

COMMUNICATION AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CRAIOVA

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Abstract

In the development of this approach, we started from the idea that communication at organisational level has different ways of expression depending on the type of institution in which it takes place and the values and symbols it promotes. Moreover, the specificity of the organisation is reflected in the specificity of the communication. Therefore, we have proposed to follow, through some defining elements, not exhaustive, the characteristics of communication within the institution we belong to, the University of Craiova. We have added the forms of expression of organisational culture to these characteristics.

Keywords: communication, communication and organisational culture, academic institution

1. COMMUNICATION VERSUS ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION

Scholastically, communication can be understood as a transfer of meanings between sender and receiver through a communication channel. Most theorists believe that there is communication and not just a mere transfer of information when there is a transmission of the receiver's reaction back to the sender.

When it comes to organisational communication, not only feedback, but also the quality and speed of feedback are becoming the touchstone of any modern organisation.

In the organisational context, the term communication is not used in the sense of discipline, but refers to one or more of the following categories: direct or mediated interpersonal communication between members of the organisation: employees, managers, specialists, collaborators; communication between different organisational structures: between departments, divisions, subsidiaries, directorates, divisions; the way in which the abstract organisation communicates by conveying meanings to its own employees, to customers or to other

organisations. This type of communicating is done through personnel policies, internal marketing, advertising, public communication, market policies.

From the above, there are differences between the notion of communication and organisational communication. If the communication process, in general, means report, relationship, notice, news, organisational communication is deemed as a continuous process, permanently subordinated to the management information system.

2. ORGANISATIONAL COMMUNICATION - GENERAL LAND-MARKS

Built out of a general human need to convey information, ideas, feelings, emotions, thoughts, communication generally becomes synonymous with existence. At the organisational level, communication remains the vital means by which performance is achieved. Thus, within organisations, the communication process is the act that triggers their existence, facilitates their development or, if this process becomes defective, can cause them to stagnate, even disappear. The demise of an organisation often means bankruptcy.

Although it seems simple, the meaning of organisational communication is complex and full of underpinnings. Communication is characterised by a multitude of meanings, a multitude of purposes and about as many methods of expression and manifestation. This means the intentional transmission of data, information at the level of organisational structures. We also subscribe to the idea that “there is no communication without a communication plan. For corporate communication to exist and be recognised as a profession in its own right, it must have a methodological basis that is impossible to dispute. Communication can be seen as an objective, but it must be understood above all as a technique capable of supporting a development dynamic. In corporate communication, there will be no professionalism without a thorough reflection on the communication plan”¹.

This type of communication takes place on several levels: between people within an organisation, between sub-units of the same organisation (i.e. intra-organisational) or with people, institutions functionally linked to the organisation's activity: suppliers, customers, public (i.e. extra-organisational). Each of these levels has different forms of complexity and is characterised by restrictions related to organisational roles: manager – subordinate, decision-making compartments – executive compartments, specific rules and organisational structure.

Organisational as well as managerial communication is part of the infrastructure of any organisation. The complexity of the organisation, the degree of centralisation, the degree of uncertainty in the activity are factors that determine significant differences within organisational communication as a process. Thus, in *small organisations* communication is generally oral, through

direct contact between members. At the same time it takes place horizontally and vertically, all participants have access to information and written communication is used more in external relations.

At the level of *large organisations*, written communication is crucial. Information has a slower flow, there are communicational differentiations by compartments, because not all participants need the same information in the work process. If the number of coordinated compartments increases, the communication network becomes more complicated and full of information flow.

Organisational communication is understood as “a field of study that seeks to determine why and how organisations send and receive information in a complex systemic environment”².

3. ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CRAIOVA

Alongside *organisational communication*, another growing concept is *organisational culture*. Every educational institution has a strong business card, translated by an organisational culture that has become a representative and identifiable emblem. For “just as people have a character, a personality, likewise organisations are represented by a certain culture”³. The manifestations of organisational culture are numerous, among them we can distinguish *visible elements* such as: behaviours, common language, rituals, symbols, ceremonies, but also *invisible elements*: values, beliefs, norms, concepts.

Symbols fall into the category of manifestations through which an organisation's culture becomes visible and are used in relations with other cultures to express certain similarities or differences. For example, for the higher education institution we represent, the University of Craiova, a symbol is the *logo* itself. The central element is an open book with the inscription *Universitas Craiovensis*. It is a direct invitation to get to know this institution, to penetrate its mysteries through the light of the book, of learning, as the representatives of the Romanian Enlightenment claimed more than two centuries ago. The logo includes an image of a lion emerging from a bridge. It is the bridge of Drobeta, built by the Romans with the help of the Greek architect, Emperor Trajan's favourite, Apollodorus of Damascus. The lion on the logo of the University of Craiova has a crown on its head, for the lion is the symbol of divine power, of royalty, of grandeur, of triumph. In some Near Eastern languages, such as Hittite, the same word was used for lions, heroes and kings.

Another visible form of culture at the organisational level is the *slogan*, considered a verbal symbol. From an etymological viewpoint, the slogan is the equivalent of a battle cry, as attested by the Celtic language from which the term is taken and later developed in Germanic languages. Its purpose is to pin the image of the organisation, to make it known to the competition, to present the

vision, the strength of the institution. The slogan of the University of Craiova is *Sapientia et dignitas*.

Two other visible forms through which culture, at the institutional level, marks its existence are *rituals* and *ceremonies*. It is through them that beliefs and values are expressed and reinforced and which are considered decisive for the survival and evolution of organisations.

Ritual is a set of planned actions with a dramatic content, giving cultural expression to certain values specific to each organisation. Further on, we will mention some rituals that take place at the University of Craiova: the open meetings, in the Mihai I Hall, where first-year students are welcomed. They take place at the beginning of each academic year. It can be seen as an initiation ritual, introducing new students to the atmosphere and academic life.

The ceremony is also one of the collective events, less formal, which expresses an awareness and an assumption of tradition, of the history of the school. Ceremonies would be, for example, reinforcing a person's status in an organisation, the values they promote.

In our university the ceremony is carried out, for example, by publicly awarding prizes and distinctions to both professors and students. This ceremony, called "Excellence Awards Gala", is an open recognition of the scientific research performance achieved by the teaching staff of the University of Craiova.

In the category of ceremonies, we can also include the honorary title of *Doctor Honoris Causa*. Thus, the University of Craiova has welcomed personalities such as: Dan Dediu, President of the Senate of the National University of Music, Bucharest; Dan Bălteanu, Academician, Institute of Geography; Mihai Coman, Dean of the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences, University of Bucharest; Christian Heiss, Prof. Dr., specialist in orthopaedics – sports medicine at the University Hospital of Giessen – Marburg, Germany and many others.

In organisational culture, *heroes* appear alongside stories and myths, personifying the values of the organisation and emphasising its strength. Heroes can be school founders, senior leaders or ordinary employees. Through their behaviour, heroes reflect the organisation's core values and become leaders themselves. Of course, an organisation of the level of the University of Craiova counts as heroes, first of all, King Mihai, the founder of the institution, then we add the names of the rectors Andrei Moraru, Ion Lungu, Alexandru Buia, Mircea Oprean, Marius Preda, Titus Georgescu, Silviu Pușcașu, Tiberiu Nicola, Mircea Ivănescu.

On the other hand, considered an important element in the conduct of some professional activities, *jargon* naturally permeates the culture of organisations. For each institution tends to create its own language that reflects both the characteristics of its members and the nature of the activities carried out and the objectives pursued. Language specific to a particular organisational culture is formed gradually over time. The longevity and permanence of an organisation guarantees the existence of a strong culture on which it is based and

hence impressive forms of its manifestation. At the University of Craiova, too, elements of jargon are structured, without meaning an elitist language, but rather a language adapted by each professor to the context. During the act of teaching, it is natural to use terms specific to the subject we represent, without abusing neologisms, out of a natural desire to use a Romanian language characterized by two basic attributes: accessibility and adaptability. Of course, when the context becomes informal, our language, that of professors, descends to the colloquial register, without leaving the level of the profession we represent.

CONCLUSIONS

Building an organisational form of communication is an ongoing, living process, like the language of a people. Organisational communication is naturally associated with organisational culture, which reflects the symbols, values and concepts of an institution.

By presenting the culture of the University of Craiova we wanted to highlight its strength, its specific, elitist nature, given by the members of this higher education institution. These are, of course, just some milestones, important, we believe, but they can always be amplified. As the University of Craiova grows institutionally, so will the entire culture that represents it.

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²Viorica Aura Păuș, *Comunicare și resurse umane*, Iași, Polirom Publishing House, 2006, p.4.

³Mihaela, Marcu, *Comunicare și structuri organizaționale*, Craiova, Universitaria Publishing House, p. 37.