reasons behind the non-communicative behavior of the employees, which could be due to hierarchical fear or the apprehension of being wrong or lack of communication opportunities. Noelle-Neumann (1974) has theorized the decoding of ambiguity which led him to establish the concept of 'spiral of silence'. According to him, the subordinates observe silence out of fear of getting isolated or punished for communicating the message despite its truthfulness. In other words, the fear of consequences of verbal communication forces them to resort to non-communication i.e. silence. The spiral of silence refers to "how people tend to remain silent when they feel that their views are in minority", (*Encyclopedia Britannica*). The spiral of silence is a fear based strategy which prevents the people from expressing diverse opinions. In turn, it hampers the multi-dimensional growth of the organization because of its policies that are commanded by a particular section of people. Bowen and Blackmon identify 'vertical pressure' on the minority, which is due to lack of courage to put forth their divergent or non-complying opinions. According to them, "Revealing a potentially disruptive identity might impair social cohesion: concealing it, however, can inhibit social exchange and task exchange and reduce the self-efficacy, leading to organizational silence". The vertical

pressure from the superiors is the cause of fear for the minority not to protest against their exploitation. For example, when the manager asks the employees to work for an extra hour for the day they conceal their communicative intentions and observe silence without raising their voice lest they would be penalized. It demands their open-mindedness and courage of the managers to facilitate the practitioners of silence to articulate their views. Further, the responsibility also lies with the practitioners of silence to demonstrate moral strength to express their non-conniving views in an amicable and non-aggressive way.

CONCLUSION: The management of human resources cannot be realized in isolation. It can be best achieved with a finer management of human sensitivities and sensibilities. Communication is not the be-all and the end-all of HRM. It comes next only to finer elements of human virtues like honesty, transparency, patience, accommodativeness, empathy and deeds based on these elements. The interpersonal relationship and understanding depend on the literal meaning of communication testified on notes of honesty and credibility. Contrary to the perception that communication skills have organizational connotation alone, the theories examined in the paper have their relevance to interpersonal communication in various social and domestic contexts, too. The elegance of communication is warranted in all contexts and all relationships that determine the communication patterns based on certain strategies. The strategies help in the professional handling of sensibilities, sensitivities, situations, emotions, thoughts, etc. that bear key to higher success rate of communication.

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