Creative Problem Solving as a Communication Approach for Motivational Training

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ABSTRACT

This research is about the role of creative problem solving as a communication approach for motivational trainers in the changing world. The paper is constructed based on the assumption that, in order to face the increasingly intense business competition, reliable human resource is needed. It is required for improved employee performance. In Indonesia, to enhance performance, companies conduct training (that is motivational training) for their staff. In reference these trainings, this paper is about the communication patterns and approaches used in motivational training by trainers across the archipelago to influence the training outcomes. The research employed a case study method, in which the object of study were trainers located in Bandung and Jakarta metropolitan areas. Meanwhile, the locations for the study were a few selected training centres, especially those which focus on human resource development. The research outcomes elaborate the communication processes, communication patterns, and role of creative problem solving in motivational training.

INTRODUCTION

Though the world has changed and still transforming, many local companies in Indonesia which have failed to pay attention to their employees, hence becoming one of the causes for employee dissatisfaction, hence poor performance. Such companies have failed to understand that employees are key to the company’s success or failure. According to Hameed and Waheed (2011) the success or failure of the organization depends on employee performance. Therefore, any low level of intellectual performance and discipline will cause: unempowered work-force; week employee career development system; inefficient and bureaucratic employment system; authoritarian control system which lacks follow-ups; inappropriate wages not matching the needs and work-load of the employee; unfair promotions and mutations; and lack of social interaction between the superior and subordinates (Randall and Susan, 1999).

Staff performance can be improved by administering employee motivational training communication. Training enriches knowledge and enhances skills, leading to quality service delivery. A correlational study on training administration and training motivation (Azman et al., 2013), this is of course influenced by trainer communication as one of the predictors to improved performance.

Studies have continuously indicated that training is key to good performance, quality human resource and improved service delivery. It is upon this fact that various organizations conduct the various types of on the job and off the job training programs which aim to enhance employees’ knowledge, skills, and abilities (Vodde, 2012 as cited in Azman et al., 2013). Indeed, training is one of the programs of human resource development in companies. It is held by companies with the focus on employee self-development or for the interest and needs of the training participants of companies/institutions.

Training as one of the non-formal education activity, it is short-term education program which uses systematic and organized procedures to meet participant needs. Evans defines nonformal education as those education activities organized outside the formal system to the other extreme in which nonformal education is part of the whole integrated concept of the educational system (Evans, 1981 as cited by Wamaungo, 2011). Training as a component of nonformal education in Indonesia is conducted as a life-long learning process in the transformation of cultural values and for empowerment of participants (Wamaungo, 2011).
Flipo (1961) asserts that training is basically an effort of gaining knowledge and skills in order for the employees to be able to do certain jobs better. Presidential Instruction No. 15 of 1974 explains that training is a part of education pertaining to learning process in order to gain and improve knowledge and skills, and it is conducted in a relatively short time using methods that prioritize practice rather than theories. In this paper, the following phenomena have been observed by the researcher: 1. communication process during training by trainers, 2. communication pattern used by trainers during training, and 3. Creative Problem Solving implemented by trainers during training.

**Research Method:**
The study employed a case study method, with the stages involving: selecting the case(s), collecting data, analyzing data, improvement, and report writing. The subjects of this research were trainers in Bandung City and the Great Jakarta region, while the object was the training held in Bandung City, specifically in the field of human resource development. The training observed in this research suited to the research questions and objectives. The study aimed at observing the communication activities of the trainer during the trainings and participants reactions. Meanwhile, research sites covered Bandung and Jakarta (the locations where the informants for the study were obtained). In addition, data analysis techniques the researcher employed consisted of five stages, starting from data availability, data reduction or selection, data display, and inference.

**Literature Review:**
The word trainer refers to the person who trains. A trainer does not only serve to give motivation and instruction, but also to offer guidance, direction, development and attention, control, suggestion, and correction. In regard to motivational communication in training, a trainer must be an instructor and motivator. However, an instructor or motivator is not necessarily able to handle the jobs of a trainer. Training can be carried out by individuals or a group that provides various kinds of training, as expressed by Hasibuan that “a trainer or instructor is a person or a team that provides training/education to employees” (2005). Analoui (2004), states that trainers or educators play a significant role in organizational development and change by meeting the goals and competency as well as knowledge and skills required by the participants.

According to Poon Teng Fat (2003), a good trainer is one that can create a conducive learning atmosphere in which participants are motivated and able to absorb the information delivered by the trainer. Hasibuan further explains the requirements that a trainer as a communicator must have in training: a) Teaching skills; b) Communication skills; c) Personality Authority; d) Social Skills; e) Technical Competence; f) Emotional Stability (Hasibuan, 2005). Training is a method to improve human performance. When one’s ability to do a job is restricted by a lack of knowledge or skills, it is reasonable to bridge the gap by providing the required instruction (Silberman and Auerbach, 2013).

Simamora (1995) defines training as a series of activities that are designed to improve skills, knowledge, experience, or change in an individual’s attitudes. Meanwhile, training is usually associated with preparing someone in playing a certain role or fulfilling a certain duty, generally in the work world. Nonetheless, training can also be seen as a special element of input of an education process that is more general in nature. Peter as cited by Kamil reveals that “the concept of training can be implemented when there are a number of skills needed for mastery in this case training is neccessary for mastering skills, and a stress on theories exists but only minimal” (Kamil, 2010: ). The aim of training is to gain a change in the attitudes of those who are trained. Meanwhile, the definition of training put forward by Flipo focuses more on the aim of training as in to improve knowledge.

**Role Theory:**
Experts of Anthropology, such as Linton and Nadel; sociologists, such as Parsons, Merton, Gross, Cottrel, Brim, Bates, Turner, and Goode; and psychologists, such as Newcomb, Sarbin, Levinson, Maccoby, and Sargent; all in general and in-depth are involved in the discussion of the phenomenon of role. So popular the topic is that those experts tend to develop concepts for role more as an effort to complement their studies of other aspects in the field of their interests (Suhardono, 1994: 1).

As for the meaning of the word “role”, it can be explained by several means. First, role refers to characterizations to be performed by an actor in a staged play (Suhardono, 1994: 3).Second, an explanation referring to the connotation in social sciences defines role as a function performed by one when occupying a position (characterization) in a social structure (Suhardono, 1994: 3). Third, a more operational explanation mentions that the role of an actor is a limitation designed by another actor, which accidentally performs on the same stage in a role performance. The relationship between an actor and his or her role partner is interrelated and mutually completing in nature, because in a social context, there is no single role that can stand by its own, without the existence of other roles. In other words, a role will fulfill its existence if it is in a positional connection that engages two complementary actors (Suhardono, 1994: 3).

**Symbolic Interactionism Theory:**
Symbolic Interactionism is an approach established on the basis of social formations of
symbols—symbols, meanings—general meaning or shared meanings, and their use in communication, both with oneself and in an orientation of self with others, in various interactions between agents or social actors (Turner, 2012).

The approach used to explain emotions contained in symbolic Interactionism and cultural or social constructionism is relatively new in the history of sociology. It is frequently mentioned that sociology’s interest in emotions began in the 1970s. However, in reality sociological explanations through emotions have long existed in the history.

Conceptual Review:
Nitisemito (1996: 35) defines training as an activity aimed to improve and develop attitudes, behavior, skills, and knowledge of the employees according to the company’s desires. Hence, the training referred to here is one in a general understanding, not limited merely to skills development. Carrell and Kuzmits (1982: 282) define training as a systematic process where employees learn knowledge, skills, abilities, or behavior in line with personal and organizational goals.

The training provided for employees in a company is none other than employees’ self-development. The background to the need of self-development, according to Conny Setiawan, originates from the fact that human beings live in between two poles of existence, namely the individual existence and the social existence, where the two are highly interconnected and seem to be inseparable in humans (individualization and socialization).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Communication process is concerned with how a communicator delivers messages to his or her communicants in order to create shared meanings between the communicants and the communicator. This communication process aims to create effective communication (in line with communication goals in general). Communication process has undergone development. It can occur when there is interaction between human beings and when there is a message delivered to realize a certain communication motive. The stages of communication process are 1) interpretation, 2) encoding, 3) delivery, 4) travel, 5) acceptance, 6) decoding, and 7) interpretation.

Data of research results from field observation for training communication process:
The researcher found seven second-degree constructs of the 10 sub-questions that were initially inquired in the interview with the trainers. There were three sub-questions that were not appropriate to ask or whose answers were included in the previous questions or sub-questions; therefore, the three sub-questions were removed by the researcher, namely: How to cope with obstacles, to deliver ideas, and concerning the process of situation management. What follows are the second-degree constructs of research results from interview and observation conducted by the researcher in the field. The initial stage of training: playing the slides, smiling and greeting, preparing. The implementation stage: involving cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains; mastering content materials and engaging with the participants; giving satisfaction to the participants; using the right and left brains; edutainment; playing videos, games, and ice-breaking; applying the principle of befriending training participants wherever they are; ice breaking; participants being taught and learning; playing game, chemistry audience, humor. The closing stage: post-assessment, written evaluation, displaying slides with wise words, relaxation, packaging training atmosphere, singing, giving meanings; repetition, motivation and monitoring, self-assessment, and questionnaire distribution. Time management process: time management 20/80, divided into prologue, content, and closing. Question management: opening question session during and after training; not opening question session; making sure participants understand and get the answers. Training evaluation: personal evaluation, participants’ test, questionnaire.

The data of field research results explained above are real data as references for both trainers (informants) and vendors or administrating committee, which in this case are companies or institutions. The training communication process from the data gained in the field in the initial, implementation, and closing stages; time management process; question management; media; and training evaluation by each of the informants reveal what has been done during training and are based on the experiences of the informants interviewed by the researcher. The training communication process involves several components, namely the trainer, trainees, the media used, and other facilities of training, such as training rooms and seat layout as well as sound system. Communication process in training always goes through three stages, namely initial stage, implementation stage, and closing stage. Each trainer as research informant here certainly has different styles, but results of interview and direct observation conducted by the researcher reveal that there are many similarities shared by the informants. The similarities can be observed, for instance, in the initial stage, where the trainer finds the background of the training participants, and in the duration of the implementation stage. Another similarity is in the stage of implementation, namely all trainers deliver content in ways that are easily understood, such as by using ice breaking, game, and role playing.
Data of research results in the field for Communication Pattern:

The researcher found five second-degree constructs of the 10 initial sub-questions inquired during interview with the trainers. The five sub-questions that were not appropriate or whose answers were already given by the previous questions were eliminated; they are questions on: communication traits, communication method, communication strategies, place/situation mastery. The second-degree constructs of research results on Communication Pattern obtained from interview and field observation are as follows:

Communication forms; interpersonal communication, inspiring; Communication styles: attractive, articulate, “Visual, auditory, kinesthetic” and “Paralanguage and Body Language”, considering that theories are processed through the left brain; Communication models: passing and leading, role playing, visual learning. Grabbing attention: giving surprises, becoming friendly with trouble, solving problems from various sides, smiling, ice breaking, brain breaking, eye breaking, games; Verbal and non-verbal communication: verbal communication with loud and clear intonation, while non verbal communication with body language, facial expression, clothes, hand movements, and leg movements.

Data of research results on communication pattern are seen from communication forms, communication styles, communication models, attention grabbing, verbal and nonverbal communication. The data were gained based on the experiences of the trainers in giving training. The data that have been collected by the research were then processed and analyzed, so that the results of this research can be comprehensively presented in the chapter of results and discussion.

In training communication pattern, one of the findings explored and found or obtained from the field is Communication Style. The researcher will attempt to explain communication style, both from the findings of the interview and observation and from the theoretical perspective.

According to Kolb, there are four primary learning styles: diverger, assimilator, converger, and accommodator. Diverger learning style has the characteristics of: being good at producing ideas, looking at a situation from various points of view and tending to be interested in people, culture, and art. Assimilator learning style has the characteristics of being good at inductive thinking, creating theoretical model, and combining different observations into an integrated explanation, and not being more interested in people than in ideas and abstract concepts. Converger learning style has the characteristics of being assertive, good at applying ideas practically, thinking in hypothetical-deductive way, and loving handling technical jobs rather than interpersonal affairs. Accommodator learning style has the characteristics of being smart at applying decision, making plan, and engaged in new experience, as well as being inclined to easily mingle with others, but may be seen as being impatient and pressing.

Each training participant has a different learning style. The difference in learning style is the challenge for trainers in designing the training as well as possible so that they can be well accepted and the content materials to be delivered will be easily understood by the participants. The learning style that becomes the focus of this research is adult learning style, because the training participants are all adults.

Adult learning requires the implementation of andragogical principles in its approach because the attempts of making adults learn is different from that of children. Andragogical stresses more on guiding and helping adults to find knowledge, skills, and attitudes in an attempt of solving the problems they encounter in their lives.

Data of research results from the field for creative problem solving:

Regarding CPS in training, the researcher found three second-degree constructs of the 10 sub-questions initially inquired in the interview with the trainers. Seven sub-questions that were inappropriate to ask or whose answers have been included in previous questions were eliminated; they are: CPS techniques, CPS stages, CPS cycles, mapping participants’ problems, CPS weaknesses, and CPS obstacles. The following are second-degree constructs of research results from interview and observation: Creative problem solving (CPS) processes: giving solution and alternative answers, creative level, collaboration. Finding audiences’ profiles through the four stages of CPS, namely: a) problem definition, b) idea generation/development, c) decision making, d) evaluation. The strengths of creative problem solving (CPS): a) bridging and giving solution, b) solving problems, c) resulting in changes, d) directly involving people knowing the situation, e) mind-mapping. The roles of creative problem solving (CPS): giving solution, involving people (training participants).

Creative problem solving is highly required in training because each participant has his or her own problems. The problems can be private or personal or related to the working environment, thereby requiring different strategies or ways to solve them. Problems are the incongruity or gap between what is in one’s mind and what happens or should be done. Training activity is one of the answers to bridge the gap. However, here, the training does not encourage participants to only think, but to think creatively. Hence, the creative thinking can help participants find solutions to the existing problems. Creativity does not merely encourage one to think out of the box, but also to manage oneself to think creatively.
From research results in the field, it is found that the primary role of creative problem solving is to give solution to solve the problems encountered by training participants. The forms of creative problem solving during training can vary from discussion to role playing to games provided by the trainer, such as one conducted by an informant named Neny. What she did can be considered collaboration in training.

Sutanto Windura, one of the informants of this research, divides creative problem solving into four steps, namely problem definition, idea generation/development, decision making, and evaluation. In this research, two theories that the researcher thinks to be very appropriate to the research context are added, namely Role Theory and Impression Management Theory and the GROW model.

Role theory is associated to the roles played by a trainer in the training that s/he holds. The trainer’s role is focused on how to make the training interesting and well-received by the participants. Certainly, a trainer who plays such roles should have credibility. Based on its forms, credibility can be distinguished in three types, as follows: Initial Credibility, namely credibility gained by a communicator before communication process takes place. Derived Credibility, namely credibility gained by one during communication. Terminal Credibility, namely credibility a communicator gains after the hearers or readers follow his/her explanations. (McCroskey in DeVito, 1986).

Regarding Impression Management Theory and Grow Model, in the book Excellence in Coaching by Jonathan Passmore (2010), it is stated that in the coaching sessions, a structure gradually emerges, which is inherent in each coaching practice. The structure is in a simple and memorable format that can be used by other coaches. Meanwhile, GROW, which stands for Goal, Reality, Options, and Wrap-up, is a simple and effective model that can be implemented in all coaching interactions.

**Conclusion:**

The communication process undergone by a trainer during training is described below: The initial stage of training: playing the slides, smiling and guiding, preparing. The implementation stage: involving cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains; mastering content materials and engaging with the participants; giving satisfaction to the participants; using the right and left brains; edutainment; playing videos, games, and ice-breaking; applying the principle of befriending training participants wherever they are; ice breaking; participants being taught and learning; game, chemistry audience, humor. The closing stage: post-assessment, written evaluation, displaying slides with wise words, relaxation, packaging training atmosphere, singing, giving life meanings; repetition, motivation and monitoring, self-evaluation, and questionnaire distribution. Time management process: time management 20/80, divided into prologue, content, and closing. Question management: opening question session during and after training; not opening question session; making sure participants understand and get the answers. Media used: keyboard, game equipment, clip art, laser pointer.

The communication pattern employed by trainer during training is as follow: Communication forms: interpersonal communication, inspiring. Communication styles: attractive, articulate, “Visual, auditory, kinesthetic” and “Paralanguage and Body Language”, considering that theories are processed through the left brain. Communication models: passing and leading, role playing, visual learning. Grabbing attention: giving surprises, becoming friendly with trouble, solving problems from various sides, smiling, ice breaking, brain breaking, eye breaking, and games. Verbal and non-verbal communication: verbal communication with loud and clear intonation, while non verbal communication with body language, facial expression, clothes, hand movements, and leg movements.

The roles of Creative Problem Solving played by trainers during training are as follows: Creative problem solving (CPS) processes: giving solution and alternative answers, creative level, collaboration. Finding audiences’ profiles through the four stages of CPS, namely: a) problem definition, b) idea generation/development, c) decision making, d) evaluation. The strengths of creative problem solving (CPS): a) bridging and giving solution, b) solving problems, c) resulting in changes, d) directly involving people knowing the situation, e) mind mapping. The roles of creative problem solving (CPS): giving solution, involving people (training participants).

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