This case study explores the role of communication in change management, the premises and presumptions that steer change management and its strategies of communication. The primary case as well as the comparison case were organizational change programs launched to improve operations and the way of working, and included a broad range of changes in the organizations. The case data was collected mainly with qualitative interviews that were analyzed with ATLAS/ti computer program.

The initial theoretical framework of this study is the hitherto dominant paradigm of change management and its communication premises. This framework is based on presumptions of change as a rational linear, predictable process. Communication is seen as essential: Its role is to inform and commit the members of organization, and decrease change resistance.

During the initial analysis a need for a different perspective emerged: The initial framework seemed to fail in grasping the complexity and some essential qualities of organizational change and communication. Thus, the data was analyzed with an additional theoretical framework that Ph.D. Pekka Aula has presented in his dynamic theory of organizational communication. In this framework organizational change is not seen as a linear, predictable, step-by-step process that the organization creates. Organization can only create the conditions that support the change. Communication has a dual function: it can both facilitate an obstruct change. This study indicates that there is a need for a shift of paradigm in the research and practice of organizational change management. Presumptions on change and communication are critical in organizational change as they steer the way in which change is planned, organization and management, and what kinds of communication strategies are used. The rational linear models of change fail in the non-linear reality of organizations. According to this study, the role of communication is essential in change management.

However, the narrow view of communication as informing and its focus on channels, and the accuracy and continuity of information, does not contribute to successful change. The diversity of communication - dissipative communication in addition to integrative communication - is significant in creating the conditions that support change.

Avainsanat-Nyckelord-Keywords
organizational change - change management
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Säilytyspaikka-Förvaringsställe-Where deposited
Muita tietoja-Övriga uppgifter-Additional information