

# MODALITIES OF OPERATIONALIZATION OF MANAGEMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF DIGITALIZATION OF INFORMATION

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**Abstract:** The scientific paper presents relevant aspects about both the existing management of the central public administration level, and the essential management principles that should be the foundation of building any management strategy for a public institution. Issues related to current communication trends used by public service beneficiaries in relation to central public institutions were addressed. The proposed research is focused on the issues of the communication system within the management process at the level of a public institution. Some of the reports prepared by the central public authorities were analyzed, in order to highlight the tendency of citizens to often use technology in the process of communicating with public institutions. The need for public service beneficiaries to use information technology can lead to fast and efficient communication, and ultimately to the effectiveness of the system. We also took account of the predictions of sociologists who came to the conclusion that certain types of future generations are foreshadowed, but also special principles, which may be nodal in an organization of the future. The digitalization of public services is a reality that cannot be denied and must be accepted and assumed by the management of all public institutions and beyond. Only in this context the quality of public services will be improved, by implementing the digitization process, depending, to a large extent, on the degree of application of public policies that emphasize the decisive role of information technology. All these aspects are explained in this scientific paper.

**Keywords:** management, communication, central public administration, public services, organization of the future

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Communication is vital for the optimal functioning of a public institution, as it connects all managerial functions, and the success of the

management of a public institution depends, to a large extent, on the communication and manager skills of the head of that government organization. Through the communication process, decisions taken at governmental level

are transmitted and information about their rights and obligations as citizens is made known to citizens. Another role of communication, at the level of public administration, is to gain the trust of citizens, to promote public projects and policies or to gain notoriety and a positive image for the public institution. We must not neglect the fact that all government ministers are politicians, being appointed on the basis of belonging to a certain entity, and by accepting the appointment to a position of public dignity, they assume, implicitly, the role of managers of public institutions. The good image of a public institution can lead to increased notoriety and sympathy among citizens for its leader. Communication is also necessary for interaction with other public institutions, which efforts focus on identifying and meeting the needs of citizens and the general interest. According to the provisions of the legislation in force, public institutions have the obligation to inform citizens, to receive in audience any citizen and, last but not least, the public institution must consult, in fact, citizens on the adoption of various public policies. For an efficient management it is necessary to adapt the information systems to the new technologies and to the needs of the citizen of flexibility, promptness and efficiency, characteristic elements of the citizen belonging to the organizations of the future.

## 2 MANAGEMENT AND DIGITIZATION, CONCEPTS ASSOCIATED IN THE CHOSEN TYPE OF ORGANIZATION

In the conditions of the contemporary socio-economic realities, of the increase and diversification of the public services destined to satisfy the needs of the citizens, the communication problems tend to become more and more diversified and varied. The communication system requires the use of modern forms of information, as well as methods of involving the final beneficiaries,

respectively the citizens, in their use, in order to provoke a series of changes in mentalities and habits of communication with public partners.

Contemporary society is profoundly changed through new technologies, so we discover new transformations, day by day, in the way are organized elements that influence our existence, such as: production of goods, distribution and consumption of goods, movement of people, trade and, last but not least, information and communication.

At the level of public institutions, an adaptation to the new technological realities is needed, and the existing management at the level of central public administration must deepen its management principles, as founded by prominent representatives in the field, Frederick Winslow Taylor or Henri Fayol. Public institutions should also look to the horizon, towards what the organizations of the future will consider to be essential, in the context of meeting the needs of the citizens who will be part of the so-called Alpha Generation. Frederick Winslow Taylor, in his "Principles of Scientific Management", published in 1911 and considered a pillar management book, stated that "the main objective of management should ensure maximum prosperity for the employer, coupled with maximum prosperity for each employee" (Taylor, 1919, p. 9). In Taylor's vision, also called the father of scientific management, it is grounded the idea that the true interests of the employee and the employer are one and the same. Taylorism appears as a technical organizational conception, in which the human element is placed in a secondary place. The principles of scientific management, which are given schematically in Figure 1, are useful today, and those that should be reiterated to the heads of public institutions are those that refer to authority and responsibility, equity, order, unity of direction. Thus, the principles underlying scientific management, according to F.W. Taylor, are as follows:

- replacing working methods, as a rule, with methods based on a scientific study of tasks;
- scientific selection, training and development of each employee, rather than being allowed to passively train;
- cooperation with employees, to ensure that scientifically developed methods are followed;
- the division of labor almost equally between managers and employees, so that managers apply scientific management principles for work planning, and workers effectively perform tasks (Taylor, 1919).

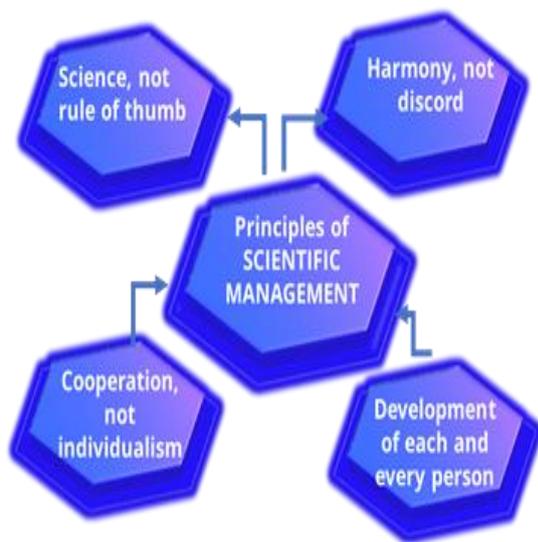


Figure 1. The Principles of Scientific Management (Taylor, 1919)

Scientific management fundamentally consists of certain broad general principles, a certain philosophy, which can be applied in many ways, and a description of what any man or men may believe to be the best mechanism for applying these general principles should in no way be confused with the principles themselves (Taylor, 1919, p. 28- 29).

Under scientific management the initiative of the employees (that is, their hard work, their good-will and their ingenuity) is obtained with absolute uniformity and to a greater extent than is possible under the old system; and in addition to this improvement, the managers assume new burdens, new duties and responsibilities never dreamed of in the past (Taylor, 1919, p. 36).

Perhaps the most prominent single element in the modern scientific management is the task idea. The work of every employee is fully planned out by the management at least one day in advance, and each man receives in most cases complete written instructions, describing in detail the task which he is to accomplish, as well as the means to be used in doing the work (Taylor, 1919, p. 39).

In public institutions, it is sometimes found that no responsibility is assumed, in the sense that a department director, through his status as head, has a civil servant to prepare a certain document, but there are situations in which he or she does not want to take responsibility for that provision, but prefers that the responsibility be assumed by his or her subordinate. Unfortunately, in every public institution there are managers who do not have the minimum knowledge of management and are not suitable for management positions. This generates dissatisfaction among executive civil servants, who are sometimes much better prepared professionally than their bosses. There are situations in which a civil servant, although very well trained from a professional point of view, chooses not to be involved in the successful resolution of certain situations, and this has a negative impact and sometimes affects the quality of the government act. Thus, one of the principles of Henri Fayol's management, according to which each employee must occupy the right position, just as each object must be in the right place, at the right time, most of the time cannot be transposed in the central public administration.

The decision-making activity of the managers of the central public authorities can be improved if each manager is aware that a good decision is taken only when the expertise of civil servants working in that institution for many years is also used. It is important to mention that at the level of each ministry there is a Board of Directors, composed of the heads of the specialized structures. These leaders could come up with solutions for different situations, as many of them have been working for the institution for many years, so they can share their experience and propose solutions. However, once projected into decision-making positions, dignitaries sometimes demonstrate an inability to accept that a civil servant may also have a good idea or proposal for resolving various ministerial actions or competencies.

Successful management is based on excellent public programs and strategies, which should always be doubled by effective managerial communication. Today, citizens express, whenever they have the opportunity, dissatisfaction with the public system in general, the quality of public services provided by civil servants, the quality of professional training of civil servants and the way in which public institutions in Romania are managed. The information published in the media to which citizens have access, which present daily the inadequate quality of public services, such as medical services or education, lead to the creation of a negative image of the entire public system, the term civil servant being most often used in a pejorative way.

Any leader / manager of a public institution, regardless of the political environment from which he or she comes, undoubtedly wants to be appreciated for the mandate held, if not by subordinates, at least by party colleagues, but especially by the prime minister, who gave him confidence by appointment. To cope with various political or media pressures, any dignitary, in his capacity as leader or manager of a public institution, needs a well-functioning

organization. The advantage of running a public institution, such as a ministry, is that, regardless of the decisions taken or the quality of the activity carried out as a minister or manager, there is a very low probability that the public entity will close its activity. The same cannot be said about running a private organization, where poor management can lead to the closure of the business. One aspect is certain, the desire for personal prestige is very high, whether we are talking about the head of a public institution, such as a minister, or we are talking about a manager of a private organization.

Successful management of a public institution requires constant adaptation to the needs and realities existing at a given time in society, the ability to correctly identify the public policies they need to adopt and to be receptive to feedback received from citizens. Citizens, who are the beneficiaries of public services provided by public institutions, are ultimately the evaluators of the managerial activity of a public institution. Today, more than ever, the feedback that a public institution receives from its recipients, citizens or various organizations is obtained instantly, thanks to the development of communication technologies currently available. Thus, in a very short time, in a few minutes, sometimes tens of seconds, the reaction of the citizens to a press release published on the official pages of the ministries can be identified. The new technologies offer the possibility to visualize, as manager / minister, in real time, the reactions of the citizens to the adopted measures.

The tendency of citizens to use social media was also analyzed at the governmental level. Thus, the ministries, but also other public institutions, have adopted the strategy of building official Facebook pages, which are managed, mainly, by employees within the communication departments. Through this approach, public institutions aimed to address the categories of active citizens, young people and adults, who are big consumers of online

social media. Thus, the ministries pay increased attention to the publication and updating of their Facebook pages with information, press releases, interviews, announcements, in order to disseminate both the activity of the ministry and to promote the activity of the minister. However, through the use of social media, there are also risks, such as the reaction of citizens to various posts, reactions that are either related to that information or are intended to draw attention to personal issues. There are a considerable number of citizens who devote much of their energy and time to attacks on certain institutions and their leaders.

The following communication tools are most often used in public institutions: addresses / notes / reports on paper, e-mail, telephone, and less and less used is fax, which has even been eliminated by certain institutions. The telephone is very often used in the communication process, but it is the communication tool that has the disadvantage that it does not allow to predict the mood that the receiver will have or the reaction that he will have in relation to the information provided. Another disadvantage of the telephone is the limited feedback compared to a direct communication, where the verbal communication is doubled by the non-verbal communication, which can sometimes transmit more information than "a thousand words". The advantage of a telephone conversation is that it adds human interaction to the situation in which information is transmitted by fax, e-mail or on paper. There are many people, especially the elderly, who especially appreciate the fact that they have been contacted by telephone to be informed of certain information and have not been sent e-mails or letters.

E-mail is widely used in public institutions; it allows the transmission of attached documents or links from where you can obtain additional information. The advantages of using e-mail as a form of transmitting information in the communication process are the following:

- the information arrives immediately;
- a large volume of documents can be transmitted;
- there are no transmission costs as there are in the case of transmission of documents on paper through post offices;
- an e-mail can be evidence in court regarding the transmission of information;
- allows the archiving of certain documents in electronic format, without the need to print them on paper, which leads to a low consumption of consumables, such as: toner, paper, bookshelves, files or cabinets;
- documents sent by e-mail can be consulted from any computer, phone, tablet;
- allows several people access to the same document at the same time, if it is necessary to consult a document by several civil servants;
- an e-mail can be sent to several people at the same time.

The disadvantages of using e-mail as a communication tool are the following:

- deleting documents from the electronic archive with a simple click;
- more attention to how you write and express yourself in writing, compared to a telephone conversation. An email written with grammatical errors can be a topic of press for certain journalists, organizations or activists in certain fields;
- if the e-mail address is incorrect or was entered incorrectly, the receiver does not receive the reply generated by the sender. As a result of not receiving a reply, the citizen may file, in accordance with the legislation in force, a prior complaint against the public institution for not sending the answer to the petition within the legal term, so there is

the possibility of a lawsuit against the public institution;

- in the situation when the computer system of an institution is cyber attacked, the e-mail becomes unusable;
- e-mail is only usable if there is a connection to an internet network.

Response addresses formulated on paper are also used, but at a much lower rate than addresses formulated electronically and sent by e-mail to public institutions.

In this context, the reports published by a ministry, regarding the way of transmitting documents by the citizens of the public institution for the period 2016-2020 were analyzed, thus resulting in the graph shown in Figure 2.

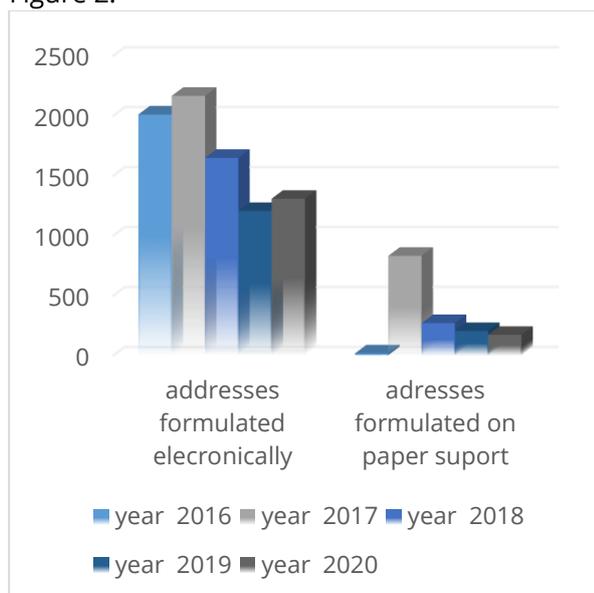


Figure 2. Share of how citizens send addresses to a ministry (e.g. Ministry of Culture, 2020)

They are intended, in particular, for people who do not communicate their contact details or e-mail, and this category is mainly made up of elderly people who do not have personal computers or who do not have the necessary knowledge to use a computer. Paper addresses are still used at the level of public institutions in internal communication, as approvals from

different departments are required, and any type of request is not processed unless there is a written request. Thus, a considerable volume of "papers" is processed daily and transmitted between departments within the same institution, and "bureaucracy" finds its place inside the institution, not just outside it. To date, no internal procedures have been established to simplify the flow of documents within public institutions, but there are expectations regarding the elimination and simplification of bureaucracy in the relationship between public institutions and the citizen. The system procedures approved within the public institutions, which provide for obtaining signatures from all department heads, who have been designated as signatories in the approval process, generate situations in which data from experts within the various departments are not processed, as there is also no signature of the head of the department, although he has verbally agreed on the report, and the document or information must be disseminated urgently.

Hence many delays in the processing time for documents produced by a public institution (Banciu, Doina, 2013). We consider that, on the one hand, there is the fear of the civil servant to be sanctioned for non-compliance with the system procedures in force, and on the other hand, the tendency of certain civil servants, who are the favorites of certain bosses, to work as little as possible, processing documents as little as possible.

Today's technology also allows new communication tools, such as the WhatsApp application, which can be installed for free on mobile phones and which allows fast, efficient communication, from anywhere and anytime. The advantage of this application is that even scanned documents can be transmitted through it. The information reaches the target receiver in a short time. Another advantage is that different groups can be formed, where points of view can be expressed or information can be exchanged. There is the possibility to have control over the

recipients of the transmitted information, to get feedback quickly and to check who reads the information.

In the context in which technology is an essential component of the life of every citizen, we believe that it is appropriate to address issues such as the organization of the future, starting from the analysis and projection of the psychosocial profile for members of the future organization. Thus, if in previous years sociologists and psychologists presented the dominant types of generations such as: Generation X, Generation Y (Millennials), Generation Z, today, specialists who study human behaviors have brought to the fore a new type of generation, namely the Alpha Generation (Williams). We appreciate that the organization

of the future, including public entities such as ministries, will have to pay special attention to the profile of the citizen, who will come from the Alpha Generation, will have to find solutions to meet it's need for autonomy, flexibility, communication and of creativity. In this context, organizations will be required to implement digitization systems through which can meet these needs.

Predictions about the organization of the future were also made by the American Jacob Morgan, journalist and author of the book "The Future of Work", in which he presented the 14 defining principles (Morgan, 2020) that will underpin the work of future organizations, as shown in Figure 3.

-  Globally distributed with smaller teams
-  Connected workforce
-  Intrapreneurial
-  Operates like a small company
-  Focuses on "want"
-  Adapts to change faster
-  Innovation everywhere
-  Runs in the cloud
-  Tells stories
-  Democratizes learning
-  Shifts from profits to prosperity
-  More women in senior management roles
-  Adapts to the future employee and the future manager
-  Flatter structure



Figure 3. The 14 Principles of the Future Organization (Morgan, 2020)

Sociologists' predictions outlined the profile of the future citizen, what are his or her needs, respectively the need for flexibility,

communication and creativity. The reality of the last year, in which the Covid-19 pandemic surprised the whole society, highlighted the fact

that what was expected to happen in the near future has already become a reality. In the last year, public authorities have had to telework most civil servants. The flexibility consisted in the fact that a large part of the works of civil servants were solved from the telework system. Interdepartmental communication played a key role, civil servants had to use free tools and applications such as google drive and dropbox, which use cloud technology, to access all the work of the department and to follow, in real time, each step on document management. The need to implement digitization systems has become essential for all central public authorities and beyond. Modern managerial thinking must be aware that the submission of paper files, in order to obtain approvals or authorizations, should be replaced by the provision of IT infrastructure to allow the submission of documentation in electronic format, and the obtaining of approvals or authorizations must also be achieved through a digital platform. The future is today, so technological solutions must be implemented as soon as possible. One of the important components of management is communication, so managerial communication, according to Henry Fayol, is part of the management process, through which the manager understands subordinates and is understood by them, with the aim of not only transmitting messages, but also the change of mentalities and the alignment of the will of the officials to the objectives of the institution. Ideally, the objectives of any institution should be meeting the needs of beneficiaries of public services, in the context of the development of new technologies.

### 3 CONCLUSIONS

In order to carry out its specific tasks, in accordance with the legislation in force, a ministry needs to improve its communication, so that communication processes become much more efficient and secure, given that, most

often, a considerable number of public institutions are subordinated to it. We can say that the way an organization thinks reflects or represents the culture of that organization. The Ministry, as an entity of the central public apparatus, is a coercive and normative organization.

In the years 2017-2019, at the level of all central public authorities, a communication strategy was adopted, putting "emphasis on the result", presenting only the positive aspects of the activity carried out by the ministries. Accordingly, every government communications department had to disseminate many press releases and news that would lead to the idea that government was fully involved in meeting the needs of every citizen. A modernization of managerial thinking involves, on the one hand, the adoption of measures at the level of the central public authority to solve, if not all, at least the issues most frequently noticed by citizens. The easiest way to determine which administrative processes need to be improved is to communicate with citizens, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to be proactive in addressing complaints from citizens, who are ultimately the beneficiaries of public services. An effective communication that is not duplicated by action does not lead to the improvement of public services, so it does not guarantee a positive image and will not succeed in attracting the much-desired electoral votes.

In order to increase the quality of public services, we believe that a modernization of managerial thinking is needed, which essentially implies the existence of new perspectives on the forms of organization for any type of organization. It is also important to keep up with new forms of organization, with the evolution of society, but also to have the ability to predict what the new requirements of society will be, so that the management of a public institution is prepared as much as possible for new challenges and economic and social realities. In order to see what challenges he or she will have

to face successfully, a manager must foreshadow the profile of the future citizen. In this context, we believe that the organization of the future will be the organization that will best adapt to the trends imposed by the new generations (here we also refer to the central public administration). The future citizen, who will be part of the so-called Alpha Generation, will show needs for autonomy, flexibility and fast communication. The citizen of this generation, dependent on technology, will no longer want to physically travel to the headquarters of public institutions, to submit applications to their registry, and certainly will not intend to interact with civil servants. In this context, public institutions will be required to implement digitization systems to meet these needs. Also, all future organizations, including public institutions, will have to provide employees with the technology needed to connect from anywhere and on any device, and the information will be contained in databases that will run in the "cloud" (Banciu, Doina, 2014). Even today, in order to function more efficiently, any public institution should be able to manage important databases, from several institutions, which can be assimilated to central systems, in order to take the most appropriate decisions for a better, direct and fast communication. The tendency of the citizen is to access as much information as possible, especially that information that affects his or her daily life, but also out of the desire to have access to the latest news.

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