

QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS FROM THE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:

The products and services' quality in the public sector is now one of the most important objectives set by almost all public and administrative authorities in developed countries. Total quality management, as the main direction in modernizing and optimize the public field, relies on the involvement of all categories of staff, from managers to executive staff, in order to fulfill the organizational objectives. However, for quality management the main objective is to fulfill the customers' needs at a higher level, to identify the citizen's needs and values and even anticipating and exceeding their expectations.

All these quality goals cannot be achieved without conferring the due importance of the organizational communication in the efficiency of the public sector. The human relations inside the organization, the motivation and implication of the employees, harmonizing the personal interests with the organizational objectives, and also the organization's relation with its environment and especially with the citizens to whom are addressed the public services, are regulated by the use of communication through information exchange.

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1. Introduction

During the latest period were recorded significant changes in the field of public management. Current trends significantly redefine traditional values, the way of expressing and assessing the public managers and staff's performances.

The main purpose of the changes in the public management aims primarily at promoting other meanings on the governance of the public sector, changing the traditional benchmarks of quality, redefining the role of the citizen as a customer of public services, a greater focus on satisfying its increasing importance given to organizational communication.

2. Methodology

The objective of this study is to develop understanding of the peculiarities and the role of the communication in the implementation of total quality management in the public institutions.

The complexity of the research subject determines the need to use a research methodology which integrates a wide range of methods, techniques, tools and procedures:

-*The study of general and specialized bibliography* in order to create the foundation of the scientific research and knowledge of the structure and dynamics of studied phenomena and processes ;

-*The scientific and empirical observation method* of the managerial presences in the Romanian public system focusing on TQM;

- *Interdisciplinary methods* linking economic, managerial, psychological and legal concepts;

The research aims to improve and increase knowledge of the studied areas through application of quality management to the specificity of public institutions on the one hand, and to find solutions to concrete problems, on the other hand, underlining the role and the importance of organizational communication.

The study is concerned with several main key concepts: specificity of public organization, total quality management, communication as the main element that creates connections inside the organizations and triggers the actions.

3. Quality Management, the current trend in the modernization of public management

Each European country has found its own solutions and priorities for quality management, which is why we emphasize that in the scientific literature there are major differences in the approach of the quality management according to the type of organization, specific social context and orientation of public management. For example, in Britain, the quality of public services is related to customer satisfaction of the provided public services, in Italy prevails the transparency and flexibility of the administrative activities, while in Germany, modernizing public administration and government directives on public management principles represents the quality basic coordinates of the public domain.

Regardless of the system of value, the communication should be regarded as a constant benchmark of quality in any of the approaches chosen, a true bridge between the principles and objectives of the public organization and the citizen's expectations and needs, the *client* of the public services. Either it serves the "*cause*" of focusing on the citizen and total satisfaction of its demands, or is the milestone for achieving the transparency goal of the public services, communication is a *sine-qua-non* condition for the quality inside the public sector /area.

Upgrading the system based on the present principles cannot be completed without the presence of an effective and efficient communication at all levels in order to establish clear and new goals and help monitoring the changes that take place inside the organizations. The organization's performance cannot be conceived as long as each employee do not know and understands his new role and objectives to which he should contribute for achieving them, or this fact requires efficient communication.

Thus the modernization of the public sector and the new approach of public management it is based on the following basic values, essential for the implementation of Total Quality Management:

- Responsibility;
- Leadership;
- Professional performance and results;
- Standards of performance;

- Customer satisfaction by improving the relationship with them and identifying the needs of service users;
- Improving organizational communication;

4. The particularities of communication inside the organizations from the public field

Lately the communication tends to get new perspectives, new aspects, communication directors are no longer considered just "*information channels*" but are rather strategic advisors for the top management.

Along with financial management and production management, communication must contribute to achieving the organization's mission. The role of communication in this process can be described in short by the expression "*the fulfillment in a professional manner the window and the mirror functions*" (Van Riel, 1995). The expression "*window function*" requires the development and implementation of communication policies, and the result being a message capable of showing all the organization's aspects in a coherent and appealing manner.

Communication - the exchange of information, ideas and feelings – was defined as an interpersonal process of transmission and reception of symbols that have meanings attached. Communication is that phenomenon that allows creating links between people, between institutions and between institutions and people, links similar to invisible bridges of informational essence. (Serbanica, D. 2005)

Some experts have sustained that **communication** is a fundamental principle for all the specific components of the management activity, namely: communication (exchange of information of different nature - oral and written), which fill about a third of working time; **traditional management** (planning, decision taking and control), which takes about a third of all working time; **correlation** (interaction, using communication with others, from inside and outside the organization), which takes around a fifth of the time; **human resource management** (motivation/encouragement, advice/discipline, conflict management, employment). (Marinescu, P., 2003)

Organizational communication records in the public sector a distinction based on the criterion of communication partners' identity:

- Interpersonal communication;
- Intra-organizational communication;
- Inter-organizational communication;

A. Interpersonal communication includes formal and informal interactions between members of the organization (communication between the manager and the subordinate, superior - subordinate, between individuals of a department);

B. Intra-organizational communication or internal communication is positioned between the limits of authority and reporting relationships in the organization, being dependent and also established on the existing organizational chart.

C. Inter-organizational communication or external communication refers, in fact, to the organization's relations with its environment. Even though public sector organizations are characterized by the lack of competition, the lack of market as an output all this facts must not disregard the institutions' need of increasing the external dialogue in order to promote their activity, the products, services, and to define their identity. Current conditions demand transparency, public services promotion, developing proficient specific activities taking into consideration the citizens' needs and expectations.

In this context the specialized literature approaches the concept of institutional or organizational communication underlining the fact that the communication's main objective is the company or the organization itself. Therefore organizational communication demands building and managing the organization's image, its philosophy and own values, trying to answer to the following questions: who is, what it wants to do, what it can do and what the organization actually do?

Organizational communication is the external communication through which the public administration institution seeks to strengthen its image to attract and to build around her a the public's confidence and sympathy climate. (Nedelea A.2006)

Regardless of the level at which the communication takes place, as Scott and Mitchell state the communication fulfills four functions: - function of control (task's explanation, authority, responsibility); - function of information (as a foundation for decisions taking), - the function of motivation (request for cooperation in order to fulfill the organization's objectives) - emotional function (expressing the feelings).

The public institution's external communication contributes to the reputation and the organization's image. The external communication fulfills in the same time the function of promoting the governmental public institution

and the territorial - administrative units. The communication carrying the role of promotion is in fact a special case, because, even if the specialists without exception consider that being a part of the external communication, it takes place unilaterally from the public institution toward its external environment. In this situation the members of the public organization are no longer those maintaining the contact with the exterior, but the organization as an institution. It provides information about the services offered, trying to improve the overall image or simply wants to communicate and promote its values. (V. Munteanu, 2006)

5. The role of communication in implementing the quality of management in public organizations

Total quality management is a system based on quality, involving all its members aiming as a result the organization's success on long-term, through customer satisfaction and obtaining benefits for all organization's members. (Oprean, C., 2005)

Total quality management involves also the extend of efficiency problems over all the functions and at all levels of the organization's structure, from the organization's top manager and to the staff responsible for the execution, each member having its role in improving the performances. Based on this comprehension of the quality management the role of communication it is easily to predict.

So TQM implementation in an institution requires a commitment from the management at all levels, something that requires a change of attitude, mentality of the entire staff, from top manager to the last employee. Each has its own role, senior management being responsible for developing strategies and tactics, middle management dealing with the implementation of them and at operational level they are dealing with adopting those techniques and instruments compatible with the principles of quality management, communication being the instrument which harmonizes all these actions. The objective pursued cannot be achieved without transforming "organizational culture" - a daily way of expression, in an appropriate organizational culture for developing the quality.

Remarking the need of a commitment at all levels, backed up by the existence of a conceptual framework of the organization's policy, Philip B. Cosby makes a very pertinent remark: "If the managers do not develop an

official policy on quality, then you must be sure that each employee will choose his own policy". (Cosby, PB, 1979)

According to Joseph M. Juran's concept the organization must adopt such a policy by which to state the wished position to be hold on the market through quality and to communicate it at all levels of the organization.

A suitable policy of quality should be based on the following considerations:

- The management of the organization is the one that defines the quality by establishing an appropriate policy of quality and getting involved in the implementation. Making the changes required by quality policy embroils an inefficient communication.

- Establishing and implementing the quality policy must be achieved by the organization's management by coordinating and training the staff, practically being the management's commitment to the employees, as the first interested individuals, but also to the customers and society in general.

- The final assessment of the product/service quality it is realized by the client, the society. Competence in the field of quality it means satisfied and loyal customers.

Communication reported to the principles of focus on customer

Quality is what the customer wants and not what the organization decides it is best for him. (Oprean, C., 2002). Applying the principle of focus on the customer mainly includes:

- understanding the customer's needs and expectations, linked to the price;

- balancing these needs with the organization's possibilities, the suppliers, local community;

- communicating the needs and expectations to the entire organization;

- regular assessment of customer satisfaction in order to record possible improvements;

- the management of the relationship with the customers;

Leadership and communication

The leadership as a basic principle can be explained by the primary role of management in an organization, achieving the organization's goals being achieved by leaders who take responsibility and have the initiative of establishing the policy adopted by achieving the organization's objective.

According to John Kotter (Harvard Business School) by Leadership it is understood the orientation process of a group or groups by non-coercive

means to achieve the defined objectives such as: proactive attitude, understanding the changes, knowledge of customer requirements, clear vision of the organization's future, open and honest communication.

This goal requires the prior fulfillment of some steps: communicating the mission and the organization's objectives, effective and clear strategies, the analysis of the management structure, empowerment- encouraging the employee's participation in decision making.

The public manager faces serious limitations in terms of human resource management; in the case of private companies the employee's motivation or punishment it is located under the control of the general manager. In the case of the public organization the manager does not have the same authority. On the one hand, the status of civil servants and other relevant legal regulations limit its possibilities of hiring, dismissing, punish or reward. (Hint, C)

We are mentioning some *advantages* resulting from the application of Total Quality Management in the public sector:

- simplifying and significantly relieving of the management and execution processes, by the development of quality system procedures well defined and structured;
- increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of public servants in general and of the public managers, in particular;
- establishing a system of continuous training of public servants and public managers;
- increase the degree of motivation of the employees for quality in the developed activity;
- flexible public management system that allows continuous improvement of the quality of services delivered;
- identify the ways of improving the relations with the institutions' customer and the public authorities;
- discovery and correction of informational system's deficiencies;
- improving the management of human resources, material resources, informational and financial resources from the public institutions;
- *improving the process of coordination and communication within the organization.* (Androiceanu, A. 2002)

6. Conclusions

Major advantages arising from introducing Total Quality Management are strong enough to stimulate receptivity of the decision makers and their initiative in the direction of considering this trend as one of the basic coordinates in the reform process in general and the public sector in Romania, in particular.

Total Quality Management as a totally new concept must be translated into actions in a new vision (total quality, ie. exceeding customer expectation) and a new organization of the activity, we consider that the link between the principles of this quality system and expected changes is the communication.

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