DIRECTIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION AT THE LEVEL OF THE STUDENTS' CULTURAL CENTRE IN PETROSANI - A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT: *General communication processes rely on messages that involve a content, a space, certain channels, clear objectives, motivation as well as factors that exert their influence upon the processes. Communication is also an important device owing to which organizations are able of mastering a series of algorithms of encoding and decoding messages transmitted through various channels. A complex approach of the process of communication determines the strengthening of the identity of all organizations. Accordingly, the Students' Cultural Centre in Petrosani attempts at founding an organizational communication framework capable of facilitating internal and external communication through transmitting improvement-directed objectives and responsibilities and through conceiving a message adapted to the needs and demands of its beneficiaries.*

KEY WORDS: *organizations' communication; channels of communication; space of communication; internal and external communication; the Students' Cultural Centre in Petrosani.*

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1. PRESENTATION OF THE STUDENTS' CULTURAL CENTRE IN PETROSANI

1.1. Identity and objectives of the organization

The hereby case study regards the Students' Cultural Centre located in Petrosani, the District of Hunedoara, Romania, which is a legal personality public institution, subordinated to the National Authority for Sports and Youth. The centre has as a main object of activity the conceiving, organizing, and deploying of cultural and artistic events, of sporting, educational, and entertainment activities that mainly

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target the students belonging to the University of Petrosani. It also has in view the participation of young people in various programs and events implemented by other institutions at a local, regional, national or international level.

The basic objectives of the centre focus upon the following coordinates:

- Diversity of cultural, artistic, and educational programs displaying a permanent or temporary character through establishing partnerships with similar institutions, various other public institutions, non-governmental organizations, and private entities;
- Participation to an increased number of national cultural events;
- Optimization of the administration of human resources owing to constantly implementing the principle of co-responsibility, stimulating the multitude of opinions, forging an ascendant trend of the activity of its employees and collaborators, understanding the diversity of the participants to the cultural act, emitting flexible and reversible judgments;
- Implementing a coherent approach with a view of integrating within European structures;
- Establishing partnerships capable of providing the funds required by its evolution.

1.2. Directions of organizational communication at the level of the organization

Due to the characteristics of its object of activity, the Students' Cultural Centre in Petrosani establishes communication at the level of masses. Accordingly, a relation between an emitter – the cultural centre – and several receivers, representing all the beneficiaries of the programs initiated by the emitter, occurs. All relations rely on communication which, at its turn, is founded upon dialogues involving a message that should be transmitted and received both verbally and visually. It is considered that an efficient communication should focus on all the opportunities and devices at hand in order to direct the organization towards success. Such a communication includes both external communication, primarily addressed to the beneficiaries of the cultural offer and to partners and attempting at transmitting a clear message allowing the others to get a correct image of the identity of the cultural centre, and an internal communication directed towards the employees or occurring amongst them.

A consistent, authentic and coherent identity capable of adding value to the organization has been outlined in the context of a general communication framework – understood according to a managerial and entrepreneurial meaning – which all organizations require in order to carry out their goals.

2. COMMUNICATION – ORGANIZATIONS' TOOL

2.1. Terminological specifications

Organizations may be perceived as entities processing information due to the fact that they collect data, select data and change them into relevant information which is further used in order to provide organizations' survival and future development.

Yet, with a view of triggering development, organizations should be capable of sharing the relevant information about their external or internal environment according to a congruent manner; in other words they should be able of communicating and of transforming communication into an organizational coordination mechanism.

It is generally admitted that there are four types of inter-human communication, as follows:

- **Logical or verbal**, dealing with the transmission and decoding of the symbolic meaning of either verbalized (oral) words or of written words;
- **Para verbal**, dealing with the communication capacity of voice itself (volume, intonation, intensity, rhythm, accent, pauses, etc) and the verbal manifestations without verbal content (laughing, cough, moaning, sigh, screaming, etc.)
- **Nonverbal**, dealing with gestures, mimics, attitudinal postures, etc. that may display various particularities depending on the various cultures worldwide;
- **Energetic**, dealing with paranormal communication and relying on human senses (auditory, visual, olfactory, gustative, tactile), and intuition.

Communication specialists agree that individuals interact owing to their anatomic analyzers; accordingly, they have conceived a conventional representation of the channels of communication which is further displayed:

- **Measurable channels** of communication, including the sound channel, the visual, olfactory, gustative, and tactile channel;
- **Mixed channel** of communication that occurs at an intuitive level;
- **Non-measurable channel** of communication that includes the extra sensorial level.

2.2. Types and channels of communication at the level of the Students' Cultural Centre in Petrosani. The impact of communication upon the beneficiaries of the activities promoted by the organization

Communication with the target beneficiaries of the programs and activities initiated and deployed by the institution represents an important part of the management strategy of the Students' Cultural Centre in Petrosani. Owing to its specific field, the organization carries out most part of communication through verbal means, either verbalized (oral) or written, depending on the goal of communication or on the location and space of communication. The organization mainly establishes communication with its beneficiaries that are both the individuals who deploy artistic, cultural, educational activities with a view to enlarge their personal skills or to develop their personality and the audience which take part in the various activities proposed by the centre.

The previously mentioned communication occurs owing to oral (direct) verbal communication and written (indirect) verbal communication.

Whenever the organization directly communicates with the beneficiaries of the programs it displays, para-verbal and nonverbal communication tend to be used at their maximum both in formal locations - show-rooms, rehearsal rooms, offices, etc. - and in informal locations – street, University corridors, etc. – where the employees of the

organization – specialized staff, administrative personnel – may communicate with the beneficiaries.

Quite often, the organization resorts to mass-media means– newspapers, television and radio stations - in order to promote certain events and programs or to increase audience, establishing a verbal communication that seems to require the absence of nonverbal and para-verbal types of communication.

The use of direct verbal communication when addressing to the organization's beneficiaries may be accompanied by written or indirect verbal communication – posters, advertisements, fliers, etc. - whose function is to strengthen the message transmitted within direct communication locations. The measurable communication channel through its visual and sound channels is most frequently used and provides the envisaged impact on the receivers. The organization's employees who mainly make use of the previously mentioned channels are, as a rule, those whose responsibilities are the establishing and developing of the organization's relations with its beneficiaries: staff specialized in the artistic and cultural fields, secretary. During the last years, the Students' Cultural Centre has focused upon the direct relation with the beneficiaries of the activities it promotes attempting at actively engaging its employees along this coordinate. Unfortunately, the constraints determined by a certain framework of the personnel scheme has prevented the employment of a person specialized in communication and public relations.

The management of the organization has attempted at training those members of the staff involved in direct relations with the beneficiaries with a view of allowing them to get abilities connected with the use of the nonverbal and para-verbal types of communication. The training that regards the development of the capacity of nonverbal communication transmitted along the visual channel has mainly relied upon certain acknowledged guidelines of behavior and dress which rather determine habits than develop skills. With this in view, specialized and professional courses, periodical sessions or a "customer type" education directed towards the specific activity of the organization would determine the improvement of communicational behaviors as well as a differentiate, and more appropriate, manner of approaching "cultural and artistic" beneficiaries (customers).

3. COMMUNICATION SPACE

3.1. Terminological specifications

Communication specialists have also taken into consideration certain behavioral and attitude aspects which may be associated with the individuals that belong to a space and time context.

Social psychology approaches the so-called "social distance" between individuals while other communication theories state the existence of three "communication spaces" as well as various manners through which individuals placed at various physical distances from each other prefer certain types and channels of communication. Accordingly, specialized works speak about:

- **Private space** that regards all individuals and is conventionally delineated at about one meter around each individual. It is basically characterized by visual and verbal communication. Let's also notice that the impact of the messages transmitted through the measurable channel of communication, relying on the tactile, olfactory, and gustative human senses, is also high. Private space involves the stimulation of the affective mechanisms of individuals, too. Consequently, invading private space, without the conscious or unconscious agreement of the communication partner, determines a certain tension that may arouse feelings of pleasure, indifference or aggressiveness.
- **Entourage space** has been conventionally settled at about two meters around each individual and is effective in locations where people spend a large amount of time and where they tend not to pay attention to non-verbal communication. The researches upon the behavior of the individuals who find themselves in an entourage space show that such a space determines either indifference or maximal attractiveness or rejection. Entourage space allows the subconscious extraction of details out of their context owing to non-verbal communication transmitted along sensorial channels. Hence the different perception of details afferent to the private and entourage spaces.
- **Public space** involves a space larger than two meters around each individual, including a vast area of manifestation and facilitating verbal communication. It also enables the easily grasping of attention owing to the maximum impact of para-verbal and nonverbal communication. From the point of view of the social distance between individuals, the message of public space communication is not addressed to an individual but to a whole group of entities (social group, group of companies, etc.).

3.2. Communication space at the level of the Students' Cultural Centre in Petrosani

Internal communication among the employees of the organization basically occurs at the level of private and entourage spaces where verbal, energetic, and nonverbal communication prevail. As a rule, these spaces are unconsciously and mutually invaded and, although a certain tension can be sometimes sensed, the general context of the communication in the organization is positive.

Let's also notice the stimulation of the affective mechanisms of the employees at the level of their private space, the increase of human energetic communication as well as the plurality of communication in entourage space which allows the interchange between official and private registers.

An analysis of the communication spaces that regard the transmitting of messages between the employees of the organization and the beneficiaries of the centre's activities show the priority of public space followed by entourage spaces. Certain drawbacks may come out when dealing with the organization's communication with its beneficiaries in public and entourage spaces and they are connected with the fact that, under such circumstances, messages cannot be directed to a specific receiver; hence the feelings of frustration in case of certain beneficiaries. With these in view,

the organization has successfully implemented the idea of a relational space – a work environment relying on larger space, warm colors, adequate lighting, pleasant odor, living plants, and art works - capable of facilitating verbal and nonverbal communication with its beneficiaries. The advantages of the previously mentioned relational space have determined a closer communication, the decrease of private space invasion, and tension diminishing.

4. ORGANIZATION'S COMMUNICATION AND THE FACTORS THAT EXERT THEIR INFLUENCE UPON IT

4.1. Theoretical grounds

Communication is a complex process of transmitting messages, according to which the emitter encodes the information transmitted through a specific channel to a receiver who ultimately is going to decode it. At an ordinary level, communication as a message exchange between individuals is understood as a verbal or written transmission of information. The success of all communications is dependent on several factors that exert their influence on both the emitter and the receiver. Organizational communication obeys the general rules of communication being, at its turn, influenced by a series of factors, as follows:

- **Language.** In order to communicate, individuals employ certain codes and while language has been defined as a system of signs and symbols, the choice of a specific code is determined by the language of communication. Individuals perceive reality due to the linguistic code they employ; accordingly, the wide range of their experience depends on the linguistic habits of the community they belong to. Individual experience is thus classified owing to the linguistic code, during the process of communication. The items belonging to external environment are given identities due to both previous human experience and to language, a fact that sets forth the relativity of reporting language to surrounding reality; this may further explain the conventional character of all communications, including organizational communication.

- **Environment.** The notion includes all social, economic, cultural, linguistic, and ethnical factors that mark the evolution of individuals. These factors play variable parts and determine the direction of individuals' behavior towards a certain goal.

- **Convictions.** Although it is supposed that under the influence of the environment, individuals change their behavior, convictions may induce social barriers as well as contradictions with society, organizations, as well as inner contradictions.

- **Communication competence.** The concept includes a series of rules regarding the identifying and use of the most adequate words in a certain context as well as the capacity of transmitting a message that would not determine the adverse reactions of the receiver. Organizational communication mainly relies on this type of competence and requires its continual adapting to the organizational culture.

- **Motivation.** Managerial communication, as general communication, obeys the rules of message transmission: before sending the message, under the influence of external stimuli, motivation – or the reason of communication – comes out. The

complexity of human cognitive structures determines specific abstract motivations that add to the physiological ones.

- **The goal of the message.** It is a consequence of motivation determining the process of communication; it targets at getting a certain effect upon the receiver in accordance with the enunciation of the message.
- **Communication channels.** They allow the transmission of a message in order to get a maximum impact on the receiver. Choosing a communication channel at an organizational level should focus upon the receiver's expectations and needs while rigorously employing a clear, concise and positive tone in order to increase the impact.
- **Malfunctioning of communication channels.** They may occur during the whole process of message transmitting and may be audible, tactile or odorous. The success of a process of communication, in general, and implicitly of organizational communication depends on the capacity of the entities that deploy the process of communication to neglect such malfunctioning; more specifically, when receivers get the messages they should grasp an almost identical signification as the one meant by the emitter.

4.2. Factors that influence organization's communication at the level of the Students' Cultural Centre in Petrosani

The Students' Cultural Centre in Petrosani displays a complex process of communication which either occurs inside its organizational structure or is directed towards the exterior, comprising communication with its beneficiaries, partners, similar organizations, upper level entities, etc.

As a result of the specific character of its activities, the organization attempts at establishing adequate communication owing to an appropriate language, competence, and motivation, and targets the getting of positive responses from its receivers according to the enunciation of the message.

At the level of the organization, the need and reasons of communication, in other words motivation, is determined by the initiation, promotion, and continuity of the events that address to young people and are achieved owing to their help.

An essential factor of the organization's communication directed towards the exterior is the general manner of displaying the main characteristics of the institution stressing the promotion of a dynamic image. Accordingly, the organization's objectives are the following ones:

- Improvement of the interface with the beneficiaries of the organization's programs (secretary, specialized staff);
- Establishing behavior standards and efficient communication;
- Outlining and maintaining a unitary image of the organization through informative stuffs, fliers, etc.;
- Evaluating the abilities required in order to efficiently communicate with the organization's beneficiaries;
- Increasing the employees' motivation and loyalty.

5. INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

5.1. Theoretical grounds

The analysis that precedes the process of communication starts from the idea of the existence of a real or hypothetical issue, exhibiting a certain risk and involving the identification of efficient solutions able to settle that issue. The means owing to which the specific issues of organizational activities can be settled is organizational communication.

From the point of view of organizational communication a series of issues may come out and they can be divided as follows:

- Issues regarding the activity carried out within the organization (job tasks, daily work issues, crisis conditions, etc.);
- Issues connected with inter-human relations (within hierarchical levels, within an internal work group, within the partnership relations with external entities, etc.);
- Issues linked with the up-stream and down-stream organizational relations (beneficiaries, partners, circles of influence, etc.).

Depending on the character of the issues that may come out within organizational activity, two specific forms of organizational communication are to be noticed:

- **Internal organizational communication** which is the framework of an efficient coordination of the activity of the organization. It occurs within the organization, both vertically and horizontally, according to the encoding and decoding of messages in due time and based on a given space and context. A performing organizational communication represents the grounds of a good functioning of the organization and involves the following stages:
  - Clearly stating organization's goals and policies;
  - Monitoring the carrying out of the goals and conformity to the policies of the organization;
  - Coordinating the whole activity of the organization ;
  - Controlling and evaluating the results in order to get efficiency indices and comparing the results with anticipated goals.

- **External organizational communication**. In order to attain their objectives, organizations come into contact with various partners. According to the character of such partners, the following forms of external organizational communication may be noticed:
  - „Up-stream – down-stream" communication that facilitates the exchange of messages between the organization and the beneficiaries, partners, companies with whom the organization enters competition, etc., and involves direct relations (meetings, telephone conversations, fax, letters, offers, etc.) and mass media advertisements;

- Communication with non-governmental organizations involving direct relations, contacts owing to specialized publications or mutual conventional meetings;
- Communication with the governmental institutions that monitor employment, salaries, health conditions, labor protection, etc.

5.2. The process of internal and external communication at the level of the Students' Cultural Centre in Petrosani

Internal communication represents an important process of the organization's management. The absence of internal communication would result in the impossibility of transmitting organization's objectives, of monitoring the coordination of the whole activity, and of evaluating the results. Due to the fact that the organization is supervised by an upper entity that has in its subordination similar organizations in the country, two distinct structure levels may be noticed: a central level and a local level. Between these two levels there is a vertical informational communication flux, both up-stream and down-stream. The down-stream flux contains messages from the upper central entity which occur as decisions, internal notes, briefings, etc. Such items are elaborated as a result of a previous process of horizontal communication at the central level (meetings, briefings, etc.) as well as a result of the feed-back provided by the local level (activity reports, plans, programs, budget reports, etc.).

The organization's external communication is as important as its internal communication. It is either directed towards the exterior relying upon the correct and inciting transmission of the cultural, artistic or entertainment offer or is the recipient of the data coming from beneficiaries who communicate their expectations, aspirations, and needs. According to such items of information, the organization outlines the structure of its offer as well as the manner of implementing the cultural, artistic or entertaining product. And, in order to be able to do such a thing, it is important to permanently improve relations with beneficiaries. The employees involved in the direct relation with beneficiaries are those who carry out the process of communication providing the transmission of information up to the decisional level of the organization.

External communication at the level of the Students' Cultural Centre in Petrosani also involves communication with non-governmental – mainly youth – entities and with governmental entities due to the fact that, owing to the character of its activity, the organization has to develop partnership or subordination relations with such entities.

6. CONCLUSIONS

A complex approach of the process of communication determines the strengthening of the identity of all organizations. Reality has proved that it is not enough to create a certain product – in the hereby case, a cultural product – without letting people know about it. Consequently, communication becomes an essential issue, due to the fact that when a general communicational process towards the exterior and within the interior of the organization lacks, activity is going to be terminated.

With this in view, the Students' Cultural Centre in Petrosani has attempted at founding an organizational framework capable of facilitating inner communication as well as external communication through transmitting the objectives and responsibilities in a manner that may determine improvement and through conceiving a message adapted to the needs and demands of its beneficiaries. The improvement of the process of communication has permanently had in view the transmission of the messages towards the receivers in due time, clearly, and accurately and the settling of concrete motivations and objectives of the messages which could strengthen the partnership between the organization and the beneficiaries of its cultural offer.

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