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Analysis of organizational and professional communication in the Hungarian agriculture

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Abstract

In this article we would like to present our research results of communication. We believe that professional communication is the flow of professional information inside the sector, and it also covers the flow between the producer and administrational sector. We examined the communication influential factors in consultant systems and agricultural extension networks. The reason for that is to evaluate and understand communication processes and problems which affect actors of the sectors. This research enables to analyze and demonstrate the flow of professional information defined and explained by ourselves.

Key words: communication, producer, consultant system, agricultural extension

Introduction

As a result of the changes of last decades, such an operation of entrepreneurial and corporate structure formed in the Hungarian agriculture, which raises more and more communication-information questions. Communication-information channels are not harmonizing with the current corporate, entrepreneurial structure. For JEUB (2007) the farming sector is faced with huge challenges in our unified and free Europe. Agricultural consultancy is such a service that supports producers in developing production flow with training methods. Hereby helps to increase the rate of producer’s living, and social adjudication of rural life (Kozári, 2000). According to Gályász et al. (2001) the most important function of domestic agricultural consultancy is to prepare producers to suit to the inner market of EU.

After change of regime in a radically changed situation by appearance of private farms, form of a supporting organization for entrepreneurs and administrative governance became necessary. After came to give rise and operate of agricultural extension agents’ network with the aim of support agricultural producers and rural residents to know their way about their opportunities. The most important function of agricultural extension agent is giving help for forming subsistence farms, giving information continuously to farmers for solving their problems.

Professional communication systems broke down, their reorganization flow is slow. Build up of such a professional communication system should be necessary, that politically and sector-neutral, and can help to inform both enterprises and private ventures, too. We consider professional communication the flow of professional information inside the sector, and between the producer and institutional sector. Operation of these communication channels is basic organizational and entrepreneurial interest, because they get information that control their activity, function, economical opportunities, and they can build successful business and market relationships by these. For Svodoba (2007) attention is paid to the importance of data and information for the top managerial decision making, which is the principal of the business management. In the last decade structure of
Hungarian agriculture changed radically (Bálint, 2000). Because of diversity of information sources and complexity of connection system lot farmer can not get information without external help (Pető and Nagy, 1999). This is the reason why it is necessary to examine professional and organizational communication and these influential factors.

**Material and Methods**

Researches were made as the part of “Functional examination of agricultural corporate management” research programme that was worked out in 1994 by the Department of Management Sciences at University of Debrecen in Hungary.

In the article we worked up the data of totally 100 questionnaire interviews (30 consultants’ and 70 agricultural extension agents’ questionnaires). The exercise examinations ask for the everyday activities of interviewees. In the information survey we asked for information demands of producers, and the role of different information sources at present and in the future. In communication examinations we evaluated the role of communication forms applied for successful working at present and in the future. We examined factors, which influenced upwards (institutional sector) and downwards (to producers) communication. Reliability of data was tested with Chrombach alpha index. This index’s values in case of every questionnaire are 0.9048 for consultant, and 0.9009 for agricultural extension agents, these were higher than defined value 0.7 (Barrett, 2001). So we found data suitable for further analyses.

$$\alpha = \frac{k}{k-1} \left( 1 - \frac{\sum s^2_i}{s^2_T} \right)$$

where:  
$k$ = the number of items  
$s^2_i$ = item variance $i$ of $k$  
$s^2_T$ = the total test core variance

Preparations and analyses were based on descriptive statistical methods: division and precedence examinations by classifying criteria’s, analysis of variance; main component analysis and cluster-analysis.

**Results and discussion**

In information examinations we tried to find the answer for the question what kind of information producers were interested in, what information consultants and agricultural extension agents needed to give correct answers and what kind of sources they used for it. Information demand of producers is demonstrated in figure 1.

![Figure 1: Information demand of producers](source: Own examinations)
By the summarized averages we have found that information in connection with tenders and advocacies were the most important by respondents. In the ranking information about market and profession were indicated on the second and third place by the respondents. Producers are well-informed about land case- and financial information by the data, so this information got the lowest qualification.

The examination results of upward (to upper administrative sector) communication influential factors are demonstrated in figure 2. The values of summarized averages are rarely homogeneous.

![Figure 2: Influential factors of upward communication](image)

Source: Own examinations

By the results the most important influential factor of communication is the structure of consultant organization. Improper organization structure is an important obstructive factor in efficient professional communication. Average rank of lack of time, the stiffness of communication ways in organization and lack of information got not much lower qualification. The stiffness of formal communication ways is usually connected to lack of time factor. In many cases because of less time subordinates can’t get correct information from upper leaders, or the problem will be solved somehow or loosing its importance while the superior leader could get the information. Usually this situation guide to the lack of information. The personality of upward partner and its management style strongly influences the effectiveness of communication, so it has an indirect effect on the effectiveness. Upward communications are obstructed by fullness of information and differences in state the less.

By consultant questionnaires we compressed information of every question groups to the least number of components. Those entrepreneurs were classified into one component that mostly coheres by their variance. As a result, from the data set of consultants, 29 main components were created out of 63 variants, which results in 2.17 fold data reduction (more than half of the data was reduced, while 70-75% of the information could be saved). Components are important in aggregation and at definition of groups. After that, we analyzed variance again on main components by sex, age, school qualification and operating sphere. In those main components where difference was significant we examined the reason of it. Data were subject to cluster analysis by all questions and than we examined in which components the groups differ by variance analysis. We differentiated 17 main components by examination of agricultural extension agent’s questionnaires. Out of the data set of agricultural extension agents, 43 main components were created out of 105, which results in 2.5-fold data reduction, while considerable part of the information
was saved. After that, we analyzed variance again on main components by sex, age, school qualification and operating sphere. In those main components where difference was significant we examined the reason of it. Data of agricultural extensional agent’s questionnaires were also subject to cluster analysis by all questions and than we examined in which components the groups differ by variance analysis. Groups were different by the following main components:

1\textsuperscript{st} in the present: professional programs, friendships, vocational connections

2\textsuperscript{nd} in the present: field counsel, negotiation

3\textsuperscript{rd} help of co-operations, and family farms

4\textsuperscript{th} new production opportunities, marketing channels, genus, new technology

5\textsuperscript{th} administrative and legal information

6\textsuperscript{th} in the future: circular letter, order

7\textsuperscript{th} in the future: field counsel, negotiation

8\textsuperscript{th} in the future: consulting hours

9\textsuperscript{th} lack of information, lack of time, personality of superior partner

10\textsuperscript{th} qualification of receiver partner, prejudice, informal communication

11\textsuperscript{th} in upward communication: making proposals, counselling, phrase of dissents, guidance

12\textsuperscript{th} in downward communication: giving information, giving advice, instruction, audition, accordance, suggest, direct

By main components 3 groups of agricultural extension agents were evolved. Biggest part of questionnaires (41\%), pertain to the “positive” group. Experts classified in this group qualified all the factors at a quite high level. Oddly 4\textsuperscript{th} component excels, this is the component of informative exercises: new production and marketing opportunities, new genus, exhibition of new technologies.

32\% of questionnaires are classified to “ambivalent” group where qualifications are different. Altogether five components excel from others. In downward communication the role of factors information transfer, suggest, instruct, audit, agree, accordance and order are the most significant (12\textsuperscript{th} main component). From information sources in the present the role of professional programs, friendships, vocational connections is determining (1\textsuperscript{st} main component). Communication trend to Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is significantly influenced by personality of upward partner and lack of information and time (9\textsuperscript{th} main component).

Third cluster is the “negative” group where those correspondents were classified for whom none of enumerated factors are important. 27\% of questionnaires are classified here. Just two factor exceed from main components (2\textsuperscript{nd} and 7\textsuperscript{th} main components), but their role is just remarkable according to other factors.

By the results of main component and cluster analyses it can be declared that correspondents classified into “positive” group qualified the role of new production and marketing opportunities, genus and new technology with the highest value. In case of correspondents in “ambivalent” group the role of factors appear in downward communication (giving information, giving advice, instruction, audition, accordance, suggest, direct) is the most exceeding. “Negative” correspondents qualified all factors with low value, but they do not dispute the present and future importance of field counselling. Only this factor got positive average.
Conclusions

By the examination of communication we have found that job of consultants and extension agents have similar characteristics. In these two ways of communication the exercises are not separated, and often repeated. Research results indicate that producers mostly demand economic information, for example economic, application and market information. The demand for professional, technologic and technical information is just secondary. We think that upward and downward communication has special position in consultant organizations. In this structure downward communication has the same difficulties as upward communication. In the organizational structure of the consultant organizations there is no downward hierarchy and inferior-superior relation. The success and effectiveness of downward communication is determined by the factors of producers’ information need and the authenticity of consultant. The structure of organization and internal ways of organizational communication has a basic role in information flow, as the influential factor analysis shows. The stability of consultant structures and the build up and stabilization of communication ways have basic importance in professional communication. Changes of the last few years in agriculture caused the transformation, abolishment of these information and communication systems in Hungary.

References


http://www.pbarrett.net/rater.pdf


