



An Investigation on Communication
in the Ministry of Regional Development
Warsaw, Poland

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Foreword

I wish to thank Ministry of Regional Development in Warsaw, Poland for giving me an opportunity to have an internship at the Department of Aid Programs and Technical Assistance. I would also like to thank my supervisor Hans Peter Hansen for all the advices I received from him, which helped me to write this thesis and to do the research. Many thanks to the supervisor of my internship for all the support, patience, materials and knowledge which I received from him. I also wish to thank all the people that I have met in the Department which left a valuable input in my work

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Abstract

This thesis is an investigation on the communication process within the governmental institution, in this particular case it is Ministry of Regional Development in Warsaw, Poland. The investigation is based on the interviews with sample of employees from different units such as Finance and Control of Technical Aid, Coordination of Technical Aid, Monitoring International Help and other units within the department of Aid Programs and Technical Assistance. This paper presents different schemes and paths of communication which are used in this particular case study. The main research question concerns the communication strategy and tools which can be used in order to develop better cooperation and understanding. What is more the internal (within the Department) and external communication (between the Department and County Administrative Boards) is analyzed and discussed on the basis of the findings from the interviews and theoretical concepts. The main conclusion which comes out of the research is that however internal communication is perceived as a well working systems, it occurs that external communication is still problematic and needs a lot of improvement on order to function well and improve the collaboration between CABs and the Ministry. The findings of the thesis show that administrators from CABs are not satisfied with the current situation and hope for better communication and collaboration with the Ministry in the future.

The analysis section showed that there are weaknesses in the communication strategy. The research results with the conclusions that CAB often receives contradictory messages from the different Units of the Department. This situation often leads to misunderstandings, frustrations, cause chaos and delays in the projects. Distance and lack of face-to-face meetings (or limited number of those) are also barriers in the improvement of the situation. Another identified problem is that CAB has a limited authority in taking decisions and should consult most of the them with specific Units within the Department. This creates an obstacle in the cooperation and extend the time of finalizing the assignments.

1. Introduction

This paper is going to present an investigation on internal and external communication in the implementation of the goals introduced to the county administrative boards. The complexity of the governmental institution requires good cooperation and both internal and external communication strategy between different departments but also between central and local level authorities. The question which raises here is how does the communication strategy look like, how it can be improved in terms of implementation of decisions and strategies. What does actually mean good communication and cooperation? Further on I am going to present the framework of the specific organization – Ministry of Regional Development in Warsaw, Poland, and my actual findings coming from the research.

In this chapter I am going to present the aim of my study, formulation of the problem and my personal goals. First I am going to give a short background of the Ministry of Regional Development in Warsaw, where I applied and got admitted for almost two months internship in the Department of Aid Programs and Technical Assistance.

1.1 Background

Ministry of Regional Development [Figure 1.] where my internship takes place is a complex governmental institution which coordinates functions related to the preparation and implementation of the national development strategy. It includes the concept of the country's zoning and functions related to the management of the European Union's assistance funds. The area of their work which I am most interested in is co-operation with local government in the area of regional development and within particular units of my Department. One of the programs which is supervised by the Ministry is the Community Support Framework. This strategy determines directions and quantity of support from structural funds for realization of development plans in Poland. These funds are used mainly for infrastructure development, such as transport, support for enterprises, private and public projects in the area of both human resources and environment. I got an opportunity to take an internship in the department of Aid Programs and Technical Assistance which works with another project called Technical Assistance Operational Program (TAOP). [TAOP was developed pursuant to the guidelines of Art. 18 of the Council Regulation 1260/1999/EC]. The Program is a frame for different sub-programs included in the development strategy and gives a brief view on the situation for technical support instruments in Poland, formulates the goals, describes the strategy aiming to achieve them in the context of efficient use of structural funds and finally sets out the way of co-ordination and implementation for technical assistance while the Program is executed. The main purpose of taking those actions is to support management, monitoring, evaluation and control of the Community Support Framework, which was mentioned above. My department is responsible for financing consulting services, experts work, evaluation, training and research to support effective structural funds management. It provides communication, exchange of information and promotion of Community Support Framework and structural funds operations. The Department consists of six sub-departments which collaborate but also control and monitor each other in order to implement the strategies and integrate the policy with more individual projects. It clearly results that communication strategy between particular units within the Department but also between external sections of the Ministry should be a well developed tool of high importance. In my research I would like to find out if and how this instrument works in practice. From various projects I have decided to focus more on the specific aid program which includes both, implementation of the goals and communication strategy at the internal and external level – Operational Program – Innovative Economy 2007-2013.

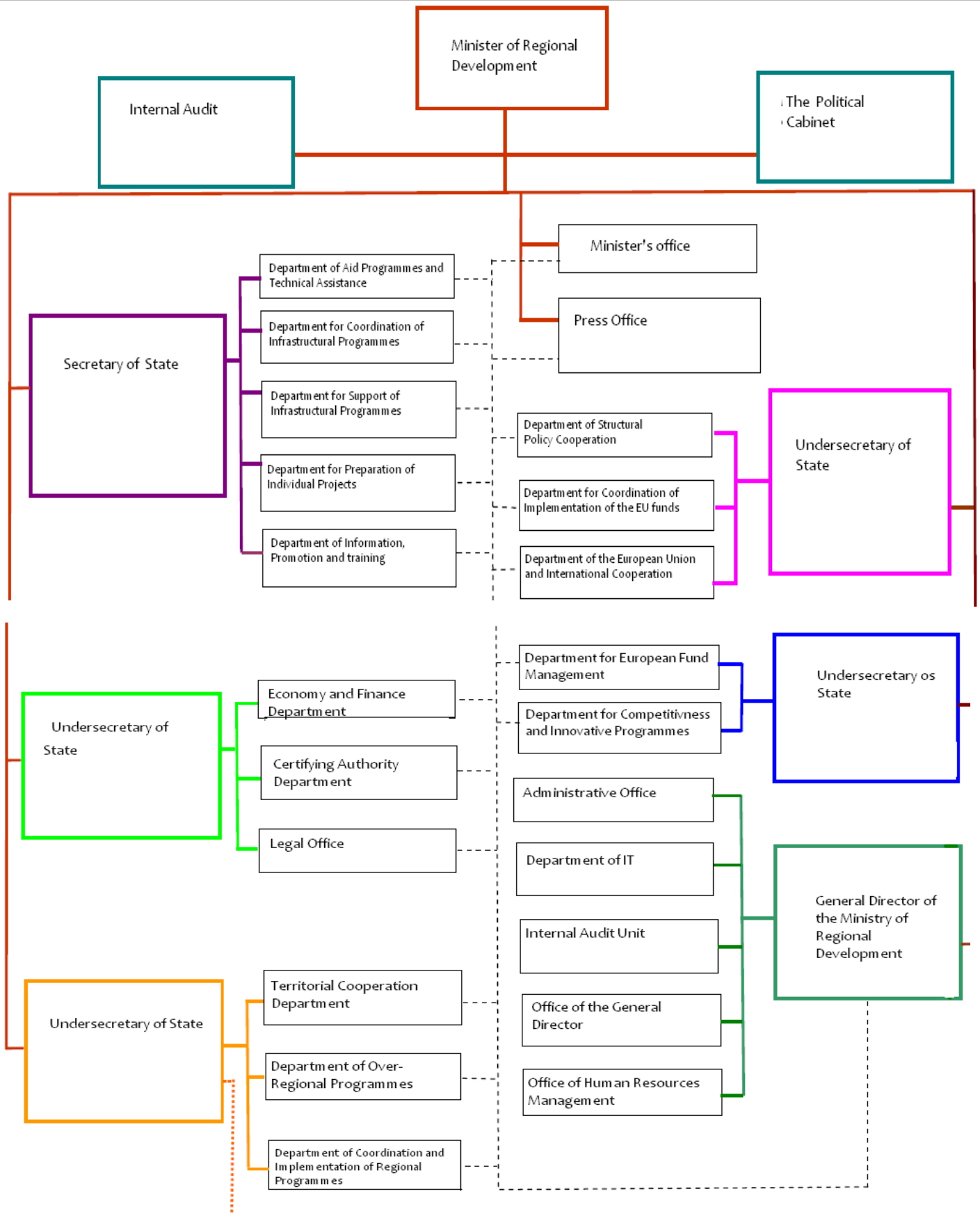


Figure 1. Internal Structure of the Ministry of Regional Development in Warsaw, Poland [Translated and modified from the Ministry of Regional Development; www.mrr.gov.pl]

1.2 Problem Formulation

My investigation in this paper is based on both theoretical and empirical data. Problem formulation considers the internal and external communication and its possible improvement according to the Operational Program – Innovative Economy mentioned in the previous section of this paper. What is going to be analyzed in the following chapters of this report is also the formal and informal communication. It is important to clarify to a certain extent what is meant by those concepts. Formal communication is a well planned, written or verbal form of transmitting information, while informal strategy is often verbal and unplanned [Tayntor. Ch; Six Sigma Software Development; 2003]. To put aside one's perspective and accomplish different goals as a team requires a lot of effort and input from individuals. Those specific points of view are mirrored in the communication strategy both formally and informally. Those concepts I am going to study in this paper, basing my research on interviews and observations. Sample of employees from the Department of Aid Programs are going to be interviewed to get their perspective on the communication.

My assumption of the Ministry of Regional Development was a hierarchical structure, therefore similar style of the communication strategy. It appeared that, even though it truly has a hierarchical structure it does not mean it is really a factor which decides whether communication is less or more efficient. Hierarchical communication strategy in the Ministry is caused mainly by its complexity. What is more, organizational structure, as it can be noticed in Figure 1., includes authorities of different levels. Information from the top has to be spread to the bottom, and opposite. Time is always important therefore personal meetings are not always possible. Those factors induce the formal hierarchical communication strategy. Situation looks different when it comes to communication within specific departments – however it can also be formal, it is not as hierarchical as at the central level. Formal and informal way of communicating interfere together and a dialog between employees becomes a main way of transferring and receiving information. Those data has been collected with the use of interviews and participatory observations. Method of categorization of the material was used in order to analyze and discuss the findings.

The questions of my research are narrowed down to two main points:

- How is the internal communication strategy perceived and carried out by the department of Aid Programs?
- How the internal and external communication could be improved in order to develop better cooperation and understanding?

In my paper I am going to focus mainly on those two questions and try to find satisfying answers based on my research, participatory observations and interviews.

1.3 Aim

The aim of this research is to investigate how the different sub-units of the Department of Aid Programs within the Ministry of Regional Development perceive and use the communication strategy about the project and its implementation. My intention is to present how the internal and external communication works between employees within the governmental institution. Furthermore, my personal goal is to gain an understanding on the process of communication. I am aiming to get an insight view into the work of the governmental institution but also hope to increase my competence and experience in the communication strategies. My goal is not to investigate how individual administrators communicate with each other, but to base the research on a sample of employees in terms of internal and external communication. On this basis I wish to consider how the communication strategy works within the Department and between County Administrative Boards. Moreover, my aim is to understand what exactly is an internal communication and I hope to achieve this by basing my research on this particular environment and group of people.

To reach my aim I am going to use different methods of analyzing empirical data such as categorization and rating of the transcribed interviews. With the use of method mentioned above I hope to filter collected information and draw conclusions from the research.

2. Methodology

In this section I am going to explain how I defined my analytical framework. When analyzing the material, symbolic interactionism (Charon. J; *Symbolic Interactionism, an introduction, an interpretation, and integration*; 2007) approach was a guideline and the starting point. This methodology section starts with a short background on symbolic interactionism and how it is related to my case study.

2.2 Data Collection

In this section, methods of collecting data for the research are presented. The research material [Figure 2.] was collected in the place of internship – Ministry of Regional Development, mostly in the department of Technical Assistance and Aid Programmes. The supervisor of my internship was a head of this department. I gained access to a lot of specialised publications which gave me the general idea of the work of the department, strategic documents and also communication strategy program. All the data which I have used in this paper were collected from participatory observations, formal and informal interviews and literature.

2.2.1 Selection of people and planning of the interviews

The selection of people that were interviewed was important. I have collected information from the employees of particular units and also, as mentioned before, from representatives of CAB. An overview of the interviewees can be found in Figure 2. Those two groups determined the final outcome of the research and gave the most data. Because of this division, the categorization was possible to achieve and different perspectives gave a field for a complex analysis.

Figure 2. *Table of collected material*

Name of the Unit	Number of Interviewed employees	Position in the Department	Number of Formal Interviews	Number of Informal Interviews	County Administrative Boards
Unit for Coordination of Technical Aid	1	head of the Unit	2	6	Number of interviewed employees: 3
	6	subordinates	6	25	
Unit for Finance and Control of Technical Aid	1	head of the Unit	1	2	Number of Formal Interviews: 3
	1	subordinate	1	1	
Unit for Program implementation of International Aid	1	head of the Unit	1	0	Number of Informal Interviews: 0
	3	subordinates	3	2	
Unit for Monitoring International Help	3	subordinates	3	0	All of the interviewed employees were chosen by chance, regardless of their position
Unit for Programming of International Aid	1	head of the Unit	3	6	
	2	subordinates			

Results of participatory observations are not placed in the diagram because the character of this documentation was done in a way of written everyday reflections which are going to be presented in the reflection section of this report.

I planned my interviews with employees in a slightly different way to get more informal data. Despite having an earlier prepared interview guide, I was collecting information everyday, not only during a set time for interview. (This method was almost impossible to do with heads of the units because of their limited time) and once I got to know most of the people and they recognized my existence in the Department I started to talk with them everyday. I was gathering participatory observation and information all together and after couple of weeks I got into some conclusions which I am going to describe below.

I made about 20 formal interviews with employees from different units included in my department. I was trying to categorize information collected both in formal and informal way. It seems that informants have different perspectives depending on which unit they work in. They perceive priorities differently and do not share the same perspective on key-role issues, however when it comes to collaborate in order to fulfill all the requirements for the project, they try to work the most efficiently as a one “harmonized body”.

While interviewing the employees and the superiors, I had to change my role a bit, as a facilitator of the interview. Depends on a specific individual, once I was more challenging, another time less interventionist and allowing to discuss a bit more issues that were not that close connected to the questions asked in the interview guide. During the time of my internship and my research, I learned how to recognize and gather information, but also how

to review the data collected constantly, during everyday meetings with the staff of the department. Conducting interviews was pretty intuitive since I do not have that much experience in this area of study. However 'learning-by-doing' was a great experience of increasing both, skills as a facilitator and knowledge of the communication process within the specific groups.

During this work experience and the research I gained a knowledge and an understanding that internal communication is a powerful tool which can create a force and structure of all the groups in different dimensions.

When it comes to reflection on being a researcher it is important to say that it was the first time in my life when I did so many interviews in such a short period of time. The main concern was that questionnaire will not be clear enough for people, interviews will be too short and will not give full answers. Myself, I did prepared for the interviews by reading specialized literature about the Aid Program, however my knowledge about the specified strategies was not sufficient enough. Before each interview started I had given each person a short view on what that interview was going to be about . One of my questions, was considered by the most of interviewees as difficult one: Is there anything behind internal communication than just information? This question brought many opinions and discussions in the end of interview. After interviews I thought that I could go deeper into this question and focus more on different perceptions of the employees regarding for example their position in the Department, work experience etc, but the time for single case study was very limited.

After the first interview I felt more secure and it was easier to interview next respondents. Being a researcher was a process which brought so many different ideas and concepts - it is both challenging and gratifying task.

2.2.2 Qualitative Semi- Structured Interviews

In my work I used semi structured interview method. This means my interview was an open, individual interview [Flick. U; *An introduction to qualitative research*; 2002] and I started with more general questions to get more into details later on. Examples of the questions from the interview guide can be found in the table below [Figure 3.]. Most of my informants do not wish to be cited or signed by name therefore I am going to refer only to their position in the Department. I was trying to have very clear research proposal and stick to my main research question which was the internal communication strategy (while I was interviewing employees at the Ministry) and the situation of external cooperation between the Ministry and County Administrative Boards (while I was interviewing representative persons from this organization). Almost every interview needed follow up question to encourage interviewees to talk. Interviews at the Ministry were done face-to face and by telephone when it comes to CAB. As it was easier for me an interview script was used every time , consisting of a set of questions as a starting point to guide the interview more into details and personal feelings about the topic. I was trying to capture as much as possible what is actually interviewee thinking about my particular topic. I was following in depth the process of thinking, posing new questions after the first answers given by the persons.

Within my Department, I have interviewed two groups of employees: superiors and subordinates. Almost all the interviews have been scheduled before so I knew which informant I am going to interview the following day. This framework was easy to follow and since the beginning it helped to categorize information which have been collected. I have decided no to cite directly in this paper, information which have been gathered but compare them and analyze as independent sources of information (CAB, superiors and regular employees).

Figure 3. *Examples of questions from the questionnaire*

Q1. How would you define the communication process/strategy within the Department?
Q2. What tools are used in the communication strategy within the Department?
Q3. How do you perceive communication process within the Department?
Q4. How does the external communication with CABs look like, from the perspective of your Unit?

2.2.3 Telephone interviews

One way to contact administrators from County Administrative Boards was either via e-mail or telephone. From my supervisor at the department, I got a list of contacts and chose few of them randomly. I had difficulties to get in touch with representatives from CAB and in the end I managed to make three telephone interviews. I did not have the opportunity to visit CABs in other cities because of the time limits. In my opinion, even if I have had such a possibility, that would not influence a lot the final result. From my experience in the department, it takes much more time than one day to develop a general understanding of the process of communication.

2.2.4 Participatory observation

This section of the methodology used in my research helped, at the highest degree, to understand the process of internal – informal communication. I could recall many situations when a 'small talk' became a part of my research and brought something new in terms of internal communication. Direct participation and interaction in the 'environment' of the Department was a mile step in the process of gaining understanding on communication and insight view on the work of this institution. I got an opportunity to participate in the Monitoring Committee during the second week of my internship in the Ministry, which was evaluating few points of the Operational Program, including internal and external communication regardless this strategy. The table below [Figure 4.] presents a very short overview of one of the main 'thoughts' from particular day (those days are chosen by chance)

Date	Example of observation
15 th April	Atmosphere of unity, shared goals and cooperation
29 th April	Internal communication does not really affects the external communication. Internal strategy works well but there are problems with external relations regarding CAB
5 th May	Sometimes messages are misinterpreted but thanks to good relations between superiors and subordinates fast agreement is possible.

Figure 4. *An overview of notes from participatory observations*

It was a great experience to be a part of the work of the Department and after some time get a feeling of belonging to the “community of the unit”. Because of this experience I realized that often we take things for granted and do not put an effort to understand or change them.

Changing one's perspective through the interaction with others is a still on-going process of exchanging thoughts and experiences.

During my internship I had a lot possibilities but at the same time difficulties in conducting the research. Since my personal goal was to gain an insight view on how the institution works, and how does the communication in general work in practice, my interviewees were often confused with my aims and what I actually mean by asking questions about 'communication strategies'. I had to deal with many very personal opinions which I could not really include in my data because of high subjectivity and individuality. The field of my study – environmental communication – was a bit mysterious to most of my informants. After some time and many 'informal' conversations I managed to explain to most of the people what I actually work with, but I would not say that this made my work easier. Interviewees often were afraid that they do not give 'the right answers' for my questions, even though I ensured them several times that there is no such thing as good answer or best perspective and the point is to work with those different points of view and compare them with each other. I have made many assumptions before my research which somehow influenced further process and the way I organized my work.

The thing I would do differently if I had another opportunity to start again would be introducing myself to the stuff of the Department and my unit. I wish I could be more explicit and accurate in what I am aiming for and this is something that I did not handle well. In my opinion improving this step could have brought improvement in further steps because employees could get a general idea of my research and maybe their answers would be slightly different as well.

The most difficult thing for me were the interviews via telephones with the representatives from county administrative boards. All of them were very suspicious and I felt I have to force them to answer my questions. I think they did not feel secure enough to talk to me because of few basic things. First of all I informed them about my work and that I am calling from the Ministry. In my opinion they thought that I am going to evaluate the external communication which they have with the Ministry of Regional Development and when I explained that it is not my goal to evaluate but to understand, they became even more reserve. This situation is an result of only three interviews that I have made with those people. On the other hand it illustrates how the external communication works in practice and how "one-leveled" it is. County administrative board is mainly a receiver of the information and implementer of the goals included in the strategy. In case of misunderstandings the only existing way of communication is through the official letters or emails. There is no space for feedback meetings and it shows great weakness in this strategy.

3. Theoretical Framework

In this section, concepts used to analyze the collected material are going to be described. It is both the theory of symbolic interactionism and communication schemes which I used in order to categorize the material from interviews and observations.

3.1 Symbolic interactionism

Communication is an interaction which takes place in everyday life, it could be also described as a set of particular symbols, not only words but also gestures and actions. All those elements together create an unique process and influence all the further actions we might take. Therefore I have decided to use a methodological framework for my study such as symbolic interactionism. Charon claims that 'each individual depends on society for symbols; without other people each individual would be without a symbolic life and all the things that symbols

make possible'. Symbols are then used for communication - their meaning is social and each individual is meant for 'communication of meaning'. Those are elements crucial for the individuals in order to define our reality, make the human life and complex group life possible. [J. Charon, *Symbolic Interactionism*, 1995; p.55]. 'Symbol is the central concept of the whole perspective, it is a class of social objects' [J. Charon, *Symbolic Interactionism*; 1995, Chapter 4]. It can be used to represent, communicate and symbolize some things during interactions with other people. Effectiveness of communication depends on the ability of people to agree on the meanings of verbal and body gestures (nonverbal elements). Although words, acts, writing – are all considered symbols, the important thing is that they are used on purpose and communicated by that as well. Ernest Becker makes a distinction between symbols and signs. The main difference is that signs do not occur as a result of symbolic interaction and people react to them spontaneously. Symbols that individuals send, read, receive and respond to, are symbolic, since the mean is the same for both the sender and receiver. The importance of the symbol is uncontested. – 'it is through symbolic interaction with one another that we give the world meaning and develop the reality towards which we act'. [Herbert Blumer, 1969]. Symbols maintain the society, allow individual to socialize within the group through taking the role of other and their perspective. Symbols are indisputably connected with the language which we use as a tool in communication. It allows us to keep the information, think, solve problems, memorize things, create abstract reality – 'symbols are individual's eyes to the world'.

Individual human being is then described by J. Charon as 'an organism that interacts with others and with self; shaped by various combinations of heredity and environment; a dynamic being in constantly happening social interactions'. [J. Charon, *Symbolic Interactionism*, 1995; Chapter 6]. I think that his theory, shows how different but also similar we are, and the one thing we all have, in common is that every individual shares different perspective and perceive things from another point of view. 'There is no way that any individual can see all aspects of any situation simultaneously' [J. Charon, *Symbolic Interactionism*, 1995; Chapter 1]. Perspectives change constantly and complete knowledge about the social environment is not possible, so there are often misinterpretations, mistakes in interactions and social behavior. The interpretation of the same situation depends on different perspectives - people refer to other mental structures within interpretation of human behavior or observed events.

According to symbolic interactionism it is also mentioned that cause of the act comes from decisions and definition of the situation which are on the other hand influenced by interaction with 'self' and others [J. Charon, 1995, Chapter 9]. In the process of communication, the crucial thing is to take the role of the other and to understand 'one's mind', then develop a new perspective and knowledge about this action. It can be noticed when it comes to vertical communication mentioned below, in the company, or as it is in my case, in the governmental institution - without 'stepping out' and putting oneself in somebody's else position internal communication, especially at this level could not be achieved. To take the role of the other means to 'play' different role in the social interaction.

It can be seen how each single interaction within the communication process is important. To observe how it works in practice was a big part of my research.

3.2 Internal Communication at the Department of Aid Programs

Communication in the organization includes formulation and interpretation of the communicates but also non-verbal dimension - the circumstances of transmission, the accompanying gestures and behavior of the speaker and the hearer. To be aware of the those different factors is an important ground for cooperation [A. Hejda, *Komunikacja Wewnętrzna*, Warszawa 2005].

3.2.1 Vertical communication

This communication strategy could be categorized as a vertical, because it functions in one dimension: between subordinates and supervisors and opposite direction.

In my research I interviewed four out of six directors of particular units within my Department. All of them claimed that communication strategy is - for them - a set of rules that they follow in order to communicate with their subordinates. “ I do believe that in an institution like that (Ministry) specific paths of communication need to be follow, so we do not work in chaos and avoid misunderstandings” – says the head of the Unit for Coordination of Technical Help. Common things which I noticed were for example: to choose appropriate words and forms of expression to individuals, which executes an order; explain confusing or ambiguous elements; present an attitude of openness and willingness to hear opinions from others, use the advices and guidance; treat everybody with respect, regardless to the position; inform subordinates of any plans concerning themselves, the institution or the department (to the appropriate extent). Head of the Unit for Finance and Control of Technical Help says: “It should be our concern to create a transparent stream of information, however misunderstandings happen all the time”. (Interview from 27th April). The role of the head of the unit is to acquire and provide the team information about the impacts of any structural or personal changes within the department.

It is important to highlight that informants from every unit described the general rules they use in everyday situations in a face-to-face contact, as an answer for my question about any specific kind of communication strategy. Interviewee from the Unit for Finance and Control of Technical Aid admitted that it gives her an illusions of a frame or zone where she feels comfortable: “ I try to stick to the general guideline of communication which we have created in both formal and informal way within our department. There are just some general rules and manners that you use in everyday situations with your subordinates” (Interview from 27th April).

I put together information that was repeated in answers to my questionnaires and those were following: it is important to give a feedback to your direct supervisor so he/she knows about the development of the work; give a feedback about opinions, understanding and realization of the assignments, signalize all the new facts or factors that might influence work of specific individual; mention all the doubts or queries regarding formal side of one’s work. For all of my informants clear boundaries on job description are very important and helpful in their work and they are satisfied how it is handled in the department. Employee at the Unit from Program Implementation: “What I really think is the most important, is a good cooperation between different units within our Department. It is a challenging task to avoid problems and shorten the time of reaction. Sometimes it takes much time to receive answers when it is impossible to meet personally, and this can be frustrating” (Interview from 4th May).

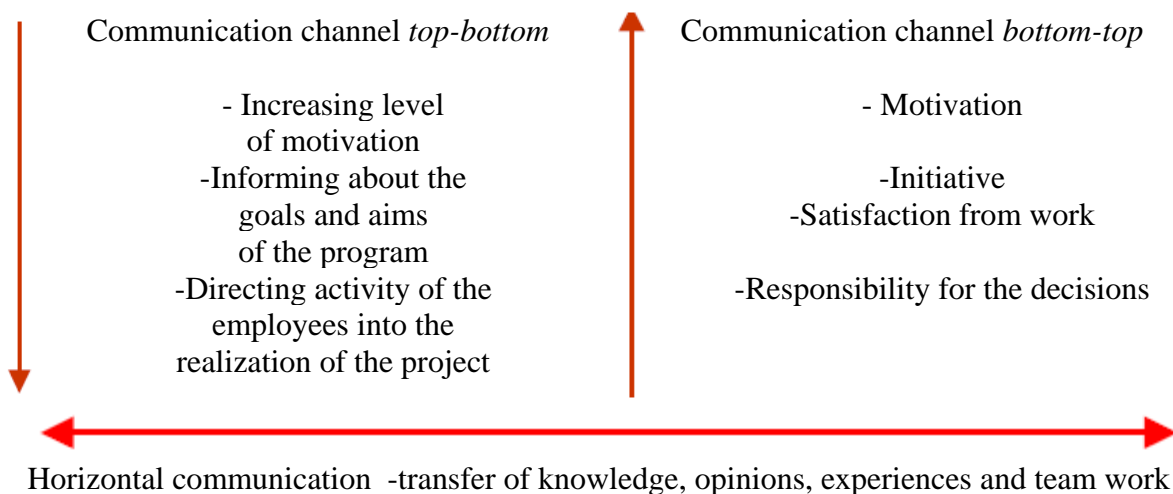
It is important to mention that my whole Department (especially the unit where I was working) was a bit unique when it comes to diversity of employees because most of them are in their mid 30s. Since the first day I noticed that there is no big distance between the head of the unit and his subordinates, everybody calls each other by name, which is usually not common in work places. All those factors are major benefits because people share similar life experiences, have similar job experience and started to work in the department in more or less the same time – all those factors contribute to well-working communication process.

3.2.2 Horizontal communication

Apart from the vertical dimension, professional contacts have also horizontal level driven primarily during group work, teamwork, within a single department (projects, tasks), and during meetings or discussions. Some of my informants mentioned about communication strategy which is necessary to carry out those types of situation. This could be for example selection of a person responsible for implementing and coordinating the tasks, which could also collect and transmit all the information from the working environment and the team. Almost all of my informants claim that, often the success of collective action determines how appropriate the transfer of information between individuals or departments works. Interviewed employee at the Unit for Coordination of Technical Help: “I really appreciate meetings which we have with the head of our Unit, this is a major benefit for our work because everybody can share any doubts they have regarding specific assignments or projects. I wish we had more time to divide our work and work in teams, but at least for now, this is impossible”. Because of the communication, the work quality of a colleague or friend can - despite appearances - depend on single individual and his/her actions. Informal interview at the Unit for Finance and Control of Technical Aid (two employees): “Although it all seems like office work it can be very stressful because our work strictly depends on what other Units decide and do. We have to control all the budget they spend on promotion, communication and projects co-financed with the EU. If we make a mistake in our calculations, it makes the whole work doubled”.

Figure 2. presents the simple schema of those two types of communication processes. Vertical communication is divided into two channels – by that I meant two possible ways of communicating between superiors and subordinates.

Figure 2. Internal communication within the department



4. Empirical findings

In this section I am going to describe an existing document for the communication within the Ministry of Regional Development and between the Ministry and County Administrative Boards. This document is stated by the law and called the Communication Policy. Further on a specific communication strategy regarding the Operational Program – Innovative Economy for the years 2007-2013 is described. Both of those documents create the theoretical

framework on which I developed further understanding and analysis regarding communication process in the external and internal environment of this particular institution.

4.1 Communication policy

According to the regulations [Communication Strategy of Operational Program- Innovative Economy 2007-2013] communication strategy in the institution should establish, implement and maintain procedures such as:

- a) internal communication between different levels and departments of organizations;
- b) receive, document and respond to relevant communication from external parties interested in the work of the institution.

Communication policy requires that the organization has established, implemented and maintain a procedure for communicating information related to the significant environmental aspects, both within the organization, between different organizational units, and outside the organization. Communication procedure should include obtaining, documenting and responding to information provided by stakeholders, including employees. Effective communication process provides opportunities for all employees to demonstrate their creativity and motivation to become more involved in environmental activities. The procedure for external communication must allow all interested parties to express their views, comments or complaints. The information obtained should be taken into account when assessing the organization's environmental aspects. What is more some solutions are available to the public such as telephone numbers for reporting of complains and requests by the concerned parties or individuals. Communication policy requires the active participation of workers, which is a prerequisite and a key to continual improvement in the work of institutions and implementing operational programs. Therefore, methods of internal communication should ensure that the information from the outgoing leadership were transferred to the lower-level employees, and that any comments and views of employees were reported to the appropriate people at the management level. Communication policy highlights the importance of shared knowledge and experience within employees - each level of organizational work is an important source of information.

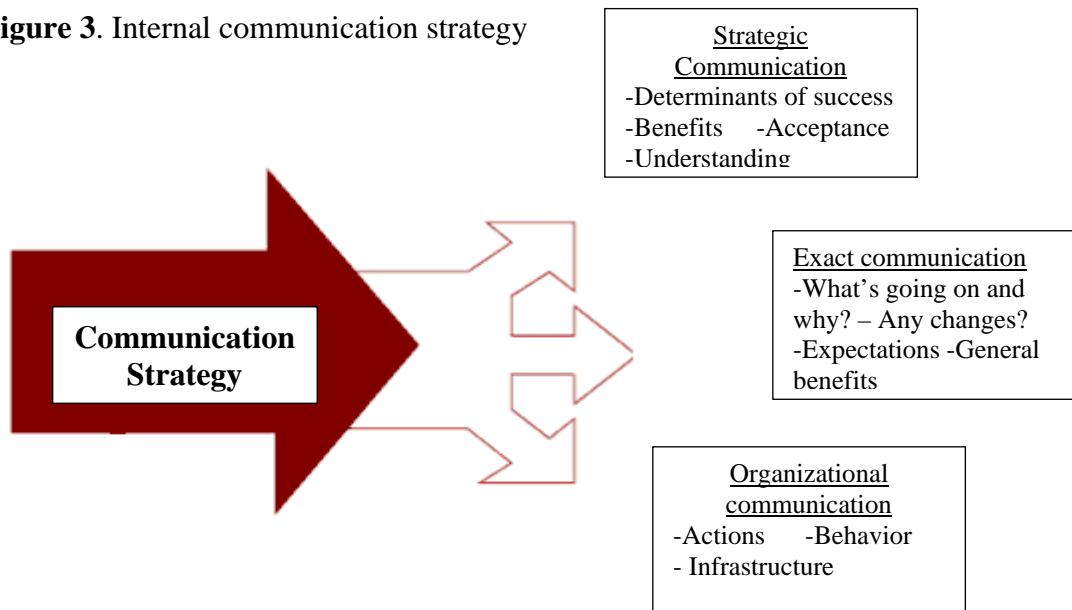
4.2 Communication strategy

Communication strategy regarding Operational program is described in the document "*Communication strategy for the Operational Program – Innovative Economy for the years 2007-2013*". The document is divided into three main parts: strategic, organizational and exact communication, which is presented in a graphic way in the schema below (Figure 3). This document determines as well frames for external communication between the department and county administrative boards responsible for implementing the strategy included in the paper. Communication strategy is analyzed once a year and if there is a need for any corrections it is being updated. Communication and cooperation with county administrative boards involved in the tasks of information - promotion and training under the Operational Program is based mainly on participation in the work of the Steering Group. Members from different counties which manage implementation of the strategy are called for the meetings. In addition, cooperation takes into account the exchange of information during trainings, conferences, seminars or emails.

Within the department the monitor and evaluation work is carried out four times during the year. The verifier checks the effectiveness of communication and only when internal or external communication is described as insufficient, documentation and procedures are taken into consideration for appropriate action. Means of communication within the organization

are often described in other procedures system. An important element in the process of interpersonal communication within the program is receiving feedback. Internal communication strategy is based on: receiving accurate and objective feedback on the evaluation of the implementation and management of the Operational Program, obtain information about the strengths and weaknesses of the institutional system of implementation and management of the OP, improving efficiency by providing opportunities to confront the assessment received from at least three independent sources, an objective assessment of training needs, training and improvement of professional staff, collecting information about potential difficulties and barriers in achieving the desired efficiency.

Figure 3. Internal communication strategy



Strategic communication aims to strengthen the acceptance for the organization's activities, understand of needs for the change and development strategies but also to raise awareness of what it means for a company, its employees and customers through the prism of expectations, groups and individual benefits.

Tactical communication is a system of communicating any changes that occur in the institution - in terms of planning, processes or technologies. It informs about things which are changing and why, how it will affect any action taken by the group or individuals

Organizational communication reflects the fact that the institution is oriented towards administrators and at the same time is aware that effectiveness of any action depends on them. It determines such issues as building structures and relationships between different hierarchical levels and creates the desired behavior or development of individual employees. The sense of identity and positive relationships within the departments enable to achieve a sense of importance of each task which is entrusted, regardless of one's position, and motivates to take specific actions. Thus, internal communication encourage self-improvement, education and knowledge. Acceptance and understanding , supported by two-way internal communication builds a sense of common purpose that motivates and mobilizes to work. However, even the best-developed communication system does not provide the expected results if the relationship between the sender and receiver of information is not build on trust. Hence, it is important that the process is based on the principles of mutual understanding and honesty.

4.3 Terminology

I have developed further understanding of my case study based on the theoretical approaches described above, observations and interviews presented in the previous section. Hence, I wanted to combine empirical data with the theoretical framework and categorize it in order to analyze the material. First of all I decided to focus on the internal communication within the Department. I defined *vertical* and *horizontal* communication as two basic ways of transmitting data between the employees within different units. Those analytical terms define formal communication processes and are possible between superiors and subordinates (*vertical*) or exist in a homogenous group – only superiors or subordinates (*horizontal*). [E. Lepkowska, G. Kostecki; *Komunikacja Interpersonalna*, 2006]. What is more, if those two forms of communication represent the formal style, it is important to mention that *informal* strategy is present and important as well. My findings regarding participatory observations can be found in the section of informal communication. Moreover, I defined two categories which are mixed (formal and informal communication is possible at the same time) such as *Intranet* and *Bulletin*. All of those concepts are going to be described in the next chapter.

5. Analysis

In this section empirical data is combined with terminology in order to explain findings from the research. In order to make an analysis of both, internal and external communication it is important to consider different dimensions of this process. According to symbolic interactionism, observing in depth the use of symbols within specific group of actors – as it is in my case – big group of employees at the specific department, it becomes possible to gain a better and deeper understanding of the situation. Individuals change their perspective throughout the process; take an active role in telling others who we they and control their actions in order to give off the image that they want. Charon writes: 'the presentation of self in situations reminds us one again that human beings are symbol users'. [J. Charon, *Symbolic Interactionism*, 1995; Chapter 3]

Internal communication at the Department of Aid Programs is perceived, by the sample of employees, as an important and necessary tool in everyday work. Due to analysis coming out from the interviews, it has been categorized into two groups and classified as vertical and horizontal communication. Vertical communication is characterized by the hierarchical structure and functions in the top- bottom dimension which means receiving and forming messages between superiors and their subordinates. From this perspective, communication can be described as a set of rules which should be followed in order to communicate with co-workers. Within the Department the attitude of openness and willingness for cooperation is a common characteristic, as well as face-to-face contacts and meetings. The internal communication strategy is subjected to the rules presented in the communication policy and to the communication strategy from the Operational Program. Apart from this, horizontal communication is an important part of the process. This category includes transfer of knowledge, opinions and experiences within project groups, team work, employees from different units within the Department. What is more, internal communication is carried out by the Department in the forms of informal meetings, intranet and bulletins.

4.1.3 Informal meetings

There are a lot both informal and formal meetings in the department in which I was participating. During formal appointments not only people from the department were present, but they were meeting employees from the whole Ministry and also people from other Governmental Institutions from the whole country. I had an opportunity to take part in the Monitor Committee which gathers every 3 months to evaluate the work of particular departments and operational programs. During formal meetings there is a visible division for “headmasters” and “others” which become two separate groups who do not really communicate with each other. Situation comes back to normal when employees come back to their units after such a meeting.

Some of my informants mentioned that there is lack of any organized association for employees (it is a common tool in many organizations in Poland, especially in governmental institutions, to create an detached association available for any employee) which could be not only a place of internal contacts, but also a bridge and a tool for communication with the external environment and superiors.

4.1.4 Intranet

In the Ministry of Regional Development functions an internal web called LOTUS where all the information about employees, number of telephones, messages, incoming mails can be found. This web of hundreds connections functions pretty well and everybody use it everyday. All of my informants, both heads of units and regular employees admit that it is the fastest and one of the most efficient ways of communicating and be up-to-date with others within the same building. Intranet has more impersonal form of internal communication but it is a good procedure to inform everybody at the same time. On the other hand some of the employees mention personal contacts and meetings as a better way of cooperation, which might allow to avoid misunderstandings, few of my informants claimed that it is also a kind of social activity which integrates people.

4.1.5 Bulletin

Except Intranet, in the Ministry exists one other tool which is used as a device for the communication strategy. It is a bulletin which is written and published by my Department every two months. This document is used to inform about the ongoing tasks, projects, strategies for different programs.

5. External Communication with County Administrative Boards

The County Administrative Board in Poland is an governmental organization which exists in every county. It cooperates with central-level authorities such as Ministry of Regional Development, Ministry of Infrastructure, Environmental Protection Agency and others. The Board is responsible for implementing national goals and strategies into the local level, managing funds from Operational Program, local projects and assignments. Representatives from County Administrative Boards have both direct and indirect contact with the Ministry. The sample of employees were asked about this cooperation in terms of communicating Operational Program strategy. Interviews with representatives from County Administrative Boards have been done via telephone.

5.1 Weaknesses in the communication strategy

From the few interviews that I have made I got general idea that there is a lot space for improvement in the external communication process between the administrators from the Ministry and employees at CAB.

All of my interviewees were aware about the communication strategy defined by the *Communication Policy* and the *Communication Strategy for the Operational Program – Innovative Economy for the years 2007-2013* (chapter 4.1 and 4.2 of this paper). I classified the problems mentioned the most into the following points:

- *contradictory messages*

My informants claim that the situation which happens quite often is receiving mixed messages by the CAB from specific units of the Department of Aid Programs. Telephone interview with the CAB administrator - 26th April: “We appreciate all the support which we get from the Ministry but to work efficient, we need a clear communication. We are responsible for implementing most of the regional projects but how can it be done if we hear mixed messages? We receive so many different dispositions that mistakes and misunderstandings function on daily basis”. Representatives from CAB claim that this situation is caused by the lack of communication and cooperation between the units. On the other hand employees from the Department say that this situation happens because of lack of communication between employees within this institution. This is the ground for potential conflict since both of the sides involved in this situation are ensured about “their right point of view”.

Some of my informants at the Department mentioned interesting thing, that this lack of coordination might be also caused by the “overall attitude” of CAB. Since CAB receives funds and finance support for their projects, implement goals and strategies, it is also carefully monitored and observed by the Ministry. This sometimes cause frustration and results in the situation where relations can not be build on trust since the beginning.

County Administrative Boards often perceive received messages as complicated and not heterogeneous. Telephone interview with the CAB administrator – 28th April: “I understand that each department in the Ministry has the number of Units. But is certainly their problem to control every message which is send to us. The situation which happens most of the time is that we get one formal message and when we write back or call, to confirm the information which happens to be not up-to-date or sent by mistake. This is really frustrating”.

It is important to mention that there are two existing channels of transmitting information when it comes to external communication – formal and informal. Both of them can be also either oral or written. This can easily create misunderstandings and the administrators from CAB cannot be always certain that specific message comes from high level authority.

All of the informants admit that what they think, is the main reason of problems in external communication is differences between units within the Department, diversified interests between units and always a pressure connected to time constraints.

- *distance*

Three informants which I was able to interview are situated in a big geographical distance (c.a 200-300 km from Warsaw). The problem which they always face when it comes to communicate and cooperate with the Department of Aid Programs is that there are hardly any personal meetings. Although Department organize the Monitoring Committee twice a year it is not enough to deal with many issues and definitely more personal contact is needed.

- coordination and cooperation

From CAB perspective cooperation with the Department of Aid Programs does not function as well as it should. Representatives from the counties admit that they appreciate all the economic support they get to develop new projects, but also because of that they are depended and subordinated to the commands coming from the Department. What is more, important factor in their communication is receiving too many (or too less) messages and guidelines. CAB claims that this long term goals or strategies, especially when it comes to the Operational Program – Innovative Economy which they take active part in, are difficult for them to work with. Often they do not have the authority to decide and take specific actions which leads back to communication with the Department and makes the whole process longer and more stressful for both sides.

Administrators from CAB mentioned as well the fact of high rotation of employees in the Department which influence level of efficiency in the cooperation between those two authorities. A lot of new employees have been hired during last two years which replaced older ones. This creates a dysfunction of shared knowledge. My interviewees from CAB claim that a situation which often takes place is that their questions stay without answer from the side of Department. This might be caused by mentioned “rotation” of the stuff within the units and time needed for consultations with more experienced employees or superiors of the units. However this situation is slowly changing and CAB hopes that in future cooperation with the Department will be improved.

5.2 Possible improvement solutions

Based on my observation there is a failure to develop those relationships in external communication with CAB. It is caused first of all by the geographical distance and lack of time for additional meetings – factors which are almost impossible to change. It is also caused by the lack of concrete tools which could support external communication and which on the other hand function well within the Department. By those tools I mean bulletins, spreadsheets or conferences. More specifically, such devices would help administrators at CAB to shape a common basis, a framework for more efficient cooperation and perspectives for the future in the management of the projects and implementation of the strategies.

Both employees at the Department and administrators from CAB wish to have more personal meetings in the future. They also mention practical guideline (apart from existing one which is more the law guideline) which could be created in order to work faster and more efficient with the projects. CAB, although it has the local-level authority would like to be more independent in the future in terms of managing local strategies and funds from EU. So far CAB has no possibility to influence the work of the Department.

The interviews show that, although CAB and the Ministry in general share the same goal – regional development, they use different tools to achieve it. Local-level authorities see the solution in acting locally and implementing more short term strategies. On the other hand the Department in interested is long term planning and fulfilling central level requirements according to strict aims of the Operational Program. There are ongoing discussions about this problem which were for example brought up by the Secretary of State and heads of the units during the Monitoring Committee. In spite of this discussions and incoming reports of evaluations nothing has changed yet. My proposition on solutions for at least part of the existing problems would be first of all to organize “workshops” with the representatives from the Department and CAB employees where they would have an arena to express their thoughts, doubts and ideas regarding the Project. Those participatory meetings could be a good tool and opportunity for both formal and informal meetings, it might be a chance to

create closer connections, a starter to build a “web of knowledge” which would conclude in improved external communication.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to investigate how does the internal communication works in practice within the Department of Aid Programs and how does it look like when it comes to external communication between the Department and the County Administrative Boards.

My goal was to connect the use of different methods such as participatory observation, building a questionnaire and collection of the data to gain and analyze the knowledge of this research. The main source of those findings was an ability to get an internship in one of the units of the Department and also contact administrators from CAB. Through observation, participation in meetings and formal or informal conversation with the employees I was hoping to create somehow a picture of the Department – the web of connections, relations but first of all, internal communication between the employees.

From a theoretical perspective it is stated that communication is an interaction created with the use of different symbols which all together influence human action and shape other’s perspectives - develop our own interpretations of the particular issue.

When it comes to decide what happens that interaction takes place, symbolic communication is a factor of importance. It is human action which occurs through the use of symbols and should be also interpreted this way. The result of this process might be both taking role of the other or change of the perspective but, what is most important, is shared knowledge. Therefore, there are no doubts that symbols play significant role in the communication process. In the first section – problem formulation, I assumed that the hierarchical structure of the Ministry of Regional Development would be also a dominant style in the communication. Those assumption had confirmed while working there and gathering the material from the research but also reveled other factors which gave broader picture of this case study.

Internal communication, enables to understand and develop a positive attitude towards the institution and it has a direct impact on the quality and effectiveness in external communication with county administrative boards or outer environment such as other ministries, institutions or private beneficiaries The Department of Aid Programs perceives internal communication strategy as an important and necessary tool in the area of public administration within the Ministry. It is confirmed by the awareness of the employees, regarding communication strategy and communication policy. It can be also noticed in different actions taken by the Department such as meetings, messages spread through intranet, informal and formal discussions. Without employees who actively participate in the work of the organization it is impossible to implement the goals and strategies. Interesting thing coming out from my research is that in spite of efficient system of internal communication, external communication does not work that well and needs a lot of improvements.

6.1 Additional Reflections

In order to develop better cooperation and understanding, internal communication can be improved in different ways, mentioned earlier in this paper. First of all there is a need for independent association which could have possibility to gather employees and create a 'bridge' between them and higher hierarchical levels of administrators. This would help to increase understanding but also could be a tool to avoid complex conflicts.

There is a lot of space for improvements regarding external communication and relation between the Department and County Administrative Boards. So far this process does not function well. Although there are existing documents for the communication strategy, it looks different in practice. First of all, communication can not be 'one-leveled' as it was mentioned before in this paper. The crucial thing is to give and receive feedback. This could be achieved by organizing feedback meetings or conferences involving administrators from CAB and from the Ministry. The external communication could be improved by creating a guideline, mentioned in the section 6.2 of this paper. So far there is no possibility to give more authority to County Administrative Boards, however CABs should have an opportunity to express their needs. This action could strengthen their cooperation and understanding on their shared goals. Effective management of elements of identity and communication within the organization builds loyalty. My observation is that an employee who feels responsible for the organization, can become its 'spokesman'. It can be noticed whether when it comes to interpersonal relationships within the internal or outside environment, what is more an individual can demonstrate the initiative and commitment in the improvement, understanding goals and values.

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