Internal Communication in Courts: Toward Establishing Trust Based Relationships

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Communication and communication systems are topics widely discussed in the literature of the subject. However, the analysis of the specific subjects of this study as courts, is so far a subject that is rarely discussed in empirical research as well as in a debate at the level of communication theory. The paper presents the results of survey research on internal communication in district and regional courts in the context of trust building. The study assumes that there is a relationship between communication on a given project tasks, communication on project management and non-formal communication, and confidence in the public institution and its management. The results of the research clearly showed the existing relationship between satisfaction coming from the proper communication, and the level of employee trust in the court as a place of work.

Keywords: communication, trust, public organization, court

Introduction

The contemporary expectations concerning public sector organizations are similar to those concerning business entities. The organizations operating in public sector are expected to adjust themselves to new, changing requirements

of stakeholders. Since 1980s many countries have attempted to reform the public sector and the institutions functioning within the sector. The interest in managerial practices, impacting the conducted reforms, has resulted in many cases in erosion of the significant values for public management (Maesschalck, 2004). This, in turn, causes increasing interest in issues connected with the values of public organizations (Perry, Hondeghem, 2008), which are expected to be a panacea for the abandonment of traditional values as the value -based approach on relationships and value-oriented policy are essential for organizations whose major assets are human resources.

In the presented considerations, the following thesis has been put forward: building employees' trust in the organization, in this particular case-courts, is indispensable for the improvement in their efficiency. Trust is one of key factors influencing the employees' attitude towards the work they do and their behavior. The higher the trust level is, the more willingly the employees share information, co-operate with each other and with managers, achieve above-average performance and are also involved in the so called civic organizational behaviors (Cho, Song, 2017).

The role of internal communication in efficiency building process is undeniable and has a proven track record dating back to the writings of Chester Bernard. The internal communication, i.e. the communication between management and employees, reflects the ability of managers to build relationships with employees on various organizational levels (Welch, Jackson, 2007). This is exactly the case as concerns trust that is also researched and analyzed (Podnar, 2015). And it is the two phenomena, i.e. communication and organizational trust that are the area of discussion in the article. However, the focal point of the article is not the very trust, but the organizational communication that allows to build the trust. Given the growing interest in judiciary system in the Polish literature in the field of management and still insignificant level of knowledge concerning the two mentioned phenomena in this area of public activity, the objective of the analysis has been to identity the relationships between the internal communication and the degree of trust among the employees of the Polish Courts. Moreover, the review literature of the subject has justified the statement that there is a research gap in the analysis of the communication-trust relationship, especially regarding the public sector organizations, which has led to outline another objective of the article, i.e. examining this relationship.

Trust within the organization and in the organization

For many years the issue of trust has been the subject of numerous studies and researches (Deutsch, 1973; Barber, 1983; Fukuyama, 1995; Sztompka, 2007; Hardin, 2009). Researches are divided over the issue into two groups: some of them state that the trust is the basis of functioning of societies and institutions created by them (Sztompka, 2007); others claim that societies attach too much importance to the trust, especially in politicians (Hardin, 2000). Within the past years there have been conducted the researches indicating a drop in trust in public institutions, especially visible after the year 2008 (Stevenson, Wolfers, 2011).

As a research subject trust is increasingly often analyzed, notably in the context of threats, risk and various kinds of crises (Deutsch, 1973; Luhmann, 2000; Podnar, 2015) by the representatives of social sciences (social psychologist, economists, anthropologists, philosophers and other with special consideration of management sciences and sociology. In the mentioned context trust is considered to be one of the most effective mechanisms responsible for management of transactions (Arrow, 1974; 1970; Ouchi, 1980, Zucker, 1986) and understood as mutual conviction that neither of the parties (to a transaction) makes use of weaknesses of the other party (Zając, 2012). On the one hand, trust is an attribute of an individual – it is a person who trusts somebody or something, but it is also a social phenomenon as it occurs within a social system that may support or restrict the trust. Sztompka writes about structural sources of the culture of trust including: (a) historical tradition, (b) current structural context including stability of norms, transparency of social organization, continuity of social order, adaptation of social environment, responsibility of individuals and institutions, (c) subject factors such as social sentiment and social capital resources (Sztompka, 2007). The large number of those determinants proves that trust is a socially complex phenomenon, difficult to be measured within a single system. However, the trust is the desired value as it determines many minds of behavior of individuals and social groups. Trust is an integral part of majority of transactions (Zucker, 1983, p. 3) and although it is first of all – an essential element of interpersonal relations, the very fact of involvement of individuals in such functional systems as economy or politics makes it not only the element of personal relations (Luhman, 2000). Trust is a social, ethical and organizational phenomenon. And the social framework create the culture of trust understood as *the rules common in society that make treat both trust and reliability as values, and confidence in the others as well as meeting commitments as the norms of proper conduct* (Sztompka, 2007). Therefore , the trust is an ethical value. It is also an element of

activities of various organizations. These organizations, accomplishing their tasks build up an appropriate cultural system (organizational culture), communication system (communication is dependent on the culture of trust in an organization and its surrounding, and the system of ethical principles stipulated by codes and nowadays increasingly often by the strategies of social responsibility, in which the value of the trust in stakeholder is one of the foundations (Podnar, 2015). Thus, this way the trust has nowadays become not only a phenomenon, as Deutsch wanted it to be, but also a concrete value influenced by structural and individual determinants as well as defining the course of transactions realized by the organization.

Trust within an organization can be both personal and impersonal. The former results from direct, interpersonal relationships among the organization's members. The latter one triggers various interpretations. First of all, a question arises whether the impersonal trust concerns an institution as an obbject of the trust, or the environment in which individuals develop their relationships. In the first case the individuals trust the system of cultural and institutional rules of an institution, and in the second – it is assumed that individuals trust each other in the context of structural rules of their institution (Bachmann, 2003, p. 63). Moreover, people have to trust strangers in some social situations (e.g. while establishing relations with a new supplier). Under such circumstances they rather rely on the rules and institutionalized norms of social exchange, which are independent of personal traits of the previously unknown people(Hardin, 2009).

The review of definitions of trust in management studies reveals that it is primarily understood as one's readiness for co-operation with other individual or a group based on the assumption of generally perceived decency of the other party. Therefore, the trust is an ethical value of social significance that can be created and managed (Grudzewski et al., 2007).

Some representative of management studies are convinced that trust, as many other capital, can be managed. Such an attitude is typical for such definitions of trust that define it through referring to risk. Managing trust translates into building systems and seeking methods allowing to take decisions concerning operations with risk factor (Grudzewski et al., 2007). Slightly different is the perception of Nooteboom (2003) who discusses rather the management sensitive to trust, whose idea is monitoring the operations of an organization considering their impact on the trust and trust-based relations (Sydow, 1998, p. 54). There is also a group of researchers who indicate impediments to trust management, notably in relations between two organizational systems due to the following reasons: (a) trust in both a person and a system is often dependent on international acting, (b) each managerial activity influences trust, (c) nowadays in the era of the

web environment, relations between organizations are not always sufficiently reflected on in terms of revising an issue in the context of the acquired knowledge, and (d) relations between organizations are not institutionalized and hierarchical which impair the possibility of trust management (Sydow, 2006).

Defining trust has been troublesome to researchers because of the social significance of this phenomenon. Trust is treated as an indivisible whole i.e. *socially acquired and confirmed expectations that people have of each other, of institutions and organizations amongst which they live as well as the expectations of moral principles of social life that determine rudimentary rules of their life* (Barber, 1983) or: *adequate expectations of other people's acting that influences the acting of an individual in the situation when the choice of acting has to be made prior to the observation of the acting of the others* (Dasgupta, 2000).

For the needs of the presented researches, trust is understood as *organizational trust is the overarching belief that an organization in its communication and behaviors is competent, open and honest, concerned, reliable, and worthy of identification with its goals, norms, and values* (Shockley-Zalabak et al. 2010, p.12).

In case of organizations three levels of trust could be identified: (1) the level of trust in the people creating the organization (employees, managers, owners), (2) the level of trust in the organization as w whole (its products, methods of operations, culture, management style, etc.), (3) the level of trust of the organization in both internal and external environment, i.e. stakeholders (trust between the systems). The mentioned level are not separable, and they are rather interconnected. The trust in people of an organization must translate into the entire organization and reversely. The trust of the organization in its internal stakeholders might be transferred into the trust in the organization as such (Nootebum, Six, 2003, p. 5). Thus, analyzing the issue of trust – within and in – an organization there emerge the following areas requiring to be researched:

- relationship of people's trust in their organization and the organization in thepeople;
- relationship of external stakeholders' trust in the organization and its internal stakeholders;
- relationship of the organization and its employees to its external stakeholders.

Communication, communicating and organizational trust

In sociology the term "communicating" is understood as a mechanism, thanks to which interpersonal relations can be established and developed (Cooley, 1909). Effective communicatiion facilitates creating bonds between those involved in the

process based on mutual understanding, trust and engagement (Anderson, Narus, 1990; Grudzewski et al., 2007).

For the needs of the paper the disctinction between communication and communicating haswas made. Communicating refers to the process between subjects of an interaction (people or/and groups, organizations). The process concerns creating and negotiating meanings through symbolic, verbal and non-verbal interactions (Mumby, 2013). Communication in the notion emphasizing the system within which the process takes place. However, it should be noted that while analyzing relations between communicating and trust, it is indispensable to focus on the issue of communicating within an organization. In this particular case it should be emphasized that there are many approaches that discuss this issue in variety of ways, however, the majority tend to perceive the process as coordinating systems of meanings through symbolic practice aimed at achieving organizational goals (Mumby, 2013).

The literature on communication does treat the phenomenon of trust both as a determinant and a result of communicating. Moreover, the researches conducted on the trust do not focus much on the relationships between the process of communicating and the trust itself. The only example of researches concerning this relationship are those regarding financial institutions (Tayler, Stanley, 2007), as well as the researches on the process of developing customer loyalty (Halliburton, Poenaru, 2010). Thus, there is some research gap within the analysis of the relationship between communicating and trust. The gap is difficult to fill as the complexity of both phenomena does not facilitate such a split. Therefore, the following conceptual question could be asked: where – within the communicating process – could the phenomenon of trust be positioned? American researches of social communication – P. H. Watzlawick, J. Beavin and D. Jackson – in 1960s put forward five universal rules of communicating (1967):

1. Every behavior or statement (or lack of statement) is form of communication.
2. Social interaction includes two dimensions: content and relationship, and it may be of three kinds: (a) approval of the opinion and attitude of one interlocutor; (b) disapproval for the beliefs of the interlocutor; (c) reassuring the partner in the belief that his opinion on the subject is true.
3. The course of interaction (positive or negative) indicates convergence (or divergence) in defining a situation.
4. Communicating might become an exchange of information between verbal, non-verbal and digital means (or the combinations of those means).
5. In case of an interaction in which the behaviors of one party are identical (or convergent) with the attitude of the other party, there occurs symmetric

interaction; in case of divergence in defining a situation by the two parties – complementary interaction takes place.

Given that the trust is socially acquired and confirmed expectations that people have of each other, towards institutions and organizations, each rule of communicating also applies to trust. Thus, it is possible to formulate a concept regarding the relationships between communicating and trust falling into the following principles:

a) each manifestation of communicating impacts trust between the participants of the communicating process;

b) communicating as a social interaction – depending on its content and form – can: facilitate the trust or the lack of trust between those involved in the relationship; however, it is impossible to talk about neutrality between the partners in communicating, since either they have or do not have the trust in each other;

c) the course of interaction (positive or negative for a despatcher or/and recipient) influences the development of trust or its lack;

d) means of communication – verbal, nonverbal or digital (or the combination of the means) – do not influence the trust directly; however, not using the means might determine the phenomenon of trust;

e) in case of the interaction process when the behaviors of one party are identical (or convergent) with the attitude of the other party, there occurs a symmetrical interaction, which deepens the trust between the parties; in the event of divergence in defining a situation by the parties, the likelihood of lack of trust is increasing.

As concluded by Morgan and Hunt the high level of trust occurs when communicating takes place frequently, and when the communicating taking place in the past is perceived as the one of high quality. The quality depends on adequacy, trustworthy and understanding of the concrete message by its recipient, and also on how much the message is up-to-date (Morgan, Hunt, 1994).

The researchers analysing trust within organizations referring to Luhman, who distinguished the trust in people and the trust in the system,claim that the trust is more and organization's attribute than the trait of an individual (Sydow, 2006). Therefore, everything that is connected with organizational management has an influence on the trust, yet, the trust also influences the organization. One of the particularly valuable systems in an organization is the communication system as all the organizations generate, receive, make use of and manage information (Graber, 2003). Communication is considered a factor preceding trust (Grudzewski et al., 2007). Therefore, the analysis of the above relations, both on theoretical and empirical level, must take place in the context of the communicating process.

Means of building trust constitute a set of many elements related to both subjective characteristics (abilities, good will) and objective ones such as: organizational identity, reputation, culture (Blomqvist, 2002, p. 156). Trust in an organization includes: abilities, good will and self-reference[1]. One of indicators of trust, included in the "behavior" component in the Blomquist's model is open communicating that influences this phenomenon in a direct and significant way (Blomqvist, 2002). Trust – for Luhmann – is the result of communicatiion within and between the systems. Securities are the systems based on communicating and create the network of communication, built on beforehand communicating, future communicating and any other type of communicating. Thus, communicating is possible within the system of communication and this system cannot escape recursion. The basic events are only those individual communication units that can be referred to other elements within the same system (Luhmann, 1985). Concluding it should be underlined that trust is a phenomenon directly linked to communicating with each other and to the social system understood as the system of communication. The above was also observed by Deutsch who states that an individual would have trust in the other individual depending on the extent of the freedom of communication between them, before they take decisions to be taken by them (Deutsch, 1973).

The review of literature concerning trust allows us to formulate an additional thesis about the occurrence of trust resulting from a belief that the thrusty side is credible, honest and with such attributes as: consistency, competence, justice, responsibility, sibsidiary, kindness (Morgan, Hunt, 1994). The mentioned features of ethical nature could be identified mainly in the process of communicating taking place in a wider social system, include the management one.

Importance of internal communication for building trust based relationships[2]

In order to attain the objectives defined at the beginning of the article, in 2016 quantitative researches with the use of a questionnaire survey were conducted. Four sets of the questionnaire of the survey were worked out for different groups of employees: judges, chairmen of judiciary departments, employes

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[1] "Self-reference" according to Niklas Luhmann, is a self-organizing, self-regulating and self-evaluating system (Luhmann, 1985).

[2] The presented research findings are the aftermath of project "Communication management and communicating in public organizations" pursued by the team of Chair of Public Management and Social Sciences of the University of Economics in Katowice.

of non-judicial departments (as administration staff) and their supervisors (heads). The respondents could provide their answers within a seven-grade scale. Questionnaires were sent in to 85 magistrate and district courts, requesting to be responded in an electronic way. The sample was of convenience nature. The research on the sample of 85 courts was conducted in 2016. 62 of the courts, i.e. about 17% of total population agreed to respond to the survey. The data was obtained from: 43 chairman of judiciary court departments, 34 judges, 108 heads of non-judicial departments and 102 of their subordinates . In some cases, the questionnaire was filled in by more than one representative of a given group from one organization. Their responses were also included in preliminary analyses.

In the area of communicating in courts two groups of questions were asked: the firs group concerned satisfaction with communicating that could be defined as corporate communicating, and the second one – evaluation of quality of communication with the superior. Satisfaction with the system of communicating was evaluated by means of 8 questions and the quality of communication with the superior – using 5 questions from the Downs and Hazen's (1977) scale in Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire. The value of the Alfa Cronbach indicator for the mentioned scales was 0.93 and 0.96 respectively. In order to assess the trust 4 questions regarding 2 dimensions (integrity and trustworthiness) from the scale proposed by Hon and Grunig (1997) were used. The Alf Cronbach value for this scale amounted to 0.93. The factor analysis for the scales was also carried out. Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin measurement and the Bartlet spherical test confirmed the relevance of conducting the factor analysis. In case of individual scales the factor analysis indicated the presence of one dimension, therefore in the analyses of correlation and regression the responses to questions identifying individual phenomena were analyzed as three metavariables.

The researchers focused on defining the level of satisfaction with the communication system, the assessment of the quality of communication with the superior as well as the satisfaction level of court employees.

Analyzing the descriptive statistics (Table 1) to assess the satisfaction with corporate communication it can be claimed that the average assessment of all the aspects considered cannot be considered high (4.51). Yet, the responses regarding the assessment were very much varied. A half of the respondents evaluated this field at 5 or less. The highest level of satisfaction regarded: system of rewarding, system of granting bonuses or the possibility of professional development. The lowest assessment of the respondents referred to the level of information they receive concerning the financial situation of their courts.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics – level of satisfaction with corporate communicating

		M	D	DV
I am informed about strategy and plans of the Court.	4.55	5.0	6.0	1.69
I am informed about decisions of administrative authorities concerning the activity of our Court.	4.59	5.0	6.0	1.71
I am informed about the changes planned in our Court.	4.41	5.0	5.0	1.71
I am informed about the financial situation of the Court I work for.	3.72	4.0	2.0	1.82
I am informed about the achievements (including successes and failures) of the Court I work for.	4.59	5.0	5.0	1.65
I am informed about the difficulties faced by the Court I work for.	4.47	5.0	6.0	1.72
I am informed about the principles of remuneration, including bonuses/rewards, applicable to the Court I work for.	4.81	5.0	6.0	1.87
I am informed about professional development opportunities of the staff of the Court I work for.	5.00	5.0	6.0	1.61
OVERALL	4.51	–	–	1.42

The respondents evaluated the quality of communicating with their superiors significantly higher. The average was 5.84 with 6 being the most often chosen value. Therefore it could be stated that this dimension was assessed relatively highly.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics on evaluation of quality of communicating with superior

		M	D	SD
Information provided by a superior is up-to-date.	5.95	6	6	1.28
Information provided by a superior is detailed/precise.	5.74	6	6	1.36
Information provided by a superior is useful.	5.93	6	6	1.14
Information provided by a superior is sufficient.	5.71	6	6	1.29
I assess the communication with my superior as satisfactory.	5.88	6	7	1.39
OVERALL	5.84	–	–	1.21

In turn trust was evaluated on the similar level to the level of satisfaction with the communication system. The average amounted to 4.56 with the median and the dominant amounting to 5. The trust level is, thus, moderately high

although the values of standard deflection justify the statement that a part of the respondents assess their trust as pretty low.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics on the level of employees; trust to Court

	M	D	SD
The Court I work for treats employees fairly – just like I do.	4.63	5	5	1.61
If in the Court important decisions concerning employees are made, I know that their need are considered.	4.55	5	5	1.53
Commitments made to employees are met.	4.58	5	5	1.46
I believe that in decision making process in my Court, opinions of employees, such as me, are considered.	4.49	5	5	1.64
OVERALL	4.56			1.42

The second aim of the research concerned researching the relationship between internal communication and trust. To meet the objective a correlation analysis was conducted. The analysis confirmed the occurrence of statistically relevant correlation between the level of quality of communication with a superior and the level of trust, which was relatively high (0.379).

Table 4. Correlation between the quality of communication with a superior
and the level of trust

		Quality of communication with superior	Organizational trust
Quality of communication with superior	Pearson Correlation	1	.379[**]
	Relevance (bilateral)		.000
Organizational trust	Pearson Correlation	.379[**]	1
	Relevance (bilateral)	.000	

[**]. Correlation relevant on the level of 0.01 (bilaterally).

The analysis of correlation between satisfaction with the system of communicating and the level of trust also confirmed the existence of a very strong correlation (0.716).

Moreover, the conducted regression analysis allowed to prove a strong influence of satisfaction with corporate communication on organizational trust. As much as 51% of the satisfaction level is justified by the satisfaction with the communication system.

**Table 5. Correlation between satisfaction with corporate communication
and the level of trust**

		Corporate communication	Trust
Corporate communication	Pearson Correlation	1	.716[**]
	Pearson Correlation		.000
Trust	Pearson Correlation	.716[**]	1
	Pearson Correlation)	.000	

**. Correlation relevant on the level of 0.01 (bilaterally).

**Table 6. Model of regression between communication system satisfaction and the
level of trust – summing up**

Model	R	R-square	Corrected R-square	Standard estimation error
1	.716[a]	.513	.511	.998

[a] Predictors: (Constant), communication system.

Conclusions

The conducted questionnaire surveys allow to formulate conclusions confirming logical, derived from the literature on the subject, statement concerning the existence of correlation between communication within an organization and the level of trust. The analysis of the correlation between the employees' satisfaction with the communication system in their court and their level of trust in their institution reveals that along with high-evaluated corporate communication, there is an increase in employees' trust in their organization.

Both the size and the choice of the sample population do not provide a platform for unanimously justified conclusions. However, on the basis of the findings it can be projected that along with higher assessments of court's communication system within their organization, the level of trust in it is growing. Given the conclusions of other researchers concerning the impact of trust on corporate communication improvement (Tyler, Stanley 2007), hypothetical assumption could be made that there is a mutual impact of trust on communication and the communication on the trust. However, neither the trust, nor communication are single-dimension phenomena. Therefore, providing support for this thesis requires multi-dimensional researches concerning the two phenomena within an organization.

The findings of the researches justify putting forward several applicable recommendations addressed to the managers of public organizations, notably courts. First and foremost, the employees of the courts (regardless of their positions in the court structure) expect information concerning the activity of their courts both in the area of management and finance. Thus, the flow of information that is important for employees must be intensified. Secondly, managers and superiors, who are the key source of information, do not always are trusted in. therefore, the second recommendation resulting from the findings of the researches is enhancement of measures supporting the authority of the management. Thirdly, as a correlation between the efficiency of communication system and the trust level exists, there is a need to establish professional, efficient and ethical communication systems in the courts. The systems could then influence the communication processes between groups of court employees, who could – in turn – positively implicate trust as a value in the management of a public organization that the court of law is.

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