ELECTRONIC ADMINISTRATION AS A FACTOR IN THE EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT, DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATION OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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Abstract

Background. In the current economic circumstances, a significant process that affects the efficiency and functionality of the operations of every organisation, including public administration, is the communication process. The correct information flow, as well as mechanisms for sharing knowledge, have become key areas in the life of every organisation. In that respect, the information and communication technologies, which are currently a key factor supporting social integration and increasing possibilities for the cooperation of public administration bodies with other entities and citizens, are becoming more and more helpful in the communication process. The application of e-administration when fulfilling the needs of citizens has become a real challenge for modern administration.

Research aims. The objective of the research of the analysed area is to indicate the main principles concerning efficient communication with the environment and within public administration units, using skilful e-communication management.

Methodology. The author presents the main assumptions of communication process management, including e-communication in public administration. The search for some aspects related to the application of e-administration, using certain techniques of communication process management, was based on a review of the scientific literature, with the indication of practical examples and results of previous empirical research in that respect. The author also applied the method of legal dogmatic, which focused particularly on the analysis of the material standard to determine what law applies in a given time on a given territory.

Key findings. Among the many aspects and techniques of communication process management in public administration, IT and the Internet are more and more often used for the purposes of realising public services. The possibility of completing administrative procedures electronically allows the modernisation of every organisation, including public administration units, and the building of trust for such

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institutions. Citizens more and more often use the possibility of contacting various offices online thanks to modern IT technologies.

INTRODUCTION

The changing role and the large amount of information prepared by public administration units makes it necessary to apply tools which allow quick and efficient processing and use of such data. Public administration units have the advantage of being able to provide new IT technologies used in the communication process. The strong points of a good communication process include speed and efficiency of receipt, the reach of potential recipients, and no time limits with respect to its use. Therefore, society expects from the public administration better access to all of its information. Public institutions try to satisfy such expectations by using electronic platforms for public administration services to connect with the world.

The article is aimed at indicating the basic principles of efficient and powerful communication processes between public administration units and the world, as well as within public administration units. Therefore, the study shall indicate the e-communication tools by invoking the aforementioned scientific literature.

INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNICATION IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The operations of public administration may be characterised in the simplest manner by the communication processes that constitute them. Such processes fall into the category of social communication in the broad context. It is understood as a certain mechanism which allows the development of interpersonal relationships, supported by the means of their communication at a given time and in a given place (Dudek, 1985, pp. 46–48).

At this point it should be mentioned that the following may be included in the field of issues related to the communication process in public administration units:

   –   communication of public administration with the world;

   –   internal information flow process;

   –   efficient methods for collecting information, its processing, and appropriate archiving;

   –   methods for making the information available to citizens (Ferens & Macek, 1999, pp. 146–148).

In this case, any types of communication actions take place within the area of the functioning of public administration, and the public communication system is definitely formal (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2012, pp. 69–71). The system is very important as it refers to skilful process management with respect to, for example, public debates between a citizen and public institutions. It should also be noted that the main feature of communication between public administration and the world should be visible symmetry, where the roles of the speaker and the recipient are not strictly assigned to one party of the invoked communication action. Such an approach strongly emphasises the significant role of society, where the most important recipient of the messages communicated by public administration units is the citizen, who is also the most important recipient of public information. At this point, it is worth mentioning the Act of 6th September, 2001, on Access to Public Information, which in its Article 1 sec. 1 stipulates that all information on public matters shall be the public information within the meaning thereof, and shall be subject to access and re-use on the terms and conditions defined in the subject Act (Access to Public Information, API). The Act specifically outlines the manner of making available and transferring public information created by the units of the public finance sector.

When discussing the initial assumptions, which constitute an important link in the communication process of public administration, some criteria of good communication should also be indicated. They include the following:

   –   availability – the information must be easily accessible to each interested party;

   –   usefulness – all the information is useful when making a specific decision;

   –   comprehensibility – the information is in a correct and comprehensible language;

   –   reliability – all the information created by public institutions must precisely indicate its subject;

– truthfulness – the information must be in harmony with the reality (Goban-Klas, 1999, p. 14).

The above-mentioned important criteria of good communication joining public institutions with society also constitute the grounds for a permanent relationship between those two entities, based on mutual trust and truthfulness.

It should also be indicated that the available communication processes in public administration are implemented at two basic levels. The first one is the government administration level and the second one is the local government level (Ferens & Macek, 1999, pp. 151–153). It is possible to notice a communication flow between these two levels. The government and local government administration levels send and transmit information to the media and directly to citizens. Information services, including promotion offices and press offices, play an important role at both levels. In the case of government administration bodies, the Government Information Centre is responsible for the communication process at the level of government administration. The above-mentioned body performs, in particular, the following activities:

– information and press services for the Prime Minister and the whole Council of Ministers;
– media coverage of visits, and national and international contacts of the Prime Minister, and visits of foreign guests to the Republic of Poland;
– execution of information campaigns concerning the work of the Council of Ministers;
– creation of tasks connected with relations with the media and public opinion;
– monitoring of press and electronic media, as well as preparing of daily reports and updates on events in Poland and worldwide.

In the case of the communication process at the local government administration level, it becomes truly important to ensure a proper information flow and skilful management of clear channels of information distribution, including significant ways of sending messages to society. It is especially important to understand the role of employees at all levels of self-government in the process of creating the information policy of a local government unit. Appropriate and efficient information policy, and the competence and professionalism of the officials are responsible for the right image of local government authorities. The

information policy of each local government unit should be to a large extent identified as an important area of the management process. To ensure a better information flow in local government, it is essential to undertake some efficient activities. The above may include proper planning of the placement of information boards, or more frequent contacts between the officials and inhabitants, who have the right to access public information and co-decide on the key matters in public management (Mruk, 2002, pp. 112–117).

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Every developed country is an active entity participating in the creation of the information society. Polish public institutions have to collaborate with all public authorities at the central and regional levels to ensure a good information flow. Such collaboration also requires the involvement of the private sector, NGO's, and appropriate information resources (Janowski, 2009, pp. 53–54). The state performs many functions with respect to its society and plays a truly innovative role in the process of the implementation of the so-called information-based societal thought. Such functions are the following:

- protective function aimed at ensuring safety for citizens in many spheres of life;
- economic function aimed at guaranteeing proper legal and intervention steps in the field of business activity;
- regulatory function focused on creating proper organisational and legal environments for progressing social changes;
- adaptation function, which is a helpful tool for implementing activities resulting from constant social development;
- innovative function, which is the germ of new social processes protecting citizens against undesired and socially harmful events (Ganczar, 2009, pp. 27–29).

Nowadays, the information and communication technologies (ICT) in public administration bodies are a very important factor affecting the development of social integration, which enhances the quality of life of inhabitants. In the area of information it is important to satisfy the basic needs related to the ICT sector. The needs might be as follows:

–   economic – satisfied through business activity, e.g. e-commerce, e-service;
–   informational – related to an ongoing process of acquiring knowledge, e.g. e-administration;
–   social – objectives realised thanks to the activities of certain institutions, e.g. e-health, e-security (Sienkiewicz, 2009).

The changes that take place in public institutions as regards the manner of communicating their activities are becoming more and more common. Nowadays, it is required from modern public administration bodies to provide transparent and open activities as well as high quality services. Following this approach, it is possible to explicitly state that the contemporary office is becoming more and more citizen-friendly. Undoubtedly, this goal can be achieved by a common application of access to public services by way of e-communication (Norris & Moon, 2005, pp. 434–440).

In the legal doctrine, but also – more and more often – in the management doctrine, a natural tendency emerges, according to which public institutions start using the Internet for their work, as it is a helpful, user-friendly, and efficient source of communication. What is more, nowadays, all public offices have computers with access to the Internet. Such institutions also have their own websites, where they publish main public information on the activities of the administrative bodies, and where citizens can download various forms useful in dealing with different public matters (Ganczar, 2009, pp. 46).

The observed constant development of new IT technologies, the Internet, and ICT networks has contributed to a new approach to communication between the state (office) and citizens. The development of the information technologies made it necessary to introduce new management and communication solutions as well as new service models by introducing public e-administration. The introduction of e-government into the institutions contributed to certain, yet still not strongly visible changes. The application of ICT in public administration bodies is aimed at improving accessibility to the information, including certain improvements in the process of delivering public services to citizens (Ho, 2002).

Such an approach may be considered satisfactory, especially because the model of mutual relations between the public institutions and citizens is changing. On the basis of the definition of the European Commission, e-government is understood as "the use of ICTs in public

administration – combined with organisational change and new skills – to improve public services and democratic processes and to strengthen support to the public" (Bogucki, 2005, p. 12).

E-administration is a helpful tool for better task management. Thanks to this solution public administration bodies can use the possibilities offered by modern ICT technologies in the process of improving their functionalities. For a couple of years now innovative IT technologies have been dynamically implemented in public administration. The changes make it necessary to adapt the new solutions to the new activities of the public sector. Additionally, the observed amendment to the provisions of law in that respect also constitutes an inherent part of shaping the relations, which are normally mainly related to the dissemination and transfer of information, together with its adaptation to new social expectations (Szpor, Martysz & Wojsyk, 2015).

It should also be noted that e-administration – in European terms – is aimed at modifying effective business processes implemented on the basis of ICT. Its aim is to make the public sector characterised by certain features. Therefore, it must be:

–   open and comprehensible, where state management is clear and – which is especially important for citizens – predictable and open to cooperation with the inhabitants of local self-governing authorities that implement the so-called social (civic) control;

–   efficient, whose services should be of high quality, with proper use of public funds;

–   citizen-friendly, where the activities of public administration should be aimed at satisfying the main needs of people (Butkiewicz, 2006, p. 60).

The development of e-administration is obviously related to computerisation and new IT solutions in the dynamically growing information society. Public administration bodies must continuously adapt their procedures to the possibilities of their application by using the e-communication management process. Thanks to applying new IT technologies and tools, a comprehensible, clear communication process, devoid of unnecessary formalities between the citizen and a given office, is established. However, it should be noted that such activities make it necessary to build high awareness of the occurrence of such changes among administration personnel (Ganczar, 2009, p. 38–40).

The modified administration must be modern, so that it is able to apply new IT techniques used and useful in executing public activities. Such administration must be also free from any corruption and other unethical behaviours (Cho & Choi, 2004, pp. 719–725). With such an understanding of administration, any types of decisions, permissions, information, or announcements take the form of electronic documentation. The documents constitute a separate part of the whole set of data arranged according to a specific internal structure. They are also recorded on the IT data storage device. Therefore, public administration bodies must remember to use the correct IT tools, which resources are properly secured by placing them on separate servers protected by anti-virus software. Another important goal of the progressing computerisation of public administration is to facilitate the administrative handling of cases by citizens. On the other hand, when establishing new relations between the citizens and certain bodies, it is crucial to remember to facilitate access to a given office and its personnel. At this point it is worth quoting the words of W. Iszkowski, who said that "apparently, the return to obsolete methods of administrative operations is out of the question. The once started process of modernising communication methods between citizens/companies and offices is unstoppable. Both citizens and officers have already got used to computers, information websites, e-forms, and e-mails" (Iszkowski, 2006, p. 2). 10 years have elapsed since this opinion was made, but there is still a lot to do in that respect, and probably, more time must pass until e-administration is common among people.

OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS OFFERED BY E-ADMINISTRATION

When discussing the development of e-administration in the public sector it is also worth mentioning certain advantages related thereto. The result of the widespread gradually progressing transformation of "paper" administration into digital administration is that all types of administrative service start to play a more and more important role, not only for the state, but mainly for its citizens. Nowadays, the Internet is one of the most essential work tools, which constitutes a great source of information and hence helps in handling administrative

matters. Along with the enormous expansion of education, the Polish society has undoubtedly become more aware, and thus has more expectations from public institutions, mainly in seeking the improvement of the provided services and changes in approach to the traditional manner of handling the majority of administrative cases (Bertot & Jaeger, 2008). For some time now the procedures of document and information flow have been implemented in public administration bodies, and the services rendered thereby have been digitised, which to a large extent has increased the satisfaction of citizens (Torres, Pina & Acerete, 2005).

It should also be remembered that the application of many services offered by e-administration is dictated by a number of factors, for example, the possibility to save time, easy and quick access to information, or cost-efficiency. The fact that many EU Member States have introduced services exclusively for citizens, which concern the handling of cases related to tax payments, petitions for the issuance of ID cards, or receipt of indispensable information regarding conducted business activity, has contributed to substantial savings in the management and operations of public administration bodies (Dąbrowska, Janoś-Kresło & Wódkowski, 2009, p. 138). E-services, which will soon be fully executed by natural persons (G2C – *government to citizens*), cover the process of changing a permanent address (as of 1st January 2008, the registration requirement will be cancelled), passport services, availability of information from a civil registrar, submission of tax returns (i.e. PIT), registration of business activity, or access to land and mortgage registers. In the case of legal persons (G2B – *government to business*) the most desired services within the framework of e-administration include settlement of corporate tax, VAT, or services related to public procurement. The majority of the above-mentioned services are already offered in the form of e-services. However, it is still necessary to increase social awareness related to this manner of handling administrative matters. Not everybody has enough knowledge or courage to use e-services on a daily basis. Therefore, public administration bodies need to play an important role in the field of social education.

It is also crucial to unify the IT systems which allows for simultaneous handling of matters in different public institutions. A desired feature of e-administration is to reduce the number of cases when the same data are introduced to various platforms. The result of such

improvement will be a significant reduction in the time needed to deal with certain matters, as well the possibility of multiple use of the same information previously introduced through the so-called data import function (Moon, 2002).

Additionally, it is also worth mentioning certain notable advantages for every citizen which are offered by better management of e-administration. Such advantages include, among others, the following:

- – access to data in one place (the Internet);
- – unlimited access to the electronic services of public institutions;
- – facilitation of the administrative handling of cases by the disabled, without the necessity to leave home;
- – quick handling of cases, hence improved time and cost efficiency;
- – one document database with all the necessary information;
- – no need to notify public offices and institutions about changes in personal details;
- – raised citizens' awareness of electronic access to services offered by public administration bodies;
- – minimising of the risk of errors related to the process of sending, addressing, or the so-called physical transport of documents to public institutions.

The above-mentioned benefits related to the application of the widely understood e-communication connecting the citizen with the office are only a small part of mutual good practices, which – we hope – will soon be completely implemented.

The establishment of an efficient and effective e-government is dependent on the favour of the environment and building mutual understanding between citizens and institutions. The challenge of building this form of dialogue and to educate the public should involved employees of various levels of government – from top management to the rank and file employees. This process requires considerable effort from the departments responsible for the same electronic communication, departments of "e-public relations" (Monarcha-Matlak, 2008, pp. 165–167). The purpose of their action should be to improve the image of the administration in the eyes of the society, so that it can achieve results similar to the results of the implementation of the US strategy for e-Government, in which 60% of the population considers interesting information posted on government web portals, 49% of customers say that since the transition to electronic communication their relations with the authorities have improved, and most importantly, 60% of

users positively evaluated the possibility of using the administration pages (Shim & Eom, 2008).

Ensuring proper functioning of its e-government is not a simple task. The immediate reason is the attitude towards the use of ICT systems. According to A. Monarcha-Matlak, there are four attitudes related to this area. These include ignorance, isolation, idealisation, and integration. The first attitude is focused on ignoring tools. It is, unfortunately, the result of a lack of basic information in the field of modern technologies. The other approach is the identification of ICT as a separate reform process and as a problem of purely technical nature. The attitude of integration technologies treats ICT as a cure for everything. This look is appropriate for those for whom modern technology will solve all the problems in the administration. The fourth attitude is connected with the inclusion of utility computing to everyday administrative practice. This is the attitude that makes it possible to achieve the desired effects in the use of electronic administration (Monarcha-Matlak, 2008, p. 165).

Barriers to the development of e-administration and communication between public entities may also occur. These include, among others:
- the lack of linkage relationships of many ICT projects, for example, e-Statements, e-taxes;
- lack of sufficient infrastructure for offices communication with citizens and other offices (the equipment in hardware, software, and broadband Internet access);
- difficult to synchronize the work on computerization of the country (lack of proper cooperation between the ministries);
- too small and insufficient knowledge about e-government;
- officials fear losing their jobs;
- apparent reluctance of employees to make changes;
- less trust of people because of system errors after the first stage of e-government (Budziewicz-Guźlecka, 2010, pp. 349–351).

You can also identify other barriers associated with the implementation of new technologies in public administration:
- tenure of authorities and political conditions;
- little or no involvement in the implementation of new technologies on the part of top management of the organisation;
- unwillingness or inability to engage in work on implementing the quality management system of personnel directly involved in the implementation process;

–   traditional organisational culture and visible resistance to change;
–   difficulties in defining standards of performance (lack of standards and measures) (Przybyszewski, 2009).

Particular attention in the case of electronic communication must be paid to the problem of the digital divide. According to the research by Millward Brown SMG/KRC, only 52.4% of Poles used the network in 2010. Although this index increased by 2.9% in 12 months, it still puts Poland among countries with a lower degree of use of the Internet by citizens of the European Union.

To conclude the discussion on the solutions of e-administration as a system of efficient management, as well as on the development and communication of public institutions, it is worth mentioning, even to a small extent, the Electronic Platform of Public Administration Services (ePUAP). The legal definition of ePUAP includes Article 3 sec. 13 of the Act of 17th February, 2005 on the computerisation of activity of entities implementing public tasks. In compliance with the above regulation the electronic platform for e-services of public administration is the ICT system, where the public institutions offer their services through a single access point on the Internet (Act on Computerisation). The preliminary assumptions related to ePUAP were prepared in December 2002 as a part of a wider programme called "Wrota Polski" (Gateway to Poland). In 2005, the concept was transformed into a uniform system which main idea was to actually implement e-administration, and the mission was to improve the quality and availability of the offered public services. The authors of this concept aimed at creating a local government platform where government and local government services would be placed. To some extent these goals were achieved, and a relatively uniform, safe channel of making public services available was established. ePUAP was launched at the end of 2008 (Wiewiórowski & Wierczyński, 2008, p. 351).

Currently, the Centre of Digital Administration of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration is realised by ePUAP2. It is aimed at developing the functionality of the ePUAP platform and increasing the number of e-services. The project was co-financed from the European Regional Development Fund under the Operational Programme Innovative Economy 2007–2013, Priority 7 – Information society – establishment of electronic administration. In accordance with the idea of the legislator, ePUAP also realises certain strategic goals, i.e.:

–   extends the choice of public services available online;
–   extends the scale of public services offered online;
–   integrates new public administration systems with the ePUAP web portal;
–   reduces the cost of the rendered services;
–   catalogues the services proposed by public administration bodies by preparing a catalogue in the form of a uniform name system including the available services (Ozga, 2011, pp. 9–10).

SUMMARY

The development of the information society has contributed to a more frequent use of IT technologies and the Internet to provide public services. The possibility of completing administrative procedures electronically allows the modernisation of every organisation, including public administration units, and the building of trust for such institutions. Citizens more and more often use the possibility of contacting various offices online thanks to modern IT technologies. However, it should be remembered that the implementation of e-administration through rendering of e-services is not an easy task. It requires overcoming many obstacles and the prejudices of both citizens and employees of public administration institutions.

Electronic administration that provides more and more services to citizens and businesses electronically is a good tool to build an information society based on communication and knowledge. The dissemination of ICT tools in dealing on the line citizens – states, allows for minimising the presence of customers in offices, shortening implementation issues, as well as improving the quality and efficiency of the public sector (Heeks, 2005). The ability to use information systems must be available to all interested parties, including individuals and legal persons. It is also imperative to plan accordingly and carry out transformation processes of public institutions.

E-administration is moving towards the creation of knowledge-based administration (organisation). Modern information technology is becoming more and more common and available to citizens, where the administration aims at offering intelligent e-services. Undoubtedly, the implementation of such solutions has improved the functioning of public administration and the management of the management processes,

especially as this process has allowed the enhancement of relations between the citizen and the office. Furthermore, communication as well as document and information flow has improved, which means mutual benefits. The implementation of e-administration has already started. Let us hope that in the reasonably near future its effects will be perceptible.

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Acts

Act of 6 September 2001 *on access to public information* (i.e. Journal of Laws of 2015, item 2058, as amended).

Act of 17 February 2005 *on computerisation of activity of entities implementing public tasks* (i.e. Journal of Laws of 2014, item 1114, as amended), hereinafter referred to as the Act on Computerisation.

Elektroniczna administracja jako czynnik skutecznego zarządzania, rozwoju i komunikacji administracji publicznej.

ELEKTRONICZNA ADMINISTRACJA JAKO CZYNNIK SKUTECZNEGO ZARZĄDZANIA, ROZWOJU I KOMUNIKACJI ADMINISTRACJI PUBLICZNEJ

Abstrakt

Tło badań. We współczesnych uwarunkowaniach gospodarczych istotnym procesem, który wpływa na skuteczność i funkcjonalność działania każdej organizacji, w tym administracji publicznej, jest proces komunikowania się. Prawidłowy przekaz informacji oraz mechanizmy dzielenia się wiedzą stały się ważnymi obszarami w życiu każdej organizacji. W tym zakresie niezwykle pomocne w procesie komunikacji stają się coraz częściej wykorzystywane technologie informacyjno-komunikacyjne, będące obecnie niewątpliwie głównym czynnikiem wspierającym integrację społeczną i zwiększającym możliwości współpracy organów administracji publicznej z innymi podmiotami oraz obywatelami. Zastosowanie elektronicznej administracji w procesie realizacji potrzeb obywateli staje się wyzwaniem dla współczesnej administracji.

Cel badań. Celem badania analizowanego obszaru jest wskazanie głównych zasad w zakresie skutecznego komunikowania się z otoczeniem oraz wewnątrz samych jednostek administracji publicznej, z zastosowaniem umiejętnego zarządzania elektroniczną komunikacją.

Metodologia. Autor przedstawia główne założenia koncepcji zarządzania procesem komunikacji, w tym komunikacji elektronicznej w organach administracji publicznej. Poszukiwanie aspektów związanych z zastosowaniem elektronicznej administracji wraz z wykorzystaniem technik zarządzania procesem komunikacji oparto na przeglądzie literatury naukowej, wskazując praktyczne przykłady oraz wyniki dotychczasowych badań empirycznych w tym zakresie.

Kluczowe wnioski. Wśród wielu aspektów i technik zarządzania procesem komunikacji w administracji publicznej coraz odważniej wykorzystuje się informatykę i Internet w procesie realizacji usług publicznych. Możliwość załatwiania spraw drogą elektroniczną unowocześnia każdą organizację, w tym organy administracji publicznej, ale również przyczynia się do budowy zaufania do takich instytucji. Obywatele coraz częściej wykorzystują możliwości komunikacji z urzędem, jakie dają im współczesne narzędzia informatyczne.

Słowa kluczowe: administracja publiczna, komunikacja, zarządzanie publiczne, elektroniczna administracja.