

ASPECTS OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE ROMANIAN INSTITUTION OF THE SPOKESPERSON

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Abstract

In Romania, despite the past post-December 20 years, institutional communication is still at an early stage in many cases acting independently or combined. On the one hand, the Romanian public institutions have fully entered the process of modernization and adaptation to the process of decentralization and democratization in general, on the other hand communication proved to be a new field of learning and promotion, not only at an individual level, but also at an institutional one. Organizational culture is now a generalized phenomenon, whose defining features are likely to produce positive changes in communication between the Romanian state's institutions or between them and Europe.

Keywords: *organizational communication, spokesperson, institutional communication.*

It is believed and often said that human goods are the goods of that era: Antiquity measured its values in gold, the Middle Ages in areas of land, modernity in banking and finance, and contemporaneity... in information. To say that the gold of our time is represented by the *information* and that you live in an information society is already a truism¹, as the assertion that mankind masters the articulated language for millennia became, but only in recent decades they are learning *to communicate*. “To communicate well with the world, we must learn to communicate at home,” said Kristensen Bred secretary of the Romanian-Dutch Association, a well-known specialist in communication².

After the human society has accepted public authority (in Antiquity – tyranny in various forms, in the Middle Ages – royal absolutism, and in modern and contemporary – dictatorship, left or right), now strives to get fullness of their personalities on two general coordinates: the unit (individual) for all (social group, organization) and in reverse. Society today seeks for the *right to dignity, freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of media freedom of information*

as undeniable foundation of some normal *public relations* mentioned in numerous acts of international law, publicly recognized and adopted by many states, including Romania, especially after its accession to the European Union. These rights, while partially mentioned in the American *Constitution* of 1787, were taken and developed in adopted European constitutions after the Great French Revolution (1789-1799), so more than 200 years ago, and found only in the current wording of the second half of the twentieth century.

Always, the power holder – not only an individual, but also an institution – has sought to defend the secrets to the public (in the last decades the phrase *classified information* is used), on the ground of ideology often reaching an exaggerated secrecy (secrecy!), and the public, when giving its vote, instead intends to have *access to information*. Of this antagonism a social situation of conflict may rise, which needs disintegration so as not to lead to social instability.

Freedom of expression and right to information are recognized in the modern world as *basic human rights* explicitly mentioned in all democratic constitutions. I went, as often emphasized by the literature, not only in a democratic society, but also in a *democratic culture*³ and in an *organizational culture*⁴. Without going into detail of defining the terms, it is necessary to emphasize that the association of the terms *culture, democracy* and *organization* induces the idea of eliminating the chaos from a system organization of any kind, and establishing some *constructive organizational guidelines* that, by efficiency and performance should always approach us to the ideal of humanity, *social welfare*, through *social dialogue* and *social action*.⁵

In the past years, a vast and complicated literature, related to the *message* (including its

structure) between individual and society, between state institutions, between them and society, or between domestic and foreign institutions, the selection is extremely difficult due to the differences in value. For example, the works of Anton Ilica⁶, that put into circulation the phrases *organizational culture* and *communicational behavior*. The metaphor *Communication – “blue blood” of a communicational organization*⁷ appeared in the author’s belief that the true, effective and beneficial communication field is situated at the interference of several modern sciences, and where psychology has a reserved space.

The term *organizational culture*, as revealed by the same author, appeared at the beginning of the 60s, in the U.S., where it spread and came into the spirituality of other countries. The author cites the definition given by *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary* in 1961: “model of mainstreaming the human behavior that includes ways of thinking, language, actions and artefacts (NB – correctly, *artifacts*, see DEX), and human capacity depends on learning and transmitting knowledge to future generations”⁸; the author combines the options of more recent authors’ definitions of foreign literature (Ouch GW (1981), Thomas J. Peters, Robert H. Waterman, and A. Strati, CB Dygert, RA Jacobs, Edgar Schein, Geert Hofstede) and EASC gifted Romanian literature (Olimpia State⁹, Zaharia Marian¹⁰, Ovidiu Nicolescu¹¹, Ion Verboncu¹², Adela Rogojinaru¹³ etc.). Edward T. Hall defined the phrase *organizational culture*, in 1996, not only as a set of “rules, beliefs, values, language, ideology, private symbols that differentiate an organization from another”¹⁴, but also as “a guide to help constituents who make the organization”, a set accepted by everyone in the organization.¹⁵

Of the many attempts to define the *organizational culture* the one given by Mr. Iosifescu¹⁶ is the most comprehensive one: “a specific complex of values, faith leaders, representations, meanings, ways of thinking shared by the members of an organization that determines how these will behave in and outside the organization that are sent to new members as

being correct”. For example, a school has a distinct organizational culture, a visible exterior (dirty/clean windows, paint fences or old company, but also the less visible at first contact (welcome customs of the new generation, “brotherhood”, lectures with the names of graduates become important cultural figures, an impeccable dress and a particular vocabulary of teachers, etc.)¹⁷.

In essence, the term *organizational culture* refers to the *formal* elements *and background*, characteristic of a social group. The *visible* elements of an organizational culture are the symbols (trademark, flag, coat of arms), slogans (relevant words, eg.: *succeed together*), rituals and ceremonies (receiving newcomers award in the ceremony, the party’s team), myths and heroes (stories of life organization, relevant events), behavioral patterns (personalities in the history of the organization that became models for successors), jargon (language specific to the usually short for fun etc.). *The invisible* elements are: the norms (internal regulations, unwritten codes of conduct), values (group ideals), faiths (assumed values), representations (models, copies to reach), meanings (meanings and significance of the fundamental concepts), patterns of thought.¹⁸

Since the organization of any kind as it coagulates any number of people with *perceptions, values, attitudes and their personalities*, but different, shape its three major coordinates: *complexity, uncertainty and possible conflicts*, whose management, through effective *organizational communication*, increases the efficiency of the organization. Regarding terminology, the fact that the theme of the present study with a large interdisciplinary nature in literature often uses different terms to define the same thing. For example, psycho-sociology generally uses the term *transmitter/receiver* of information. In this paper, located at the crossroads of communication sciences with political sciences, of linguistics to psychology, sociology and even cultural history, etc. the widely recognized and used term *speaker/recipient* will be preferred.

Organizational communication is, therefore, the management of all human communication

processes and phenomena in an organization where our institution's spokesperson is closely linked to the introduction and maintenance of *order* in the system, for the normal and efficient proposed activities: quality decision, initiating and implementing projects, motivating staff, resolving obstacles and difficulties, establishing a climate of cooperation and disintegrating conflict situations, thus maintaining the human relations of cooperation, using the authority, consultancy, or by growing visibility and team labor¹⁹.

This conglomerate, which the organizational culture assumes finds its maximum expression *in the transmitted message within the system*, especially *in its exterior*, the concrete case, in the relations between the Romanian institution of the spokesman, that represents the Presidency, the Government (including each ministry), Parliament, and European institutions or the Romanian society which they collaborate with. Inside and outside the organization, communication is done *formally* (through specific channels of organizational structure: reports, memos, meetings, written notices, posters, e-mail addresses) and *informal* (through relationships: gossip, discussions, meetings, friends).

It is stated in the literature, from Karl Marx onwards, that man is the most important capital, the most valuable element of an organization that is bound to communication by its brain structure itself and, therefore, that he has a *specific communicative behaviour*. This phrase which came in recent years in circulation, was differently defined; for example, by A. Strati (1992) who appreciates that set of symbols, beliefs and *patterns*, behaviour *taught, produced and recreated* by people who devote their life energy to work organization²⁰.

The three basic elements of *human communication system* (*organizational culture, organizational communication and communicative behavior*) are unlikely in any human group (the formal *organization*), to varying degrees, without taking into account the specific features considered before defining these new insights approach. In 1969, P. Alderfer Clayto was publishing the article that launched *ERG theory* (*Existence Needs = Needs of*

existence, relatedness Needs = networking needs, growth needs = Needs of affirmation) the three fundamental human needs, then became famous and remains true today²¹. It can be said that, based on communicative behavior three specific ELEMENTS sustain, to varying degrees, the ERG theory.

C. A. Hutu appreciates that in Romania there are two types of organizational cultures: *bureaucratic culture* and *business culture*²²; the first can be found, obviously, in the state and has an arrogant nature, being focused towards the inside system and being deeply politicized; the second, the entrepreneurial, does not make the subject to discussion.

Since the complex and vast *communicational ideology*²³ of contemporary society, which starts from the principle of *transparency of decision* (without which the company no longer has confidence in the governmental factors and determine, by vote, their collapse!) fundamental state institutions (Presidency, Government and Parliament) cannot communicate only through a specialized agency, called *the spokesman*, who becomes *an intermediary representative factor*, between the institution and society and *between domestic and foreign institutions*, in our case, the European Union. The spokesman – the definition of literature which has not reached a consensus, if it is *an institution*²⁴ or just a *personal position* in the scheme or an *“institutionalized product of democracy”*²⁵ did not exist in Romania, in the communist nomenclature of professions, because the old regime does not accept social dialogue, communicating unilaterally with the company, the transmission of orders, and any prior periods not worked and communist²⁶. The subject does not covered in the present analysis only the institutional state scheme and we discuss the emergence and development institution in private companies²⁷.

The renouncing to dictatorship by surpassing the stage of using the least information with propaganda and ideological purposes often truncated for internal use meant a vast entrance to a *market communication*, which is placed, equally *domestically* and *internationally*. They went from *closed culture*²⁸, by globalization

phenomenon, to its opposite, *communicational culture*, as part of *organizational culture* in which communication is *imperative*, between state institutions and society between threads, between these two and the corporate between themselves and external institutions (European in particular).

In this last category the relations between the Romanian state institutions and the European institutions are also included, communication which cannot be done outside the institution of the spokesperson of the most representative Romanian state's institutions (Presidency, Government and Parliament), through a *person* who is developed through a previous *post*, and is mined orally or in writing, through media channels, and generically called *press release*. A. N. Dinescu, a former advisor to Prime Minister Calin Popescu Tariceanu, speaks about the *institutional communication market in Romania*,²⁹ which has a very dynamic nature and where she sees several "reminiscences" and "reflexes" of the totalitarian regime. The same author considers that it is due in part to the lack "of education in the spirit of an open dialogue"³⁰. Moreover, "the field of institutional communication experienced in recent decades impressive changes"³¹, and the *communication advisers*, Romanian and foreign, have an important role in disseminating their experiences and of the results or the organization's training, workshops and conferences, because we entered a millennium in which the *size tends to govern our communication*. Often, the decision-making bodies of various countries have said that we live in an age where secrecy is increasingly harder preserved at the individual that *knows even more than it should be known* so. (For example, information on the Internet shows the stages of building a bomb, and even of a nuclear bomb).

The acceptance of democracy meant in essence, not only the acceptance of the *dialogue* between state institutions and society, but also the changing of it into a real *science*, ever more complex today that talks about communication *sciences* and not of the *science of communication*. From this perspective, summarizing, we can say that the spokesman is a new product, a *transmitter* of information, and by receiving and analyzing

the feedback notice of issuance, becomes in turn a *receiver*. In terms of networking, in a democratic society it is therefore the need of creating new communicational *coordinates* – institutions, professions, skills etc. on which the *new communication activity in public administration* to be graft, between the institution of the spokesperson at all three mentioned levels – the Presidency, Government and Parliament – is *representative*. Besides this institution, there are systems of written communication or transmitted through modern equipment and technology, political system etc. and personality interview.

The spokesperson profession is specific to democratic regime in the U.S. and West European with ancient and powerful traditions. The spokesman represents the interface not only within its institution, in horizontal communication, but also in the vertical one, with other state and foreign media. For example, the Netherlands, the public communication was identified early on late seventeenth century.³²

It seems that the Scandinavian countries were the first European countries that have provided public access to state, Sweden legislating the transparency of public information in 1776³³.

In the U.S. system, the presidential spokesman and chief executive of the whole government, his mission is valid for the Presidency and the government, in the media relations the representatives being no more for each ministry.

In Romania, the spokesperson position was set up in the notorious period of transition, in 1990, the first official being Bogdan Baltazar, the the spokesman of Petre Roman government (1990-1991). His work was so high that Virginia Gheorghiu, former spokeswoman of Theodor Stolojan government in 1992, was considered a "*decision maker*" through her undeniable influence. The need for communication meant the job creation, and after a winding road, press offices and departments specialized in communication/public relations were created at the highest level. As the Romanian communication system has changed, and by Law no. 544/2001 the Romanian citizen was recognized right to information in each Romanian institution where

a spokesman operates, in a department of communication (press office) or off. Thus, we can say that after the first post-December decade, searches, failures and recovery, the spokesman profession has been implemented in the entire Romanian institutional environment, nationally *generalized*, developing within the *department itself, a veritable institution in another institution*, dependent only on the official they represent and only during his mandate, but not necessarily fully³⁴. Most personalities who served during 1990-2006, interviewed by Adriana Saftoiu³⁵ having herself a consistent experience in this post – said they had accepted their appointment as a self challenge, without any previous specialized training, which took place during the mission exercise or *post factum*, through study abroad and practice in formal institutions or through critical analysis of its mission and business continuity in communication with civil society. So we can say that the post was created before the profession, taking shape as principles, practical exercise, law and ethics. Taking into account all these elements, the *quality of communication and communicative behavior* is different, not necessarily in crescendo, but determined by many factors not subject to discussion.

The requirement made in fulfillment of a spokesman at the highest (presidential and parliamentary government) plus the personality, it seems that different owners that have succeeded for 20 years set the bar so much that they created around *myths*, transmitted from generation to generation. “I think the Institution of the spokesman was diluted so far since Bogdan Baltazar” have to declare Virginia Gheorghiu, one of her successors, because the holder became a standard, very hard to match in post-December Romania³⁶.

Returning to the above statement, referring to the fact that, in modern Romania, the station appeared rather late, only in 1990, the profession itself has crystallized long after the appearance of the job. Ioan Mihai Rosca recalls that, in the early 90s, the spokesmen were in a “total anonymity, they were afraid to come out with answers to journalists, the press without having approval of the Minister or a Secretary of State”,

and the time of application to receive notice of and provide response to the mass – media intervening time that damage the credibility of the institution. In these cases, the message quality of the locator greatly suffered, imprecision, error, the returns are only few of the many blamings of the media³⁷. It is now known the abstention of the American diplomacy towards Romania, in the first post-December presidential term, accused of undemocratization of the country, an attitude that contributed not only policymakers errors, but also the failures of communication between the Romanian state and the external environment, in which the Romanian speaker’s message hadn’t the qualities expected by the European and American diplomacy.

In conclusion, it can be said that in Romania, despite the post-December 20 years, the institutional communication is still at an early stage due to several reasons that acted independently or combined. On the one hand, the Romanian public institutions have fully entered into the process of modernization and adaptation to the process of decentralization and democratization in general, on the other hand, communication proved to be a new field of learning and promotion, not only at an individual level, but also at an institutional one. Organizational culture is now a generalized phenomenon, whose defining features are likely to produce positive changes in communication between the Romanian state’s institutions or between them and the European ones.

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- 23 See also Ana Dinescu, *Ghid al comunicatorului din instituțiile publice*, Iași, Lumen, 2010, p. 9.
- 24 All literature finds that there cannot be an effective institutional communication (between the state or between them and those international, especially European ones) without the existence and activity of a press office, the staff working more or less numerous, but the professional information, led and represented by a spokesperson. It is used in the recent literature, the term institution of spokesman, especially since many papers have authored former job holders. The phrase has its support, in our opinion, and will keep the present work, only for easier communication, as he, the spokesman, usually an effervescent factor is the leader and the organization calls the press office, and maximum visibility of the work of a department and institution. In any case, he can not make up complex business information, documentation, analysis and synthesis documentation, drafting a press release, and related activities, organizing and supporting a press conference.

Endnotes

- 1 In literature, it can be found the view that the twentieth century belongs to the era of information and the 21st century – to the digital era.
- 2 Brîndușa Armanca, communication guide for journalists and spokespeople, Timisoara, Mirton, 2002, p. 7. The book is prefaced by Breda Kristensen. The author offers at the end of Part I, the Dutch model of public communication, p. 38-82.
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- 4 Anton Ilica, *Comportament comunicativ și cultura organizațională*, Arad, Editura Universității "Aurel Vlaicu", 2008.
- 5 See also: Codreanu Georgeta, *Dialogul social și pacea socială*, București, Editura Economică, 2007; Ciutacu Constantin, *Dialogul social și concertare în țările candidate: România*, în „Probleme economice”, 2001, nr. 18-19, p. 83.
- 6 See note 3 and 4.
- 7 See note 1.
- 8 Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, apud Anton Ilica, *Pedagogia comunicării, op. cit.*, p. 137.
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- 14 A. Ilica, *Comportament comunicativ*, p. 249.
- 15 A. Ilica, *op.cit.*, p. 249.
- 16 Șerban Iosifescu, *Managementul educațional*, 2000, apud Anton Ilica, *op.cit.*, p. 140.
- 17 Anton Ilica, *Comportament comunicațional*, p. 140-141.
- 18 A. Ilica, *op.cit.*, p. 249.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 251.
- 20 Apud Anton Ilica, *Pedagogia comunicării*, p. 138.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 175.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 155.
- 25 Ministry of Public Information, *Manualul purtătorului de cuvânt din instituțiile publice destinat uzului intern*, București, 2003, p. 5 (further, it will be cited: *Manual...*).
- 26 Communist ideology was a clear dichotomy between propaganda (who work in writing) and shaker (which was an oral propaganda), after Lenin's recommendation.
- 27 For this topic, see Isac Florin Lucian, *Comunicarea comercială și corporativă*, Timișoara, Mirton, 2007.
- 28 Ana Dinescu, *op.cit.*, p. 9.
- 29 *Ibid.*
- 30 *Ibid.* The same author considers that a more intense socialization, from the individual to the level of institutions may be one of the solutions and proposes the introduction of communication courses from primary school.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- 32 Brîndușa Armanca, *op.cit.*, p. 38.
- 33 *Ibid.*, p. 20.
- 34 We know many cases where, during an arrest of an official in public office (president, prime minister, etc.), succeeded to the position of spokesman for many people, for various reasons, more or less subjective.
- 35 See Adriana Saftoiu, *Vocile puterii. De vorbă cu purtătorii de cuvânt*. Postfață de Emil Hurezeanu, Editura Trei, București, 2006, *passim*. Emil Hurezeanu characterizes the author of the volume as “the longest and youngest speaker in Romania last year” (*Ibid.*). Adriana Saftoiu was a governmental (1998-2000) and a presidential (2004-2007) spokesperson.
- 36 Adriana Saftoiu, *op.cit.*, p. 159.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 199.