

INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

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Abstract:

In this paper we investigated the relationship between the organizational communication and organizational culture. The starting point of our analysis is that the two variables are in interdependent relation. Our study, performed in a large public organization operating in Romania and abroad, identified a positive association between the two variables. The organizational communication helps the organization to disseminate the culture among the employees. Also, the organizational culture is developed through the interactions and communications among the staff. The management of the organizations must encourage and promote an open communication in order to create a culture that sustain the performance.

Keywords: organizational communication, organizational culture, open communication

1. Introduction

Communication was part of human activity since the earliest times. The importance of communication began to grow as other instruments to solve the problems lost pace. Another reason for the growing interest for communication is that people constantly engage in collaborative activities that involve a network of relationships, therefore mastering the art and science of communication is vital for success. The emergence of the industrial society led to the development of a new discipline: organizational communication. Management courses and organizational theory courses shifted their attention toward the

organizational communication. Katz & Kahn (1966) consider that organizations are social systems based on communication to face uncertainty and to perform with a certain degree of efficiency.

The interest for organizational communication was accompanied by an increase of the interest for other elements of organizational behavior. In this respect the organizational culture was one of the most investigated subject in the theory and practice of management and organization science. The starting point is that there is a strong connection between the organizational culture and organizational performances and in that process the communication

is a catalyst. An adequate organizational culture, backed by an open communication is an impulse for the implementation of the organization' strategy.

Each organization has unique characteristics that differentiate it from other organizations. Every organization has its own set of cultural elements such as languages, traditions, symbols, practices, history and social facts that makes that organization unique. We can try to understand organizations if we analyze their unique cultures and how these cultures are influenced and influence the organization communication.

2. Literature review

Cheney et al. (2011, p. 6) appreciate that an organization is communication. When we refer to an organization we speak about a network of communication flows and interactions that significantly influence the organization. Communication refers to symbols, messages, networks and interactions directed toward attaining organizational objectives.

Kreps (1986, p. 5) considers the organizational communication to be social activities of collectivities through which people develop interaction models to coordinate activities and efforts in order to reach individual and group objectives.

Miller (2012, p. 11) considers that organizational communication implies the presence of five main elements: the existence of a social collectivity, individual and organizational objectives, a coordinated activity, an organizational structure and the interaction with other organizations.

Analyzing the above mentioned definitions we observe that the framework of the organizational communication involves certain

preconditions: the existence of an organizational structure (normative communication), the presence of objectives at all levels (aspirational communication), the presence of interactions within the organization and outside the organization (network communication).

Deetz (2001) defines the organizational communication as being the process through which a stakeholder or a group of stakeholders try to stimulate meanings for another stakeholder using intentional verbal, non-verbal and mediated messages.

Burduş and Căprărescu (1999) consider that organizational communication is the process through which messages are transmitted in order to realize individual and joint objectives of the members of the organization. Communication is important because in its absence the managerial functions cannot be operationalized. Communication is essential for the existence and success of the organization, having as objectives: the motivation of the employees, the coordination of resources and processes, the relationships with external stakeholders. It can be observed that the authors align themselves with the main theoretical framework considering communication as a tool to reach specific organizational objectives.

Cismaru (2008) acknowledge that the changes in the management of organizations in the latest decades brought a paradigm shift that settled the organizational communication as a decisive element for the success of organizations. At the relational and communicational level the accent goes from individual to the group which implies new and performing communication abilities.

Simon (1957) considers that without communication there cannot be any organization. This is because organizations are made of humans that communicate in order to achieve organizational goals.

Referring now to the organizational culture, Schein (2004) considers that the organizational culture offers to the members of the organization a feeling of identity and belonging and also it offers an indication about the way problems are solved in an organization. Realizing an analogy with an individual, Schein views organizational culture as a set of hidden characteristics that determine the observable organizational behavior. In Schein' (2004) opinion the most appreciated ability of a leader is to manage the culture of an organization, to understand, to work with and to transform the organizational culture into a creative force. The central set of values of an organization represents the AND of that organization, the genes that govern the entirely organizational process.

For Hofstede (2001) organizational culture represents mental models and linguistics paradigms that frames perceptions, thoughts and the language used by the members of an organization in the socialization process. In this respect the organizational culture can be learned by the members of the organization through socialization. The elements of organizational culture are internalized by the members of the organization in the process of day-to-day interaction, using ideas, language and behavior. The effects of the organizational culture can be identified at the level of organizational behavior. The organizational culture represents the hidden characteristics of an organization that influence and balance the organizational and individual behavior.

The interest of the researchers referring to the organizational communication and organizational culture was manifested since the first influential papers from the field. Peters and Waterman (1982) concluded that in order to install a culture that will favor performance and excellence, organizations must be good at communication. An organizational culture that is based on social integration, motivation and the implication of the employees help organizations to have an innovative approach that will guide them to achieve the competitive advantage. Organizational culture is a mix of symbols that can be managed by the personnel with managerial positions in order to obtain the commitment of all members of the organization. The organization with a strong culture are more integrated and more oriented toward obtaining the objectives than the organizations with a weak culture.

From a communication perspective, people from organizations create culture through their interactions. Culture develops directly through language, stories, non-verbal messages and other forms of communication (Eisenberg and Goodall, 2001, p. 128). We can see and understand only a part of the organizational culture due to its vast area of content.

The organizational culture represents the glue that keep together the members of the organization, offering in the same time consistence and relevance to the organization. The perception of the employees regarding the organizational culture is important because the organizational culture has a strong impact on the visible and measurable characteristics of the employees. Organizational culture operates at a deep and profound mental level so that this cultures offers the employees the means to understand the

things from the organization (values and beliefs).

3. The objectives and methodology of the research

The research problem originated from the fact that in many organizations an inaccurate, opaque communication represented a hindrance for the cohesion and group unity. The objective of the research is to identify the relationship between organizational culture and organizational communication and to see if there is a positive association between the two variables. The methodology of the research involved interviewing a number of 218 persons from the Ministry of Foreign Affaires of Romania.

For the study of organizational communication we took into consideration the methodology proposed by Downs and Hazen (1977). The questionnaire of organizational communication was introduced by the two authors to investigate the relationship between organizational communication and job satisfaction. The

initial questionnaire had a number of 40 items grouped into 8 dimensions. For our study we kept 32 items grouped in 7 dimensions (four items for each dimension). The 28 items are Likert type scale ranking from total disagreement (1) to total agreement (7). The 7 dimensions of the investigated organizational communication are: organizational integration, personal feedback, organizational perspective, communication climate, relationship to superiors, communication quality and informal communication.

In order to analyze the organizational culture we adapted a test comprising 15 items that measure four dimensions of the organizational culture: innovative culture, competitive culture, bureaucratic culture and community culture (Deshpande et al. 1993, Ogbonna and Harris, 2000). To evaluate the items we used a scale from 1 to 7.

4. Results and discussion

In table 1 we detailed the results obtained for each of the 28 items that characterize the organizational communication.

Table 1

Results of the items of organizational communication

No.	Dimension	Items	Average
1.	Organizational integration	Information regarding my progress in career	5.22
2.		Information about the politics and objectives of the department I work in	5.11
3.		Information regarding the job description	5.27
4.		Information about the payment and other benefits	5.18
5.	Personal feedback	Acknowledgement of my merits	4.94
6.		Information about the transparency of the evaluation	4.85
7.		Information about the way my requests are solved	4.95

8.		Extent to which superiors understand my problems	4.76
9.	Organizational perspective	Information about the politics and objectives of the organization	5.00
10.		Information about the changes in organization	4.82
11.		Information about the budget of the organization	3.84
12.		Information about the accomplishments and/or failures of the organization	4.44
13.	Communication climate	Extent to which the organizational communication motivates me	4.45
14.		Extent to which the people from the organization have good communication skills	4.14
15.		Extent to which organizational communication makes me feel to identify with the organization	4.31
16.		Extent to which the conflicts are solved in an efficient manner	3.90
17.	Relationship to superiors	Extent to which my superior listens to me when I have a problem	4.90
18.		Extent to which my superior helps me to solve problems	4.77
19.		Extent to which my superior trusts me	5.11
20.		Extent to which my superior is open to my ideas	4.39
21.	Communication quality	Extent to which the meetings are well-organized	4.58
22.		Extent to which the written communication is clear and concise	5.24
23.		Extent to which there is a healthy communication in organization	4.02
24.		Extent to which the organizational communication is relevant	5.10
25.	Informal communication	Extent to which informal communication is active	4.47
26.		Extent to which there is compatibility among the members of my department	4.00
27.		Extent to which the communication with other members of the organization is open and free	4.33
28.		Extent to which communication practices can be adapted to emergency situations	4.79

Ranking the first three items that *regarding the job description* (5.27), scored highest we obtain: *Information Extent to which the written*

communication is clear and concise (5.24) and *Information regarding my progress in career* (5.22). In the category of the items characterizing the organizational communication the last places were obtained by the following: *Extent to which there is compatibility among the members of my department* (4.00), *Extent to which the conflicts are*

solved in an efficient manner (3.90), *Information about the budget of the organization* (3.84).

Averaging the results for each dimension of the organizational communication we can observe how the dimensions of the organizational communication are ranked (table 2).

Table 2

Ranking of the organizational communication dimensions

No.	Dimension of the organizational communication	Average
1.	Organizational integration	5.19
2.	Personal feedback	4.88
3.	Relationship to superiors	4.80
4.	Communication quality	4.74
5.	Organizational perspective	4.53
6.	Informal communication	4.40
7.	Communication climate	4.20
Average for organizational communication		4.68

The average for organizational communication was a good one: 4.68. Results above the average were obtained by the following dimensions: Organizational integration (5.19), Personal feedback (4.88), Relationship to superiors (4.80), Communication quality (4.74). Results below the average were obtained by the variables Organizational perspective (4.53), Informal communication (4.40) and Communication climate (4.20). In many previous studies the score obtained by the organizational integration was the highest. The good result obtained by this dimension can be explained by the fact that, in general, the communication associated with organizational integration is not negotiable. The

information concerning job description, salary and other benefits, future career path are usually given, apriori known and dissatisfaction can appear if there are some delays in the respective processes.

The personal feedback dimension assesses the modalities through which the employees are informed about the evaluation of personal achievements, merits acknowledgement, performances recognition. The score obtained reflects the fact that the employees are satisfied with the quality of the feedback they received. In strong tie with the personal feedback is the score for the relationship to superiors. The managers are appreciated for their merits and competences, and also, they poses

communication abilities that help the employees to feel useful and efficient. Communication quality, understood as the quality of the media and supportive elements of the communication, is appreciated, especially the written directive assigned to the personnel. Improvements can be made regarding the set up of the meetings and communication during the meetings.

Regarding the organizational perspective, the respondents indicated that they are less satisfied with the availability of information regarding the strategy of the organization. We appreciate that this can generate a fear of unknown regarding the personal and organizational future. The personnel of an organization has the right to be informed about the objectives, strategies and the budget of the organization in order to feel completely involved in the decision-making process. Regarding the informal communication this can create a good working atmosphere. The

dimension of communication climate is the least appreciated by the respondents.

Correlating the dimensions of organizational communication we identified the strongest correlation among communication climate and informal communication ($r=0.747$). An increase in the satisfaction toward the informal communication is associated with an increase of satisfaction toward the communication climate. The weakest correlation is between organizational integration and quality of communication ($r=0.283$).

Organizational communication is an important motivational and integrative factor for the personnel, contributing decisively to job satisfaction. Organizational communication is related to the organizational culture. The results obtained by the items characterizing the organizational culture are presented in table 3.

Table 3

Results of the items describing organizational culture

No.	Dimension	Items	Average
1.	Innovative culture	The organization is ready to face new challenges	4.79
2.		People are encouraged to take risks in order to find new and efficient solutions	4.02
3.		The organization embraces with ease new ideas	3.30
4.		In this organization to be a good manager means to be an innovator and entrepreneurship oriented	3.68
5.	Competitive culture	The organization is oriented toward the prompt fulfilment of tasks	5.56
6.		In this organization to be a good manager is to be a specialist and hard-working	5.32
7.		The organization favors objectives achievement	5.63
8.	Bureaucratic culture	The organization is oriented toward formal rules	5.58
9.		The organization is very formal and procedural	5.35

10.		The organization favors stability and predictability	5.57
11.		In this organization a good manager is a coordinator and an organizer	5.05
12.	Community culture	The organization favors loyalty and tradition	4.95
13.		The organization is like a big family	4.12
14.		In this organization a good group cohesion is important	4.99
15.		In this organization to be a good manager means to be a mentor and a coach	4.25

The best results were obtained by the items: *The organization favors objectives achievement* (5.63), *The organization is oriented toward formal rules* (5.58) and *The organization favors stability and predictability* (5.57). The weakest results were obtained by the items: *The organization embraces with ease new ideas* (3.30), *In this organization to be a good manager*

means to be an innovator and entrepreneurship oriented (3.68) and *People are encouraged to take risks in order to find new and efficient solutions* (4.02).

Summing up the composite averages obtained by the four dimensions of the organizational culture we obtain the results presented in table 4.

Table 4

Classifying the dimensions of organizational culture

No.	Dimensions of organizational culture	Average
1.	Innovative culture	3.94
2.	Competitive culture	5.50
3.	Bureaucratic culture	5.39
4.	Community culture	4.58
Average organizational culture		4.81

We can observe that competitive culture and bureaucratic culture dimensions prevail. In general, a public organization's objective is not to support innovation. Regardless of its ownership, each organization must pay attention to satisfying the employees' needs so that they can provide full potential in fulfilling's their tasks. In order to face the

future challenges the organization must sustain the institutional innovation and to adopt the new technologies.

Analyzing the correlation between organizational culture and organizational communication we obtained a correlation coefficient indicating a strong positive association among the two variable (figure 1).

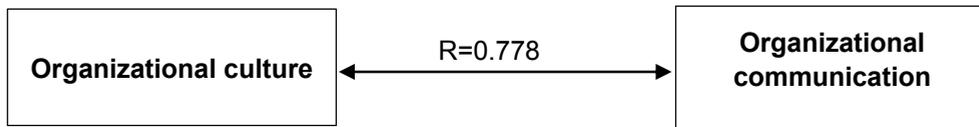


Figure 1. The relationship organizational culture–organizational communication

Interpreting the above results it is obvious that between the organizational culture and organizational communication there is a positive relationship of interdependency. An increase in the appreciation for the organizational culture is positively correlated with an increase in the appreciation for organizational communication. Organizations should develop and implement a structure of organizational culture elements that favors organizational communication. Organizations should open up toward the employees and must stimulate the innovation and the creativity of the employees. This is benefic for a bureaucratic organization because it can lead to the release of the creative potential of employees, to the by-pass of daily routine and to prepare the organization for unforeseen events.

5. Conclusions

Our study proved that the relationship between the organizational culture and organizational communication is one of interdependence, of reciprocal influence. In this respect the culture is being transmitted using communication and the communication is decisively influenced by organizational culture.

The organizational culture is important because it affects the way communication is taking place within organizations. Improving the organizational culture using adequate communication practices leads to both motivating the employees of the organization and improving the performances of the organization.

Organizations in which an effective communication takes place beneficiate from the potential of satisfied and happy employees, which can perform at high standards. On the contrary, the organizations in which communication is malfunctioning from various reasons, the employees feel a state of discouragement that negatively affects the organization.

Organizational communication is the one that ensures the conditions for a better internalization and valorization of the organizational culture. In the conditions of a relaxed organizational communication, that supports the members of the organization, the elements of the organizational culture find an easy way to be accepted, in part due to the support of the organization' members. Thou, organizational communication has an instrumental role to sustain the organizational culture.

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