COMMUNICATION PECULIARITIES IN THE PUBLIC AREA RELATED TO THE NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION'S COMPUTERIZATION

Emanoil MUSCALU[1]

Abstract: The quality of products and services in the public sector, the transparency, information accessibility of general interest is the core goal of all public institutions and administrative authorities in the developed countries. All these quality goals cannot be achieved without granting communication the proper position as a valuable and indispensable management tool used for improving the public sector. Human relations within the organization, motivation and employee's involvement, harmonizing the personal interests with the organization's interests and goals, as well as the organization's relations with the environment and especially with the citizens for the one that the public services are designed for and regulated by information exchange through communication.

In this context the public sector specific communication, in particular corporate communication should support the information technology's implementation in all the public organizations as an opportunity in order that governmental services to become more accessible and transparent but also more effective and efficient, the final goal is to increase the confidence in the public sector and even the society's development as a whole.

Keywords: communication, information technology, public management, public organizations, sustainable development;

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1. Introduction

Current transformations of the Romanian society demand significant changes in the public sector; current requirements endorse the traditional

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[1]"Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu, e-mail: emanoil.muscalu@ulbsibiu.ro.

values redefinition, the method of expression and evaluation of the public managers and subordinates' performances.

Changes in public management should primarily aim the promotion of a different understanding of public sector's management, replacing the traditional benchmarks of quality, redefining the role of the citizen as public services' customer, greater attention especially to satisfy the increasing importance given to organizational communication.

Unlike private management oriented toward the rational organization of the resources in order to obtain a maximum profit, public domain it is characterized by the managerial peculiarities required by the role of public organizations of serving the governmental interest. The public manager has a direct responsibility toward the citizen with an introverted purpose, meeting the needs of society. The current demands require more from the public services, reporting the quality to the user's requirements, learning about their expectations, transparency and accessibility.

Clearly these goals cannot be achieved without increasing and focusing the attention over communication as a bridge between public organization, internal environment, the values that are required to be promoted and the citizens as beneficiaries of the public domain.

Communication in the public organization, due to its specificity and especially of its role, which must assume, that of attester of the transparency and accessibility to general interest information, the barometer of the citizen's expectations, the instrument designed to grow the trust in the public domain, should be seen in a new perspective through the computerization of the public system's needs.

2. Communication's peculiarities inside the public domain's institutions

Any public institution it is made up of people who work for people, communication it is an essential factor in relation to the environment, both internally and externally. (When, D., 2010)

Implementing the information technology in public sector's organizations it is considered to be an opportunity for the government's services which can become more accessible and transparent but also more effective and efficient. According to David Mc. Kewitt, specialist in public management, the access to public information management gives

transparency to the management process and clearly support for the development of the society as a whole.

Thus, the development of social and political values enforce at the level of the public institutions' management some mandatory elements that not always relate to costs and efficiency, but rather the public service principles such as transparency, the system's independence, facilitating the citizens' access to public services and general interest information.

Lately the communication tends to know new perspectives, new aspects, communication directors are no longer considered to be just *"information channels"* but are rather considered to be strategic advisors for the top management.

Together with the financial management and the production management, communication must bring its contribution in order to achieve the organization's mission. The role of communication in this process can be described in short by using the term *"fulfilling in a professional manner the window and mirror functions "* (Van Riel, 1995). The term *"window function"* requires the development and implementation of communication policies and the result being a message capable of representing all the facets of the organization in a consistent and appealing manner.

Communication - the exchange of information, ideas and feelings - defined as an interpersonal process of transmission and reception of the symbols that have meanings attached. Communication it is that phenomenon that allows creating invisible bridges between people, between institutions and between institutions and people, links similar to an invisible bridge of informational essence (Serbanica, D. 2005).

Some experts have reached to the conclusion that **communication** it is a fundamental principle for all the managerial activity specific components, namely: communication (exchange of information of different nature oral and written), which occupies about a third of the working time; **traditional management** (planning, decision making and control), which occupies also about a third of all working time; **correlation** (interaction, also through communication, with the one around you, from inside and outside the organization), which takes around a fifth of the time; **human resource management** (motivation/encouragement, advice/ discipline, conflict management, staffing) (Marinescu, P., 2003).

In conclusion the communication activity has a significant share in the activities developed in an organization regardless of its nature, public or

private. Any interaction, regardless of its purpose, involves verbal or nonverbal communication, oral or written, formal or informal.

Organizational communication in the public sector makes a distinction based on the criterion of communication partners' identity, namely:

- Interpersonal Communication;
- Intra-organizational communication;
- Inter-organizational communication;

A. Interpersonal communication includes formal and informal interactions between members of the organization (communication between manager - subordinate, boss - subordinate, between individuals of a department);

B. Intra-organizational communication and the internal communication it is stationed around the limits of authority and of the reporting relationships inside the organization, being dependent on the existing organizational chart.

C. Inter-organizational communication or external communication refers, in fact, to the organization's relations with the environment. Even though public sector organizations are characterized by lack of competition, lack of market as output it does not exclude the need for the institutions to increase the external dialogue in order to promote its activity, products, services, in order to define their identity. Current requirements demand transparency, enhancement of public services, reporting the performance of the specific activities to the citizens' needs and expectations.

The specialized literature reveals that in this context the concept of institutional or corporate communication whose objective is the company or the organization in itself. The institutional communication presumes creating and managing the organization's image, the philosophy and its own values, trying to answer the next questions: who it is, what it wants to do, what it can do and what the organization actually does?

Communication between institutions it is the external-organizational communication through which the public administration institution seeks to strengthen its image, to attract around it a climate of confidence and sympathy from the public (Nedelea A. 2006).

Regardless of the level that it takes place, communication fulfills, as Scott and Mitchell declare, four functions: - control function (clarification of the task, authority, responsibility); - information function (as a basis for the decisions), - the motivation function (request of cooperation in order to

attain the organization's objectives) - emotional function (expressing the feelings).

External communication of the public institution contributes to the organization's reputation and image inside the institution. In the same time it fulfills the function of promoting the public institution of the state and the regional administrative units. Communication that fulfills the role of promotion is in fact a special case, because although the literature, without exception, considers it as part of the external communication, it is completed unilaterally from the public institution toward the its external environment. In this situation the members of the public body are no longer the one that maintain the contact with the exterior, but the organization as the institution. It provides information about the services delivered, trying to improve the overall image or simply wants to inform the public about its values and to promote them (V. Munteanu, 2006).

Through communication, the public organizations inform their beneficiaries, the citizens as public services *clients*. Informing the citizens supposes to communication the values enclosed in the organizational culture, values which should be reflected in the provided services. Communication fulfills in the public domain also the role of a guarantor of meeting the needs and citizens expectations, a good communication strengthening the citizens' confidence in the public institutions.

The computerization of the domain opens up new possibilities for the communication process, being a sine-qva- non condition for modernizing the public management, the intra-organizational communication to become more efficient and especially develop an efficient inter-organizational communication, a guarantor for transparency and accessibility of the public services.

3. Computerization of public administration, central condition for sustainable development

It can be declared without any doubt that information became one of the most important strategic resources for all organizations. Collecting, processing, transmission and storage of data are essential for the quality of the decisions and completing them. (Androiceanu, A., 2004)

Unlike the management practiced inside the private organization oriented toward the rational organization of the resources in order to obtain a maximum profit, the public domain it is characterized by the

organizational peculiarities required by the role of the public organizations of serving the governmental general interest. Public manager has a direct responsibility towards the citizens, but the private company does not develop such a relationship.

The values and the main principles of the public sector does not subordinates to the idea of profit or cost and performance indicators, but it reports to some non-economic indicators, very difficult to be quantified such as the public services' transparency, the independence of the system, facilitating the citizens' access to public services and to information of general interest.

We must note that the legislative changes, the legislation inforce supports these efforts by normative acts such as the Law 544/2001 on free access to information, published in O.M.663, October 23, 2001.

The implications of this trend over the public management's system in Romania require changing the perception of the information flow from the administrative and judicial system's area, which does not fall in a linear path.

The first step in modernizing the public management in Romania was performed by computerization of the domain since 1998, when in February was approved by the Government's Decision the National Strategy for computerization and accelerated implementation of the Informatization Society and the Programme Action regarding the widespread use and the development of information technology in Romania.

In this respect, in 2001, the Romanian Government through the Ministry of Public Administration has developed the National Action Plan "e-Administration" which includes the following coordinates:

- computerization activities in public institutions that ensures the increase of operational efficiency within the central and local administration bodies;
- computerization of the public services for citizens, for the businesses agents at the central and local administration level. The stated objective in these documents is to provide informational society in Romania. Article 9 of the National Informatization Strategy states that the use of information technology in order to support the public administration's reform, for:
- ensuring homogeneous computerization and coordination the institutions at the central and local public administration, including the judicial system, for improving public services;

- simplification of the administrative procedures and practices;
- removing arbitrariness and corruption;
- optimize communication and the information flow between the institutions at central and local level;
- ensuring the inter-departmental cooperation;
- gradual generalization of the information exchange based on the electronic documents;
- ensuring the citizens' access to the public information: info centers, electronic kiosks placed in public areas;
- ensuring the compatibility and interoperability of the information systems in public administration at the national and international level by accelerating the development and application of the methodologies, norms, standards;
- coordinating the public procurement of ICT products and services (information and communications technology) according with the European regulations;
- monitoring the computerization funds provided by the assistance and international cooperation's projects.

So basically, computerization should provide the rapid access and non-discriminatory, transparent, of the citizens to public services, while simplifying the administrative procedures.

The experience of many developed countries showed that both creating and developing of an information society involves complex actions, on long term well integrated into a comprehensive and ample process.

In this context it was recorded an increased attention focused on the trend of computerization of the administrative system in our country, in general, which will be developed on three major coordinates:

1. Computerization of the activities from the public institutions which must lead an increase of operational efficiency within central and local administrative bodies.

2. Computerization of the services for citizens and economic agents, which often involves the integration of the services provided by the service organizations of central and local administration. Recent approaches of the international public management and the opportunity to adapt and implement them in the public institutions from Romania.

3. Providing access to information through information technology services for final users of the central administration services.

The Romania public institutions' projects of computerization, on the short term, are fully covered in accordance with the objectives set by the European Union under the "e-Europe" to allow electronic access as well as to information and of the main bodies' services by creating a new set of portals:

- for information, which should facilitate the access using the internet and operating the database of the public administration;
- legal regulations in order to facilitate the access to the existing information on the sites of various institutions;
- services provided to the citizens, to the economic agents, for the employment of the workforce and a special portal for certification.

4. Web technology and the evolution of organizational communication

Computerization of the public administration, as a general concern inside the European Union, was also taken by our country as a requirement for the modernization of the public sector, recording several stages.

The period between 1994-2004 was the Internet's starting phase, known as Web 1.0, characterized by poor accessibility, small and static Web pages, outdated and unattractive for the visitors.

The next phase, since 2004, brings the technology Web 2.0, technology which promotes communication between sites, between Web applications, between people, using a tool which became vital, the Internet.

The experts stresse the importance of Web technologies in the context of the current public administration (Cândea, D., 2010):

- provides support for clarity and timeliness, removing the time excuse or misplacing the acts;
- remodeling the conscience;
- it removes the bureaucracy;
- removes laziness and indifference, facilitating training of the public servant for citizens, eliminating those individuals who until now were hiding behind the offices or postponed the tasks moving the papers from one side of the desk to another.

5. Electronic administration

The reality shows that the public sector in Romania is characterized by *burdensome* service, an endless number of forms to fill in, to stand in endless lines at different locations, limited working programs with the public and lack of celerity in answering the requests and solving the complains.

Despite the fact that lately has been invested considerable amounts of money for acquiring the equipment and software applications which should improve the system and some activities to become more efficient, the institutions experience major deficiencies and the positive changes being postponed.

The first problem is the lack of overall vision over an integrated network of computer systems which would deal with the workflows.

Another deficiency, more difficult to correct, is to change the organizational values, the attitudes of the public servants who are too focused on the institution's activities forgetting about their primer purpose that of meeting the citizens' needs. They should move their attention toward the requirements of the beneficiary and how to facilitate citizens' access to information. An electronic administration to be effective and efficient should be grounded on accessibility, simple design focused on the citizens' needs.

Also it is necessary the citizen's change of attitude, which should be familiarized with the electronic information, and to be perceived as a benefit, as an useful element designed to increase the accessibility to the public services.

6. Conclusions

The public domain's computerization is an important step, always a step that should be taken under consideration, an element which innovated communication and redefined the meaning of the principle explained by the expression *in the citizen's service*.

We must emphasize, that the expected changes in this new type of communication, Web communication, are sometimes hindered by the recorded resistance to change, the discomfort as the result of using an unfamiliar instrument, fear of failure.

No doubt that the implementation of such changes due to public management's computerization in the field of administration in Romania requires an extensive process of training and qualification of the public servants and public managers, and not least, the political representatives promoted to a public position or a political position. They need to understand the practical use of computerization and to acquire, when necessary, the professional and managerial capacity of integrating the new information technology in the activities performed.

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