

Yevhen O. Romanenko¹

PLACE AND ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN PUBLIC POLICY

The analysis of the place and the role of communication allowed identifying structural and functional components in the system public authorities activity, classifying the main channels of information dissemination in public administration system, the introduction of communication strategies and its optimization in the process of public policy formation.

Keyword: communication policy; information dissemination channels; communication strategy; public policy.

Євген О. Романенко

МІСЦЕ ТА РОЛЬ КОМУНІКАЦІЇ У ФОРМУВАННІ ДЕРЖАВНОЇ ПОЛІТИКИ

У статті здійснено аналіз місця та ролі комунікації, що надало можливість ідентифікувати її структурно-функціональні компоненти в системній діяльності органів державної влади, класифікувати основні канали поширення інформації в системі державного управління, засоби запровадження комунікативних стратегій та їх оптимізаційні прийоми в процесі формування державної політики.

Ключові слова: комунікативна політика; канали поширення інформації; комунікативна стратегія; державна політика.

Рис. 1. Літ. 18.

Евгений А. Романенко

МЕСТО И РОЛЬ КОММУНИКАЦИИ В ФОРМИРОВАНИИ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОЙ ПОЛИТИКИ

В статье проведен анализ места и роли коммуникации, что позволило идентифицировать ее структурно-функциональные компоненты в системной деятельности органов государственной власти, классифицировать основные каналы распространения информации в системе государственного управления, средства введения коммуникативных стратегий и их оптимизационные приемы в процессе формирования государственной политики.

Ключевые слова: коммуникативная политика; каналы распространения информации; коммуникативная стратегия; государственная политика.

Problem statement. Currently, the relations between the government and the society can be characterized as based on alienation and mutual distrust. This kind is neither effective, nor safe. Parallel uncoordinated efforts do not lead to success, society energy needs to be merged with government efforts in a synergy. Building partnerships mainly depends on government's communication with the public. Since communication is a very broad and multidimensional notion, intertwined with a number of problems, this area requires careful research and analysis to identify the most effective ways for its further development.

Recent research and publications analysis. A considerable contribution to the development of the theory and practice of communications and their structural and functional components in the system of state authorities activities was performed by foreign scientists J. Kin (2010), F. Ratzel (2003), K. Deutsch (2003), K. Rosengren (2013), Russian scholars G. Gadamer (1988), V. Popov (2007), A. Strizoe (1999).

¹ Interregional Academy of Personnel Management, Kyiv, Ukraine.

Despite a large number of publications on the subject, the role of communications in state policy remains understudied.

The research objective encompasses the following: conducting analysis of the place and the role of communication in the system of state power, classifying the main channels of information dissemination within public administration system, means of implementation of communication strategies and their optimization techniques in the course of shaping public policy.

Key research findings. Strategic communication problems appear to be partly caused by weak capacity, and partly – by misunderstanding of what government communication is. At present, Ukrainian government treats communication quite narrowly – as merely providing information about its activities. Government transparency and information about its work is the prerequisite for effective communication, but not the process. Communication is by definition a two-way process, in which society is also a subject, an active participant. While informing is a one-way process, where society is an object, only a passive recipient.

The culture of governmental decision-making is very low. The procedures are often not adhered. There are cases when government ministers see the draft government decisions for the first time at the meeting where the decision is already of voted. The agenda is formed secretly. Draft decisions are usually not made public. It is difficult to explain the situations when there is no visible government activity on a particular issue for a long time, and afterwards emergency decisions of dubious quality legitimacy are taken (not credible for the society).

There are no appropriate mechanisms for horizontal communication. That is, when discussing a draft decision, one minister might be unaware of the position and arguments of another minister. Only the project developer has the opportunity to see all comments.

The issue of improving communication with the public is currently on the agenda of the government. Local communication improvements are more possible, but the attempts to change the whole system stalled. The absence of strategic communication is hindering all other reforms.

In this state of affairs one should not expect much efforts made to improve communication. Significant changes first of all are necessary at the conceptual, strategic and institutional levels.

Communication is a fundamental tool for power-management relations and institutions, as well as for the formation of corresponding political values and orientations aimed at meeting certain public interests and needs, which create the relationship of the subject-object nature (Kin, 2010: 33). According to J. Kin, communication is an important tool of building social and political institutions as direct bearers of power in the state.

Following I. Bakhov (2013) statement, that "the transfer of information in political terms is the most important of all communication services", it should be noted that it is the most effective instrument of political and public managerial influence. Since ancient times rulers were clearly aware of the need for mastering communication techniques, as this had impact on the level of their influence on attitudes, opinions and beliefs of citizens. During that period of time "for creating the needed image in people's minds various types of verbal and non-verbal messages were wide-

ly used, for example, symbols of various kinds of solemn public ceremonies, and later the huge architectural structures ... tactics of indoctrination were applied to influence people's mood, or ideological "brainwashing" that was characteristic especially for the periods of wars and internal conflicts" (Serebrjanikov, 2008: 66).

The most recent stage of the public administration system development saw the beginning of using "mild forms of information influence, most of which now resemble the techniques of advocacy, campaigning, public relations and political advertising ... via decrees and laws were made attempts to direct public-management communication in the necessary direction, to control the flow of information in the society, while this control could take different forms of censorship – from official activities of special public institutions to organization of "informal pressure from below", by shaping public opinion that would meet the requirements of the time" (Popov, 2007: 40). In the XXth century the place and the role of communication in the state policy formation was associated with democratization of political and public administrative processes, with the increasing role of information technologies.

Communication has direct and indirect impact on the formation and implementation of public policy. Direct impact concerns the call for citizens to participate in shaping public policy by actively participating in elections, seeking the support of relevant public-rate management, discussion and approval of national concepts, projects, programs etc. The immediate impact of communication on the formation and implementation of public policy leads to creating certain ideal structures and their impact on the minds and activities of the state-administrative elite and various community groups. In this regard, communication has a strategic effect, since it influences consciousness, beliefs and behavior of people in the form of their participation in shaping public policy.

Determining the place of communication in shaping state policy, it is necessary to proceed from the fact that communication is an important criterion of transition from one decision-making technology to another. According to Habermas's concept, communication is an essential attribute of governance transition from absolutism to liberal democratic regimes, so the expression of critical public opinion in media is a characteristic feature of today's democracy (Habermas, 2005: 31). He also indicates that various forms of communication involve different ways of organizing activities of state bodies leading to the emergence of new mechanisms of social interaction. That is why, according J. Meyrovych (2001: 166), communication is an important means of equal distribution of power and resources in the society, leading to the situation in which individuals receive specific semantic content form certain information products, and due to this they are included in everyday life.

Analyzing the place of communication in public policy formation, it is necessary to proceed from its hermeneutical essence, the understanding effect, instruments of interpretation. According to the hermeneutic approach of G. Gadamer (1988: 144), its feasibility is due to the fact that assimilation of any information products is always due to perception of interpretation process, in which an individual tries to understand the meaning of a message, to use all information resources available.

In the context of public policy formation, communication also performs the *stabilizing role* in the provision of public transparency. In this context, communication is aimed at solving problems of stable functioning of public management system. In the

opinion of D. Easton (2008: 288), community provides two types of information requirements (constructive and destructive) and support (which may eventually transform into a form of protest when citizens are dissatisfied with the state). This can occur not only within society but from within the state-administrative system, however, irrespectively of their origin they have to be considered in structuring basic information for appropriate public-management decisions.

Given this, when public authorities meet the expectations of citizens, the state policy increases its support in society and strengthens the stabilization of the society. Conversely, unpopular actions of state authorities cause situation destabilization in the system of governance, and often leads to the transformation of citizens' support into the protest movement, thus causing certain alienation between state authorities and the public. This causes stressability of the state-management system and therefore in order to survive it has to accumulate the communicative potential.

Special attention should be paid to the *coordinative role of communication* in public policy implementation. German scientist K. Deutsch's concept is the proof to this role, he considered policy as a communicative process of coordinating the efforts of people to achieve their goals, implemented under cybernetic self-regulation (Deutsch, 2003: 93). He stresses the decreasing coordinating role of communication in state policy implementation, and providing feedback of public authorities and the public.

Based on the detection of consistency or inconsistency of state authority activities to public interests, one can determine the level of system resistance, which does not contribute to the efficiency of the state policy. Based on this, it becomes possible to develop tools for maximal approaching public authorities activity to a balanced state of implementation of relevant public management strategies and actions, eliminating errors in order to ensure transparency in public administration in all possible ways.

Communication in the formation of public policy also plays the *regulatory role*. For its functional verification we can cite the "magic bullet theory" by G. Lassawell (2007: 37), regarding "centralization of information flow dissemination, the introduction of strict censorship, complete subordination of media to the authority bodies interests, including the state, which seeks to impose both individuals and the society in general a strict set of specific attitudes, norms and rules of conduct". This role of communication in shaping public policy contradicts the liberal principles of freedom of speech under the pluralism of socio-political influence.

It is also worth paying attention to the *integrative role* of communication in public policy formation. In this respect communication acts as a mechanism for propaganda impact of mass media on public consciousness for the purpose of consolidating citizens. Accordingly, communication becomes the instrument of public opinion control through appropriate social symbols, to ensure mobilization and solidarity of people under a common goal. Under such circumstances for communication not to turn into a tool disseminating messages, there should be competition in political and legal environment, which is possible only under the conditions of a clear social stratification of the society.

In Stryzoe's opinion, only when communication is practiced in a competitive environment, the society is given a choice of a communication channel, depending

on information needs, tastes, preferences and ideological settings of people (Stryzoe, 1999: 97). This scholar comes out of the fact that only when the society is clearly stratified and consists of various well-established social communities, the impact of communication contributes to the formation of complex structure of social ties and relations, leading to increased impact of communication messages of public authorities to the society, and so provides activation of the public role in the formation of state public policy.

Following the logic of this study, it is necessary to distinguish also the *cumulative role* of communication in public policy formation, which comes down to ensuring interaction between mass media and the public, which eventually motivates people to adopt a certain symbolic image of reality. According to J. Gerbner (2009: 207), it is completely permeated by stereotyped forms of behavior and thoughts of the majority, and thus creating or significantly transforming people’s thoughts, especially their values, using a common information influence is practically impossible. It will become possible to achieve this effect only with the time when messages will constantly be clearly guided in the information space to support a particular point of view.

Of certain methodological value in the context of this study is also K. Rozenger’s (2013) "utility and satisfying needs theory" that outlines the pragmatic role of communication in shaping public policy.

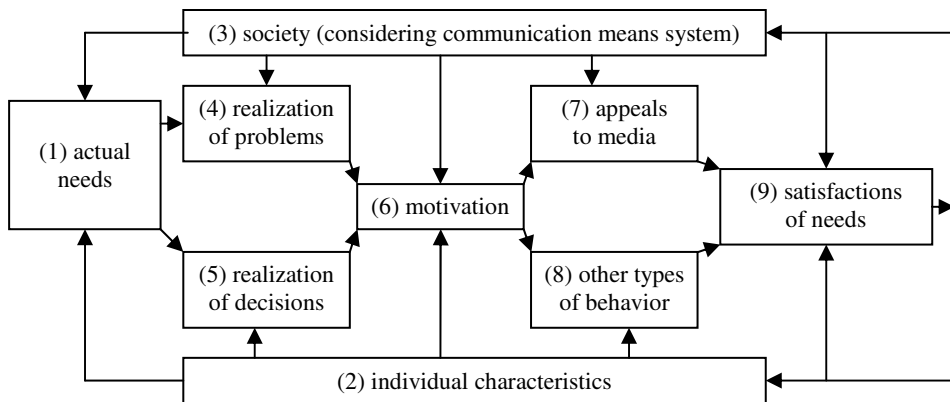


Figure 1. K. Rosenberg’s (2013) concept of utility and satisfying needs

The author schematically showed that communication is primarily aimed at socio-political needs of citizens towards ‘a particular point of view’ for the formation of public policy. Accordingly, communication is given the main task to accumulate attention on certain issues that need to have potential solutions. The scientist comes from the fact that perception of problems and awareness of their probable solutions comes as the foundation for a potential appeal of a person to a particular communication channel, enhance interpersonal communication that can lead to satisfaction of the needs, laid as a methodology foundation of public policy formation (Rozenger, 2013: 273).

We should also take into account that communication does not always serve as the optimization tool for public policy that raises questions about its destructive role. According to O. Shabrov (1997: 59) this is predetermined by the fact that not every

time when leaders of two parties meet for developing a common strategy, we can say that one of them manages the other, and therefore, this form of communicative interaction is effective.

Basically this format of public management practices subjects may be of competitive and confrontational character. There arises a question of the appropriateness of the analysis of consensual and contractual means of communication in shaping public policy, the ideal formula of communication means establishing equal relations of cooperation of public authorities with the public.

Emphasizing the *destructive role of communication* in public policy formation, it is also advisable to mention some points of D. Held's concept. He is convinced, that communication quite often leads to absurd depolitization, discouraging people from solving political and religious problems, diverting them from participation in state governing and making decisions, that have urgent importance in ensuring adequate living conditions of citizens (Held, 2008: 248).

Destructive role of communication in state policy formation is also clearly seen in L. Festinger's "*theory of minimal communicative effects*". In his view, people feel psychological discomfort, they get into the state of cognitive dissonance when they are imposed with views, ideas and opinions that lead them to doubt their own ideals, or affect their feelings and tastes (Festinger, 1999: 211). Thus, when the state policy does not meet real interests and needs, ideological convictions of citizens to some extent, its communicative support leads to lower effectiveness of its implementation. Therefore, to avoid discomfort, one selects only the information that correlates with own convictions and beliefs, and ignores contradictory reports (Festinger, 1999: 235). Communication in this format prevents public policy efficiency.

Conclusions. Many processes in Ukraine need to be built anew. Government communication is one of them. Today government has no communication policy, for example, regarding Donbass residents, displaced persons or other important issues, and for this lack of communication the government is strongly criticized. All this is a manifestation of the common problem – low efficiency of government communication with the society.

The carried out analysis of the place and the role of communication in the formation of public policy, enabled to specify its structural and functional components (official, personal, indirect) in the system activity of public authorities, to classify the main channels of information dissemination in public administration system, means of communication strategies implementation and their optimization techniques in shaping public policy as an important component of political and public administrative processes democratization.

Nevertheless, the system that creates (should create) government communication in Ukraine exists: there are hundreds of civil servants, structural units, plans, documents, websites, magazines, television programs etc. so that it can function properly.

It is necessary to transform government communication into an integral element of policy implementation.

It is also important to create the internal electronic communication system for draft decisions of the government. It has to provide horizontal communication, when all members of the government and other people who work on draft decisions, can see the proposals of each other and coordinate them electronically.

Also important is to start the practice, where every day the government spokesman (in the way similar to the one done in АТО), presents a briefing on what's going on with the reforms: what is the actual situation, what has been done during the day, what are the obstacles, what help is needed etc.

The introduction of e-government in Ukraine requires constant and active work. The government can no longer afford delays in introducing e-governance.

References:

- Гадамер Г.-Г.* Истина и метод: основы философской герменевтики. — М.: Прогресс, 1988. — 699 с.
- Истон Д.* Системный анализ политической жизни. — М., 2008. — 456 с.
- Кин Дж.* Средства массовой информации и демократия. — М.: Наука, 2010. — 167 с.
- Попов В.Д.* Тайны информационной политики. — Изд. 2-ое, допол. и переработ. — М.: РАГС, 2007. — 455 с.
- Серебрянников В.В.* Социология войны. — М., 2008. — 354 с.
- Стризов А.Л.* Политика и общество: социально-философские аспекты взаимодействия. — Волгоград: Волгоградский государственный университет, 1999. — 340 с.
- Фестингер Л.* Теория когнитивного диссонанса. — СПб.: Ювента, 1999. — 317 с.
- Хабермас Ю.* Политические работы / Пер. с нем. — М.: Праксис, 2005. — 501 с.
- Хараи А.У.* Личность, сознание и общение: к обоснованию интересубъектного подхода в исследовании коммуникативных воздействий // Журнал практического психолога.— 2014.— №1.— С. 177–200.
- Шабров О.Ф.* Политическое управление: проблема стабильности и развития. — М.: Интеллект, 1997. — 200 с.
- Bakhov, I.S.* (2013). Government multicultural policy in Canada in the period of 1970–2000s. Middle East Journal of Scientific Research, 15(10): 1450–1454.
- Deutsch, K.W.* (2003). The Nerves of Government: Models of Political Communication and Control. London, Free Press of Glencoe. 316 p.
- Gerbner, G.* (2009). Institutional Pressures on Mass Communicators. The Sociology of Mass Media Communicators: Sociological Review Monograph, Vol. 13 (pp. 205–248). Ed.: P. Halmos. University of Keels.
- Held, D.* (2008). Political Theory and the Modern State : Essays on State, Power, and Democracy. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press. 265 p.
- Lasswell, H.* (2007). Propaganda Technique in the World War. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. 233 p.
- Meurowitz, J.* (2001). No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior. New York. 345 p.
- Ratzel, F.* (2003). Politische Geographic. Oldenburg. 236 p.
- Rosengren, K.E.* (2013). Uses and Gratifications: A Paradigm Outlined. In: The Uses of Mass Communications. Eds.: J.G. Blumler, E. Katz (pp. 269–281). Beverly Hills, CA.

Стаття надійшла до редакції 24.11.2015.