

Communication forms in the management of the educational institution

M. Badut

Mircea Badut

m.badutz@gmail.com

Abstract: The paper tries to present and to classify the communications types involved in the management of the education -al institution, and to emphasize the specific applicability and some key aspects of these types.

Keywords: communication forms; classification; educational management

1. Communication forms

1.1. The act of communicating

In order to profoundly understand the communication forms – with the goal of choosing the best when needed, and also to be able to analyse the applied communication methods –, we should understand the elementary act of communicating, and than to consider it from the point of view of modalities in which the act materialises itself.

In essence, the communicating act deploys in this way: an emitting entity (being a person, or an institution/organization – and ulteriorly we will customize to the personnel from the school/college institution and respectively on those organizations with whom the school connects itself) makes a demarche to **transmit** toward another entity (receiving entity) a information/actional content (an idea, a command/order/instruction, a report, a finding, a procedure, a job-description, etc). <See the figure.>

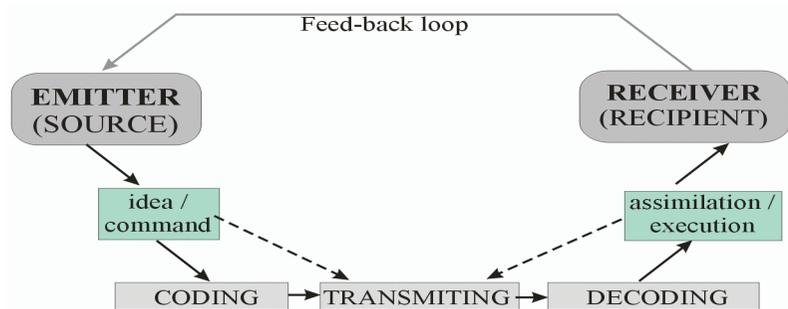


Figure 1 The scheme of the communicating act

At his turn, the receiving entity can transmit a feed-back content towards the emitter/transmitter (a content that confirms the assimilation of the transmitted idea, or reports the fulfillment of a task, or ask for more information in order to fulfill that task). And this feed-back constitutes the requisite premise for systemic optimization (from a cybernetic point of view), and it will consecrate the bidirectional nature of the communication.

From the present perspective, the interest is focused on the aspects concerning the content transmission, respectively on the achievement modalities, and on the efficiency and specificity of these modalities.

We will observe that the emitter is the one who initiates the communicating act, thus he is the one who chooses the modality of preparing the content (the communicating form, the manner of presenting the ideas/orders). (We note that the receiver is not completely devoid of the possibility of choosing the communicating mode – in a civilized environment he can theoretically do this option, – but his choice is rather the effect of the accord of being the recipient of that communication. The receiving usually assumes the acceptance, and sometimes it is involuntarily (or even subconsciously) made, therefore we can (at least in this first instance) ignore the receiver's role in choosing the communicating form.)

From an abstract point of view, we can consider that the choice of the communication form is actually a codification, an encoding (a transposition in a certain form of the informational/actional content that will be transmitted), so – consequently – the receiving process at the

receptor will imply//impose a decoding (as an understanding of that form).

By remaining at an abstract level, we surely accept that this chain of processes – coding, transmitting, decoding – can be always characterized by a series of parameters/attributes, which can describe the specificity and the efficiency of that communication.

Although I have not figured this fact in the previous scheme, it is obvious that also the feed-back connexion implies the same communicating processes chain, but from the receiver toward the emitter (and that, for „encoding” the receiver – became transmitter in this instance – will invoke probably the same communicating form, depending on context).

1.2. Communication forms and types

In this section we will firstly investigate several classifications for possible/habitual communicating forms, and than we will identify them in the organization management and we will find typological aspects that can recommend them in various situations from the education institution.

We will review a series of classification criteria for the communication forms, revealing the defining aspects or brief suggestive examples:

A. From the communication content’s point of view, reported at the involved sense organs:

- visual communication (still/animated images, text/script, gestures, mimics, schemes/figures, mock-ups);
- auditive communication (audio information, direct/recorder voice, noise, tunes, melodies);
- communication for other sensing organs (touch/Braille; olfactory; gustatory);

B. From the perspective of reporting the contents at the (linguistic) vocabulary:

- verbal communication forms (based on words);
- non-verbal communication forms (pictures, images, noises, gestures, objects, mock-ups, schemes, etc – they imply a psychic behavior based on the *perception* ability);

B1. At its turn, the verbal communication can divide itself in:

- written-communication (reports, memories, letters, notes, board-addnotation, stickers, posters, newspapers, magazines, books, etc);

- oral-communication (dialog, monologue, conference, exposition, speech, predication, interpellation, debate, interview; typical example: briefing);

B2. The written-communication can divide, depending to its support, in:

- communication written on analogic support (paper, billboard, panel, blackboard);

- communication written on digital/computer support (informatics/software file, database, e-mail messages, etc);

C. On the official or non-official character of the communication content:

- formal communication (mandatory/official content);

- informal communication (informative content, recommendation);

D. On the criterion of existing the feed-back connection:

- unidirectional communication(the emitter does not need/wait for an answer);

- bidirectional communication (the receiver answers to emitter, and this dialog can have a single cycle or more cycles);

E. From the communication source-direction point of view (a criterion applicable to organizations):

- communication from outside (the organization is the receiver);

- communication toward outside (the organization is the emitter);

- inner communication (between the organization's departments/personnel);

F. A classification using the criterion of the hierarchical-orthogonale axes of the organization:

- descending communication – vertical communication from above to bellow (statements, rulings, orders, commands);

- ascending communication – vertical communication from bellow to above – (reports, papers, petitions, requests, applications);

- horizontal communication (collaboration, at the same hierarchy level);

- oblique communication – between peoples sited on different hierarchical levels and on different hierarchical lines (between supervisors from a department and the subordinates from another, or vice-versa);

G. Considering the communication content reported at the educational activity:

- didactical and pedagogical communications (strictly aiming at the pedagogic activities);

- extradidactical communications (economical, administrative, cultural, extra-school);

H. Sorting on the implication/engaging level (a psychoanalytic criterion: on the personality level):

- explicite communication – voluntary and consciously controlled communication (developed on a single personality level);

- implicit communication – involuntary/subconscious communication;

- mixed communication: explicite and implicit (developed on more-than-one personality levels).

I. Categorisation on the cardinality of the communication (the cardinality of addressing):

- peer-to-peer (point-to-point) communications;

- point-to-multipoint communications;

J. Classification on the morphology of the communication network (addressing architecture):

- communications in a wheel (ring) network;

- communications in a Y-shaped network;

- communications in a chain network (figure 2);

- communications in a circle network;

- communications in a star-shape network (multi-channel); etc.

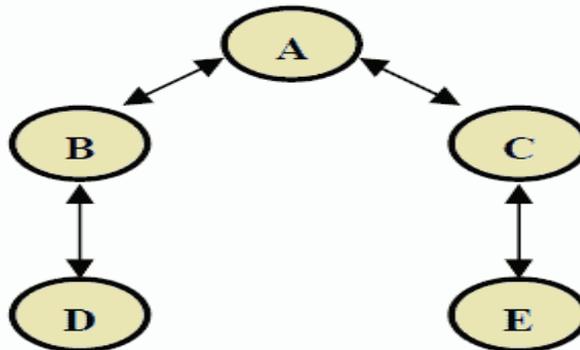


Figure 2 Chain-network communication

1.3. Typological specific aspects and applications in management

After reviewing the classification of the communication forms/types (inter-human, and respectively intra- and inter-institutions) we can reveal – by considering the aspects/characteristics of various forms/types – the following working conclusions:

- » not all classifications assure a complete disjunction;
- » not all classifications are holistic (do not cover the whole possible spectrum);
- » most of the communicating forms can be put/classified in more-than-one class/group;
- » several communicating forms are usually met as being combined (or they are mutually completing);
- » in the education institutions there are some processes that are apriori fitted with certain communication forms.

In this manner we can explore/consider a series of typological aspects that – in the operational context of organisations/institutions – specifically place or recommend the communication forms:

The communicating source-direction (exterior, interior, mixed) explicitly aims the relationships that the organization deploys with the socio-economical environment (on which aspect I will hearken back later).

- From the organization's hierarchy classification we can observe that usually the vertical relations have a formal/official character (between supervisor and subordinate), whereas the horizontal ones can take the form of informal relations.

- When the communicating content is an official one, then we use formal communication means, which are almost exclusively written communications, and the material support will be imperatively recorded (briefly mentioned in special registers). The effects of the formal communication are usually monitored, and one can reply with another official communication. Thus, the official communications are special documents, which impose/involve a rigorous treating mode. It is interesting to observe the fact that the fulfillment and/or the compliance of the tasks/requirements from the official documents involve – downstream – a series of processes (relations and activities) that involve/need informal communication, (which eventually will be synthesized in a replying official communication). We can here remark another interesting dialectics (especially from the point-of-view of critical analyse over the bureaucracy and over the institution processes efficiency): on a hand the official character determines the sharp fulfillment of the required tasks, the written form reduces the (risk of) misunderstanding and subjectivity, and the communication can be deployed on however long distances. On the other hand, on the informal side, the individuals voluntarily establish the needed information exchange in the effort of fulfilling that tasks, an interpersonal communication is occurring, unofficial (usually verbal), easily determining individual motivation and amiably resolving.

2. Administrative communication in a education institution

2.1. Communication forms in the relationships depicted in the institution's organigram

The organizational structure of the education institution (school, high-school, college, university) – synthetically and visually represented by the organization chart (organigram) – mostly reveals the formal (official) communication ways, these having the leading role in determining and facilitating the fulfillment of goals and tasks. (Generally, at the ends of communication ways there are people, but is possible that – in a certain future – informatic systems to take over this role in certain organization's departments.)

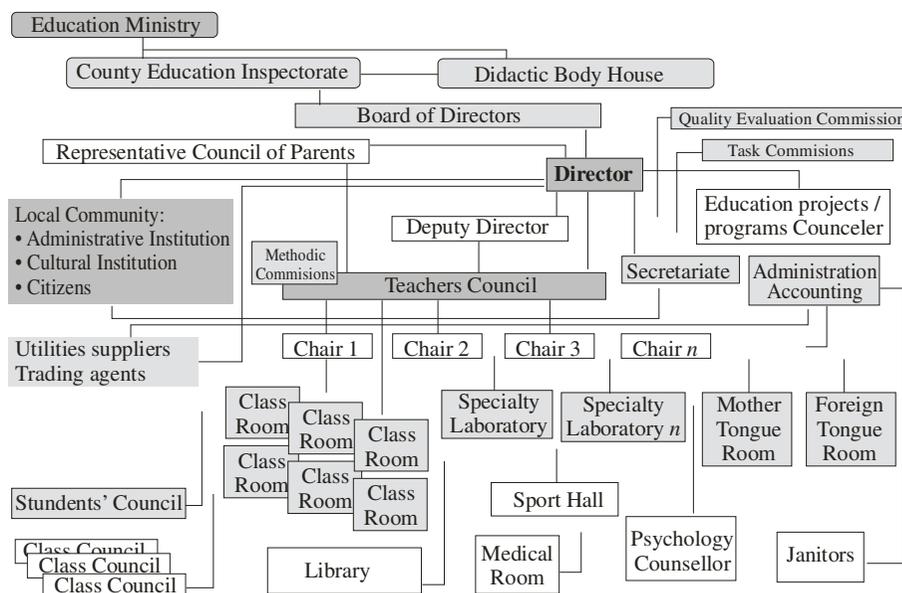


Figure 3 The organigram of a education institution

In a such chart we can observe that – between the structural entities of the institution – there appear communication lines, oriented on the both orthogonal directions of the organization. (In this manner the hierarchy of the institution is suggested, but without much sharpness claim, because this system is a much-to-complex to support a sufficient

simplification. Moreover, I intentionally left uncompleted several connections, to not touch the legibility of the chart.)

I have to stress that the most of communication ways are bidirectional (revealing feed-back channels), and everyone of them will probably support more communication forms.

- Inside the education institution, those entities that usually consist the two poles of the educational act – teachers and students –, despite the fact that they doesn't explicitly appear in the organigram, will activate in the most representative positions of the organizational structure: chairs, councils, commissions, classrooms, laboratories, specialty rooms, sports halls. Between all these entities there are communication relations (predefined of ad-hoc definable), through which education/administrative processes are started and deployed, through which the evolutions are monitored, through which states are assessed and recorded.

Along beside the didactical entities, the organigram contains also a series of auxiliary entities and activities (such as the secretariat, the accounting office, the medical room, the psychological counselor, the genitor, etc), each one with an important role in a functional and modern education/instruction.

In fact, this whole communication assembly – which ties the institution's personnel in the activities/efforts of achieving the operational goals (goals subordinated to the society's educational objectives) – constitutes so-called the *internal operational communication*.

- By looking outside organization, we can remark the subordination connections of the institution to the govern, education department, local administration (school inspectorates, prefecture), as well as the institution's relationship with the local community (parents, tutors, city-hall, police, culture institutions). We will observe also the economical relation with the utilities suppliers (electrical power, heating, water/sewage, salubrity), and also with other trading/business agents (procurement, research-design partnerships, sponsorships, scientific collaboration, cultural cooperation, etc). Certain entities from the above organizational chart can simultaneously belong to institution and to the external environment (such as „The parents Council”, which can actively participate at decisions and internal activities).

Conclusively, we can observe an important aspect: by disregarding the prime activity specific, the education institution is resembling – from the structural management and communication point of view – with almost any other organization in this days.

In the same manner, we can synthesize that, in order to serve the organization's objectives, the communication must be:

- » oriented to concrete goals/finalities (to back/serve the organization's goals);
- » multidirectional: to enclose the hierarchical vertical and horizontal of the organization;
- » instrumental: to use proper means (supports/methods), chosen and/or constituted according to the operational objectives;
- » adapted to the organization's activity and culture;
- » flexible: in order to dynamically adapt at new requirements, at structure and goals changes.

In conclusion: The organizational communication is not a spontaneous process. Therefore it must be judiciously designed and then it must be monitored and even ameliorated. In order to avoid a random deployment (thus an inefficient progress) it is advisable to manage this system according a strategical plan over the assembly of the organization.

2.2. Applicative aspects of the communicating forms

I believe that the **class-scheduling** timetable is the quintessence of the communication management in the education institution, based on at least three reasons:

- it determines the principal activity of the institution (coordinating the teaching-learning activities);
- it prepares and realizes the core link between didactic personnel (teachers) and students;
- it constitute a concretization of the education goals and respectively an operational synthesis of the didactical designing documents (education/school program/plan, teaching plans, learning unit projects, teaching-class projects);
- it extends the students activities coordination to their homes;
- it determines many others communication processes and essential administrative documents (for instance, the professors' daily register).

The external communication

The communication with the socio-economical environment (institutional or non-institutional environment), respectively with the community, must – perhaps in a larger amount than in the other communication's directions – take into account the environmental context, it must (proactively or/and reactively) adapt the communicating forms to the (sometime changing) requirements and specificity of those communications. (Here we can figuratively observe that “communication” = “link”.)

The above chart tried to catch most of the socio-economical partners, and to suggest the involved communicating forms in the context of the things presented in this paper.

In order to respect the mechanism of the democratic society, both the institution culture and its strategical plans must allow/include the communication relations with mass-media (radio, television, newspapers, etc), this being an important part of the external communication. From the perspective of studying the communicating forms, the communication with mass-media usually takes the following embodiments:

- interviews (exclusive and/or spontaneous);
- press bulletins/releases (concrete informing that the institution transmits to press);
- press conferences (interactive informing meetings, where the press is invited).

The internal communication

I previously emphasize that – in the deployment of specific activities, and respectively in fulfilling the institution's goals – many of the communication processes (even if they are initiated by official communications and by formal norms) involves the *interpersonal communication*, namely at dialogs between humans. Within the education institution, this kind of communication (circulating ideas, opinions, information, commands, orders) is mostly governed by the attributions of the involved peoples (their hierarchical position, or their *job descriptions* – that constitutes another instance of communications) and by the operational goals (explicit or implicit). But, the emitter and the receiver are humans, therefore – inevitable – this communication will be also determined by the characteristics of the human psyche (thus being influenced by aptitudes, intelligence, competences, temperament, needs, motivations, moral attitudes, etc).

Bibliography

Băduț, M., „*Informatica în management*”, Albastra Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2003

Băduț, M., „*Informatica pentru manageri*”, Teora Publishing House, București, 1999

Marinescu, P., „*Managementul instituțiilor publice*”, Bucharest University's Publishing House, 2003

*** Ministerul Educației și Cercetării, „*Regulamentul de organizare și funcționare a unităților de învățământ preuniversitar*”, Ordinul nr. 4925/08.09.2005.