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**THE DIMENSIONS OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND THE
ENGAGEMENT OF THE EMPLOYEES IN THE DECISION MAKING
PROCESS IN THE ALBANIAN EDUCATION SECTOR.**

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ABSTRACT

Communication is a complicated field because of its multidimensional nature. Yet, it is the actual complication of communication that makes it attractive for researchers to study. Organizational communication literature includes a diverse field of interest. Among those the most commonly examined are: the distortion of information, information overload, feedback implementation, gatekeeping, etc.

Another field of significant interest to investigate is the direction of communication. Information flow may many times may be an indicator of how communication is been developed in organizations and more specifically may indicate employees' participation in the decision making process. This study examines the relationship among internal communication and employees' engagement in decision making. Employees' opinion is essential in order to reach an objective conclusion. For this reason qualitative research interviews was selected as the best possible media to reach the established goal. In depth interviews will be helpful to comprehend the functions of internal communication in Albania through the case study of Ministry of Education and the depending institutions.

The qualitative analysis has shown that internal communication in Albanian Ministry of Education and the depending institutions is not developed with best possible way. According to the interviews, communication is mainly centralized, therefore, employees do not participate in the decision making process. Additionally, communication is also hampered by several other reasons such as lack of constant feedback, lack of information technology equipment, non-participation and non-organization of trainings related to communication issues.

Internal communication in Albanian public sector demonstrate certain problems with the most important the non-influence of organizational members in decision making process. Internal communication in Albania needs to be improved primarily by enhancing employees' engagement in organizations' issues. Therefore, increasing demands are being placed on management to take the necessary actions and implement the required strategy in order to upturn the existing communication patterns and bring about effective results.

KEYWORDS: Organizational communication, decision making, performance, structure, motivation, public sector, feedback, information technology

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Historically, organizational management has been focusing on how to improve effectiveness and how to involve people in the process. People of the organization are the primary elements that need to be integrated. This concern has led to the study of motivation, organization communication, misinformation and many other subtopics of organizational behavior. The typical problems raised by the management today include the following: high rates of job dissatisfaction, high rates on absenteeism and turnover, inadequate communication, high rates of distortion and misinformation, goals and priorities misinterpretation. (Lau 1975: 47.)

Communication is considered by many theorists as an organizational behavior. The role of communication is vital for every modern organization. Moreover it is a reliable indicator of growth and prosperity. Communication is a key element for organization. However, its distortion may affect organizations' effective existence. Through the observation and comprehension of how people communicate with each other, we are able to identify and improve our activities in the work field. No matter where the work setting would be, the understanding of how individuals behave and why they behave as such is crucial for organizational success.

Communication is important for human's life, it links the organizations members and it mediates the inputs to the organization from the environment and the outputs from the organization to the environment (Guetzkow 1965). In effect, it is the "very essence" of organizations (Katz & Kahn 1966: 223). Therefore, the study of organizational communication should be broad, extended to all fields of communication such as conflicts, ethics, roles, culture, networks, diversity and technology in order to build the foundations for understanding every human process that occur in organization.

As humans, we spend most of our time speaking, listening and interacting with other people. For this reason it is essential to be able to be effectively engaged in these communication activities, especially, when communication activities concern the working environment. Organizations' members should have voice and their opinion should be heard because they consist the backbone for every organization. Non-participation of employees in decision making process and on issues related to their work may lead to a number of undesirable consequences such as demotivation, turnover, absenteeism,

On the other hand, directors and supervisors must realize the importance of communication throughout every level of organizations' hierarchy and admit that effective communication is crucial for organizations' success (Byers 1997). Hence, great attention should be paid in order to enhance internal communication among all organization members through strategies, trainings, constant feedback, etc.

1.2. Research questions

Albanian communication system for many years was characterized as firmly centralized until early 90' when the political system changed. Since early 90's Albania is considered as a developing country which is trying to be adjusted to the new era. After, approximately, 25 years, it is interesting to investigate how communication is developed and the impact it has on organization members.

Based on previous discussion the main scope of this study is to examine the effects of communication in the Albanian public sector and the engagement of employees' in the decision making process. Moreover, this study aims also to explain what the functions of communication are, its main characteristics and the elements that may hamper effective communication in organizations.

The basic tool used to comprehend communication system as developed in Albanian public sector is qualitative data analysis based on face to face interviews with

organizational members. All interviewees are selected as a representative sample of different departments of the Ministry of Education and the depending Institutions. This qualitative research aims to give answers to the following main questions:

- What are the effects of internal communication in the case of Albanian Education sector?
- How does internal communication of organization influence employees' participation in the decision making?
- How employees' engagement in the decision making process affects their performance?

1.3. Study Plan

This study is consisted of five main chapters. The first chapter, introduction, is a brief presentation of the issues that this study is dealing with. The very same chapter is describing the main meanings of this research and also pronounces the basic research questions.

The second chapter makes a detailed presentation of the basic concepts of the study. Specifically, this chapter attempts to define and analyze communication and all the variables that enhance or hampers its effectiveness. An inner and detailed insight of challenges, difficulties and complications caused by communication is also presented in this chapter which also explains the importance that communication has on employees' performance and everyday life and highlights the responsibilities that management carries.

The methodology applied in this study is presented in the following chapter, the third one. The same chapter is also dealing with the presentation of the case under study and useful information around it.

The chapter number four is consisted of the empirical analysis of the collected data through the qualitative research. Basically, this chapter is dealing with interviewees' perceptions on how communication is developed in their working environment the impact that it has on their lives. The fifth chapter, which is the last one, is mainly focusing on main findings and interpretation of this study.

2. THEORETICAL APPROACH OF COMMUNICATION DIMENSIONS

To be able to realize our analysis we should have a clear view of the most significant meanings that this study is dealing with. Below an attempt is made to describe what communication is and the variable that could affect it. Additionally, we are referred to communication's most important characteristics in order to fully comprehend how organizational communication functions and its importance for every organization but also what is the connection between communication and organization and they influence one another.

In the second part of the theoretical framework we will focus mostly on the explanation of those meaning. The main goal of this chapter is to clarify that communication is a multidimensional feature of organization and can affect or be affected by other internal or external factors, this is why it's effective and accurate application is organization is essential for the organizations' objectives and employees' well being as well.

2.1. The impact of information technology in organizational communication

Technology nowadays can be considered as a massive wave that has engulfed each and every one of us. Information Technology (IT) has brought substantial changes into the living style, modes of communication and has influenced day to day operations in organizations. Technology has a significant impact in many spheres of organizational life such as structure, hierarchy and management and its use can improve or worsen the way operations are realized by making organizations more productive units or less efficient ones.

The improvisation of organizational performance and productivity was the main reason for information technologies to be developed, and has contributed a lot to daily operations by providing managers and employees with useful tools and enabling them to share news, ideas and data. (Currid 1992.)

IT consists of a wide range of communication media and devices which connect people to information systems such as voice mail, email, voice conferencing, video conferencing, internet and so on (Suleiman Ali Mohamed 2004: 6). Additionally, personal computers have been developed into powerful tools which have drastically changed organizational communication leading to the "networked organization" (Bordia 1997: 99).

There are too many definitions out there related to IT. However, if we could mention one more definition of what information technology is, we would agree with how Heintze & Bretschneider (2000: 804) described it:

"...any product that uses a computer or communication hardware or software for its technological base. Its purpose is to increase the organization's ability to communicate accurate information in a timely manner and to aid in organization decision making."

Technology includes all the knowledge, information, material resources, techniques and procedures that a work unit uses to convert systems inputs into outputs-that is to conduct work (Chrisholm 1988).

2.1.1. The effects of technological advancement in organizational life

Much pressure is being put to public organizations in order to increase productivity and efficiency and this is expressed by doing more with less. One way to achieve the latest is to embrace technological advances that will enhance productivity and minimize system dependence on employees (Chrisholm 1988). For this reason information technologies are being implemented in almost all levels of public sector. Indeed it has being suggested that public organizations are more information intense than private firms which means a greater penetration of computer technology as IT keeps evolving (Bretschneider & Wittmer 1993: 88-89).

The enormous development of information technologies and computers made organizations networked systems that can easily share information in and afar of organization. This transformation of information allows organizations to redesign

strategies, transform the existing structure, reevaluate the scope of operation and increase efficiency of controlling mechanisms, work flow products and services (Laudon & Laudon 2000: 18-19).

Automation in the office has brought changes in the structure of the organization and has two interrelated but distinct effects: to reduce the number of organizational members across the whole organization and the size of organizations as well, resulting in the reduction or expand of employment at any particular organizational level. (Heintze & Bretschneider 2000: 804-805; Hoos 1983: 107.)

The new trend today is to flatten organizational structure in order to speed up the decision making process (Lau, Wong, Chan & Law 2001: 269). Indeed, flatter organizations are consisted of fewer management levels that give greater decision making authority. Another characteristic of flatter organizations is the encouragement of individual contribution and responsibility. The establishment of global networks such as internet made it possible for team members to collaborate closely even from distant locations and reduce coordination costs (Laudon & Laudon 2000: 19).

As mentioned above, information technology has changed the traditional view of management not always in positive way. The role of top and middle management is truncated as new programs for computers are invented and their authority is decreased. (Hoos 1983: 107.)

2.1.2. Changes in communication patterns

Communication is the key factor in daily operations. It is through communication that all kind of information circulates from every level of the hierarchical ladder. Computers have become a communication hub through which employees communicate and function. Communication technology is fostering new forms of learning, enabling new types of communication between employees and management (Rudnick 1996:45). Additionally, the proper use of the new technologies can lead to improvement of the

relations among staff and to a better understanding with each other (Rudnick 1996: 45-46; Lau, Wong, Chan, Law 2001: 273).

However, as with every technological innovation there has been also some negative implications associated with the acceptance and the proper use of computer communication. Communication patterns were found to have been changed after the penetration of informational technologies in the organizations. These changes are rooted in the growth of electronic media (Allen & Shoard 2005; Lau, Wong, Chan, Law 2001: 277). Channels of communication have also changed. Formal channels of organizations have undergone certain differentiations (Hoos 1983: 108).

The employees in organizations have realized the technological revolution that is taking place and a considerable number of them feel uncertain for their jobs and the way that this new era will affect their positions. Another important issue that is affecting employees and put additional stress in their life is the fact that many organizational members consider themselves as incompetent to administer the speed and the complexity that technology evolvement has brought into organizations and react by resisting to any possible modification or innovation related with their work. (Hoos 1983: 108.)

Another that has become very common as computers are becoming more pervasive is that of privacy, trust and social control. Unlike face to face communication (FtF), computer mediated communication (CmC) is mostly realized textually. There are no nonverbal cues to embellish meaning or social context cues regarding gender, age, status. The absence of cues may hamper communication efficiency and is also possible to create a semblance of anonymity and lack of awareness of the social context. This is considered as the main reason why high incidences of rude, offensive and uninhibited behaviors have been held. (Kiesler, Siegel & McGuire 1984 as cited in Kruger, Epley, Parker, Ng 2005: 926.)

Email is one of the most successful computer applications that have been ever discovered. The original idea of email was to facilitate communication, to increase

efficiency and to make organizational life easier (Derks & Baker 2010). Indeed, email broke down the barriers of time and space and became a convenient tool for employees who are temporary away from office or working in different locations. Emails have broken down typical organization information hierarchy and communication flows freely to each level of the organizational hierarchy. This could create new opportunities for dialogue and enhance a feeling of empowerment that can lead to more informed employees and result in positive employee attitude (Rudnick 1996: 46-47).

The flexibility and asynchrony are the main advantages that email carries compared to other communication media is the reason for its proliferation. Consequently, email has increased information sharing in organizations and has improved productivity in time and place (Byron 2008: 309). Due to flexibility and asynchrony of emails, individuals are able to read them everywhere and reduce the uncertainty related to the lack of information when they are absent from work (Granat, Stanoevska-Slabena 2013).

However, email application has not brought only positive changes in organizational life. A considerable number of employees complain about information overload, the huge amount of emails they receive daily and the pressure of expectation to answer them all within a day. (Derks & Baker 2010.)

Some researchers claim that information overload is basically caused because of the inability of people to process with large amount of information. The former cause, along with the ability of new technologies to generate information much sooner than people leads to the increasing amount of unprocessed information (Allen & Shoard 2005). Marcusholm on the other hand claimed that information overload may originate both from information requested by individuals and information received without individuals searched for it (Marcusholm 1995: 36).

Either way, uncontrolled and unorganized information may hinder decision making and make employees less productive and efficient. As mentioned above, employees spent a respective part of their time mainly by reading, prioritizing and categorizing the useful from the non-useful emails while neglecting other important issues. Moreover,

information overload might have a significant impact in private and personal life of employees since there are quite many employees who due to the lack of time in office hours continue to work at home neglecting other obligations, yet this is another issue to be discussed. (Allen & Shoard 2005).

Another problem related with the application of electronic communication in organizations is the lack of connection and interaction among employees. This problem is mainly caused because emails are not capable to accurately communicate emotions. One would argue, why should organizations care about the accurate communication of emotions among employees? The answer to such question would be that emotions provide important information about others and also the environment. Moreover, emotions play a significant role in the establishment of a good relationship among employees and the development of group identity. Therefore, the failure of accurate communication of emotion may inhibit relationship between coworkers, employees or even clients. (Byron 2008: 309-310.)

Derks and Baker in their study *The impact of email communication on organizational life* (2010) raised another aspect of email communication. They claimed that communications realized through emails can be less sociable, relational, understandable, honest and effective. The reason behind this position is that the absence of nonverbal cues withholds communicator's important information about attitudes, emotions and characteristics. Rudnick also supports this position since he believes that people are able to convey messages not only with what they say but also with how they say it. Gestures, voice, expressions, all are important paralinguistic cues that can disambiguate ambiguous messages (Rudnick 1996).

2.1.3. Ethical implications of information technology advancement

Efficiency and effectiveness has been significantly increased by technological advances which have enabled dramatic changes in organizational operations and organizational work forces. The adoption of computers and the development of computer networks in organizations have minimized the impact of time and place changing fundamentally the

way organizations communicate and operate, changing the traditional way of working and redefying operating process. This new reality helps organizations to better analyze and gauge performance through diverse communication media such as email, video and others. (Herschel & Andrews 1997: 160.)

However, the intensive development and the enormous impact that technology has on organizations and individuals has raised cause to concerns related with the proper use or misuse of it. Herschel & Andrews (1997: 160) argued that:

"P*eople and members of electronic communication do not use technology in a manner that its developers envisioned*."

Technology is often associated with ethical issues because it can be used as media through which unethical behavior can occur putting into risk meanings such as privacy, accuracy and ownership. Because technology is used to capture or store vast amount of information it is possible for individuals or organization to alter or manipulate data in such manner that could cause harm. For this reason, the access to databases should be protected in order to prevent the leaking of personal or confidential information. (Herschel & Andrews 1997: 63-64.)

On the same issue, Laudon & Laudon (2000:127) in their book *Management Information System* claim that ethics are about the possibility that individuals have to choose. Ethical people will make a responsible, rational choice according to the enacted law and thinking of the consequences while the unethical will act in the exact opposite way. Specifically they support that:

"E*thics refers to the principles of right and wrong and can be used by individuals acting as free agents to make choices to guide their behavior*."

The main reason why these ethical aspects of technology use was raised as concern is to motivate technology developers and organizations to enact codes of ethics addressed to the users of technology. Ad De Maio (1991: 22-23) claims that:

"I*ndividuals not automatically discern the need to examine their use of technology by using the same ethical criteria they would typically apply elsewhere*".

For all the above mentioned reasons ethical organizational communication can only be established when the responsible people in key positions abide by ethical communication in the work place as well as the codes that defines such communication and notify when violations and unethical behaviors. (Herschel & Andrews 1997: 168.)

2.2. The importance of organizational structure

Public organizations have very specific goals and objectives. In order for these objectives to be achieved the work in organizations is been divided among its members. The division of work and obligations of each member is depicted in the organizational structure. Organization dictates individual's behavior according to the structure design in order to achieve the goals and increase effectiveness (Rogers & Rogers 1976: 78). According to Mullins (1993:301), the purpose of the structure is to specify the duties of organizational members and increase the coordination among them with main scope goal achievement. Specifically he defines structure as an exemplar of tasks responsibilities, relationships and communication channels.

Unlike to traditional organization theorists who consider as the most dominant form of organizational structure the scalar organization-the pyramid structure of superiors and subordinates. Modern organizational theorists believed that organizations should be what we want them to be, for this reason they should be form free. Free from organization could be a misleading term but what actually means is that organizational structure should define specific tasks and not supposedly eternal purposes. The best way of working within this structure is small groups or teams but this demands strict self-discipline of the members involved. Each member has to be responsible for teams' performance and its individual performance. No organization can stand on its own without some element of hierarchy in its structure, for this reason there should be one person who would make decisions in the name of the whole group without wasting time. (Drucker 1974: 440-448.)

Mintzberg (1979: 2) on the other hand, considers that coordination is the most significant feature of structure therefore he defined structure as the:

"…the s*um total of the ways in which it divides its labor into distinct tasks and then achieves coordination among them.*"

Mintzberg (1979: 2-3) also claimed that coordination is not an easy task to achieve because it involves various means which he named coordinating mechanisms. Coordinating mechanisms are not concerned only with job coordination itself but also with control and communication. Five such mechanisms were identified by Mintzberg: mutual adjustment, direct supervision and standardization on work process, of outputs, of skills.

Mutual adjustment, according to Mintzberg (1979: 2-6) is the coordination that is achieved through the use of informal communication. Direct supervision is related with the person who is in charge to control the work of others. Lastly, by work process standardization, standardization of outputs and skills standartization, Mintzberg means that the work itself, the results from the work and the skills that the person obtains and which are required to perform specific tasks are divides and specified long before tasks are undertaken

2.2.1. The dimensions of organizational structure

Structure is the pattern which defines the relationships among organizational members and this relationship may be expressed through terms of power, status and other characteristics. Structure can be understood in terms of its various dimensions. (Rogers & Rogers 1976: 79-80.)

Organizational dimensions are divided into two categories: structural and contextual. Structural dimension basically describes how the organization is built from the inside. The elements that characterize the inner functions of the organization are consisted of four important features: formalization, specialization, centralization and configuration.

Alternatively, contextual dimension is what characterizes an organization as whole such as the size, the goals and objectives, the overall environment and technological implementation. (Daft 1983:14.)

According to Daft (1983: 18), specialization is the division of labor and duties among organizational members. The endorsement of specialization as a dimension by organization means that specific tasks are performed by specific persons. In this dimension are included only the functions that are carried out by the organization.

On the other hand, formalization as a dimension of organizational structure exists in order to dictate the extent to which rules, procedures, instructions and documents are written (Pugh, Hickson, Hinings, Turner 1968). These documents could be policy manuals or job description and usually behaviors and activities are included in them (Daft 1983: 15). Based on findings large organizations are considered as highly formalized comparing to small size organizations. The reason that explains this phenomenon is the size of organization itself, since large organization rely up to a great extent on paper work, rules and regulations to achieve control and coordination. While small organization can achieve control only by personal supervision of management (Daft 1983: 128).

One additional dimension of organizational structure is centralization. This dimension is mostly related with the locus of authority, how the decisions affecting the organization are made and by whom. Authority can be understood as legitimate actions taken by legitimate person-the legitimacy of the individual is determined by the structure. (Daft 1983: 17.)

Finally, configuration is the dimension that basically defines the number of hierarchical levels and span of control (how many subordinates each manager has under his supervision). Configuration embodies the roles depicted in the structure through organizational charts. The appraisal of this chart requires a combined use of selected dimensions each of which provides a measure for the development of a particular aspect of the structure. (Pugh, Hickson, Hinings, Turner 1968.)

2.2.2. The significance of a well-structured organization

Good structure is vital for the function of organizations. It has a direct affection not only to economic growth but also to morale and job satisfaction and therefore to production and performance. Even though structure and its characteristics function independently from the member of organization who carry out the job, however, individuals personality play a significant role for the success and goal achievement, because it is individuals behavior working within the structure that puts life in the structural framework. (Mullins 1993: 307-308.)

Drucker (1974: 444-445) in his book *Management-Tasks-Responsibilities-Practices* claims that the first thing a new organization should do to increase effectiveness is to identify the activities that this organization will be responsible for and that will define the final organizational form. According to the former structure is the means to attain objectives and goals, therefore any work on the structure should be done based on the specific strategy. Strategy determines the purpose of the organization by defining the activities of the given organization.

Good structure and good function of an organization as well as mal-organization and malfunction are easy to be identified by anyone with experience in management. (Drucker 1974: 440.)

One of the most significant characteristics of bad structure that would appear in an organization is the increased management levels which can lead to confusing objectives, failure to improve performance, over-centralization etc.

Another sign of bad structure is the employment of people in the organization without clear task responsibility but to assist superiors. One more characteristic of bad structure, equally important with the fist point is the tendency to go through channels rather than directly to the one who has the information or has to be notified. This point is considered not just as a symptom of bad structuring but mostly as the cause itself. (Drucker 1974: 464.)

Structural or organizational design is crucial and vital for organizations. It is through the design of the structure that managers set the goals for the organizational members to achieve since organizations are inherently purposive and goal oriented. (Dutch 2007.) According to Mintzberg (1979: 65) organization design is assumed as the ability to change established systems that influence the division of labor and coordinating mechanisms thereby affecting the organization functions as a whole.

Managers are asked to achieve coordination through structure design by predetermining the way employees should work. The structure itself focus on differentiation of position, formulation of rules and prescription of authority, therefore it exists in order to decrease uncertainty in individuals behavior by defining specific roles and tasks to its members. (Dutch 2007.)

However, designing organizational structure is not an easy task. The first difficulty comes because of the existence of multiple options. Managers have to choose among thousands of projects, departments, methods, etc. The more options one has the more complex the conditions become therefore the correct choice is more difficult to get. (Dutch 2007.)

Another problem that occurs for managers during this process is the fact that structure represents *"the established forces of habit, tradition and power"* and as established forces is difficult to be changed. There are some cases when structure is not compatible with the natural flow of work or social needs of organization members, then the change is easily and broadly accepted but usually structure represent real organization needs and for this reason is resistant to change. (Mintzberg 1979: 66-68).

2.2.3. Changing organizational structure

One organization has a plethora of options, methods and techniques to change or adjust its own structure according to the needs of the organization. The most commonly used

methods are departmentalization, specialization, centralization/decentralization and span of control. Their features are briefly presented in the following pages.

Departmentalization is the process through which certain activities-such as sales, finance, marketing- that has to be carried out by the organization are grouped together on logical basis in order to increase coordination. Researchers claim that departmentalization can be divided in purpose and process. (Dessler 1980: 110.)

In departmentalization by purpose there are three basic ways that work can be accomplished: by product, by location and by customer. Departmentalization by product is basically the process of grouping on the basis of the product. All activities related with the production, promotion and selling of a product will go under the supervision of one manager. The coordination of a growing organization is becoming tough job therefore the establishment of product units is considered as an interesting option. Departmentalization by location, is the form where all activities of one specific region are assigned on one manager who is responsible for operations that occurs in this area (Dutch 2009). Finally, departmentalization by customer, is the form where the arrangements of the work are all related to particular customer or market. An example for customer decentralization would be the organizational structure of an education institution (Dessler 1980: 110-111; Dutch 2009).

The above forms of departmentalization present a number of advantages mostly because they are self-contained. The concentration of authority, responsibility and accountability in specific departments allows managers to increase their coordinating abilities. Moreover, the autonomy that each department possesses makes their job more clearly and recognizable. Both recognition of performance along with the autonomy given to manager can be considered as motivation mechanisms that will make them perform even better. (Dessler 1980: 111-113; Dutch 2007.)

Departmentalization by process on the other hand occurs when jobs are combined according to organizational functions. Each organization has its own activities to undertake in order to achieve its goals. The activities of the organization are its

functions and those functions could be specific departments where various jobs are combined according them. (Dutch 2007.)

This kind of departmentalization has some positive and some negative impacts. Positive impact can be considered the increased efficiency by the fact that major emphasis is being placed on particular tasks and functions. Additionally, departmentalization by process enhances centralized control since managers/superiors are more dependent on central units. (Dessler 1980: 112.)

The negative thing about the former type of departmentalization is the fact that because specialists are focused on their own department and area of expertise, departmental goals may overcome organizational goals (Dutch, 2009). Moreover, the concentration on departmental goal instead of organizations' very often hampers interdepartmental communication while the need for coordination among departments increases (Dessler 1980: 113-114).

Specialization or division of labor is another way of altering organizational structure. Division of labor is the entrustment of specific task to specific individuals. (Pugh, Hickson, Hinings, Turner 1968.)

Weber (1978: 114) classified the division of labor into three possible ways: technical, social and economic. Technical is based on the service division in order to achieve goals. Social is based to the fall or not of the services within the jurisdiction of autonomous economic units. Economic is based on the use of service and sources that are divided in a context of budgetary administration or profit making.

The rationalization that results from job specialization and division of labor leads to the increasing need for extensive coordination and supervision. For the same reasons, division of labor might also lead to professional development of employees based on carefully specified duties. However, sometimes the obedience of rules and regulations may lead to unwanted results such as job dissatisfaction, alienation etc. (Herbert 1976: 465-466.)

Centralization and decentralization are two different types of authority and decision making power. In centralized organizations the core of decision making is concentrated in the top management, while in decentralized organizations similar decisions are shared among lower level employees.

The centralization or decentralization of an organization is a subjective matter for management since both types present some strong and also some weak points. In centralization for instance the implementation of organization policies is more simple process than in decentralization. Also is easier to gain management control and coordination. Moreover, centralization prevents subunits become too independent because of the authority given to them (Mullins 1983:316-317). However the most pragmatic reason of centralization is the cost reduction from the formal training programs that the managers would have attained and cost reduction from the information and performance systems that would have been applied in order top level management to be informed about the effects of their subordinate's decisions (Dutch 2007). Nevertheless centralization is considered as the main reason of creating a more mechanistic structure resulting to a long scalar chain (Mullins 1983: 316-317).

Delegation of authority on the other hand encourages the professional development of employees, help them to gain skills and competence in their work by giving them the possibility to handle difficult situations and make decisions that affects the organization. Additionally, decentralization provides managers with a certain range of autonomy which result in increasing managers' creativity and ingenuity leading consequently to organizational development. (Dutch 2007.)

Scientific research has showed that decentralization is more possible to occur in large organizations because they have longer chain of command and greater number of employees (Daft 1983: 129). Additionally, private sector is more decentralized oriented because the regularity of procedures and uniformity of treatment is greater (Mullins 1983: 317).

Span of control is broadly identified as the number of employees who report directly to a single manager or superior and is closely related with the complexity of task and individual professionalism. The more complex the task is the less tight the span of control should be because subordinate and superiors interact often during the accomplishment of the complex task and this interaction can raise problems. (Daft 1983: 177.)

But what is the range that span of control should be applied in organizations? Many classical theorists tended to give answer to this question. Herbert Simon (1945: 34-35) claimed that intensive span of control increase "administrative distance" among individuals and this could lead to the violation of one of the fundamental administrative principles which notes that:

 "A*dministrative efficiency is enhanced by keeping at a minimum the number of organizational levels through which a matter must pass before it is acted upon.*"

Referring to the same issue Mullins (1985: 320) writes that too wide span of control become extremely difficult for managers and superiors to control subordinates. Additionally, large groupings may lead to the creation of informal leaders who might function against the organization's policy causing problems and dysfunctions which influence directly performance. On the other hand, tight span of control, as mentioned above, has a significant impact on employee's morale which results in problems of coordination, decision making and communication. Lastly, tight span of control may lead to additional authority levels creating an unnecessary long scalar chain and increasing this way the administrative costs.

2.2.4. The importance of informality in formal organization

Organizations by definition are formally enacted procedures rather than merely emergent forces. The very existence of the procedures is considered as the element that facilitates coordination among subgroups and makes an organization formal. (Blau 1974: 28-29.)

Richard Daft (1983: 127-128) wrote on the formal organizations claiming that the core of those organizations is consisted of a routine structure which is characterized by extensive standardization, division of labor into small tasks and a high degree of formalization. On contrary, when the tasks are not routinized the structure becomes less formal.

In other words formal organization structure consists of those patterns of behavior that are not easy to be changed since its purpose is to ensure stability, regularity and predictability in the organization and to eliminate any trace of randomness, temporariness or instability. (Rogers & Rogers 1976: 79-80.)

The ideal type of formal organization according to many theorists can be considered bureaucracy, more specifically Weber's notion of bureaucracy. (Merton 1985.) Amitai Etzioni (1964: 53) in his book Modern Organization summarizes Weber's basic ideas on what elements make a bureaucratic structure highly rational. According to Weber rational bureaucracy is mainly structured by rules that everyone has to obey. Bureaucracy is far from ad hoc, temporary and unstable relations. However, stability can never be achieved when is treated as individual. In bureaucratic structures personal relationships are totally eliminated.

Another point that Etzioni (1964: 53-54) emphasizes in his book is the importance that Weber pays to specializations and trainings of the staff. The person who does not possesses knowledge and technical skills cannot be member of the administrative staff, because knowledge is the basis of the authority that bureaucrats acquire.

Besides of the complexity of their structure-bureaucratic or not- what makes formal organization of high interest for the scientists is the fact that it develops informal relations through its formality (Blau 1974: 28-29). But what is really informal organization and how important is its existence in the organization?

Among the researchers who dealt in depth with the relationship between formal and informal organization is Chester Barnard. In his book *the functions of the executive*

Barnard (1938: 114-123) claims that informal organizations are the unconscious gathering of two or more people with only purpose to interact. The interaction can be positive/negative or friendly/hostile, regardless of the nature of the interaction it is possible to affect individual's attitudes and emotions.

Barnard (1938: 114-123) believes that man is a social being and for this reason he has to interact with others and feel as a part of a group by satisfying this way the important need of social integration. It is the interaction of individuals that lead to the creation of informal organizations and it is through the informal organizations that formal organizations come in to life. So, informal organizations preexist of formal ones. However, when formal organization comes into operation they require the informal. Behavior in informal organizations affects and is affected by formal organizations. Both types of organizations are interdependent elements and cannot exist without each other even though they are different. (See also Ouedraogo & Leclere 2013.)

The same as Barnard, Herbert (1976:297) claims that individual seeks to be part of a group. Man needs to belong somewhere. This is a need that can only be satisfied through interaction with other people. Formal organizations however, do not enhance this behavior considering it as counterproductive. This opinion might result because executives and superiors many times ignore of even refuse the existence of informal organization within their formal organization (Barnard 1938: 121). Yet, people still relate to other people since it is important to them to share feelings, experiences and mutual interests. The sense of belonging somewhere makes the members of the group to join their forces to achieve goals. Individuals satisfy their need for belongingness and integration and become through this process more effective but also give formal organizations a human dimension (Herbert 1976: 297-299).

Communication as mentioned above is one of the important functions of informal organization. According to Herbert communication that flows in formal organizations through informal channels is of high importance. Very often it is considered that the formal communication systems of the organization are not sufficient for its members and the gap in communication is filled by informal channels which are mainly known as

grapevine. Grapevine is not formal way of communication even within informal organizations, it is considered by everyone as the desire of individuals to know more information. However, even though many deny its reliability, grapevine is proven to be a very trustworthy mean of information and communication. (Herbert 1976: 304-305; see also Luna & Chou 2013.)

Informal organization and more specifically informal communication which satisfy member's needs, can lead to a high degree of cohesiveness which is the third function of informal organization. As mentioned above, within informal organization individuals feel part of a group, this feeling is what cohesion is mostly about. Cohesiveness bond organizational members together and make them loyal and committed to the group itself. (Herbert 1976: 306-307.)

2.2.5. Organization structure and the process of communication

Theorists consider communication as an interesting topic to analyze. And indeed, one can find innumerous studies of internal communication and its relation to other organizational dimensions such as technology, status or degree of specialization. In all studies where communication is the issue, coordination is the key meaning which bonds communication and organization together. (Hage, Aiken, Marrett 1971: 860.)

Communication is a vital process for every organization. It is essential for coordinating individuals, work process or departments. Without communication organizations would cease to exist. It is important for the information to circulate from the bottom to the top and vice versa by making superiors aware of the decisions taken by subordinates or superiors. (Herbert 1976: 168.)

In most public organizations communication is highly structured and generally can be said that structure frames and guides communication flows. But how does structure affect internal communication? (Rogers & Rogers 1976: 89.) There are mainly two structural factors that affect communication: the first one is diversity.

Diversity was defined by Hage, Aika and Marrett (1971: 863) like the complexity of occupation. More specifically, in their article *Organization Structure and Communications d*iversity is identified as the:

"…p*ersonal specialization as contrasted to the microdivision of labor implied by task specialization."*

When variety of tasks in an organization is relatively high then the need for connection and communication among members is also high. However, this equation makes organizational planning a hard task to achieve and members' interaction more complicated. (Hage, Aika & Marrett 1971: 863.)

The second structural factor that was also identified by Hage, Aika and Marrett (1971: 862) is the distribution of power and status. Communication between organization members is hampered when power is uneven. Additionally, according to Barnard (1938), people in organizations are quite often prevented from developing honest and spontaneous conversations because of the threat of sanctions imposed by high level authority thereby contributing to reduced communication and interaction.

Additionally, centralization of power is considered as an important factor to influence communication. This may happen because most public organizations are formal entities and centralization is an organizations' characteristic which is mainly developed in formality. Centralization is created by the concentration of power by few. In this case the role of subordinates instead of participating in the decision making process is limited mainly to implement those decisions taken by superiors. Since subordinates participation in decision making is limited, the communication that occurs between parts is also limited. The above can lead to the conclusion that "the greater the degree of centralization the less the rate of task communication". (Hage, Aika, Marrett 1971: 862-963.)

Generally, can be said that every process that occurs in organization and specifically in organizational structure, has significant affection in every single element of it.

Communication is the result of coordination mechanisms that have been practiced by the organization, and it is them who determine the volume and the intensity of communication. (Hage, Aika, Marrett 1971.)

2.3. Defining organizational communication

Communication can be considered as a multidimensional meaning, therefore it would have been insufficient to support that communication is just one thing. Dance (1970: 210) identifies 95 different options of the meaning of communication. He was unable to extract an absolute definition that adequately would capture the multidimensional meanings of communication.

Many definitions of communication are expressed by many theorists. For instance, Klaus and Bass (1982: 6), in their book *Interpersonal communication in organizations* defined communication as a dynamic ongoing process that involve a minimum two persons-the sender and the receiver. As a process it includes communication contents that are transmitted by a selected channel.

Similarly, Charles Conrad (1993:3) in this book Strategic Organizational Communication developed one definition of communication which puts emphasis in all types of communication, of people interaction and focuses also on the context of organization. Precisely, Conrad stated that communication:

"…is a *process through which people act together, create, sustain, and manage meanings through the use of verbal and nonverbal signs and symbols within a particular context*."

However, one of the most accurate definitions of communication ever been developed and which has been broadly accepted by the scientific community is that of Herbert Simon mentioned in his book *Administrative behavior*. Simon (1976: 209) claimed that communication could be:

".... any *process whereby decisional premises are transmitted from one member of the organization to another. Communication in organizations is a two-way process: it comprehends*

both the transmittal to decision center of order, information and advice; and the transmittal of the decisions reached from this center to other parts of the organization."

Additionally, according to Simon (1976: 209), there cannot be any effective organization without effective communication, because it is through communication that group can influence individuals' behavior. The effectiveness of a decision taken by a decision maker will be strongly depend on adequate information transmitted to him, likewise the successful influence on individuals' behavior will also depend on the ability of the decision maker to transmit the decision in sufficient way.

Based on the above assumptions, which all agree with each other up to a certain point, there is nothing left but to agree that communication is a process through which information is been transmitted from one member of the organization to another through certain communication channels selected by the communicators.

2.3.1. Functions of communication

Szilagui and Wallace (1990: 489-490) in their book *Organizational Behavior and Performance* claimed that communication processes which are served through communication are classified into four major categories: control, motivation, emotional expression and information.

Control is related with the guidelines that employees are required to follow. Organizations very often attempt to control individuals and their activities through the establishment of formal communication. Organizational charts, for instance, serve the above mentioned scope. However, informal communication can also function as behavioral controller as aptly illustrated in Hawthorne experiment where certain group maintains control by communicating the norms and the rules to be followed. (Robbins 1979: 180.)

The second function of communication is emotions. Communication is the mean for satisfying individuals need for interaction and this interaction is a major indicator for motivation. Communication could be paralleled with a mechanism through which

employees can express their frustration and feeling of satisfaction to each other or superiors. (Szilagui & Wallace 1990: 489.)

Motivation is the third function that communication obtains and is actually one of the most important ones. Through communication management is able to direct, control, evaluate organizational members, to clarify to employees what to do, how to do it and to discover the means to improve performance. This attempt of management for goal setting, feedback toward the goal and reinforcement of desired behavior stimulate motivation and communication "is the vehicle of such control". (Szilagui and Wallace 1990: 489.)

The last communication function is information. In additional to motivation and emotive functions, communication plays a significant role in decision making because provides to individuals the necessary data so they can be able to identify and evaluate the alternative choices and therefore take the best possible decision. (Szilagui & Wallace 1990: 490; Robbins 1979: 220.)

2.3.2. Directions of information flow

The direction of information in organizations is one of the most important features of communication. The above mentioned feature is an interesting subject to study because communication direction can reveal important information about organizations such as the centralized or decentralized nature of decision making process (Anderson & Level 1980: 51-53). Communication in organizations can take place in two dimensions: vertical and horizontal. Instructions move down, information moves up. Vertical communication, itself, can be divided in downward and upward directions in the communication ladder and can be described as follows: Downward is considered as the communication which flows from one level of organization to a lower level of the same organization (Simpson 1959: 188).

Downward communication is mainly used by managers in order to assign goals, provide instructions, inform about the ongoing organizations' procedures and policies and offer

feedback on employee's performance. Woodruff supports the proposition that communication effectiveness on the part of the supervisor is related to the assumption made about people. Similarly, Woodruff claimed that Theory Y is the only approach which adequately expresses superiors who believe that the main goal of communication is and should be the unlimited expression of employees. Since employees are considered as the backbone of every organization, then, they should be involved in organizations' issues and the decision making process. (Woodruff, cited in Anderson & Level 1980: 51-52.)

Downward communication does not have to be realized in oral form or face to face contact. Any kind of information that is communicated from a high level executive to a low level employee can be considered as downwards. Sometimes downward communication might be ineffective or unreliable and the problem lies in filtering. This means that as more levels the message must go through to get to the bottom of the hierarchy the more chances there are that sizeable portion of the original information to be lost or distorted in the process. One effective way so this lost to be avoided is through the feedback offered by upward communication. In their book *Communication in Organization* Rogers & Rogers associate communication to water, which goes downhill. Similarly, in the communication process, management and superiors are more likely to initiate communication flow. (Rogers & Rogers 1976: 96.)

Upward communication is the opposite of downward communication. Upward communication is used by a low level employee to a high level person or group in the organization. Upward communication serves mainly to provide feedback to supervisors, managers or directors so they can be informed regarding to the process of certain goals. Basically, upward communication keeps the higher-ups aware on employees' progress, performance and emotions. Additionally, upward communication might be a good source of ideas about how things can be improved coming from the core of organizations-employees. Suggestion boxes, surveys, grievance procedures, informal discussions between superior-subordinates are good examples to show how upward communication functions. (Rogers & Rogers 1976: 93-96.)

Horizontal communication is the communication which is taking place among people of the same work group of the same work level. This communication is been practiced among subordinates, managers or any horizontal equivalent personnel of the organization. Horizontal communication exists mainly for saving time and facilitating project or work coordination. Horizontal communication might be considered beneficial and a valuable tool for the organization for this reason it may occur with the knowledge and support of the superiors (Robbins 1989:220-230). Because horizontal communication occurs between employees of the same work level, for this reason is more frequent than vertical flows. This happens because individuals communicate more openly and effectively with their equals than with superiors. Furthermore, the content of the information sent through horizontal communication it is usually of a coordinating nature when downwards is considered as more authoritative and upwards provide feedback on performance (Rogers & Rogers 1976:96).

One significant element in the direction of communication is the degree of mechanization of the work process. Some interesting findings argues that mechanization and technology advancement reduces the need for close supervision, therefore the need for vertical communication is also limited since work can be accomplished by machines instead of men. However this might be considered as a relevant issue since not all scholars have the same opinion on this matter. (Simpson 1959: 188.)

2.3.3. Barriers of effective communication

Efficiency in organizational communication is often hampered by certain barriers which might appear to have simple causes, but they actually stem from a multitude of rather complex causes. The barriers will be obvious if we just think what two people or a group of people should have in common in order the communication to be possible. What makes the communication between those people real and effective is the exchange of all things which both sides have had past experience. This means that the codes of past experience have to be shared by both parties before meaning can be exchanged. Following we will enumerate the most significant barriers which impedes the effectiveness of communication among the members of organization. (Lau 1975: 156.)

People tend to react in different way to the same cause based on their personal experiences, habits and interpretation abilities. For instance, people who come from different cultures perceive and interpret messages in a different way. The social environment, the political environment and ones' family can play a significant role in ones' personality and the way the former comprehend and interpret various phenomena such as communicative phenomena. Among other features, motivation and personality plays an important role in the process of decoding and interpreting a message. Szilagui and Wallace (1990: 497-498) in their book *Organization Behavior and Performance* clearly support this opinion by claiming that:

"An employee who has a highly felt need for advancement in an organization and whose personality tends to be quite optimistic might interpret a smile or a causal comment made by his supervisor as an indication that he or she is a favorite child being groomed for a promotion, the opposite may happen with someone who has a low felt need for advancement and a pessimistic disposition."

People tend to see and hear based on their needs, motivations, experience, background and other personal characteristics. One of the most significant characteristics is the need to avoid or reduce cognitive disagreement. Thus, people, often ignore new information that come to contradiction with already established beliefs and they project their personal interest and expectations into communication as they decode and interpret (Szilagui & Wallace 1990: 498). Lack of adequate information could cause a number of problems to people to whom are assigned tasks (Lau 1975: 158).

As we know communication is consisted of symbols and signs. A major set of symbols and signs creates language. Words mean different things to different people. Age, education, cultural background are the most common variables that influence the language a person uses and the definition they give to words (Szilagui & Wallace 1990: 498-499). However, because many words carry different meanings, when people use all those meanings of the same word without realizing it then may cause distortion to communication (Lau 1975: 158). Therefore, two can be considered as major semantic problems that prevent to communication from being effective: first, the fact that some words and phrases are so general and abstract that can be interpreted in various ways. The second reason why communication is been hampered is the jargon or technical

language that employees develop and use with each other in organizations that could possibly be confusing for the rest of organizational members (Szilagui & Wallace 1990: 498-499).

Lack of adequate time is another issue that would cause problem for effective communication. When it comes to organizational life, time is never enough for projects to be completed and everyone complain that they run out of time or that the deadline is almost over. Time is always short and this fact leads to distorted communication. A great challenge when pressed for time would be to overlook formal communication channels. (Szilagui & Wallace 1990: 498-499.)

Inadequate information sharing, as already mentioned above can cause a numerous problems to communication itself but also to goal achievement. Similarly, the extensive amount of information can also cause problems and distortion to effective communication. Most members of organization, mainly those in high level positions complain for the amount of information they receive daily which is impossible to attend, otherwise the actual work would never be completed. (Szilagui & Wallace 1990: 499.)

Emotions play also a significant role in the interpretation of a message by the receiver. A message received when we are under a negative emotional situation can be interpreted in a completed different way if we are in neutral or positive disposition. Thus, most of people have constant ideas on how to behave and react in certain circumstances. When the message received is different than we expected the feelings created by this conflict would cause distortion or block effective communication process since people loose objectivity of the message and behave irrationally. (Lau 1975: 158-161; Robbins 1979: 228.)

Another reason why communication is often distorted is because each of us uses different assumptions and codes, yet we make the assumption that each of us is using the same communication system. This assumed overlap of codes is most of the time

incorrect but participants do not realize that so the misunderstanding goes undetected. (Lau 1975: 156.)

A common but undelaying phenomenon that may cause distortion in communication is the manipulation of information by the sender in order to be seen favorably by the receiver. This might occur quite often in organization. As information is passed up to high level executives has to be synthesized by underlings so that people on top of hierarchy will not face overload of information. The major determinant of filtering in organizations is the structure of organization itself. The denser the structure is the better filtering is applied. (Robbins 1989: 228.)

2.3.4. Overcoming Communication barriers

Given the fact that communication is been distorted by the above mentioned barrier, it is necessary to mention some techniques that could improve organizational communication. The implementation of constant feedback, the establishment of simplified language and the active listening of the involved parts, are only some methods of communication improvisation which are further developed below.

One safe way to avoid misunderstanding and inaccuracies in communication is to provide or to ask feedback. The answer to a simple question like "do you understand what I am saying" would be an illustration of feedback. In order the sender to be ensured that the message that the message is totally understood by the receiver he can make a series of questions related to the message transmitted. There are also other ways for giving and receiving feedback, for instance, some organizations are using anonymous evaluation forms the data of which can become subject of discussion between superiors in order to see how behavior is affecting the progress of the work. (Robbins 1979: 229; Lau 1975: 163; Szilagui & Wallace 1990: 502; see also Finkelstein & Fischbach, 2012.)

Listening is essential when communication and it is not an easy. It demands intellectual effort and total concentration. Most people have the ability to hear, however very few of

us can actually listen. As Robbins (1979) mentions in his book *Organizational behavior* an average person is able to say 150 words per minute but he has the ability to listen to more than 1000 words per minute. This means that our mind is able to hear a great amount of information but is not able to comprehend and analyze this received amount.

Technology has become an outstanding part of organizational life. This means that organizational members should become familiar with the new technologies and be aware of the techniques that improve indeed the communication among people because technology can be considered as one of the most significant tools of communication improvisation. (Lau 1975: 162.)

Organizational climate is a major factor when we discuss about communication. Organizational climate can lead to serious breakdown in communication when the climate is unfriendly and suppressive. Unlike, when organizational climate is supportive and embrace two-way communication, adds value to the organization itself and increase employees' performance. (Lau 1975: 162.)

One other technique that would help to avoid breakdown and distortion in communication is through the setting of goals. It would be very helpful for the organization if superiors from time to time would gather together and define the long/short terms goals of subordinates or even of organization. This way, things would be simplified and clear for both sides and distortion would be avoided. Thus, this kind of cooperation would bring both sides closer to one another. (Lau 1975: 162.)

Brainstorming or role-play are both techniques that can be used to improve communication. Brainstorming is a short duration and frequently tape recorded session. The manager sets a problem and members are trying to solve it by presenting ideas. The unique feature of this technique is that ideas are not evaluated and so members can express themselves in various ways. Role-play on the other hand, is another technique where participants act out a conflict situation in order to see how people feel when they face similar situations. (Huse & Bowditch 1973: 104.)

2.4. Summary

Technology, structure, gatekeeping, information overload, feedback, meetings, trainings etc. are all variables that can hamper or assist the development of effective communication. Communication is a multidimensional feature of organization and for this reason its effectiveness depends on other variables and characteristics of organization. Similarly, all the other activities of organization depend on effective communication. Organizations' main scope is to increase efficiency. Yet, efficiency depends strongly on coordination and coordination can only be achieved through communication. No coordination may occur if communication is hampered by various aspects.

Distinguished theorists claim that effective communication is mainly supervisors' and managements' task. It is basically the former who should support effective communication through organization strategies, simplified organization structures, implementation of advanced technologies in organization etc. Yet the most important action that supervisors and management should take is to encourage their subordinated to be spontaneous, involved in organizations' matters and to freely express their own thoughts and ideas. Perception differences should not to become a barrier in everyday communication. Therefore, the most important thing that management should do is to encourage employees' engagement in the decision making process. Employees' participation in decision making is a win-win situation for both organization and individual. Based on research, organizations that have presented high rated of employees' engagement in decision making have also presented increased performance comparing to those whose rates of engagement were law. This is mainly caused because involved employees are highly motivated and determined to accomplish their task and to achieve organizations' objective.

Numerous methods and techniques are presented and developed from well-known scholars and executives in order to help organization identify the cause of mal communication and improve efficiency and performance by changing and developing their communication habits.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Qualitative research as applied method

The main scope of this study is to investigate and analyze in depth the effects of internal communication in organizational life of Albanian public sector. More specifically, this study aims to search how communication affects employees' engagement in the decision making process and how this can be related to their performance taking into consideration different variables.

The current study is a qualitative research of one organizational characteristic such as communication. The investigation, description and evaluation of communication can better be realized through qualitative method since the former is a delicate and powerful mean to capture the experiences of the subjects from ones' own point of view (Kvale 1996: 70). Distinguished theorists agree that one of the most dominant characteristics of qualitative research as a scientific method is the fact that through in-depth investigation of the individual tries to reveal what is essential to them as well as their perception of their own working environment (Bryman 1989: 24-25).

In order to have a deep comprehension of how communication is developed in the organization another form of qualitative research was decided to be applied-the case study. The reason why such a decision was taken is because case study allows the researcher to observe personally the event being study and interview the people involved into this event. Based on this method investigators can obtain real and holistic knowledge of the case under study. (Yin 2009: 4-18.)

Kvale (1996: 1-100) defined interview as an "inter view" in ones' ideas, emotions and psychology. Interview is based on the conversation of two or more people on a topic of mutual interest. They go beyond spontaneous share of experience and turns into a careful interaction with a certain purpose. The involved parts do not share equal roles since conversation is basically driven by the researcher. The process of interview is an interaction whose main goal is knowledge production. However, the process is not over

after the conversation is closed. The researcher is called to interpret and report the collected data.

Many theorists identified a number of dangers related to interviews as a research method. Many support that conversation development is very fragile to the human side and therefore may lead to the emancipation and empowerment of the involved individuals (Kvale 1996: 70). Additionally, peoples' opinion can be considered as direct expression of their personal experience and this emotionalism is often considered as problematic (Silverman 2011:168). Moreover, information shared by the interviewee depends on the sensitivity of the topic, the emotional situation of the interviewee and other external factors which can affect the credibility of the interview (Markannen 1991:66). For all the above mentioned, qualitative research and interviews as a research tool is often considered as a relatively methodology therefore, it should be treated as exploratory stage of a study (Silverman 2011: 45).

3.1.1. The interview process

Prior interviews were conducted each respondent was firstly approached via email, informing him/her about the scope of the interview and its nature. Respondents also received the list with the interview questions that would be discussed translated in the Albanian language. This way each of the respective persons would be able to be prepared for the interview and be familiar with the outline of the discussion beforehand. However, email approach of the interviewees failed for this reason all respondents were reapproached on the work field, in person. Data collection lasted 45 days. All collected materials had to be translated from Albanian into the English language before data analysis and interpretation of the study begin.

The total number of the required interviewees is 15 people, all coming from the public sector. More specifically, all respondents were employed in the Ministry of Education of Albania (ME) and the depending to the Ministry institutions. The thought behind this particular selection of the sample was to be as representative as possible. For this reason was decided to pass through the hierarchy ladder vertically, from top to bottom and

record answers from all levels. Respondents were grouped into four main categories – directors, supervisors, experts, professors/teachers. More specifically, four (4) interviewees work in the Ministry of Education which is the policy maker. Three (3) interviewees work in DART (Regional Education Directorate of Tirana) which is the authority that mediates between the Ministry and pre-university institutions and whose main responsibility is to oversee the proper and adequate execution of the policies imposed by the Ministry. The last group of interviewees was consisted of eight (8) people, mainly school directors, teachers and professors of pre-university education who are considered as executors of the policies set from above. Table 1 shows the qualities of the sample:

Table 1. Qualities of sample.

Respondents Job Title	Gender	Degree Obtained	Years of experience in the current position	Location under study
Director	Female	MSc	5	Tirana
Director	Female	BSc	3	Tirana
Director	Male	2 BSc	4	Tirana
Director	Female	MSc	5	Tirana
Director	Female	MSC	5	Tirana
Supervisor	Male	PhD	5	Tirana
Supervisor	Female	PhD	6	Tirana
Expert	Female	MSc	5 months	Tirana
Expert	Male	MSc	3	Tirana
Expert	Male	BSc	1	Tirana
Expert	Female	MSc	5	Tirana
Professor	Female	BSc	14	Tirana
Professor	Female	BSc	6	Tirana
Teacher	Female	BSc	4	Tirana
Teacher	Female	BSc	21	Tirana

3.2. Presentation of the case study

It is said that the progress of a society is reflected in the education, civilization and culture of its own citizens. On the other hand, the education of the former strongly depends on the importance and attention that the respective authorities pay to this field. Ministry of Education along with all the other depending organizations and institutions are considered as the primary to be in charge for the policies launched and the service they provide to the citizens in order to achieve the best possible results. The quality of the services depends on many variables, among all and probably the most important, is the communication as developed among organizational employees.

The main reason why education system is chosen as a case study of this research was so to have an internal view of how a sensitive issue such as education is approached by organizational members through internal communication and how coordination is achieved by the involved employees. A key factor of efficiency, effectiveness and success of programs, policies and services launched depends on effective performance and devotion of organizational members to organization objective and to organization itself.

3.2.1. The Ministry (MASH)

The Ministry of Education and Science is consisted of two major departments: General Directorate of Secondary Education and General Directorate of Higher Education and occupies approximately 120 employees. The main concern of the Ministry is to provide basic education for all, a qualitative education system that: Respects the perspective and interests of the individual, the community and society. Ministry aims to achieve European Education standards. Provide knowledge and skills to adapt to the demands of a market economy. Additionally, Ministry is responsible for the integration of national research activities and technological development in scientific and technological activities in regional, European and worldwide basis, the development and effective use of the human resources, education and science as well as the optimization and efficient use of financial resources.

3.2.2. Department of Pre-university Education

This study is mainly focused on the Directorate of Secondary Education. The General Directorate of Secondary Education is divided into two departments: Human Recourses Department and the Department of Pre-university Education. The former dept. is consisted of three sectors: the sector of professional education, the sector of curricula and textbooks and the sector of evaluation and quality monitoring. The sector occupies 11 people: 1 director, 3 supervisors and 7 specialists.

The mission of this respective department is mentioned in details in the law No. 69/2012 on the Pre-university education of the republic of Albania. The main scope of the department is the improvement of the quality of the existing services in pre-university education through the development of a more effective legislation, a qualitative curriculum that ensures equal opportunities for all students in order to be formed as citizens with democratic consciousness in terms of globalization and technology development as well as the establishment of a modern performance evaluation system for the schools in an effective and efficient decision-making service in order to improve the quality offered.

Additionally, among the main duties that pre-university education obtains is a) the establishment of strategies/policies that lead to the development of pre-university education in coordination with Ministry and other analogues central institutional structures, b) the legal support of the objectives that Ministry has established, c) the successful design and implementation of a qualitative national curriculum for undergraduate education and the provision of qualitative textbooks, d)the management of qualitative and quantitative growth of Professional Education within the Albanian Qualification Framework, e) improving external evaluation procedures through achievement tests and increase the effectiveness of monitoring management procedures according to state standards.

3.2.3. DART (Regional Education Directorate of Tirana)

This institution is responsible for the implementation of developing policies for pre-university education in regional level. Thus, DART is also responsible for human resources management, quality assurance in public and privet schools and organizing teacher's qualification through the cooperation with specialized institutions. Deliberately, the main functions of the Directorate are described in in the same law No. 69/2012, article 27: a) the evaluation of the quality of the service of educational institutions and local educational units. b) Checking out the compliance of the activity of the educational institutions and educational units with the effective legal requirements. c) Advising the educational managers and employees of educational institutions and of local educational units. d) Informing the Minister, local educational units and institutions for findings of educational inspections as well as making them public. e) Distribution of successful practices of educational institutions and local education units.

3.2.4. Educational Institutions

Educational Institutions implement the policies, practices and strategies set by the Ministry. Their activities and functions are all mentioned in the Pre-university law No. 69/2012, article 32: a) the educational institution shall be tasked with ensuring the friendly environment for the students and opportunities so that every student may demonstrate, develop and implement his potentials according to the law. b) The education institution shall function in accordance with the with its internal standing rules, which shall be in compliance with this law and other effective legal acts and be approved by the head of the respective local educational units. c) The educational institution shall provide to students the environment and equipment for sports, cultural and recreational activities even beyond teaching hours, as well as on holidays. d) The organization of party-oriented activities with Pre-university educational system institutions shall be prohibited.

The cooperation and collaboration of the Ministry with the Directorate and Educational Institutions are essential in order for decision to be implemented and objectives to be achieved. The close interaction of all organizations is also depicted in the following figure:

Figure 1. The interconnection of educational organizations and institutions.

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              ┌─────────────────────┐
              │ Ministry of Education│
              │     and Science     │──┐
              └─────────────────────┘  │ Pre-university
                                       │ Department
                                       │
                          ┌────────────────────┐
                          │ Regional Educational│
                          │     Directorate     │
                          └────────────────────┘
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| Kindergarten (Education Institution) | Elementary School (Education Institution) | High School (Education Institution) | Professional High School (Education Institution) |
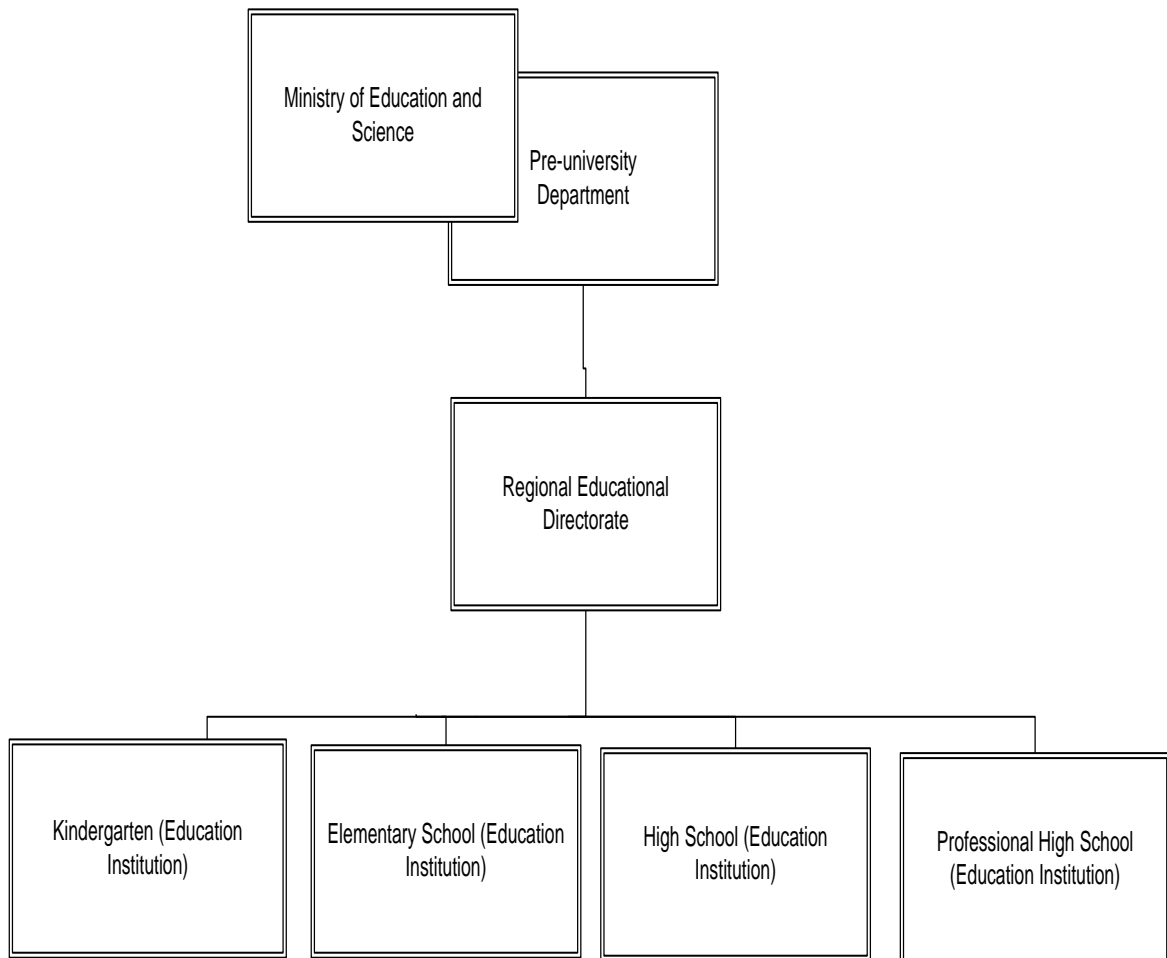
4. COMMUNICATION PARAMETERS IN PRACTICE

Communication is the mean to achieve goals and to perform excellent in public administration. The nature, functions and direction of communication are indicators of the flow of information and therefore of the organization performance.

This chapter mainly focuses on the interviews conducted with employees of the Albanian public sector. Interviews are chosen as a proper method to understand in depth how internal communication functions in practice, to identify problems that may occur during the communication and to seek for possible solution to any of the existing problems. Through direct communication with institutions' representatives, this study attempts to shed light on the effectiveness of communication conducted among employees of each organization and the measures taken by the policy makers to increase effectiveness on communication. Mostly, this study seeks to investigate employees' participation in the decision making process. Nevertheless, the above issues will be discussed in details in following pages.

4.1. Information circulation based on communication

The direction that information flows in an organization designates the communication patterns established in this particular organization. Moreover, direction of communication indicates the centralization or not of communication and therefore of decision making. For this reason, respondents were asked to share their views in one main question regarding the direction of communication which can be divided into two sub questions such as: 1) the flow of information through the organization ladder of communication and 2) the centralized or decentralized nature of communication in the actual organizations.

4.1.1. Information flow direction

Patterns of communication, as mentioned above, could be set among organization members. The flow of information is a significant indicator of communication between superiors and subordinates. Through information flow we may also identify the relations established among them, the responsibilities that each member has. Moreover, information flow facilitates the recognition of the role that management plays in influencing the improvement of communication. Likewise, it is necessary to identify possible actions taken in order to support communication channels.

The vast majority of the respondents stated that the pattern of communication that would characterize their work internally would definitely be downwards. One employee stated the below:

"....communication normally follows the hierarchy lines but in emergency cases formal way of communication is eliminated. In fact, we are administrative employees and we are executors...." Supervisor.

According to respondents it is considered that employees are mainly executors, they do take orders from superiors and execute them. Thus, is mentioned that communication follows the hierarchy line. This means that employees have not much say in decision making process and communication is directed and limited by the hierarchy structure.

As it is mentioned in the theoretical framework, administration is defined as a decision making process and decisions are viewed essentially as communication phenomena (Dorsay 1957:307). No communication phenomena may occur when there is no participation of organization members in the process. Without communication there is no flow of information. Yet, information is considered as knowledge. Lack of knowledge, as expected, cannot lead to effective results. As i see it, it could be more complicated than this. I strongly believe that when effective performance of an employee is been hampered by external factors and not by personal capabilities then this could be a determinant factor of demotivation resulting to a number of serious side effects such as turnover, absenteeism, etc. To enforce this opinion one interviewee stated that:

"Employees are not part of decision making process, even their opinion is not seriously taken into consideration when it comes to decision to be taken regarding the organization life and policies. Employees most of the times communicate with their superiors to pass information or to complain about something but not to participate in decision making" Expert.

The lack of participation in decision making process was emphasized by most respondents. Some of them claimed that education system in Albania is centralized and for this reason communication mainly occurs mostly downwards. Many respondents expressed their desire for the existing situation to change within the frames of the new coming law which is planned to cede some space to education institutions. One respondent stated regarding this issue:

"...Education system in Albania is centralized and communication is directed by the management. Teachers do not participate in decision making, their role is limited to orders execution...." Director.

However, non-participation in the decision making process was not the only issue raised by respondents. Some respondents pointed out the issue of power abuse as a result of mal communication. According to data retrieved from interviewees' replies, good communication skills in Albanian education system sometimes might be perceived as weakness and result to negative team performance. This lead to the conclusion that even if there is a considerable number of superiors that desire to set communication patterns in a less authoritative style, embracing tolerance, there is always the fear of the side effects. Based on respondents' claims good and effective communication is equated with tolerance and tolerance is equated to weakness. This equation can only result to problematic situations and difficult communication patterns. One respondent mentioned:

"....Good communication skills might be considered as tolerance and result to abuse by employees, this of course has a direct impact on performance..." Director.

Vertical communication is also very frequent in institutional environment. Is the kind of communication where both sides-management and employees-communicate sufficiently with each other. One respondent claimed that:

"The type of communication that characterizes the sector is mainly vertical…Generally can be said that all ways of communication appears in the sector" Expert.

It is very encouraging to hear from the interviewee that communication occurs from both directions -upwards and downwards. This means that management assigns goals, provide instructions, inform employees about organizations' procedures and mostly deliver feedback to employees about their performance. Employees on the other hand inform superiors for the progress of ongoing projects, provide new ideas and they also provide feedback for performance, emptions, etc. Some interviewees support that communication in organization is vertical and realized mainly through memos and emails. Information technology according to our respondents seems to be an issue of importance because direct communication is hampered. No effective communication may occur only by using the available technology. All these application can be considered as secondary means, used by people to enforce communication but none of them is able to replace the efficiency that personal communication carries. According to one interviewee:

"Communication, is vertical and realized through memos and emails no matter the direction it follows, this is ok but sometimes you need something more than just an email to be informed on current issues" Expert.

Some respondents, even though they support that communication is been realized through vertical direction however many of them claimed that under certain conditions communication is directed downwards. The following statement confirms the opinion:

"Generally communication occurs both ways-upwards and downwards. Nevertheless in some cases we receive orders from superiors and we have to execute them…" Expert.

One small percentage of the respondents replied that communication in their work place does not flow only through one direction. Communication can circulate depending on the current needs of any running project. Emergent cases do not follow the formal way of communication but direct communication among involved parts is adjusted. Furthermore, one of the respondents introduces an interesting opinion on how communication is framed and that is the meaning of liberty in communication. This is an important issue to emphasize considering the fact that Albania has been under

communist regime for about 50 years. People in Albania are very sensitive with meanings such as democracy, freedom and liberality. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to analyze, maybe in a future study, if the principles of democracy are truly comprehended, consolidated and applied in everyday activity or if the leaves of the previous regime are still affecting modern society. In a modern environment, meanings such as democracy are de facto values, there is no need to be mentioned or emphasized. For this reason, the respondent clarifies this idea. More specifically the interviewee stated that:

"...The type of communication is not standardized, it always serves job interest. There is a liberal (democratic) communication in the institution and the relations between me and subordinates or even superiors are also characterized as liberal..." Director.

Some respondents consider that communication flows from and to all directions based on the institutional needs. This makes communication flexible and not standardized. Everybody gets connected to anybody in order to get the "job done" as it should be in public organizations. However, flexibility seems not to exist as we move higher to hierarchy. One of respondents put his opinion in this statement:

"Communication is a combination of all direction, it depends on the situation, it could be upwards, downwards or horizontal. Yet, communication with top management is realized in institutional way because they are at the top of hierarchy..." Director.

Downward direction of communication is the most dominant type of communication since this is mostly used by superiors to set goals, assign projects, inform on procedures and policies. Most of interviewees argued that communication in their work place is considered mainly downwards. The supporters of this opinion were mainly professors and teachers who belong to the lowest level of educational ladder. This is not a coincidence, but a fact which shows that professors and teachers, who in fact may be considered as the backbone of the education system have less say in decision making process than all the other organizational members. The direction of communication is clearly shown in table 2.

Table 2. Different views of communication direction (N=15).

Groups	Downwards	Vertical	Other
Directors	2	2	1
Supervisors	1	1	-
Experts	1	2	1
Professors/Teachers	3	1	-
Total	7	6	2

4.1.2. Participation to decision making according to communication centrality

Participation of employees in the decision making process is vital for one healthy and effective organization. High participation in decision making create confident, positive and satisfied employees and the opposite, those characteristics will be normally illustrated in the performance.

Undoubtedly, the participation or not of organization of employees in decision making process can also be determined from the direction of communication. However, it would have been useful for this study to have a clear statement from the interviewees regarding the decision making issues and the centrality of communication.

Based in these questions, more than 60% of the respondents replied that communication in their working environment is mainly considered as centralized. Most of respondents believe that because of the public nature of institutions that they work in it is common sense that communication would be formal and centralized following hierarchy. The following statement illustrates interviewees' opinion on this issue:

"*Communication in the organization is centralized. This mainly happens for ethical reasons. Top management should intervene to solve pending issues with other departments. This is considered as a sign of respect to the hierarchy and top management also*" Supervisor.

The first study on Small-Group Network Communication was developed on 1959 for the first time by Professor Bavelas and a year later was re-examined by Professor Leavitt, showed that highly centralized communication networks are superior for routine tasks but the error rate is high mostly because two way communication and feedback is low (Rogers & Rogers 1976:96.) In centralized communication networks communication opportunities are unequal and members are required to communicate with persons in a central position but not with each other, making that way communication a complex issue (Cohen 1962:450-451.)

Based on the above, it is easy to conclude that centralized communication systems limit the potential of communication and those of employees. Centralized communication system can bring rapid results on routine jobs, however, what is missing from public organizations is a combination of both speed and efficient results. Effective results are hard to obtain when for instance, for a particular issue there is only one person who carries the responsibility for all coming problems and makes the final decision. Obviously, performance would have been improved if people collaborate closely with each other.

For the same issue there was also a smaller percentage who argued that communication is decentralized or centralized depending on the situation. One respondent who support the view of decentralization stated:

"....When there are pending issues there is close collaboration with stuff in order to achieve the goal....employees are the backbone of the institution because most projects are realized by them, for this reason their opinion count. Communication is decentralized with very few exceptions" Director.

Decentralized communication system, contrary to centralized system, is more effective for non-routine tasks, improve employees' performance and is related with members satisfaction in the working environment. The responses which support the decentralized view of communication are mainly coming from professors and school directors. It is interesting to see how people of the same profession and same hierarchical level perceive things in so different frame. For instance, the director of preliminary school argues that teachers are the weak point of education system, they do not participate in decision making and more space should be offered to them. On the other hand, the director of professional high school sees employees as a dynamic element of education

system, they execute but also have a say and their opinion is taken highly into consideration.

Finally, there is also one tendency left, the one that supports both centralized and decentralized character of communication depending on the coming situation. This tendency is represented from a low percentage of respondents. At this part all interviewees argue that even though communication is decentralized or centralized what is worthy to mention is that participation and collaboration bring out better results. One respondent stated:

"Communication is not centralized. There is space for all parties to communication, however, the higher we move to the hierarchy the more centralized it becomes. In my level, situation requires to be more operative and not formal in order to effective" Director.

Based on the above statement communication is decentralized until a certain level of hierarchical ladder, however, this makes communication partially decentralized since on the top of hierarchy there is always someone who has the last word in communication and in decisions. The tendencies of the replies received regarding centrality of communication are illustrated in table 3.

Table 3. Centralization of communication: the views of the respondents (N=15).

Groups	**Centralized**	**Decentralized**
Directors	4	1
Supervisors	2	-
Experts	2	2
Professors/Teachers	3	1
Total	11	4

4.2. Measures to enhance internal communication

Communication may be hampered by causes that are so obvious. Yet in everyday life we usually don't realize these causes and therefore it is hard to improve or avoid. Therefore, distortion in communication quite often is caused because of the limited time we have in our disposal, information overload, semantic problem as a result of age, culture, language difference or sometimes, even emotions.

Nevertheless, there are methods and techniques that people in organizations may adjust in their everyday life and enhance internal communication. That would be the usage of simple language, the application of advanced technologies, listening to others carefully, provide constant feedback, organize regular meetings etc.

This chapter is mainly focused on constant feedback that both involved parts should provide and the organization of meeting and the participation to the former.

4.2.1. The importance of successful implementation of feedback

The most common method communicators should follow in order to avoid misinformation or misinterpretation in communication is the use of constant feedback from both sides. The receiver should always inform and confirm the sender about the reception and comprehension of the communicated information.

The respondents were asked regarding feedback practice in organization. The vast majority of the sample replied negatively. Most interviewees argued that feedback is not practiced in their work environment. Many of them support that feedback not only is not constant or in regular basis but in some case is not practiced at all because employees do not consider it as a necessary communication tool. One respondent claimed:

"Usually feedback is not practiced. People don't really need it. I know it would have been better if we'd practice it, many problems might have been avoided beforehand but unfortunately we don't" Expert.

Based on replies, many respondents argue that most of the times, the feedback that they receive is the annual performance report which is mandatory by the administration law. Performance report is nothing more than just an evaluation of performance of the respective employee during the year and does not have the same impact with the feedback that members of an organization should provide to each other in order to smooth daily operations Additionally, some of them even doubt feedback as an objective indicator of performance.

"Based on the law, feedback is provided to the employees of all levels once a year. This feedback is based on annual performance and i don't believe that is very reliable and objective, it is just a typical procedure" Supervisor.

Feedback is not a method commonly practiced. Some of the respondents claim that feedback is not necessary when employees are experienced. New starters are those who mostly need guidance and supervision. However, organization is a living entity and daily operations are not constant. Even through routinized processes new issues may rise resulting to new data. The non-constant feature of organizational life leads to the need of constant communication and therefore to the need for constant feedback. One respondent stated that:

"....New employees are those who need feedback and supervision in order to learn and find their own path. But as time passes feedback is not necessary" Supervisor**.**

One other respondent is very suspicious about feedback and its benefits on communication and for this reason expresses a different, interesting opinion. This is what he stated:

"Feedback is not offered directly, you have to be intelligent and find results from reactions....i think that positive comments make an individual to think much of himself overestimating his own capabilities. Negative feedback on the other hand has negative effects on one's psychology" Expert.

Providing feedback to subordinates and peers is a good way to avoid misinterpretation and distortion in communication. Feedback is not provided in order to manipulate employees' psychological condition but to ensure the accurate progress of ongoing projects. Constant feedback provided by both sides might confirm the comprehension of

the message transmitted or correct possible misinterpretation by helping this way employees resulting to accurate task performance. Avoiding problems occurring by communication distortion and improvement of performance makes feedback a significant communication tool. Additionally, should be mentioned that feedback should be constant, objective and based on real facts. Hypothesis are not recommended because might lead to false conclusions that do not correspond to reality.

On the other hand there are some opinions which support that feedback is constantly implemented in the institution they work in. Limited number of respondents argues that they give and receive feedback mostly in the sense of performance evaluation. On example is presented below:

"Evaluation is part of our job…it has been five years that Ministry of Education provides evaluation for schools that have performed well and has also evaluated directors" Director.

Based on the above statement, one may easily assume that performance evaluation and implementation of feedback as a mean to minimize communication errors, is one single concept. In fact, evaluation is just one form of feedback but as it has been already mentioned it only takes place ones or twice per year. The question raised here is how do employees perform during the year in the absence of constant feedback and how do they overcome barriers resulting from inaccurate transfer of information?

What can be concluded from the above mentioned statements is the fact that feedback is not practiced as a communication method by any of the involved parts. One part of the sample has recognized and accepted the absence of feedback. The rest of the sample, only recognizes one aspect of feedback-that of performance evaluation. Nonetheless, as mentioned above, performance evaluation it is indeed one form of feedback but is not the only one and the exclusive use of the former is not sufficient to face communication barriers that rise during daily operations in public organizations.

Additionally, one should bear in mind that feedback is a mean that seeks to knock down the barricades of ineffective communication and to help people pass information

accurately. Feedback should never be used as a mean for criticism, demoralization or demotivation of employees.

4.2.2. Meetings as a significant tool for communication augmentation

Meetings are another important technique that organizations practice. Organizational meetings scope to deliver knowledge and information and also to communicate important issues to the participants. It is considered as a significant tool for organizations because through meetings people keep updated with each other regarding work issues. Additionally, through discussions that have been developed in the meetings, managers may keep truck of individuals and team progress on certain projects. Even though, telephone and other means of communication allow convenient interaction among people, meetings can provide an avenue of ideas and create a different effect on organization.

At this point respondents were asked to answer questions related to the frequency of the meetings and how active their role is in them. Most of respondents argued that meetings are frequently conducted in their working environment. Most of the meetings are conducted in weekly and monthly basis. Yet, there are meetings organized by supervisors or directors when urgent cases occur. Below is presented the answer of an interviewee:

"Every Friday we have a meeting in order to present a weekly report. There is also one meeting conducted every month where we usually discuss problems that have occurred during that month" Supervisor.

Moreover, most respondents confess that formal meetings are not a method that is implemented in organizations because most offices are located in common areas and all issues that arise are usually discussed at the very moment. Here is what an interviewee comments:

"....as for our sector there are no formal meeting because we all work in the same room so we discuss thing right away…" Supervisor.

One other interesting information coming out from the interviews is that most participants support that they have an active participation in the meetings conducted in their job place. Meetings are frequent and communication is direct. Participants do not feel oppressed and they express their thought in an open and spontaneous way. Some respondents claimed that they feel very confident and comfortable to express their opinion especially when the discussed topic is directly related with their job responsibilities. Here is what a respondent stated:

"....Generally, during the meeting i consider myself as an active participant. When we discuss issues related to my duties i actively express my thoughts and concerns...I am straight forward with people, i usually say what I think…" Supervisor.

On the other hand, there is a minority, 5 respondents (one interviewee is a new comer and has not participated at any meeting yet), who feel less free to express themselves because they are afraid that their opinion or views or ideas might be misinterpreted, misunderstood or even come to a contradiction with teams' or superiors' beliefs on a specific topic.

Some respondents feel more relaxed and confident when meetings are conducted among people with whom they work and have a daily interaction and therefore are familiar with. In contrary, when they deal with high level executives in official meetings they do not express their thoughts and ideas freely and naturally. The below statement illustrates this idea:

"…..When it comes to departmental meetings director has the major role, so my presence there is very dynamic. Contrary, in the meetings with superiors, even though when it comes to my duties and responsibilities i express my opinion, still, what I get from those meetings is the fact that there is no liberty of expression. Discussion in those meetings is strictly framed around individuals' responsibilities" Director.

The main reason scope why people organize meetings is so organizations' members to be updated on issues that concern them, to inform each other on the progress of certain projects and also share ideas on the improvisation of organizations' performance.
Making people feel comfortable and at ease is mainly managements' responsibility. Authority is given to certain people in order to be accountable for taken decisions.

Authoritative behavior towards colleagues or subordinates can always result to isolation, demotivation and less creative people.

4.3. The development of informal communication through formal communication networks

In an organization, no one can carry out a task without seeking or providing information and interact with others. Even the most individual tasks need the contribution of other members since the effectiveness of organization depends on coordination and collaboration.

All organizations are consisted of large or smaller communication networks which interact with each other. Communication networks are basically interconnected individuals linked together by the same communication patterns, established by organization. Networks play a significant role in organization communication process. It is through formal communication that informal relations may occur since the former are less structured communication patterns (Rogers & Rogers 1976:119).

In the following chapter will be discussed the significant role that networks play in organization life and its contribution to employees' relations and communication. In order to study further the functions of networks two questions require answers: do communication networks exist in Albanian public organizations? What is their impact on performance?

Respondents were asked to give answers to the above questions. Most of respondents believe that networks influence performance positively because they facilitate communication process. Networks are considered an important feature of organization communication. The majority of the interviewees admitted that networks are broadly developed in their working environment. Collaboration among colleagues and peers is the only way to perform effectively. One respondent made the below statement:

"...When communication networks are developed i perform better. I believe that network existence is important, especially for people that share same objectives or projects. Success at work comes from team work. Individual work may never be so effective" Professor.

Even though the vast majority embraces the existence of communication networks in the working environment, however, a small percentage from the sample share a different opinion on this issue. Few respondents believe that goals might be better achieved individually than with collaboration. Moreover, some of them claimed that networks are not helpful in daily operations because information flows from one person to another and that would cause confusion or problems. For this reason communication should be supervised and centralized. One respondent stated the following:

"....i dislike it when my subordinates share issues that concern our department with people from different departments. Communication is free, collaboration as well, but first i have to be informed. So my subordinates should not share internal departmental issues without my confirmation, this is something that bothers me, however, with discussion we have solved things out and this phenomenon does not happen anymore" Director

Strict supervision and control of communication may lead to dependent, unmotivated, undetermined employees with limited self-confidence. When these features appear in organization may lead to innumerous negative results and behaviors such as turnover, absenteeism and consequently to decrease performance.

4.3.1. The impact of informal communication on performance

Informal communication and informal relations can be considered as the most important element of an organization. No formal organization can stand on its own without the development of informality in communication and relations. As mentioned in the theoretical part, informality creates formal organizations. Yet, informality is maintained through formality. Both, formal and informal elements of an organization are depended from each other.

Based on the significance of the existence of informal communication in the organization, respondents were asked to provide information on how informal communication is developed in their working environment. Moreover, interviewees

were asked to express their opinion on how informality is connected to performance enhancement.

In a sample of 15 people the majority, approximately 60% of the interviewees believe that informal communication does exist in their institution and enhance extremely employees' performance. The question raised here is how does informal communication can improve performance? This question can be answered if we consider that most interviewees feel more motivated at work when informality is rated high. Through informal communication collaboration among employees is also increased and stress levels decreased. Those results are very encouraging considering the fact that most respondents think of their work as a good place to work. Satisfied employees may always perform better. Below is what someone stated:

"Informal communication does exist in the organization. This means that working environment is influenced positively. Moreover, performance and efficiency are both increased" Expert.

Some respondents support that informal communication and informal relations in their working environment are emphasized. Good communication and good relations are achieved through mutual understanding, collaboration, open minds, humor and common interests. For people in Albanian public institutions positive working environment has a primary role in well-being and motivation. The following statement illustrates the former idea:

"Informal communication is important. As an institution we do organize events, we go out together, spend time out of work together. Friendly environment at work for me is such a great motivation to be there every day. In my opinion informal communication improves collaboration between people" Professor.

Another important point resulting from the received responses is addressed to an interviewee who put a cultural dimension to informal communication. The respondent supported that in Albania many problems and issues can be discussed and solved while drinking coffee. Coffee is considered as an institution of its own. Many essential issues can be discussed while drinking coffee during work time and many important decisions are taken during those meetings. The respondent made the below statement:

"....In Albania coffee is a kind of institution of its own. We have very productive conversations and some very good ideas come out of these informal meetings" Supervisor.

On the other hand, some people does not see any benefits coming from the development of informal communication and therefore less formal relations are developed in the workplace. In fact, it is quite the contrary. Some interviewees believe that informal communication/relations at work it is better to be avoid. The main reason is that people very often abuse over formality and seeks to profit from the situation. Moreover, people believe that informal communication is not applied equally across the whole organization but it is established mainly among employees of the same hierarchical level. Below is what an interviewee claimed:

"Formal communication/relations in my opinion lead to better results because Albania is a small country and when you develop informal relations then people misinterpret and even taking advantage of it by asking favors" Director.

Based on interviews most of the respondents consider informality very important at work. This makes them feel comfortable and motivated. Some people are more suspicious with that, supporting that is hard to set limits when you have developed a friendly attitude with others. Few respondents even believe that in private sector communication is much more formal than it is in public sector. Employees have no say in decision making and they are turned into executors of orders. While in public sector employees feel more comfortable and satisfied.

4.3.2. The penetration of rumors in the working environment through informal
communication

Rumors exist in every organization as part of informal communication. Organization members through the channel of grapevine share information that is not officially transmitted by the respective authorities. Additionally, it is very common for people to gossip other members of organization. Talking about others could be a form of entertainment and a significant mean to decrease work stress and strengthen the existing

relationship. Many people doubt the accuracy of information transmitted by rumors, however, research have proven that rumors tent to provide 80% off accurate information.

Most respondents agree that rumors can only harm communication in organization, as well employees' relations. This happens because rumors undermine the smooth function of daily operations by causing a number of adverse events affecting this way negatively individual performance. The main reason why performance is been affected is because rumors have a significant impact on employees psychological condition. Below is what a respondent has stated:

"Rumors might lead to mal performance because they affect the psychological condition of the involved person and it becomes difficult to perform and accomplish task or pending issues" Expert.

Few of the respondents identify gossip as a characteristic feature of Albanian society and put a cultural dimension to this element. Respondents admit that the harm that rumors may cause to organizational life is because rumors usually cause conflicts and reduce productivity. However, they doubt the fact that this phenomenon can be eliminated since it is believed that rumors and gossiping are both deeply rooted in Albanian society. The same persons generalized this phenomenon for the whole Balkan region. Here is what the respondent claimed:

"We are an institution with Balkan characteristics. Life here is like a soap opera. Based on rumors we can build a whole new reality. Rumors naturally exist in the institution and they have a significant effect in daily operations. They create conflicts and misunderstandings...." Supervisor.

As it is already known, most interviewees share the same opinion about the effects of rumors in organizational life and its impact on performance. Specifically, seven people admit that rumors and gossiping is an intense phenomenon in their institution. On the other hand, there are people who even though were aware of the consequences that rumors bring to organization life and communication, yet, ignore the existence of this phenomenon in their institution or deny its existence. The main reason why these people ignore rumors' existence is because they have never been involved to any kind

of rumor before. Nevertheless, is it possible for an individual not to be involved in organization activities and communication phenomena, especially, when these phenomena occur in a working environment where rumors and gossiping are broadly developed? The answer to this question would be negative because rumors are the mean for employees to integrate more rapidly in organizational life instead of feeling isolated, it is an organizational phenomenon caused by organizational members for organizational members. One interviewee about this issued said:

"When it comes to rumors, I think you're talking with the wrong person. For some reason I have never found myself involved in that kind of conversation. I know that rumors can harm work environment because they cause misunderstandings among employees but I cannot add something more" Supervisor.

In my opinion it is difficult for people not to be involved in activities or conversations developed in their work place. All interviewees identified only the negative aspects of rumors. However, there are also some positive elements coming out from this communication activity. Rumors have more dimensions than what was previously presented. Rumors can be a good source of information. People may learn news that management has not yet announced since information based on rumors is proved to be 80% accurate. Additionally, rumors are a powerful mean of integration at work. Each and one of us need to feel part of minor or major society and working environment it is considered as such. For this reason it is possible for people to participate in activities that promote this opportunity even if these activities are not compatible with ones' own beliefs and principles.

4.4. Adoption of Information Technology into public organizations

Information technologies undoubtedly have brought revolution in communication and have been broadly adjusted in organizations and corporations. The proliferation of communication technologies is fundamentally based to flexibility and asynchrony saving precious time to their users by connecting institutions and individuals despite location. Technology has increased effectiveness and efficiency but also contribute to the evolution of operating systems and new ways of working. However, not only

positive things came up with technological advances, negative parameters occurred, the same as with most new phenomena.

4.4.1. The impact of technology in organization communication

The most important result coming from this part of the interview regarding the impact of technology in communication is what all 15 respondents support that: technology has enormous influence on organization communication. In Albanian public sector people mostly use emails and mobile telephony for their daily operations.

More specifically, the sample was asked to describe the technological devices or applications they use in their institutions and the effects of technology penetration in the work environment. The following answer is indicative:

"We use mainly emails, mobile phones and even regular post sometime. In my opinion technology is very useful in sharing information" Professor.

Some respondents made some very interesting comments regarding the technology implementation in their work place. Most of them recognize the important role that technology might play in the facilitation of operations. Yet, they complain about the lack of funds and infrastructure. Technology in Albania is still in an infant stage. The deficiency in technological devices is raised as an issue of concern. This deficiency is more emphasized at schools rather than in Ministry or Regional Education Directory. This is what a responded declared:

"Technology is very important for our work. Yet, at schools is not widely implemented because of the absence of funds and conditions. There is just one laboratory and not all classes have the chance to visit it daily considering the fact that we have approximately 1600 children in this school" Professor.

It is unpleasant to hear that even though there are means and possibilities which can improve communication and increase efficiency, the responsible authorities to not invest money and time on devices and applications. Respondents, along with the lack of funds raised concern about the lack of sufficient qualifications of the people involved to use the existing devices. Few interviewees claimed that many people in Albanian public

sector do not obtain the skills required in order to use very advanced devices or applications. Furthermore, as we have already mentioned in the theoretical part, technology is evolving with enormous speed and sometimes people do not have the ability to adjust to the new circumstances, this situation result to negative feelings and to denial of any possible change in the work process and environment. One respondent mentioned:

"Technology is a useful tool but mostly for people who are familiar with it and knows how to use it, although i think that nowadays most of people know how to use at least the very basics" Director.

On the other hand there are some respondents who appear to be very optimistic, enthusiastic and satisfied with the current situation and show appreciation and gratitude for the changes that technological advancements have brought to communication patterns and organizational life. One of the respondents argued:

"....technology has contributed a lot in the work process and this i know it from the feedback i receive when the server is down. Technology is very important to schools and they actually use it intensively. In the past, because of lack of the communication technologies people faced many problems of connection. Additionally, technology is a sign of social progress" Expert.

Technology has been embraced by many institutions or organization and has become a useful tool, solving the problems of time and place. Nevertheless, technology, along with all accommodations has brought along some negative aspects as well. The undesirable consequences that result from the use of technology are mainly noticed in personal relations and employment.

Even though technology has solved many problems related to internal or external communication among individuals and also helped organization save precious time and money, yet, still, some side effects appear. The question raised at this point is whether the extensive use of technology causes malfunctions or is it the misuse of it?

In the sample most interviewees when asked about the dominant communication tool utilized by organizations they mention mostly email and mobile telephony. Oral

communication appears thinly. One might consider that the more official the organization is the more virtual the communication becomes. On the other hand, oral communication is the main source for developing informal communication and relations. One respondent stated the following regarding the relation on technology and oral communication:

"Technology cannot replace oral communication among people. What technology can do is to facilitate and make communication more productive. Technology is the media to help people increase productivity but not quality...." Director.

Technology revolution is a phenomenon only recently appeared in Albanian public organizations and its adoption is an uncompleted process. For this reason it is difficult to penetrate to the root of this phenomenon and make a complete analysis of it. Only few years' ego technology has been an abstract meaning and most jobs were accomplished manually. Table 4 shows the respondents' perspective on the sufficient implementation of communication technology in organizations:

Table 4. The sufficiency of technology implementation: The views of the respondents (N=15).

Groups	Sufficiently Implemented	Insufficiently Implemented
Directors	3	2
Supervisors	2	-
Experts	1	3
Professors/Teachers	1	3
Total	7	8

The main communication problem in Albanian public sector appears to be caused not by the intensive use of technology but mainly from the insufficient implementation of it. The problem is more intense at schools rather than in the Ministry and the Regional Education Directory. It is expected that government will invest more in technological

equipment in the near future and facilitate this way employees' work and communication.

4.5. Structure, a determinant parameter of effective communication

Structure is a vital process for most activities that are developed in organizations. However, these activities cannot be realized in the absence of communication. For this reason communication can be assumed as the media to achieve coordination and therefore reach objectives.

Structure presents some elements of hierarchy which exist because there must be one individual who makes all decisions for the group (Drucker 1974) and who is responsible for coordination. Coordination can only be effective when the person at the top of hierarchy is aware of the decisions that his subordinates have made and encourage or prevent actions resulting from these decisions. Through structure, communication circulates in different organization levels, making aware all members on issues concerning organization.

Below respondents were asked to share their opinion about the structure in their institution and how communication is affected by it. Most of interviewees appear to have positive impression of the existing structure and according to their replies this does not cause any problems in organizational communication. The opposite, respondents claim that communication is empowered instead of hampered and that is because of one main reasons: organization structure is properly designed and proper means simple, therefore communication is personal and direct. Formal communication can be easily identified since it is conducted mainly through memos and emails, for this reason most of the times it is correct, structure again cannot hamper communication. The statement below is representative:

"....i don't think that structure affects communication in any way because the existing structure is not complex…" Teacher.

Structure for most organizations is been characterized as simple, and simplicity according to interviewees is beneficial for communication because it facilitates it. Yet, simple structure is not considered as valuable asset for communication process by everybody. An interesting opinion is coming from a respondent who claimed that it would have been better if organizational structure could be enriched with more hierarchical levels for increased supervision because increased supervision leads to performance improvement. Yet, on the other hand, increased hierarchical levels would function as filter so top management to avoid information overload. Below is presented the respondents' opinion:

"....the structure that we have at the moment is considered as simple. This way it facilitates communication. However, I believe that one complex structure serves better communication needs through filtering..." Director.

The other main trend that prevailed in the interview argues that the existing structure is complicated enough and hampers communication. By keeping structure simple, the possibilities to accurately pass information are increased. This is what a respondent believe:

"...an overloaded structure hampers communication. When information has to go through various channels, then communication is delayed and coordination as well...." Supervisor.

Finally very few interviewees claim that accurate transmission of information is an individual thing and structure does not play any significant role to that. It is mostly individuals' behavior, consciousness, motivation and responsibility to pass information correctly to others, to take the right actions and be responsible for it. There is no doubt that people should carry these characteristics in every sphere of life. Drucker (1974) mentioned that even though structure functions independently from its members, personality plays a significant role for goal achievement.

However, in working environment all people do not function the same way. To some individuals the above characteristics are more emphasized compering to some others. The role of good structure is to enhance positive characteristics that some people obtain and encourage some others to present hidden potentials by identifying and assign specific tasks and duties to its members under certain authority conditions. For this reason the role of structure is essential and should not be neglected.

4.5.1. The ability of structure to convey messages accurately

When organization structure is consisted of several managerial levels then its members fails to perform well and to achieve objectives. According to Drucker (1974) structure should remain simple and message should easily reach its target.

The sample was kindly asked to provide information related to the accurate transmit of message from the sender to the receiver through organization structure. The majority of respondents claimed that message is been transferred accurately to the target and communication is not been hampered by structure. Communication most of the times is direct and structure does not interfere. Yet, in cases that the message is communicated through various hierarchical levels this is considered as filtering, consequently not damage is caused to transmitted message. On respondent claimed:

"...the message is conveyed effectively and the main reason is direct communication, without the intervention of superiors..." Specialist.

Then again, few people from the sample argued that communication is hampered and message fails to reach the target mostly because of the centralized character of communication and the authoritative behavior that makes people less expressive. Organization members because of fear of sanctions develop less spontaneous conversations and therefore communication is reduced. Below is presented an interviewees' opinion:

"Generally communication is effective from both sides. When mal communication occurs is mostly because of the centralized design of structure..." Expert.

The last prevailing tendency from the retrieved responses shared the belief that no structure can ever hamper any communication. Effective communication strongly depends on the person who carries the information. People on top position many times abuse over other organizational members. Misuse of authority creates negative relations in work environment. This kind of relations many times may result in misinformation of management by employees, information overload or no information at all. The relations that authorities develop with their stuff will determine employees' behavior

(communication is part of behavior) and also their performance. Table 3 indicates the influence of structure on communication from respondents' point of view.

Table 5. The influence of structure on communication: the views of the respondents (N=15).

Groups	Positive Impact	Negative Impact	Other
Directors	3	2	-
Supervisors	1	-	1
Experts	3	-	1
Professors/Teachers	4	-	-
Total	11	2	2

4.5.2. Trainings, an important qualification for public organizations

Employees, generally, should be qualified and possess knowledge and technical skills which can be enriched during their professional life with trainings and specializations. Amitai (1964) in his work emphasizes the important role that educated and skillful employees play for public organizations.

Considering the fact that education, skills and qualification of the interviewed sample would be important for this study, the respondents were kindly asked to make a brief presentation of their educational background. This presentation, lead to the result that most respondents obtain University's degree, Masters' degree and in few cases (two) a PhD. In order to further penetrate in their skills and qualifications, interviewees were kindly asked to share their experiences of trainings they have participated, if participated, and the issues that those trainings mostly dealt with.

The vast majority of the sample claimed that they have not participated at any training related to communication skills. Additionally, according to their statements, no

interested is ever expressed by employees for training dealing aspects of communication. The following statement is indicative:

"....trainings are mostly focused to enhance and improve my professional skills than communication skills. From what I know, people have shown no interest in communication trainings, most of the trainings that we do participate are related to teaching ethics issues" Director.

Most of the respondents are mainly interested to improve skills closely related to their actual job neglecting communication. Unfortunately, one paradox appear at this point: organizational members do not realize that communication is part of their professional development. Being a good communicator makes you become a good professional. Professional development and good communication skills are not two separate characteristics of individuals' competences but features that the one supplements the other.

Finally, there are few respondents, mainly employees from the Ministry of education who claimed that have been participated in trainings treating communication issues. This is because according to administrative law, all administrative employees should participate in specific trainings organized by ITAP (Trainings Institution of Public Administration) in Albania. The following statement is indicative:

"...as public servants, it is mandatory for us to take part in a training which lasts 21 days and it includes all administrative behaviors, communication as well..." Supervisor.

The fact that administrative employees have all participated in trainings is encouraging. However, working life in public administration is not constant. New data, studies, surveys, new methods, techniques, technologies, etc. are lunched daily. Organization members should always be informed and up to date for everything that is new. Something said years ago may not be applicable today. For this reason organizations should continuously organize trainings and treat various issues in order employees to be informed.

4.6. Summary

Interview analysis has shown that internal communication in Albanian public sector is not implemented with the best possible approach. The way that communication is developed causes dissatisfaction from the respondents' point of view and also hampers goal achievement. During the interview, positive and negative parameters of internal communication are presented by organization members in order to analyze and comprehend the impact of particular communication methods and techniques in organization life.

Based on the interviews, most respondents consider internal communication system as centralized. This is the main reason why organization members to do not participate in decision making. According to them, communication system as it is actually constructed leaves no space to employees for their voices to be heard. Employees feel less motivated and disappointed because particularly management treats them as executors. Management plays the main role on decision taking and even though employees are the backbone of organization, they influence situation less or at all.

Interviews have also revealed that feedback as a communication method is very poorly implemented in all institutions. In most cases, an annual performance evaluation if offered to employees however, this is not considered by most respondents as a reliable and trust worthy way of evaluation. One main reason for feedback deficiency is that most people do not consider it as necessary communication tool. Instead of that, people believe that once experience is obtained no feedback is needed.

Moreover, rumors, especially gossiping, are believed to be a common phenomenon for Albanian public sector since most of people support this opinion. According to the interviews, rumors can harm internal communication and employees' performance. The main reason behind this cause is the fact the employees' psychological condition is influenced by the news and losses concentration on goal achievement.

In addition, the advances in the field of communication technology are considered as of high importance. Respondents believe that technology has brought evolution in the Albanian public sector and is necessary in the work environment because it facilitate communication. Yes, the main concern is the fact that technology implementation in Albanian is still in a preliminary phase because the respective authorities do not invest to proper technology equipment. This is disappointing for the people involved who blame the lack of funds in technology devices for the limited skills of employees in using technology properly.

Trainings organized by organizations are also considered of significant importance. Respondents support that trainings are not implemented as often as they should. Moreover, the respondents claimed that trainings treating communication issues are only occasionally organized by the respective department. Most trainings are mainly focused on the existing job profile of each interviewee. Only a small part of the sample claimed that have participated in training concerning communication matters and those are employees from the Ministry.

On the other hand, the outcome from the interviews had not only negative aspects. Some positive parameters of internal communication in Albanian public sector result from the retrieved data. For instance meetings minutes are frequent and the space that the participants have in those meeting is satisfactory since the respondent can express their thought and ideas. Additionally, communication networks and informal communication are highly developed resulting to motivated employees who feel satisfied in their working environment. Lastly, structural design is considered is considered as simplified and based on the respondents' replies, communication is not hampered and information flows accurately.

The above mentioned factors enforce and facilitated communication within organization premises. According to respondents meetings are frequent and they satisfy the participants' requirements since most of the times they feel free and confident to express themselves. Additionally, informal communication and networks are developed by making employees to feel satisfied and happy in their working environment during

their working hours. Finally, the existing structure for each respective organization, based on the interview responses is considered as simple. Therefore, even though the established communication patterns in Albanian public sector, as resulting from the empirical data is mainly centralized this is not necessarily connected with complex structure design or formal relations among colleagues. However, this encouraging outcome should only be considered as the begging for further progress and improvement of internal communication and certainly employees' participation and engagement in decision making process.

5. CONCLUSION

The main scope of this study is to shade light on the functions of internal communication in Albanian public sector. Participation in the decision making process and the impact of such participation on employees' performance are both issues resulting from the effects that internal communication has on organization and consist the basic questions of this study. The investigation of the above mentioned research questions are based on a qualitative analysis of Albanian public sector which included three main organization of education system: Ministry of Education, Regional Education Directory and Pre-University Educational Institutions.

Communication is a multidimensional feature of organization life. It Influences every sphere in organizations' daily operations and is influenced by innumerous variables since it is closely related to coordination. Decision making process is one of the most significant variables of communication. Hence, participation of organizational members in to this process is the key element for an effective communication, coordination and performance.

Decisions are characterized as communication phenomena because they occur through communication and transmitted also through communication. In centralized communication systems as the one identified in Albanian public sector, employees are excluded from the decision making process which is more concentrated on the top management while low level employees are more oriented in the implementation of organization policies as a result of the decisions taken by superiors. Moreover, as was already discussed in the theoretical part of the study, centralization of communication prevent individuals from becoming independent and confident employees (Mullins 1983: 316-317). Since employees' participation in decision making is limited then the communication occurring among organization members is also limited. Hampered communication among employees can result to low motivation rates and low job satisfaction rates. The foundation of good performance is built on the concept of highly motivated and satisfied employees. Therefore, participation in decision making process is an indicator of positive performance. When employees are valued they become

emotionally committed to organization and highly involved and concerned to reach organizations' objectives.

Decision making process and employees' performance can be influenced also by other variables such as information technology, organization structure, informal communication and relations which are developed and analyzed in previous discussions. Every one of those parameters can influence communication and the relevant fields by a different angle and perspective. For instance, information technology and its advances influence decision making process by increasing information distribution to employees and empower them to make decisions that previously were taken by management. As has already been known from the theoretical discussion, technology has played a major role to the reduction of organizational members and organizations' size, creating this way new, simple structures that can speed up the decision making process and provide greater decision making authority to all organization members (Laudon & Laudon 2000: 19). Structure on the other side contribute to the decision making process by keeping a simple communication line in order the shared information to reach its recipient instantly instead of going through various communication channels. Informal communication is important in organizations because enhance and increase employees' motivation by making them feel integrated in organizational environment, therefore, committed to organizations' objectives. Feedback, trainings, meetings are all considered as significant communication tools that when properly used can improve communication skills and increase effective communication. Rumors on the other hand appear a dual function characteristic because they can be a necessary tool, empowering communication when are used to share information about organizational decisions that management has not yet announced. Similarly, may cause problems among employees when are used to gossip organizational members.

This research basically attempts to investigate the different variable of communication as developed in Albanian public sector in order to identify the weak points of communication that hamper its effectiveness or create negative working environment though misinformation or misinterpretation. Additionally, this study identifies the positive characteristics of internal organizational communication in Albania and

emphasizes the impact that those characteristics have on employees' motivation, moral, attitude and job satisfaction.

The study is based in qualitative analysis and specifically in face to face interviews. When communication is the subject under study, interviews may be the most suitable investigation tool. Direct communication with the selected sample may reveal important information that other investigation tools may not. People are able to communicate information not only through conversation. Messages can be transferred from the sender to the receiver and the opposite even through gestures, body moves, face reaction, etc. Face to face interviews help researchers to collect data not only through the conversation but also from the non verbal communication. Therefore, through the interviewing process was possible to obtain an understanding of the mentality and the attitude of Albanian employees in their working environment. Additionally, personal contact with organizational members is proven to be useful in order to penetrate in Albanian social habits which have had a significant impact on the working behavior and framed the current working patterns.

Even though the innumerous advantages that interview can provide to the research many times can also be tough. Because of the direct nature of communication many unexpected phenomena may occur that the researcher had not predicted and may not be properly prepared. These challenges should be concurred by the interviewer with determination and strong will.

5.1. Main findings

This chapter is mainly focusing on the essential outcomes of the functions of internal communication in Albanian public sector. This study identifies a number of issues and problems that hamper employees' communication internally and influence negatively their performance on daily operations. Those issues are mainly related with the centrality of communication, employees' participation in decision making, the insufficient implementation of constant feedback by all involved parts, informal

communication development, structures' impact on communication and the role of technology information in organization communication. Moreover, the current study also identifies other variables that enhance communication and puts emphasis in the importance of maintenance of those features which along with the improvement of the problematic characteristics may ground an effective organization communication. An analytic presentation of the main findings is listed below:

The first finding is dealing with the communication direction. The main outcome concerning information flow is the fact that communication strictly follows the hierarchy line. This makes communication deliberately centralized. Based on previous discussions, centralized communication is considered proper for routine tasks but error rates are high. Even though management control, coordination and policy implementation could be more simple processes in a centralized organization, yet, prevents employees' professional development by turning them into executors and unable to handle challenging situations (Dutch 2007). One of the main reasons why communication in Albanian public sector is characterized as centralized is because people in Albanian public sector often abuse over less formal or tolerant communication, for this reason, the respective authorities maintain a strict communication style.

Furthermore, centralized communication pattern is narrowly related with low participation rates of employees in the decision making process. Organization members do not feel integrated in organization life since they are left out from issues that are related to them. Employees do not influence policies set by management for them. Non-participation has a significant impact on employees' performance on daily operation. Also it may affect employees' level of trust, dedication and support to the organization. The former, results since employees are considered more as executor and less like members of organization and particularly the pillar for each organization.

The second finding is dealing with the endowment of constant feedback. One important conclusion coming out of this study is connected with application of constant feedback during daily operations in organization. Feedback is a tool utilized by organization and

corporations to facilitate accurate communication among people. However in Albanian public sector is not a method in use. The main reason behind this phenomenon is because it is considered as a useful tool mostly for new starters, experienced employees do not need constant feedback during their daily activities. One other reason for the non-application of feedback as communication tool is the fact that feedback has the power to affect employees' psychological condition in a positive (overestimation of ones' abilities) or negative way (demotivation of employee). Feedback is a tool that empowers effective communication among people and by no mean should be used to manipulate or demotivate employees.

Feedback implementation in Albanian public sector is very often limited to mandatory annual performance reports. Nevertheless, these reports are considered unreliable and untrustworthy so people do not take them seriously into consideration. Additionally, feedback implementation should not be limited in some routine acts but should be established in daily life of organization in order to bring actual results in communication habits.

The third finding is related with the effects of rumors in organizational communication. Rumors are inseparable part of informal communication. Relevant studies have proven that rumors may transfer 80% of accurate information. However, employees in Albanian public sector consider rumors as a negative phenomenon that can only cause harm to organizational communication and employees' relations. Yet, rumors are deeply rooted in Albanian organizations' reality. From employees' perspective, rumors cannot always be noticeable unless one is involved into one.

The main reason why rumors develop in an organization is the fact that they do consist an important element of integration process for organizational members. On the other hand, rumors can create conflicts among employees or affect their psychological state resulting to demotivation and mal-performance.

The fourth finding is related with the insufficient implementation of Information Technology and its effects on communication. Information technology is has

enormously influence in the way that organizations function (Chrisholm 1988). Additionally, information technology brought significant changes to communication patterns. As already mentioned in the theoretical discussion, according to Derks & Baker (2010) and to Rudnick (1996) the use of email and telephone in public institutions has made internal communication easier and more effective resulting to a better performance. Oral communication appears seldom, especially, during formal communication. However, technological infrastructure in Albanian public sector is not as developed as it should be. Technology implementation still remains in an infant stage. The main reason is the lack of funds and the limited disposable budget. Deficiency of devices and applications are mostly observed at educational institutions and less to the other educational organizations (Ministry and RED).

Poor infrastructure in technological devices and applications, considering respondents' opinion, result to less technologically aware employees. Limited qualifications and inadequate skills of organizational members and their inability to administer effortlessly new technologies have made people less confident. Therefore, people become negative towards new application and methods and refuse to change the traditional way of working.

The fifth finding concerns employees' participation in trainings and especially trainings which deal communication issues. Based on previous discussion, trainings and qualifications are important for public sector employees. In Albanian public sector trainings are commonly practiced. Nonetheless, most trainings in which organizational members have participated are closely related to their current job profile or study field. Only those employees who work in the Ministry have participated in trainings dealing communication problems. Trainings dealing the former issue are not attractive for people, therefore, there is no interest or initiative such trainings to be organized by the respective department. However, highly skilled employees, well-educated, trained and knowledgeable result to increased performance.

Sixth finding is deliberately related to informal communication. Informal communication and informal relationships within organizations' premises are

considered as of high importance for people in Albanian public sector. Organization members appear to have developed close relations with each other. Healthy relations can grow through mutual understanding, collaboration, compromise and high sense of humor.

For people in Albanian public sector, working in a positive environment is essential factor that can only lead to successful performance. The main reason why high informal communication rates equals to high performance is because informality makes people feel more motivated. Motivation reduces work stress levels and increased collaboration among employees. Additionally, as Barnard (1938: 114-123) claimed in the theoretical approach, informal communication helps organizational members to interact with each other and satisfy this way the great need of acceptance and social interaction. Informality creates a positive working environment that satisfies its own members. Satisfied employees can always perform better. Very few people believe that informality at work should be avoided. The main reason is the tendency of people to take advantage of good relation to achieve personal goals.

Formal organizations cannot stand alone without the development of informality in it. Based on previous discussion, both organization forms maintain each other, none of them can stand alone.

The seventh finding is dealing with the importance and the role of structure in communication. Structure is essential for organizations because through it all parts can be informed on decisions taken by management and on actions taken by employees. For organization members of Albanian public sector, structure has a positive impact on communication. Communication is not been hampered because structure is simply designed. Simple structure is beneficial for communication because it facilitates it. When communication has to pass through various communication channels then information is been delayed and coordination also. However, accurate communication does not depend only on communication but also on individuals' behavior, consciousness and sense of responsibility.

The final finding concerns the frequency of meeting minutes and their connection to effective communication. Meetings are one additional method used by organizations to enhance communication among people. Based on this technique organization members are kept updated and informed about the decisions taken and the ongoing projects. In Albanian public sector meetings are relatively frequent. This is a positive outcome because the more regularly meetings are organized the more informed its members are. Another positive conclusion is the fact that organization members have an active participation in the meeting and usually communication is less formal and direct. Only few people expressed dissatisfaction about the limited space that is offered to them during meeting minutes, especially when high levels executives are present.

5.2. Further Discussion

This study examines the role that communication variables play in employees' engagement in the decision making process, employees' motivation, employees' performance and the accurate transmit of information based on the very same variables. Communication in organizations should be open and decentralized in order every person of the organization to have access to the information and say on the decisions making process. A great amount of responsibility to achieve openness and transparency in communication lies on management. Management and supervisors are in charge of the policy making and the applied policies in the organization can enhance or hamper communication. Moreover, the policies applied in organization indicate the amount of power that management grants to organization employees in order enforce their independence, self-confident and motivation and bond to the very organization that they work in.

Because of its multidimensional feature, communication is a difficult but challenging organizational phenomenon. The effects that communication has on organizational life or on organizational members depend on different variables. Each variable can be a separate subject for future research. For instance, it would be interesting to investigate if the limited participation of employees in the decision making process in Albania is a

common phenomenon for all public organizations or is it only limited to this case study deliberately. Is limited participation in decision making a phenomenon that only appears in the public sector or in the private sector as well? Is culture related to centralized communication or is centralization a style of communication that was inherited by past generations and is deeply rooted to past political regime? These are only few questions that underline the necessity of further research on communication issues generally and deliberately in Albanian public sector.

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APPENDICES

Appendix: 1

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Cover letter of questionnaire presentation

</div>

Dear Sir/Madam

My name is Florika Kolaci. I am a Master degree student in Public Management of University of Vaasa/Finland. The topic of my thesis is "The Dimensions of internal communication and the engagement of employees in Albanian education sector". The organizations under study will be the Ministry of Education, the Regional Educational Directorate and four education institutions.

This work, which is supervised by Professor Ari Salminen, is dealing with the main communication problems that occur within the organizations and prevent the effectiveness of the tasks. Moreover, this study attempts to give answers to three basic questions: 1) what are the effects of internal communication in the case of Albanian Education sector? 2) How does internal communication of organization influence employees' participation in the decision making process? 3) How does employees' participation in the decision making process affect their performance?

The reason why i am sending this email to you is to ask for your confirmation in order to conduct at your organization the empirical part of my study by interviewing in person a considerable number of organizations' employees. The total number of interviews will be 15 and will be divided to all the above mentioned organizations.

Attached you may find a sample of the questionnaire which is consisted of 16 semi structured questions, all related to the communication process and the variables that would affect it. Please bear in mind that the interview seeks only to support the scientific research on the subject mentioned above and is not intended for any other purpose beyond that. Additionally, I would like to ensure you that the anonymity of the respondents will be strictly abide.

Looking forward for your reply.

Kind Regards,

Florika Kolaci

Questionnaire

"Communication as a key element of organizations' performance"

1. Warm-up questions:

What is your educational background?

What are your job responsibilities?

How long have you been working at the same position?

2. The nature of communication:

What is the direction of communication in organization among employees?

Centralized or decentralized system would define communication developed in the organization?

3. The implications of information technology:

Which are the main communication tools utilized by organization internally and externally?

In what way information technology affects communication and performance?

4. Structural effects on communication:

How is communication process affected by the structure?

How effectively the message is conveyed from top to bottom and backwards?

Does organization provide trainings related to communication issues?

5. The contribution of informality on communication:

Do the informal networks affect performance?

In which ways informal communication (grapevine) is developed within organization?

How do rumors affect the working environment in the organization?

6. Measures for effective internal communication

Do you receive or provide constant feedback after the assignment or accomplishment of the charged task?

How often does management schedule meetings in order to discuss work related issues?

How active is your presence in those meetings?

Appendix: 2

List of participants in the interview process

Organizations: **Date:**

<u>M.E., R.E.D., E.I. (Directors):</u>

Director	16.07.2012
Director	18.06.2012
Director	27.06.2012
Director	5.07.2012

<u>M.E., R.E.D., E.I (Supervisors and Experts):</u>

Supervisor	4.07.2012
Supervisor	6.07.2012
Expert	3.07.2012
Expert	6.07.2012
Expert	12.07.2012
Expert	13.07.2012

<u>M.E., R.E.D., E.I. (Professional Teaching):</u>

Professor	5.07.2012
Professor	22.06.2012
Teacher	20.06.2012
Teacher	26.06.2012

Appendix: 3

Facts about Albania. (The CIA: World Fact Book 2013)

-Capital	-Tirana
-Background	-Declared independence in 1912. From 1944 until 1991 Albania has been under the communist regime. In the early '90 a multiparty democracy was established.
-Geography	-Albania is located in Southeastern Europe, south of Greece and Montenegro and north of Kosovo. It covers a total area of 28,748 sq km.
-Population	-Approximately 3,011,405 (July 2013 est.)
-Religion	-Muslim 70%, Albanian Orthodox 20%, Roman Catholic 10%
-Government Type	-Parliamentary Democracy
-Political Parties	-Alliance for employment, prosperity and integration (coalition of 25 centrist and center-right parties): Democratic Party, New Democracy Party, Party for Justice, Integration and Unity, Republican Party. Alliance for a European Albania (coalition of 37 opposition parties from far left to right wing): Social Democracy Party, Social Democratic Party, Socialist Movement for Integration, Socialist Party, Unity for Human Rights Party
-Constitution	-Adopted by popular referendum in 22/11/1998
-Economy	-GDP (purchasing power parity): $26.54 billion (2012 est.) GDP –per capita (PPP): $8,200 (2012 est.) GDP-real growth rate: 1.3% (2012 est.)
-Sources of economy	-Textiles, footwear, asphalt, metals and metallic ores, crude oil, vegetables, fruits, tobacco
-Levels and branches of Administration	-Executive, Judiciary, Legislature -12 Counties -15 Ministries -150 Municipalities
-Communication	-Telephones: main lines in use: 312,000 (2012) -Telephones: mobile cellular: 3.5 million (2012) -Internet hosts: 15,528 (2012) -Internet users: 1.3 million (2009)