

## Leaders' Sensemaking in Communicating Organizational Change

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Received: May 14, 2023

Accepted: June 19, 2023

Online Published: June 24, 2023

doi:10.11114/smc.v11i6.6075

URL: <https://doi.org/10.11114/smc.v11i6.6075>

### Abstract

Organizational change management is highly dependent on leaders. However, more research is needed on how leaders react and interact with employees throughout organizational change, especially in the public sector. Current research commonly employs generalized beliefs, such as leadership behaviors, which frequently contradict each other, to explain leadership communication during the organizational transition. Therefore, this study aims to explore how leadership communication was conducted in organizational transformation. This research used qualitative, interpretive, and case study approaches to examine how two public organizations prepared for and integrated into a brand-new government agency. The sensemaking viewpoint was utilized to investigate leadership communication in managing organizational change. Twenty-seven participants from various organizational levels were interviewed to obtain a holistic picture of leadership communication. This article contributes to our understanding of leadership communication by illustrating how leaders integrate bracketed information from various relevant sources, select statements, and reconstruct change mindsets through communication to navigate the management change discourse within an organization. Additionally, communication by leaders implies the existence of environmental data intended for use in the development of growth-promoting policies. This study has a dichotomy between change-orientated communication and resistance to change leadership communication. This polarization suggests that a shift in the policy's professional emphasis on growth, eliminating existing tension, and constructing new institutions will be necessary. Communication among leaders is based on different organizational-level methods to gather and interpret information, which considers the organization's structure and work culture.

**Keywords:** leadership, organizational change, leadership communication, sensemaking, structuration

### 1. Introduction

Leadership communication is critical in managing organizational change since it communicates to the organization the risks of survival and the potential outcomes of a difference (Denning, 2005). Nevertheless, leadership communication research demonstrates that the majority of leadership communication studies are in profit-orientated institutions (Abdelgawad et al., 2013; Nohe & Michaelis, 2016; Reeleder, 2006; Shulga, 2020) rather than government institutions (Kovačević et al., 2018; Robinson, 2013), which is still focused on high-level leaders. Meanwhile, public organizations are essential for society since they are related to the state by communicating information to the public about government policies, programs, and activities through their duties.

According to Vogel and Masal (2015), the existing leadership research on public organizations leads to principles commonly used in profit organizations. It has not captured elements of leadership in the public sector. It is apparent from the study of leadership communication in organizational change that still uses concepts from leadership styles, such as transactional leadership (Holten & Brenner, 2015), relational leadership (Ramcharan & Parumasur, 2014), and charismatic leadership (Men et al., 2020). Moreover, studies in leadership communication in public organizations are typically described from a vertical and heroic perspective (Stewart & Kringas, 2003), focuses primarily on the activities of top-level administrative or political leaders (Kuipers et al., 2014), and are exclusive (Lunenburg, 2010; Shvindina, 2017; van der Voet, 2016). As a result, these studies do not sufficiently investigate leadership communication within the complex organizational hierarchy of the public sector.

Additionally, the results of those studies do not fully describe leadership communication and organizational change. There is also a contradiction between research on leadership communication styles and organizational change. One study found that the transactional leadership style was effective, and another revealed the opposite (Holten & Brenner, 2015; van der Voet, 2016; Yue et al., 2019). Therefore, research exploring changes in organizations and how organizational members view, discuss and manage changes in their work or comprehensive studies from various levels of management is deemed necessary to complete the study of leadership communication in organizational change, especially in government organizations.

For that reason, the context of changes in government organizations as the subject of this study was government research institutes, SCIEN (pseudonym) and ENGIN (pseudonym) in Indonesia, which have been responded to in the form of institutional changes in response to the integration issues in Law on National System for Science & Technology (the S&T Law; Undang-Undang Sistem Nasional Ilmu Pengetahuan dan Teknologi; or UU Sisnas Iptek). This issue has also become a concern at the international level, where an editorial in the world scientific publication, Nature, argued that the establishment of the BRIN (National Research and Innovation Agency) was an unpopular step and called BRIN a super agency in Indonesia as it tries to integrate several governmental science institutions. This unpopularity is evident from efforts to concentrate scientific institutions into one institution, while several countries, such as India and France, are now starting to choose to decentralize (Nature, 2021).

For this research, these public research organizations offered the opportunity to be used as case studies to explore how leadership communication was implemented in organizational change in response to integrating government science institutions. It is expected to enrich management communication theory and practice and see how leaders and followers build understanding and commitment to organizational change. Therefore, this research is expected to contribute to studies on the role and communication of leadership in organizational change processes, which are considered poorly understood (Bish et al., 2015).

### *1.1 Leadership in Organizational Change*

Leadership tends to be seen as an attempt to achieve organizational goals purely, such as character approach (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Zaccaro et al., 2004), competency (Mumford et al., 2000; Zaccaro et al., 2000), behavior (Conger, 1999), situational (Blanchard et al., 1993), and contingency (Schriesheim et al., 1994). In addition, Den Hartog and Koopman (2001) emphasized that a greater propensity for leadership roles diminishes the Nature of leadership interactions, which build several interdependent actors. It is also consistent with the findings of Stewart dan Kringas (2003), who found that change-related studies frequently portray leadership from a hierarchical and heroic viewpoint.

Consequently, studies in this area demonstrate a lack of understanding of leadership as a whole by highlighting the importance of leadership communication in change, which can explain the interrelationships between internal and external parts of an organization, how leadership has been formed, and how it contributes to the achievement of change objectives. It could be done by examining leadership as a communication process (Ruben & Stewart, 2016). Leadership communication focuses on how individuals construct, transfer, choose, and interpret messages received and shape reality—viewing communication as a process, not merely a flow of information and meaning between actors (Ruben & Stewart, 2016).

### *1.2 Understanding Leadership Communication from a Sensemaking Perspective*

Earlier leadership theory was perceived as linear (transactional leadership), and interactional models (such as transformational leadership) have been established. However, the notion is still deficient in expressing the different variables and complexity of leadership from a communication perspective. As a result, Ruben and Gigliotti (2016) proposed that leadership communication should be viewed as a system capable of filling gaps in the constraints of leadership research.

Fairhurst (2008) defines sensemaking as comprehensively understanding leadership communication. According to this belief, leaders communicate between superiors and followers to establish a feeling of reality. Consequently, leaders communicate with people, develop compelling meanings for the environment, and share their knowledge. The capacity to simultaneously understand, create agendas, and frame information for leaders is necessary for this position. Thus, this study applied this theory to investigate leadership communication in organizational transformation, recognizing the complex capacities of approaches to studying communication in an organizational context.

Moreover, sensemaking theory was conceptualized by Karl Weick (1995). According to Miller (2005), this theory is characterized as an organizing process that heavily focuses on the communication-related aspects of organizing and views the organization as a communication vessel in which organizing and communication are interconnected and mutually influential. Meaning and organizational activities are united through sensemaking. Hence, this theory highlights the connection between cognition and behavior in organizations. According to Dervin (1998), this theory

describes how individuals understand and add coherence to daily tasks and stresses the connection between cognition and behavior in organizations.

Weick (1979) further proposed three organizational processes when seeking solutions to a continuing environment based on the significance of behavior connected with the current process options. The first phase is an enactment, which refers to the continuing climate (flowing information), wherein individuals of the organization collect part of the circumstances from a series of occurring activities or carry out specific actions, producing certain conditions. The subsequent phase is selection, which focuses on how individuals use the past to interpret the selected material and seek potential meanings. While ambiguity continues to fluctuate, the final process is retention, in which the output of interpretation is kept in memory and negotiated through constant interaction with others in the environment. Unfortunately, the current scheme does not always function as intended, but it links to the starting procedure, precisely the enactment procedure.

By focusing on how intermediate managers make sense of top-down change plans, this study investigated established connections between receiver cognition and the emergence and unpredictability of strategic change. The authors present the results of qualitative research on implementing a change initiative from various managerial perspectives and the change beneficiaries. Consistent with an interpretive approach to organizations, a sensemaking perspective from Weick (1995) was used to create a framework from empirical data to explain the findings. By using this approach, this research seeks to expand on what has already been known about cognition and change to demonstrate that middle managers' judgments of how they should respond to change interventions are essentially the result of leadership communication.

Based on the above, the research aims to explore how leadership communication was implemented in organizational change using a sensemaking perspective. Consequently, the research question for this study is as follows.

*RQ: How is leadership communication conducted during organizational change?*

The research question is explored by the sensemaking perspective, in which leaders make sense of the changes that have occurred by building transformative or persistent structures in response to the integration issue through the environment identification, selection of particular meanings, and retention process or storing and updating purposes in the form of a mindset to change or resist.

## **2. Method**

This research was based on a constructivist paradigm emphasizing participant interpretation's subjectivity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Using a qualitative approach over a quantitative one was intended to enrich leadership studies, which primarily focused on top managers and are inadequate in defining management as a dynamic and collective social systemic process (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). This case study also analyzed current difficulties in a real-world context (Yin, 2018) and thoroughly examined cases, whether they be programs, activities, processes, or individuals (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In addition, the selected instances contribute to understanding the research issue, which in this case was the response of public entities to government policies.

Snowball sampling was used to obtain informants outside of management or who previously held structural positions related to organizational change. Consequently, semi-structured interviews are conducted with potential participants via video conference or face-to-face (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), depending on their preference.

The queries focus on how respondents perceive, interpret, and communicate the change. Specifically, the questions investigate how change-related communications are conducted (planning, implementation, and evaluation), what and how they construct change information, who and how they communicate with regarding the change process, what the benefits and drawbacks of the change are, how they receive and provide feedback, and how they participate in the change process.

The interviews were entirely voluntary, and the participants were chosen without regard for gender balance. Furthermore, the anonymity of the existing informants was preserved in this study. The participants for this research were drawn from individuals who worked at various but specific levels within existing public organizations. The interviews were conducted between July and December 2022. Moreover, the interviewees were classified according to their structural positions or the governmental hierarchy in SCIEN and ENGIN, in 2019-2021 or before the official start of integration in BRIN.

A total of 27 participants were interviewed for this study. In detail, there were 17 participants at SCIEN consisting of a top leader (echelon I), three deputies for research (echelon I), four heads of the research work unit or heads of the bureau (echelon II), four leaders of the department, heads of field, or coordinators (echelon III), one head of subdivision, head of subdivision, or sub coordinator (echelon IV), and four staff from both the administrative and research fields. On the other hand, ten participants were from ENGIN, including top management (echelon I), three echelons II, two echelons III, two echelons IV, and a staff member from the administration, the technology, or engineering fields. A code

was employed to identify the participants' rank and location. Code E means echelon, and S means staff. Correspondingly, the first number after the letter indicates the rank (E1 is echelon I), and the following number identifies the organization (E21 means echelon II at SCIEN, while E22 means echelon II in ENGIN).

In addition, the researcher conducted a data collection process using the organization's essential documents. Documents, such as public information documents (such as official reports, procedures, internal news, and announcements), are used to understand and describe the change process and enrich the analysis.

Subsequently, to see something from various perspectives (Neuman, 2014), triangulation was conducted by gathering and examining different sources of each organizational structure or document to build a coherent justification for constructing a theme. Accordingly, Creswell and Creswell (2018) argue that this process can be claimed to improve the research validity.

### **3. The Case Study: SCIEN and ENGIN Changes in Response to the S&T Law Integration Issue**

The findings indicate that the organizational changes in SCIEN resulted from initiatives from the highest levels of management to promote the research function, establish global standards, and be professional. It was encouraged because the present bureaucracy could not meet research needs and has occupied heads of work units with administrative rather than research-related operations. Thus, centralization was initiated to transfer the administrative burden from research units to higher-level management (deputy or echelon I) or authorized units (echelon II) according to their primary administrative functions.

The budget, staff, assets, and business procedures are therefore centralized. In terms of funding, centralization is accomplished by transferring the authority of the holder and manager of the research budget from echelon II or the head of the work unit to echelon I or the deputy, the administrative budget to the principal secretary, and the budget for research-related assets to a particular work unit. According to their functional position, the status of non-researcher employees in research work units and administration is transferred to the bureau (echelon II). Similarly, before tier II work units existed, asset management was centred on work units whose primary role was asset management. As a result, the central work unit was under heavy financial, human resource, and asset diversion. Thus, in terms of business processes, an area working system for administrative activities is constructed to accommodate the previous business processes in each work unit.

However, in ENGIN, changes were carried out by strengthening the role of research and development (R&D), focusing on the application and implementation of science and technology (S&T) with special allocations in terms of budget, human resources, assets, and business processes in response to the S&T Law, which they interpreted the integration issue as coordination rather than union. As a result, each priority program has a financial allocation to spread information about its work accomplishments. From the HR perspective, the center's administrative staffing constraints necessitate the appointment of an additional burden for engineers to handle social media and their work unit's website. Digitalization and asset management are also becoming more stringent as they focus on projects that produce significant benefits. In general, boosting the output of individual performance and the production of work units and information dissemination is critical in ENGIN's organizational operations.

### **4. Leadership Communication: Accommodating the Change Vs. Preserving the Existence**

According to Weick (1995), sensemaking cannot be isolated from a particular context. Nevertheless, this study demonstrates that the context could alter, or contexts are initially employed as part of other hidden contexts. It is evident from the meaning stated at the outset: SCIEN is implementing adjustments so that research institutions become institutions of international standard and concentrate on research. After the emergence of the S&T Law, it became apparent that advances through centralization were part of the preparations for BRIN integration.

In contrast, ENGIN's definition of integration issue emphasizes efforts to strengthen its organizational existence. It was constructed with the idea that the S&T Law offers a solid framework for ENGIN to fulfil its duty and function as an institution for R&D, especially in application and implementation technology. Additionally, efforts are being made to closely monitor and evaluate ENGIN programs and activities to produce more significant and accountable results for society, especially industrial organizations. For this reason, disseminating information on ENGIN's achievements and performance to the public through the media is particularly crucial to emphasize the importance of the role of ENGIN, which the public may not have known much about.

The two cases show a divergent pattern in how leaders navigate their organization in reaction to change. SCIEN tends to make changes to support integration, whereas ENGIN prioritizes maintaining its performance and existence. Then, using Weick's (1995) sensemaking perspective, leadership communication was extended by investigating how environmental identification was conducted, how information was selected and presented, and how the reconstruction of mindsets was constructed perpetually to support the meaning of made changes.

#### *4.1 Constructing the Change: Integrating the S&T Law, Internal Conditions, and External Variables*

Although it seems that the S&T Law was the main trigger for both organizations to implement changes, it is clear that when communicating the change, leaders constructed a narrative of change according to its significance by establishing connections not only with the S&T Law but also with internal and external factors. The S&T Law's interpretation process and the internal and external environments, which simultaneously affected how leaders implemented changes, set off the change process in SCIEN. Typically, the S&T Law is seen as an effort to restructure government research institutes to create a favorable research ecosystem. Although the form of this unification within BRIN was not known at the time (either in the form of the Ministry of Research and Technology/BRIN coordinating with existing research organizations to live or in the form of merging into one, such as BRIN), integration is interpreted in the S&T Law as an effort to combine existing research institutions. SCIEN internally has made improvements, starting with refocusing the research function in work units by centralizing budgets, redistributing, and improving HR performance, centralizing asset management, and restructuring business processes as a tangible manifestation of building international standard research institutes, even though there is no clarity on integration and before the passing of the S&T Law.

According to the findings of the interviews, the S&T Law, internal organizational conditions, and external circumstances were all related to the context in which SCIEN took place. The S&T Law's mandate to reform the research ecosystem and the bureaucratic conditions to meet the needs of research institutions—in this case, the management of international research institutions—displays a clear connection. According to echelon I, “previously, researchers were used to be 30% in administration, such as operational and financial processes” (E2112). Because the research institutes being evaluated must refer to international standards, external conditions are also seen as change agents. This connection can be viewed as a solid basis for the organizational adjustments to be made by SCIEN. Creating meaning in change is then described as an effort to develop research institutions that meet worldwide standards and increase the professionalism of both researchers and support employees. This finding resonates with earlier studies in which leaders create visions and develop an awareness of change (Brewer, 2016; Sahlin, 2019).

On the other hand, in ENGIN, the S&T Law is regarded as strengthening the role and function of ENGIN, as the law specifies the role of research and application institutions. Hence, the integration issue is understood as a coordination of R&D operations. Therefore, ENGIN observes that all government research institutions continue to exist and work according to their roles as an echelon II in ENGIN and argues that “the integration is not removing its DNA [characteristics] from existing organizations like ENGIN or the others; we adopt an integration as a way to strengthen our function rather than melting into one big organization” (E2204). Consequently, this view also motivates ENGIN to work harder to provide results in the form of technology that can be implemented in society, particularly industry, unlike other research and development institutions, such as SCIEN, which produces scientific journals as their output. This ongoing endeavour to support ENGIN's position is not only motivated by the S&T Law because of “the role of research and development of science and technology that ENGIN has been conducted after all of this time even before the introduction of the S&T Law” (E2201). Furthermore, ENGIN promotes the improvement of performance achievements and results in the form of engineering technology and disseminates news about these achievements through the media. The leaders of ENGIN create urgency for its existence as their media campaign emphasizes “the strengthening of ENGIN and its products that are adopted by the society and industry, not only as a prototype” (E3208).

Understanding the interplay between the S&T Law, internal circumstances, and external stimuli is crucial for motivating change. Accordingly, leaders should communicate how different environmental identifications interact to motivate the organization to change. The findings demonstrated that this relationship need not be made explicit at the beginning of a change but may periodically surface as the shift progresses following the understanding alignment.

#### *4.2 Selecting Information Through Urgency, Relieving Tension, and Action*

The subsequent process, sorting information, took place in both institutions by stressing the urgency of change, lowering tension amid the changes and uncertainties, and taking action as a concrete response to the environment. At SCIEN, the selection information is focused on communicating that the change intends to improve the organization's quality as a research institution with worldwide standards, and the professional staff increases the pressure for change. It is evident from the leadership communication at the highest level, which highlights the interrelationships between various environmental factors, citing “gaps between our existing internal conditions, say yes, and conditions that should adhere to global standards” (E1101). Furthermore, communication is emphasized in reducing tension from changes by providing calm by conveying that there is “no need to worry about losing a job as long as you are competent” (E3115), “do not provide information that might have the potential to cause problems” (E2104) and expressing the positive side by “highlighting the rewards that those who work well rather than sanctions if they do not” (E1103). In addition, communication was also conducted through the direct implementation of changes because it is believed to be more effective in providing employees with an understanding of the changes, as the leader identified that “the best socialization for fundamental transformation is execution, just do it, and then it will be modified” (E1101).

At SCIEN, the top leaders communicated the digestion of change before passing the S&T Law, which focused on the need for internal improvements to support the national research ecosystem through reorganization to meet international standards of research institutions. However, the issue was raised after the approval of the submitted S&T Law; the communications emphasized the importance of the changes made as part of the SCIEN preparatory steps to join BRIN, although the form of BRIN has not yet officially existed. Related to that, Weick (1995) explains that the digestion that occurs contains models representing part of reality and supporting future understanding. Moreover, the findings extend the recommendations of a study by Steinbauer et al. (2015), which stated the presence of conscious and unconscious sensemaking used by leaders to develop an understanding of their environment for organizations. Specifically, the study argued that the top leader used conscious sensemaking, such as reorganizing bureaucratic management, and the lower leaders unconsciously digested the importance of integration into the BRIN through the change processes.

At the highest level, echelon I built the changing meaning driven by the understanding constructed by communicating change consciously, emphasizing conditions that can be observed clearly (the need to improve organizational performance as a research-based governmental institution). The narrative for restructuring through centralization is acceptable, and changes are generally accepted in most corporate structures. Over time, management and lower-level staff realized that internal change processes (such as relocation and centralization) were part of the preparation for BRIN integration. In other words, subconscious thinking tends to dominate in the early period compared to conscious cognition, which dominates at the end of the period according to the awareness that emerges throughout the evolution to reveal or convey information about integration problems.

On the contrary, the information chosen to address the integration problem at ENGIN suggests that there was a construction to consider the reaffirmation of its existence. They created urgency in their R&D role through excellent programs that even existed before the S&T Law, such as the early warning disaster system. Consequently, it made ENGIN “disseminates more about its achievements to the public through the media” (E2207). The emphasis of the communication from echelon I and even among officials was that the S&T Law made the role of ENGIN increasingly necessary and that the public needed to be made aware of it. Moreover, they also tried to eliminate tension from the integration issue as it is considered non-official information. Therefore, a leader of echelon I made an effort to comfort the change in ENGIN by declaring that “as long as there is no official information, he [his leader] does not communicate anything to the subordinates that indicate speculative information” (E1206). To provide evidence supporting their point of view, ENGIN has been publicizing its successes and demonstrating how its research and development program has made significant contributions to the nation. It is accomplished by presenting the information to the public through the media by delivering information from the projects it works on and packaging it to be more easily understood and provided to the general public “in a way considered massive” (S0210).

Based on the findings, the authors could see that the process of selecting information for building the change involves not only exerting an emphasis on the positive aspects of the change but also addressing any potential drawbacks that may result from the transition to encourage employees to take an active role in the change process. In addition, communication through action is considered significant since it may promote the change itself to move forward, and it can give the employees knowledge through the movement of the change process.

#### *4.3 Reconstructing the Mindset of Professionalism in Bureaucracy*

Furthermore, the retention process, the storing and reconstructing of mindset, in both institutions uncovered an effort to build a more professional work pattern. Trust, experience, and engagement are the parts that influence the construction of that new mindset. However, they could also hinder the reconstruction of new thinking. For example, high confidence in a boss supports change, but unbalanced trust between the leader and the follower tends to form favoritism that prevents other individuals from being able to follow the difference.

For the case at SCIEN, it is clear that the change is being made towards a transformation towards an international-class research institution through the development of a previously existing and convenient working mindset and patterns to become more professional based on even improved performance outputs not only for the work unit level but also individuals. In this regard, the high level of trust in the leader supports the change, as echelon III personally communicated to his staff by saying, “This is already the policy of the management, and I believe that this is only for our common good, and yet even those who experience this are not only one or two people who have experienced this” (E3115). However, trust, experience, and participation could also hinder the formation of new ways of thinking. The staff stated, “Not all the leaders trust the other staff...until there is jealousy at my level...” (S0111). Therefore, the imbalance of trust between the boss and the subordinate created favoritism, preventing others from following the change.

The leader's experience also plays a role in the construction of communication in change. As revealed by an echelon I who has had a diaspora experience, he “feels the gap when returning to work in Indonesia that needs to be refined” (E1101). Additionally, the engagement of senior and technical executives is essential in reconstructing the new mindset.

An echelon III expressed that “contributions in the policy formulation are not only from the regulatory but also from the sociological, philosophical, and economic aspects, which usually, in fact, staff, particularly seniors, have different views, which are subsequently forwarded to the superiors” (E3107).

Additionally, changes are being made to become a scientific institution that meets international standards and builds a way of thinking and working that already exists, with the reconstruction of the existing comfort zone. As a head of the research work unit revealed, “We are comfortable, so comfortable that we do not need to have a higher degree anymore as we think we enough” (E2117). On the administrative side, the leader also uncovered the employee's comfort from “working only while serving, only receiving salary without accountable output” (E2104).

Efforts are also being made in ENGIN to improve work professionalism. Still, it is parallel to their efforts to give urgency to the importance of ENGIN through publication in the media and improvement of performance. This understanding is gained by distinguishing the roles and tasks of engineers and researchers, with engineers focusing on “product-based outcomes rather than research articles” (E1205). Thus, the superiors encouraged the ENGIN officers to gather information in the form of “evidence to demonstrate that ENGIN is needed and has made a significant contribution as a national research agency” (E3203). Consequently, they provided evidence through a media campaign “emphasizing the strengthening of the existence of ENGIN” (E3208).

Various factors, including involvement, experience, and trust, influence the construction of this new perspective. However, involvement, knowledge, and beliefs can also act as barriers to forming new ways of thinking. For example, having a high level of confidence in a leader can help changes happen; nevertheless, having an imbalanced level of trust between the leader and the follower can often lead to favoritism, preventing others from involving in the change process.

For the situation at SCIEN, it is abundantly clear that the change is moving towards a transformation as an international-class research institution. This change is made by developing a previously existing and convenient working mindset and patterns to become more professional based on improved performance outputs for the work unit level and individuals. Efforts are also being made in ENGIN to improve professionalism. However, these efforts are being made in parallel with their efforts to give urgency to the importance of ENGIN's role by disseminating information about its significance in the media and improving its performance output.

## 5. Discussion

Using the sensemaking perspective of Weick (1995), leadership communication is seen as a cyclical process between understanding the complexity of the environment, selecting information, and reconstructing the way of thinking in responding to change (Figure 1). The ability to build connections between the needs of the change trigger, which in this study consisted of the S&T Law and the internal and external environment, is the basis for building change. This identification then facilitates the information flow, which was a change of initiation in this research, usually divided into information leading to the importance of change to improve internal management to support the development of research institutions with international standards.

Through information selection, the ability to interpret and reconstruct the meaning of change becomes essential. The choice of information communicated when implementing change should not only build up the urgency of change (e.g., rationality in need for change) but also provide tranquillity when conditions of uncertainty occur (e.g., emphasizing the positive side of change) and act concretely (e.g., execution of change implementation to understand the change) so that the concept of change is fully understood. Therefore, as asserted above, the ability to interpret and reconstruct the meaning of change becomes essential. It indicates that, according to the leaders, the information disclosure is potentially disruptive during organizational changes that can trigger adverse reactions (Bilgili et al., 2017), so they are more likely to convey the positive side of the change or limit certain information that may trigger rejection of change.

Furthermore, identifying the environment and choosing traceable information is an attempt to reconstruct the way of thinking in creating new work structures and models influenced by the role of confidence, experience, and leadership in forming a professional and competitive workplace culture. In SCIEN, there was an escalation of the mindset built before the approval of the S&T Law to improve the quality of institutions and professionalism into a higher understanding mindset, which was the development of philosophy and work models as part of the integration preparation in this study. Therefore, as thinking, working models and integration issues began to sharpen, the choice of understanding the change in leadership communication was restructured as part of preparing the BRIN integration study. However, there were no formal rules at the time. This finding supports Whittle et al. (2015), who argued that top management negotiates to balance problems and changes in existing functions and attributes, reflecting changes in centralization, which are then reconstructed in preparation for integration.

The study also demonstrates that the sensemaking approach could uncover things that were not present in the environment (i.e., integration issues of research institutions) but was implemented and constructed with the related

digestion forms; nonetheless, it did not mention the issue of integration (i.e., an effort to become an international standard research institute and have professional employees in their field). However, as the issue of integration increased and when integration occurred, it was then that the digestion and communication carried out emphasized that the changes made during this time were preparations for integration.

Thus, it can be understood that leadership communication is the relationship between connecting reality and reflections of the organizational environment, the selection of information, and the continuous reconstruction efforts to update the changing mindset. In particular, leadership communication is the response of the S&T Law through organizational change, has a complex relationship between the processes of sensemaking consisting of the identification of the environment (not only the law itself, but also the internal and external environment), the information dissolution, and the mindset reconstruction against change.

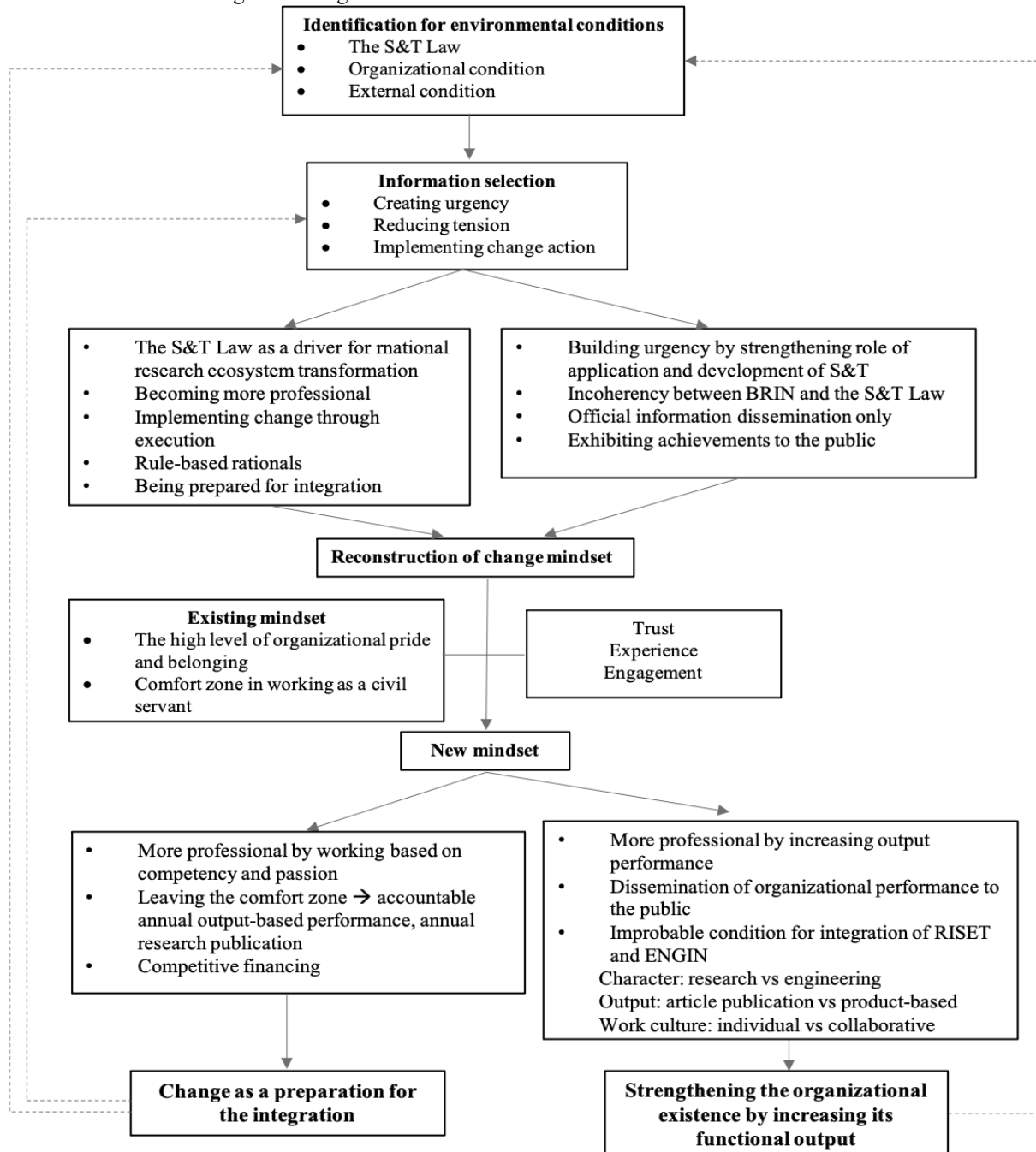


Figure 1. The framework of leadership communication through the identification of the environment, emphasis on information, and reconstruction of the mindset in response to the S&T Law through organizational change



## 6. Conclusion

By trying to explain leadership more nuancedly, this study compensated for the limitations of leadership studies that are typically vertical and heroic (Stewart & Kringas, 2003). Specifically, in leadership in public institutions dominated by the activities of administrative or political leaders at senior management levels (Kuipers et al., 2014) and leadership studies in Indonesia, where such trends are prevalent, the activities of administrative or political leaders at senior management levels dominate (Balkis, 2020; Rondonuwu & Trisnantoro, 2013; Taufik & Warsono, 2020).

Furthermore, the leadership communication framework also provides a visual representation of the complexity typically considered inherent since the study did not employ concepts commonly utilized in the study of leadership, such as leadership style approaches (Holten & Brenner, 2015), relational leadership (Ramcharan & Parumasur, 2014), or popular leadership theories such as transformative leadership (van der Voet, 2016; Yue et al., 2019). To this end, the study satisfies the demand for leadership research in a multifaceted manner, that is, by employing a communication perspective to analyze and explain organizational actions (Lewis, 2011). The communication technique was implemented by emphasizing informational and relational outcomes not only as a result of leadership but also as a result of followers, who, in this study, disclosed how leadership communication was perceived through meaningful behaviors.

However, this study has limitations. This analysis was limited to organizational changes related to the S&T Law, namely the integration issue, and focused on SCIEN and ENGIN, not the other government research institutes, which are also impacted by the policy. Moreover, this study only focused on the period of change between 2019 and the establishment of BRIN (1 September 2021). Since the case study could not generalize the results of other cases (Gustafsson, 2017), this study could not generalize the leadership communication processes of other government research institutes in responding to the integration issue. Furthermore, the findings of this study did not indicate that leadership communication models are the key to effective large-scale change in a government institution. Meanwhile, the results imply that models may stimulate fresh ideas on leadership communication in the context of the emergence of organizational changes in their structure and culture through the sensemaking of their environment and change efforts.

## Acknowledgements

The article presented was written during Yudie's doctoral study, and he would like to thank Beasiswa Saintek and also the mentorship and inspirational lecturers at the Department of Communication Science, Faculty of Social & Political Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia.

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