

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND MANAGEMENT BY OBJECTIVES IN SPORTS PROFILE INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Effective communication is required not only in interpersonal/human relationships but also in a successful management. In the real world, there is no organization without good communication.

Since the acceptance of "management" as a separate body of knowledge over a half century ago, no management tool has had such a pervasive impact on organizations as the management by objectives.

In this article, a cross-sectional study was conducted using the survey method based on a questionnaire with 24 items (10 items for the variable internal communication; 10 items for the variable management by objectives and 4 items for demographic data: gender, age, city and work institutions).

The main objective of this study is to show what kind of connection there is between the variable internal communication and the variable management by objectives among teachers from high schools with sports program and the teachers from faculties of physical education and sports in the Eastern side of Romania (Moldova Region). We also wanted to see if there is a difference between internal communication among high school teachers compared to university teachers. The same aspect of the difference was analyzed in the case of the management by objectives variable.

The study has 127 validated questionnaires that were completed by 80 teachers working in eight high schools with sports program and 47 teachers working in four faculties of physical education and sports in the Eastern side of Romania.

Keywords: *communication, educational institutions, management, physical education, sports.*

Introduction

The aim of this study is to show what kind of connection there is between the variable internal communication (IC) and the variable management by objectives (MBO) among teachers of high schools with sports programs and teachers of faculties of physical education and sports in the Eastern side of Romania (Region Moldova).

Defining the variable Internal Communication (IC)

It is not possible to have good interpersonal/human relationships without communication. On the other hand effective communication is required not only for interpersonal/human relationships but for a good and successful business (Spaho, 2011).

Managers have long recognized the importance of IC. However, it is seen from the perspective of management rather than the employee. As Welch and Jackson (2007) argue, “research into employee preferences for channel and content of internal corporate communication is required to ensure it meets employees’ needs”. This is echoed by Uusi-Rauva and Nurkka (2010) who assert that “little research has focused on finding out what employees consider important in the internal *expert communication process*”.

IC, often perceived as a synonym for intra-organizational communication, is quite often equated with the employee communication inside of an organization (Putnam & Poole, 2008).

The main objective of IC is to inform the employees about the objectives and policies of the institution and to help them understand their tasks, obligations, and merits within the institution. IC (managers – employees) when open – thus incorporating listening and feedback and facilitating decision-making – constructs and maintains relationships (Mazzei, 2014).

Defining the variable Management by Objectives (MBO)

Public service institutions particularly need objectives and concentration of efforts on goals and results – that is management. These are, of course, precisely the needs management by objectives and self-control (MBO) promises to satisfy. But the same reasons which make MBO potentially so productive for the public service institution also make it only too easy for the institution to mistake MBO procedures for the substance of both management and objectives. Indeed, they may encourage the fatal error of mis using MBO as a substitute for thinking and decision making. Therefore, the administrator in the public service institution needs a “users’guide” (Drucker, 1976).

A management program may be ineffective because it is not fully implemented and not necessarily because the organizational process behind

the program is faulty. The key point in the program implementation is the extent of top-management involvement in the MBO program (Rodgers & Hunter, 1992).

The key aspects of management activities are the motivation and the development of the employees, and the effective managerial behaviour includes interaction and communication with subordinates. The management by objectives (MBO) emphasizes that both superiors and subordinates jointly define performance goals, and coordinate their efforts towards the goal attainment (Konradt, Hertel & Schmook, 2003).

MBO can be summarized as a group of management techniques with an emphasis on three components: setting of goals, participation, and feedback on task fulfilment (McConkie, 1979). These three basic components account for high motivation, performance, and employees job satisfaction.

Methodology

Participants and design

127 respondents participated in this study (54 females and 73 males), with a mean age of 44.82 years ($SD = \pm 7.15$ years; see Table 1). They are teachers and come from twelve sports institutions (four faculties of physical education and sports and eight high schools with sports program) in the Eastern side of Romania, Region of Moldova (cities: Suceava, Botosani, Piatra Neamt, Iasi, Bacau, Vaslui, Focsani, Galati; see Table 2).

Table 1. The gender and age of the people introduced in the study

| | | Frequency | Percent | Mean Age | Std. Dev. Age | Std. Error Mean Age | Median Age | Mode Age | Min Age | Max Age | Range Age |
|-------|--------|-----------|---------|----------|---------------|---------------------|------------|----------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Valid | Female | 54 | 42.5% | 45.33 | 7.516 | 1.023 | 45.50 | 45 | 29 | 63 | 34 |
| | Male | 73 | 57.5% | 44.44 | 6.902 | 0.808 | 45.00 | 44 | 28 | 64 | 36 |
| | Total | 127 | 100.0% | 44.82 | 7.154 | 0.635 | 45.00 | 45 | 28 | 64 | 36 |

Of the 127 respondents, 80 (63%) have employment contracts in high schools with a sports program, and 47 (37%) have employment contracts with physical education and sports faculties. The research subjects have a minimum of five years of experience and they are employed for an indefinite period (see Table 2).

The research method used to conduct this study was the questionnaire survey method. The questionnaires were sent to the sports institutions employees by email with the consent of their managers (directors, deans).

Table 2. Cities and environment (high school or university)from which the respondents come

| Town/City | High School | University | High School + University | Percent |
|--------------|-------------|------------|--------------------------|---------|
| Suceava | 10 | 11 | 21 | 16.5 |
| Botosani | 10 | 0 | 10 | 7.9 |
| Piatra Neamt | 10 | 0 | 10 | 7.9 |
| Iasi | 10 | 12 | 22 | 17.3 |
| Bacau | 10 | 12 | 22 | 17.3 |
| Vaslui | 10 | 0 | 10 | 7.9 |
| Focsani | 10 | 0 | 10 | 7.9 |
| Galati | 10 | 12 | 22 | 17.3 |
| Total | 80 | 47 | 127 | 100% |

Measurement of variables

To measure the MBO variable we used a questionnaire as a data collection tool (Latham & Locke, 1979; Locke & Latham, 1984; 1990; Konradt, et al., 2003). The original questionnaires contained over thirty items. In this research we used ten items for the variable MBO, these are presented in the table below (see Table 3). In this research MBO is used as a dependent variable.

Table 3. Items used to measure the MBO variable

| |
|--|
| 1) I have specific, clear goals that I pursue at work. |
| 2) My Director / Dean allows me to have something to say in deciding how I will proceed to implement the objectives. |
| 3) If I reach my goals, my chances of promotion are higher. |
| 4) During the performance evaluation period, my director / dean focuses on problem solving rather than criticism. |
| 5) I feel proud when I receive feedback indicating that I have achieved my goals |
| 6) My director / dean clearly explains the reasons behind the achievement of the objectives. |
| 7) The work teams in the institution where I am employed work together to achieve the objectives. |
| 8) My goals are too difficult. |
| 9) The goals in my institution are used more to punish me than to help me do my job well. |
| 10) The goals I have at work make me ignore certain important aspects of my job. |

The study participants responded to the items in this variable using a four-point scale (1-never; 2-almost never; 3-almost always, 4-always). In the specialized literature (Locke & Latham, 1990; Konradt, et al., 2003) the scale has five points (1-almost never to 5-almost always, where point 3 is neutral). The Romanian respondents tend to tick point 3 to be in the neutral situation, which is why this value 3 was removed from this research. The internal consistency of the items in this MBO variable is very good, Cronbach's Alpha = 0.92 (see Table 5).

To measure the variable IC we used the same tool – the questionnaire. In the current research we used ten items for the IC variable, these are presented in the table below and they have been adapted from the specialized literature (Locke & Latham, 1990; Van den Bosch, Elving & De Jong, 2006; Konradt, et al., 2003; Grandien & Johansson, 2012; Ruck & Welch, 2012). In this research IC is used as an independent variable.

Table 4. Items used to measure the IC variable

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- 1) I know the way of internal communication and the accepted channels as good for an effective and efficient communication within the institution.
 - 2) My Director/Dean allows me to have something to say in adapting internal communication to my personal needs.
 - 3) If my mode of communication is as formal / official as possible my chances of promotion are higher.
 - 4) During the performance evaluation period, my director / dean focuses more on formal communication than on informal communication.
 - 5) I feel proud when I receive feedback indicating that I have had a good level of communication.
 - 6) My director / dean clearly explains to me why internal communication has an important role in institutional management.
 - 7) In general there is a good communication between the employees of the institution which leads to the achievement of the organizational objectives.
 - 8) The content of the internal communication and the channels through which the communication is made cause me a state of discomfort.
 - 9) Internal communication in the institution where I am employed is used more to punish me than to help me do my job well.
 - 10) The internal communication within the institution causes me to ignore certain important aspects of my work.
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Study participants responded to the items in this variable using the same four-point scale (1-never; 2-almost never; 3-almost always, 4-always). The internal consistency of the items within this IC variable has a very good level, Cronbach's Alpha = 0.93 (see Table 5).

Research hypotheses

There is a difference of IC in high schools with sports program compared to the faculties of physical education and sports.

There is a difference of MBO in high schools with sports program compared to the faculties of physical education and sports.

There is a positive relationship between IC and MBO in schools with a sports profile in the Eastern side of Romania.

Results

The quantitative analysis of the data obtained in the research was performed through the SPSS 20 software. The statistical indicators calculated in this research are: the internal consistency of the variables – *Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient*; the difference of the averages between two independent samples – *Independent-Samples T Test*; the correlation between two variables – *Correlate Bivariate (Pearson and Spearman Coefficient)*; the regression between two variables – *Regression linear*.

The Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was used to evaluate the internal consistency of the items in each variable, meaning how these items tend to measure the same thing (internal construct analysis). In the specialized literature (Cohen, 1988; Malhotra, 1996; George & Mallery, 2003; Schumacker & Lomax, 2004) it is recommended that each item have a Cronbach's Alpha value over 0.6 and the variable (construct) as a whole should have the value this coefficient over 0.7. In our research the above specifications have been applied/followed, the variables in this study have a Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient over 0.9 (see Table 5).

Table 5. Internal consistency of variables

| Variable | Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
|----------|------------------|--|------------|
| MBO | .924 | .928 | 10 |
| IC | .937 | .940 | 10 |

Hypothesis testing

The first two research hypotheses were tested using *the t-Test for independent samples*. This test is used when the two sets of variables come from two different samples of people (high school employees and university employees).

Testing Hypothesis 1: *There is a difference of IC in high schools with sports program compared to the faculties of physical education and sports.*

The average for the values of the IC variable of the teachers coming from the high schools with sports program ($M = 2.54$; $SD = \pm 0.85$) is not significantly higher ($t = 0.19$; $DF = 125$; two-tailed $p = 0.84$ – the significance threshold is higher than 0.05) than the average of teachers from the faculties of physical education and sports ($M = 2.51$; $SD = \pm 0.79$; see Table 6).

Table 6. Independent Samples Test – variable IC

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|-------------|-----------------------------|---|-------------|------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|---|--------|
| | | <i>F</i> | <i>Sig.</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>Df</i> | <i>Sig.</i> (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper | |
| Variable IC | Equal variances assumed | .702 | .404 | .199 | 125 | .843 | .03048 | .15321 | -.27274 | .33369 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | .203 | 102.83 | .839 | .03048 | .15004 | -.26709 | .32804 |

These statistical calculations lead to the conclusion that hypothesis 1 of this research is invalidated and the null hypothesis is accepted: *there is no difference between the IC averages for the two samples (high school and university) in schools with a sports profile in the Eastern side of Romania.*

Testing Hypothesis 2: *There is a difference of MBO in high schools with sports program compared to the faculties of physical education and sports.*

The average for the values of the MBO variable of the teachers coming from the high schools with sports program ($M = 2.49$; $SD = \pm 0.79$) is not significantly higher ($t = 0.10$; $DF = 125$; two-tailed $p = 0.91$ – the significance threshold is higher than 0.05) than the average of teachers from the faculties of physical education and sports ($M = 2.48$; $SD = \pm 0.73$). The difference is statistically insignificant at the significance level of 5% (two-tailed) and the 95% confidence interval (see Table 7).

These statistical calculations lead to the conclusion that hypothesis 2 of this research is invalidated and the null hypothesis is accepted: *there is no difference between the MBO averages for the two samples (high school and university) in schools with a sports profile in Eastern side of Romania.*

Table 7. Independent Samples Test – variable MBO

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | | | | |
|--------------|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|--------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|---|--------|
| | | F | Sig. | t | DF | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | | | Lower | Upper | |
| Variable MBO | Equal variances assumed | .719 | .398 | .109 | 125 | .914 | .01540 | .14179 | -.26522 | .29602 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | .111 | 103.12 | .912 | .01540 | .13872 | -.25972 | .29052 |

Testing Hypothesis 3: *There is a positive relationship between IC and MBO in schools with a sports profile in Eastern side of Romania.*

The testing of the third hypothesis was performed through bivariate correlation (*Pearson and Spearman Coefficient*). Through bivariate correlation you can see what kind of connection there is between two variables (positive or negative) and what is its intensity (low, medium or high).

Table 8. Pearson and Spearman Coefficient

| Pearson Coefficient | | Variable IC | Variable MBO |
|----------------------|-----------------|-------------|--------------|
| Variable IC | Correlation | 1 | .718** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 127 | 127 |
| Variable MBO | Correlation | .718** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 127 | 127 |
| Spearman Coefficient | | Variable IC | Variable MBO |
| Variable IC | Correlation | 1 | .680** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 127 | 127 |
| Variable MBO | Correlation | .680** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 127 | 127 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the statistical calculations (*Pearson and Spearman Coefficient* – see Table 8) we can say that there is a significant positive relationship, of high intensity, between the variable IC and MBO (*Pearson $r = 0.71$; Spearman $r = 0.68$; $DF = 125$; $p < 0.01$). The relationship is statistically significant at the significance level (two-tailed) of 1% and the confidence interval of 99%. In other words, there is a probability of less than 1% to obtain a $r = 0.71$ Pearson and $r = 0.68$ Spearman if there is no correlation between the two variables.*

In the context in which this hypothesis is confirmed (namely, the fact that *there is a positive relationship between IC and MBO*) the following question arises: *what is the proportionality of the relationship between the two variables?* In other words, if the IC variable increases by one unit, how much will the MBO variable increase? To answer this question we will use the *Regression Coefficient Unstandardized* (see Table 9).

Table 9. Regression Coefficient Unstandardized

| | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | <i>t</i> | Sig. | 95,0% Confidence Interval for B | |
|--------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|----------|------|---------------------------------|-------------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| 1 (Constant) | .805 | .154 | | 5.240 | .000 | .501 | 1.109 |
| Variable IC | .665 | .058 | .718 | 11.537 | .000 | .551 | .779 |

Dependent Variable: MBO

The table above shows that between the variables IC and MBO there is a Regression Coefficient Unstandardized with a value of 0.66. This means that for every increase of the IC variable with 1, the value of the MBO variable will increase with 0.66.

Conclusions

Within the schools with sports profile (high schools with sports program and faculties of physical education and sports) in the Eastern side of Romania there is no significant differentiation of the IC level. The average value of the IC level in high school with a sports program is $M = 2.54$ and $SD = \pm 0.85$, compared to $M = 2.51$; $SD = \pm 0.79$ within the faculties of physical education and sports. The difference is statistically insignificant at the significance level (two-tailed) of 5% and the 95% confidence interval.

The most important role of IC is building relationships. Relationship building will provide strong basis in case of management crisis and help

in facing the institution changes. This will raise the employees' morale and will have a great contribution to the institution's strategic goals.

Regarding MBO, the difference is still insignificant. The average value of the MBO level in high schools with sports program is $M = 2.49$ and $SD = \pm 0.79$, compared to $M = 2.48$ and $SD = \pm 0.73$ in the faculties of physical education and sports. The difference is statistically insignificant at the significance level (two-tailed) of 5% and the 95% confidence interval.

Managers of institutions with a sports profile will continue to embrace new management programs that offer the promise of significant productivity gain.

In the components of properly implemented MBO programs feedback is essential, goal setting is critical, and participation in decision making is expected.

Through hypothesis 3 we put the two variables IC and MBO in a causal relationship. Statistical indicators such as Pearson and Spearman Coefficient have helped us to demonstrate that in sports institutions from the Eastern side of Romania there is a positive relationship of high intensity between IC and MBO ($r = 0.71$ Pearson and $r = 0.68$ Spearman). Also Regression Coefficient Unstandardized us shows us that for every increase of the IC variable with 1, the value of the MBO variable will increase with 0.66. A better IC level will lead to better management.

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