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Abstract

This case study investigates why and how public research institutes and scientists practice their organizational communication with the public, so-called "organizational science communication". While existing literatures show almost no interest in science communication as an organizational matter, the study focuses on its increasing importance. The study explores this new phenomena and proposes a model of organizational science communication as a social process.

Data was mainly collected through participatory observation in a unit of a governmental ICT research institute of Japan, consisting of field notes, records of meetings, official documents, and interviews with keypersons. The case includes two different types of sub cases occurring in succession between 2004 and 2007 in the unit: (1) exhibitions and demonstrations of ubiquitous information systems for EXPO 2005 Aichi Japan; (2) a series of "science cafes" for dialogic discussion between scientists and a small group of the public and "tutorial workshops" for collaborative practice using advanced ICT groupware.

The findings show science communication is a crucial factor not only in communicating science but also in reflectively constructing research activities and strategies for research organizations. Due to the recent new mode of science-driven R&D and innovation, scientists are constantly involved in multi-disciplinary collaborative and strategically organized research projects driven by publicly contextual concepts rather than individual excellence. Such a situation directly requires them, not the PR staff, to reinforce communication with the public in various ways, from multi-channel strategic PR to local collaborative dialogue, to survive this mode change.

This study also finds it important to focus on the nature of the scientists' autonomy in the process of science communication. It shows that scientists are capable of organizing a borderless community against a generally accepted view that scientists are unsociable. On the one hand, the study indicates that communication problems may make the organization of a homogenous team for a quasi-firm type of project difficult. The key factor is not individuals but organizational forms.

In conclusion, the model of organizational science communication as a "social

co-creation system of reflective science" is proposed. First, dialogic communication between scientific knowledge and other local knowledge creates public knowledge of science. Second, this public knowledge provides reflective scientific knowledge for reflective science. Third, public knowledge also provides public contexts for research organizations. Fourth, the research organizations produce an ideal outcome in terms of both contributing innovation and in reorganizing reflective science. Fifth, reflective science provides policy implications for public policy, supporting public engagement in policy process.

In the future, more case studies especially in the other fields of ICT should be conducted to refine the model. Investigating in detail what reflective science really is and the nater of its creation process is suggested.

Keywords: science communication, science PR, dialogic PR, public communication of science and technology, sociology of scientific knowledge, reflective science, organizational communication, professional organization, public research.