

# Creating A Sustainable Organizational Structure Through A Capacity Building And Communication Model- COMTEL

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**Abstract** - Capacity is form of an investment for the future sustainability. Capacity building, in an organization, would refer to creating means to build a system that can strengthen the organizational structure in all its forms. The present paper is an attempt to introduce the concept of a capacity building and communication model 'COMTEL' to build a sustainable system that can create a robust and strong environment in any organization. 'COMTEL' is the acronym for Communication, Optimism, Medium, Training, Environment and Leadership. Each of these components has a very important role in the larger organizational context. Effective communication is essential for better delivery in any organization because that is the only way to interact with employees and get the desired results. Optimism is an attitude which fortifies an individual against any crisis and gives a better and positive outlook. A medium can be described as any method which is suitable to communicate with the people at large. Training, with its universal acceptance and need, is the tool which is able to mould, develop and change individuals. Environment is an effective factor which has a remarkable influence on the people who live in it. And finally, one thing that can undisputedly claim to be instrumental in transformation and change is Leadership. Thus, all the factors of COMTEL can collectively help build capacity in organizational structure.

**keywords** - Organization; Training; Leadership; Optimism; Environment

## Introduction:

Capacity building, in an organization, is extremely relevant not only for a diversified country like India but the entire world. India as a multi-cultural society with its varied cultures lacks a common development programme which can work towards building a robust system. Therefore, the levels of knowledge outcome and skills are different in different region, cultures and states. We see vast knowledge gaps amongst the varied work force that is the part of an organization. Therefore, when we talk about capacity building it should majorly focus on reducing the gaps among the people and also the management. There should be parity in the knowledge and skills possessed by individuals of same grade and job role, irrespective of the region or culture they belong to. That is a challenge which can only be resolved by creating a wholesome system and culture which should include every stakeholder in the organization.

If we go by the definition of Wikipedia, 'Capacity building can be termed as a process through which individuals and organizations can obtain, enhance and retain skills for a more competent and sustainable environment and effect'. (Wikipedia, 2020) The same can be reached by a planned development of management, knowledge, communication, selection, environment, leadership and training. In other words these are the actual parameters for capacity building. Capacity building projects should include communication strategies, selection process, leadership communication, and a supportive environment. However, it is also a known fact that people cannot be developed and development needs to be participatory. The need is to become more inclusive in the capacity building process. (Colleen & Michelle, 2014) Capacity building in an organization should lead to behavioral change and infrastructure development resulting in better understanding of obstacles that inhibit growth in learning and training. (Mohelska & Sokolova, 2018) While many private organizations have come forward and have willingly embarked on this road the gaps still remain. The change agents and leaders have not fully developed the foundations necessary for achieving progress. We need to establish the structures, processes and cultures required to meet the quality objective. (Bryan, 2017) Capacity building entails creating a cohesive structure of knowledge, methods and skills aimed at overall improvement in an organization. Capacity building in a workplace would also mean getting excellent results, leveraging the knowledge and skills to maximize the potential for effective improvement, problem solving, analytical thinking and leadership. Motivation, beliefs, commitment and values about work are also the factors that need to be strengthened. (Kong & Thomas, 2006)

Thus the path to capacity building should be structured, clearly defining each parameter towards the aim. The limited consideration for capacity building in the existing literature is mainly because it lacks clarity and cohesiveness. (Cornforth & Mordaunt, 2011) The communication model COMTEL was developed by the authors so as to help the industry create a better communication strategy, which is more cohesive and inclusive, to resolve issues. Its relevance can clearly be seen in the education sector too. Communication is obviously the core of human existence. We use communication in every aspect of life. With the advent of social media, communication has become even more complex. Its complexity is due to the influx of various social media apps where people communicate indiscriminately and without using much discretion. Although, social

media can be both boon and bane, management and leaders can use it to their advantage. If communication can be channeled in right direction it can revolutionize any workplace. Organizations have been using communication with a lot of caution mainly due to the reason that it can be misused. The model COMTEL was created based on a survey, with the aim to emphasize the effectiveness of communication and to use it as a technology based leadership tool to develop more effective, participative, cohesive and structured environment. COMTEL is the acronym for Communication, Optimism, Media, Technology, Environment and Leadership. The dimensions of 'COMTEL' are the actual defining factors in any organization and therefore can play a very important role in capacity building across sectors.

Key words: Capacity building; Communication; Media; Technology; Leadership; Optimism

#### **Objective of the study:**

The objective of the study is to create a comprehensive model towards capacity building in organizational structures across sectors.

#### **Review of literature**

Capacity building is not a stand-alone and one time effort but requires continual improvement for sustainability and effectiveness. (Hatcheu, 2017) It has been recognized that for an evolved social sector there is a need to involve multiple stakeholders thereby increasing efficiency, effectiveness and scale to solve social issues. In this regard (Millar & Doherty, 2018) process was developed to provide a comprehensive understanding of Capacity Building. The process was related to recognizing the stimulus and identification of needs and assets responding to the stimulus. Its process also examines the organization's readiness, strategy and selection and long and short term impact of capacity building strategies.

United Nations, in its development programme 2008-2013 focused on two areas in capacity building-Capacity training, need assessment and stake holder's engagement. Citing the need for strong leadership, the report also insisted on the need for mentoring and coaching through leaders who have the power to influence. The report also mentioned priority setting, communication and strategic planning to be the important factors. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capacity\\_building](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capacity_building), 2011) Other than that it was also seen that inefficiencies of organizations are mostly due to bad policies, resource management, procedures, frameworks and communication.

(Aref, 2011), stated that capacity building is an approach towards developing an organization's resources and responding to new and changing situation. Emphasizing on the importance of leadership in capacity building in education sector (Colleen & Young, 2014) stated that leadership must be inclusive. Lack of leadership can lead to an irrevocable situation. It would not be incorrect to compare a leader to a conductor who orchestrates to ensure that his musicians play to the best of their abilities and guides them to avoid any false notes (Mankad, 2013).

Fullan identified five elements that leaders must embed in their leaderships in order to change which are- moral purpose, understanding the process of change, developing relationships, seeking out and sharing knowledge, and finally, understanding. Once leaders effectively implement these elements, they gain commitment from those they lead which in turn, increases positive results (Fullan, 2002). In this regard emphasis also has been given to leaders who are inclusive and follow participative management principles.

Meyer researched that participative style of leadership decreases threat and increases performance. It gives stakeholders a feeling of power and prestige (Meyer, Becker, & Van, 2006). But leadership per se will not be effective unless it is equipped with the right channels of communication which will also make it strategic and participative.

(Deborah Barrett 2008), cited leadership communication to be a guide, direction, motivation and inspiration for others' action. Deborah Barrett also says that leadership communication is capable of influencing not just a single person but also a group, a whole organization and a complete community (Barrett, 2007). Mosley, Pierti and Megginson described leadership as the ability to influence others through the process of communication towards attainment of their goals (Mosley, Pierti, & Megginson, 1996).

Communication is considered as the most important tool to change attitudes and behaviors. Shannon and (Shannon, 1969) Mc Gregor (McGregor, 2018) also stated that communication is a mean, for organizations and leaders, to exercise their power and establish natural understanding.

Many modern researchers have established many different communication processes which benefit leadership. Howell reiterated the above mentioned point by saying that direct leadership is an interactive process through which an individual influences the behavior of others to achieve some specific goals (Howell, 2011). Simon very assertively commented that leadership communication is the most imperative need of any administrative process and without it they will not be able to influence decisions of any individual (Simon & Herbert, 1955).

Communication is the byproduct of the right attitude. People with high optimism, as an attitude, can more effectively use communication to their advantage. Optimism reduces conflict and creates an atmosphere of happiness and wellbeing. People's happier and positive disposition will have a holistic effect on organizational climate and this will have an impact on whole organization. As per Marilyn Macik-Frey Leader's emotional intelligence is the only unique predictor of workers' performance and organizational citizenship behavior, more than even interpersonal communication (Mackik & Marilyn, 2007).

Those with high level of optimism will be effective communicator and leaders. Optimism can be learned and is a continuum that can be developed. That means a person who belongs to the low level of optimism can strive to go to the higher level through a little effort. Many interventions like mindful meditation and Optimism Attitude Model developed by Dr. Padmakali Banerjee can help people reach the required levels of optimism to achieve success and wellbeing in life. (Banerjee, Power of positivity-optimism and the seventh sense, 2018). But high or low level of optimism is not visible externally. We need a tool that can measure optimism levels in people. Optimism index is a psychometric assessment tool that can accurately measure levels of optimism.

Technology has been at the helm of evolution and development. Physical reality and virtual have been meeting together creating immersive virtual environments. It has been seen that different kinds of media services, software for teaching and

learning have become a greater part in higher education. Platforms like Moodle are viewed as e-learning solutions. Social media, chats forums, messengers etc are the newest ways to communicate. Learning is also becoming more collaborative through digital learning platforms. In this way, students' role can be shifted from passive learners to knowledge creators and contributors. As a result we see a better leaning outcome. (Schuster, et al., 2016).

Technology has become a major part of our lives. These disruptive technologies have the effect on education as much as they have on our lives. In other words, we cannot separate technology and education. Educational institutes are figuring out the manner in which they can maximize the use of technology (Riismandel, 2012).

Environment, in regard to procedures, processes, climate, routines and perceptions plays a pivotal role in how the behaviours will be modified due to its effect and how it will determinate its effectiveness. (Bowen & Ostroff, 2017). There is a direct relationship between organizational climate and the employees' behavior. The organizational expectations for a particular behavior can be maneuvered through policies, practices and routines and their affect can be reinforced, if it matches expectations, through reward and appreciation. (Parke, 2017)

### Research Methodology:

The communication model COMTEL is the outcome of a research survey conducted by the authors. An open ended questionnaire was created to understand the functioning of industrial sectors.

Four sectors were chosen to collect the data. The four sectors were aviation, apparel, construction and automotive. The sectors were chosen keeping in mind the role of communication in these sectors and their climate which is technology intensive, niche, contemporary and involves large amount of training. Out of more than 500 questionnaires that were sent to top managers and leaders, 200 responses were received. Interview schedule contained nine questions based on history of communication, methods, use of grapevine, and effectiveness of training, role of leadership in organizations and feedback and implementation. The objective was to understand the best practices in the above mentioned sectors.

The questions were eloquently responded by the participants. Respondents freely spoke about their organizational communication structure and also discussed lacunas, if any. To arrive at results, each question was categorized based on the responses received. The categorization helped in measuring the quantum of responses falling into each category and in bringing out the percentage for further analysis and inferences.

Interview Schedule broadly touched the following areas:

1. Status of interpersonal skills
2. Communication structure
3. Popularity and use of social media applications
4. Use and likelihood of grapevine
5. Conduct and effectiveness of training
6. Role of leadership
7. Feedback

The idea of covering these areas was to preview general state of communication in the given sectors and to see the management's involvement. Based on the responses, various categories were evolved. The responses were broken into parts like, yes, no, not aware, somewhat etc. Categories helped quantify the responses into percentage. This comprehensive analysis helped in finding a conclusive analysis about the objectives of studies regarding, best practices and general environment in a given sector.

### Results and Analysis:

- 36% respondents felt that interpersonal skills are the major cause of dispute as against 21% who blamed management. Only 6% stated economic reasons.
- A very significant 66.39 percent of respondents felt that communication is effective and quick mechanism to resolve disputes in their organization.
- 74% respondents said that new age communication is used in their organization and a significant 54.97% felt that social media should become an integral part of communication
- 74% organizations had formal structure in communication but it is becoming more open and flat.
- Although following formal structure, 74.11% people have welcomed the idea of informal channels and grapevine for quicker and faster communication.
- 88.7% Respondents had complete trust in the power of training and its effectiveness
- 76% Respondents also showed complete faith in leadership and accepted their role in resolving disputes.
- Feedback was largely accepted as the backbone of organizations but most people were not aware whether their suggestions are implemented or taken seriously.

### Discussion:

- Despite organization's all round efforts towards employees satisfaction people still find faults in management
- Leadership plays an important role in dispute settlement and thus is responsible towards creating an amicable atmosphere in the organization
- People showed an inclination towards new age media and social media in Organizational communication
- Feedback and implementation are given a lot of impetus by people

### Communication model COMTEL and its effectiveness in Capacity Building:

After analyzing the survey of our open ended questions we created the model COMTEL which was based on the answers given by our survey population. We examined the best practices and the short comings of the functions in an organization and created the model.

We will now examine each part of the model given below:

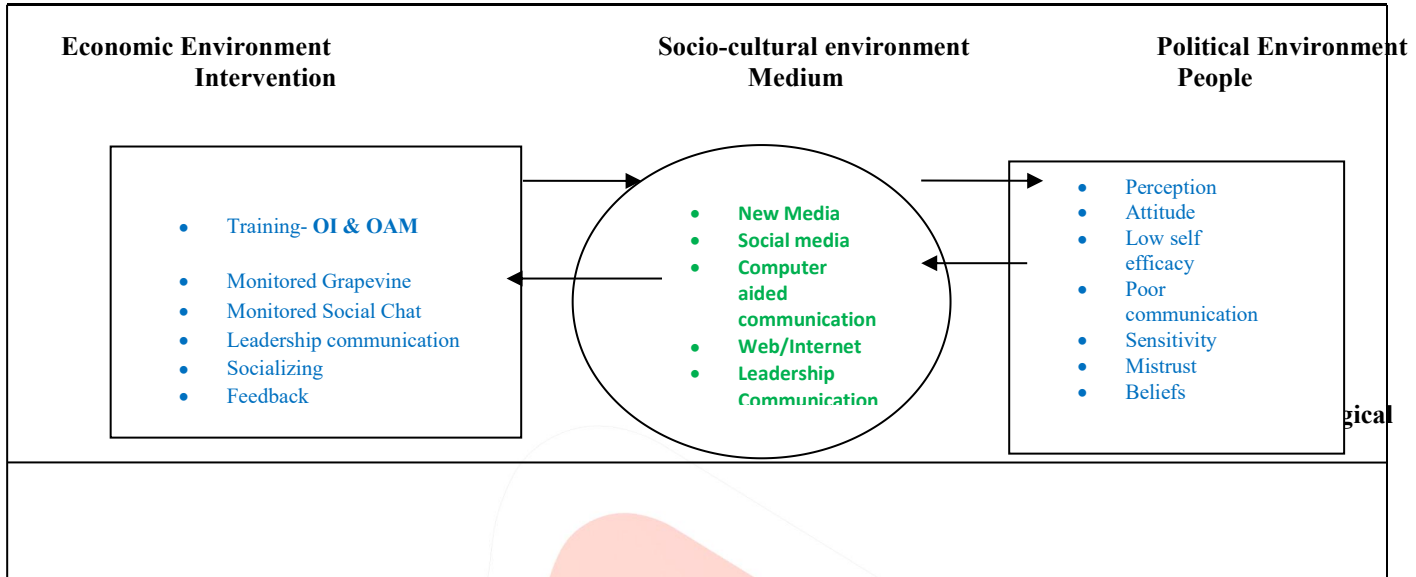


Figure 1: COMTEL: A model to build capacity

Above figure depicts an organizational setup which is influenced by various environments like political, global, psychological, technological etc. The environment effects people’s perceptions, beliefs, communication etc. which can be changed by using interventions through right medium. The tools that are suggested in this particular model are optimism index which can measure the optimism level in a person and OAM (Optimism Attitude Model) which can be used as an intervention to enhance optimism in a person. As stated earlier, optimism level of individuals is a defining factor in their behavior, self efficacy, functionality and interpersonal skills.

COMTEL is the acronym for Communication, Optimism, Medium, Training, Environment and Leadership. Each of these components has a very important role towards capacity building in organizations. The model was constructed after analyzing the survey results.

We will now examine the components of COMTEL independently and enumerate their role in building capacity towards a robust organizational structure.

**Communication:**

Communication is always at the helm of all affairs in the workplace. Communication can be poor or effective. If an effective communication can resolve a crisis a poor communication can create one. Humans use communication to convey their thoughts, ideas and opinions. The ideas that are conveyed by an individual are interwoven with the perception one has. Perception is developed in the environment that an individual is part of. This perception can be changed and transformed through effective communication. In most organizations the structure is such that not everything is communicated successfully and at times communication is perceived even when there is a total absence of communication. With the introduction of new age medium of communication, workers and management alike are making informal channels of communication a preferred mode (Mooji, Kendall, & Marieke, 2014).

The new age communication tools are lauded by all as they have proved to be successful in bringing people together, in breaking barriers and in making organizations united. It is making management’s role easier to communicate benefits and the vision and goals of the organization.

(Banerjee, Adhikari, & Nigam, 2016).

It is a need to open newer channels to diversify communication among workers and management for enhancing better participation of each stakeholder.

**Optimism:**

Optimism is an attitude which fortifies an individual with the power to live a fuller and positive life. People who are blessed with high levels of optimism have all the endowments that pave the way for their success and wellbeing. Such people are not only successful but they are also good human beings making a difference in other people’s lives and making the world a better place to be in. These people also have the undeterred spirit to face crisis and bounce back as winners. A person’s optimism level decides how an individual will deal with different situations. Everyone goes through the stressful situations but not everyone goes through the mental stress. The defining factor can be the level of optimism. Those who are blessed with positive frame of mind have better sustainability on the face of crisis. Those with higher optimism are less likely to suffer with physical health problems too. Those with higher optimism can also motivate and help others. Martin Seligman, the father of positive psychology, is of the opinion that optimism is associated to one’s higher sense of confidence and personal ability.



People who have higher optimism levels believe that negative events are short lived and limited in scope and therefore, they are manageable without being threatened by them. Seligman also brought out the fact that optimism is a learnable skill and can be developed (Seligman, 1991). One can metamorphose to a higher level of optimism from a lower level. Lazarus and Opton talked about coping which is an adaptive response to deal with threatening situations which is another way to deal with learned helplessness (Opton & Lazarus, 1966).

The people involved in higher management need optimism for better performance and sustainability. People involved in rigorous work routines may find themselves in conditions of low motivation and boredom. Also for professionals there is a constant need to develop and improve their professional competencies. Only people equipped with right attitude will find themselves working towards their professional growth with energy and enthusiasm. Therefore, building an attitude of optimism should be the constant endeavour in capacity building.

In our model we recommend using two important tools of optimism- **Optimism index** is a tool to measure levels of optimism in individuals to understand where an individual stands on the scale of optimism; **Optimism Attitude Model** is an intervention that can develop Optimism in people and help them reach a higher level if they belong to the lower levels of optimism.

#### **Medium:**

There can be various mediums to communicate and as is universally known, it is highly important to use the right medium. Something that can be effective in one on one communication may not be effective if conveyed on phone or other long distanced mediums or channels.

Advent of internet has brought a paradigm shift in the way people communicate. Use of Social media has spurred the interpersonal communication resulting in sudden overflow of communication through these mediums. Social chat applications have given people a platform to communicate in an innovative way and people who, hitherto, shied away from communication can be seen chatting and communicating unflinchingly. This communication over flooding can be taken both as a problem and a solution. A smart management, through leadership communication, can do wonders with these application and curb, even a dispute, in their favor through these applications. We can reap the benefits of grapevine and unstructured communication through the mediums of communication like internet, CAC and, where required, a one on one, personalized communication.

Present day's communication is hugely influenced by technology. People are getting used to the latest in technology and are experimenting with its uses. Workplaces can proactively use the technology by using the right medium and to understand workers' unions and communities. The disruptive technology like social media, digital marketing, social chat application, emails, new age media, Computer mediated Communication etc have changed the way people think and act. With so many options available, it becomes imperative to understand the correct medium in varied situation.

#### **Training:**

Training has a universal acceptance and appeal as a tool that can transform. Every training, irrespective of its duration and content, is able to achieve success and produce positive outcomes to organize ideas and change perceptions. There was a consensus on the regularity and efficacy of Training in our survey. 80.91% people affirmed that organization is organizing Training regularly and 73.35% felt it is always very effective. A need analysis should precede the planning and execution of a training program. (Zulkifli, 2014). Training need analysis is also a very important part of training. Analysis of training needs will be able to recognize gaps which will help in customizing the training. Under this model, we recommend, customized training as per the requirement of the organization and targeted towards a specific group. People differ in perceptions and attitude therefore; a general, blanket training may not bring the desired result. Training, not only brings changes in people's knowledge and learning it can also change attitudes. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capacity\\_building](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capacity_building), 2011) In a research survey by (Thompson, 1992) it was evident that training showed positive changes in workers' attitude.

#### **Environment:**

Environment, people work in, has a direct implication on people's behavior and attitude. A workplace environment determines whether the people working in it will be aggressive, irritable, pleasant or productive. Similarly, the employees will determine whether the work environment will remain amicable or hostile. Environment of a particular workplace is affected by global, political, economical, cultural, technological and psychological conditions of its surroundings. One needs to assess the environment cautiously before trying to change the environment through communication or any other mean. People, with their power to communicate, are at the nucleus of environment (Cherunilam, 2011).

Environment is both, dynamic and constant. Environment is dynamic in its technological advances and the changes that are constantly occurring in an organizational environment. It is constant because some constituents of organization, like people, conflicts, attitudes, changes, remain the same. Based on these different constituents, organizational environment can be divided into many types. Global, economical, political, Governmental, Socio Cultural, Psychological are some of the dimensions that it can be categorized into. Management needs to accept this basic nature of environment and make efforts to deal with it by being proactive. In India, many workplaces have become the hub of a particular ideology which may affect the general environment and productivity of the workplace. Similarly, economic condition of a particular region will have a direct implication on the psyche, attitude and cultural and political sensitivity of people.

Socio-cultural climate depends upon the diverse groups that form the population of the workplace. People come from different cultural and social environment backgrounds and they bring along with them the moral, cultural and social threads which they find difficult to break. People are also very sensitive towards their own culture and members of the same community or social group flock together and sometimes carry an unhealthy contempt for the other groups.

Psychological environment consists of attitudes, beliefs, perceptions, intellect and mental set up of the people. Psychological environment is an interesting mix of people who are happy, sad, reserve, introverts and extroverts. The beliefs they carry

decide how collaborative or participative they are. Through in-service training, managers can identify and evaluate critically the culture of the workplace which can bring changes to the environment.

#### **Leadership:**

In the history of man, one thing that can be undisputedly claimed as the power behind change and transformation is 'Leadership'. People naturally look up to their leaders for the answers and use them as rescue boats when the ship is about to sink.

A true leader is like a captain who knows how to steer the boat in the right direction. In a workplace management can play the role of a good leader due to their positioning. Management has the data they can proactively work on. As per (Alice, 1993) administrators have workplace data like needs of workers, strengths and weaknesses, opportunities, challenges, mission and vision etc that give them a good platform to begin the capacity building initiatives. Leadership communication is another very important tool. Organizations, where leaders are collaborative and participative have better sustainability. In our survey it was evident how much people trust their leaders and how these leaders are looked upon for decision making and problem solving. Therefore, leaders have a huge role in capacity building across sector. Thus leaders who are equipped with right communication skills and optimism are more suited to leadership roles and are more successful.

#### **Implications and the Limitations of the study:**

The Model introduced in the study will be a helpful mode to organize, structure and reinvent an organization. Through the various dimensions of the Model organizations will be able to chalk a path for their capacity Building Programme. Although, the effectiveness of each of the dimensions has been tested in different studies, the model itself has not been tested for its effectiveness and that can be seen as its limitation.

#### **Conclusion:**

Here it would be relevant to discuss the interrelation of each component of COMTEL and its functionality with one another. Effectiveness of communication cannot be contested. Communication is that powerful tool that can be used to handle any situation. It has been observed that organizations with effective communication have friendlier environment and knowledge sharing.

Optimism as an attitude is another component which defines the character of an organization. People who are at low levels of optimism are vulnerable to conflicts and will have difficulty in handling a situation. On the contrary, people with high levels of optimism are not only great communicators; they also show better confidence and are better equipped to handle negative situations. An assessment tool like **Optimism index (www.optimismindex.com)** can be a handy tool to measure levels of optimism. **Optimism Attitude Model** can provide intervention to individuals with low levels of optimism in an organization. The right medium of communication will be able to reach every vertical of organization towards the pursuit of transforming people's attitude. Training, at every level, will be another intervention to modify attitudes. Environment monitoring will help to understand what is causing the hindrances and roadblocks. Effective leadership and communication can be brought in because of its success rate in gaining people's confidence and trust for better collaboration and inclusion. Thus organizations can bring favorable results by applying a model like COMTEL as their capacity building endeavours and initiatives.

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