

THE EFFICIENCY OF COMMUNICATION IN ORGANIZATION – THE PRAXEOLGY APPROACH

MAGDALENA ZALEWSKA-TURZYŃSKA

Abstract: *On the basis of praxeology, efficiency can be described from two perspectives: the distributive and the cumulative. Communication, on the other hand, is inseparable human activity within the organization. In the paper there is an attempt to set the distributive perspective to describe the efficient act of communication in the organization. The representatives chosen to be presented here, from the distributive efficiency perspective, are the features of communication usefulness and effectiveness. Moreover, an attempt is made to settle the measurements of those two. The paper also contains the description of the gradation possibility of those measurements, the mathematical formula and the conditions of usage.*

Key Words: *praxiology, communication, efficiency, effectiveness, purposefulness*

JEL Classification: *M12, D83*

1. INTRODUCTION

The paper is based on the praxeology theory – the theory of efficient action. It was developed on the basis of Polish science with an invaluable contribution of T. Kotarbinski. In 1910, he began to give lectures in the subject of "Theory of an act and practice of an action" („Teoria czynu i praktyka działania”), the content of which was published in 1913 [Swiąder [in]: Gasparski, Strzałecki; 1991: 45] in the form of elaboration under the title: “The Practical Sketches” (“Szkice Praktyczne”). At that time the science did not yet have the name "praxeology" but it was still called in different manners, for example: "the grammar of action" („gramatyka czynu”), "the logic of action" („logika czynu”), "the science of action practicality" („nauka o praktyczności działań”), "the overall operation technology" („ogólna technologia działania”), "the general theory of act" („ogólna teoria czynu”), "the theory of efficient operation" („teoria sprawnego działania”), or "the science of good work" („nauka o dobrej robocie”). Although the term "praxeology" was first used by A. Espinas [Kotarbiński 1973: 309, 332] in 1890 in the article *Technologie générale*, it then concerned technology in general; and the appropriate name of "praxeology" in the sense of efficient action was first used much later in 1955, by T. Kotarbinski in the first issue of the “Treaty on Good Work” (Traktat o dobrej robocie). Since then, praxeology has become the subject of academic interest of other scholars, including J. Zieleniewski, who attempted to create a praxeological theory of the organization.

Kotarbinski was followed by other authors, to mention the precursors: J. Zieleniewski, J. Kurnal, W. Kieżun, T. Pszczołowski, Z. Martyniak, W. Gasparski, K. Pięjko, J. Rudniański and others. Among them, there were the direct successors of prof. Zieleniewski’s thought – Z. Mikołajczyk, M. Bielski and Z. Janowska, Cz. Sikorski and H. Zarychta – the so called School of Lodz. Originally, they were called "Economics and Organization of Work Department", ultimately "Department of Management" of the University of Lodz [Gregor, Mikołajczyk; 2004: 111]

Praxeology issues still inspire the interest of scientists from Poland, but also and above all, from outside the country (the names include: The Czech Republic – Ladislav Tondl (Czech Academy of Sciences – Prague), France – Victor Aleksandre (Universite de Nice – Nice) and Abraham A. Moles (Universite de Strasbourg I – Strasbourg), Finland – Timo Airaksinen (University of Helsinki – Helsinki), Israel – A Zvie Bar-On (The Hebrew University – Jerusalem), China – Zou Sting (Tsinghua University – Beijing), Russia – Nikolai Sackow, USA – Josiak Lee Auspitz.) They are rediscovered by scientists from around the world, undertaken once again and analyzed. The authors’ interest in the issues and their work in this area finds its confirmation in a number of publications, however studies of praxeology are rather scarce in foreign language literature, and if any do appear, they are usually only published in the English version, several years later than the prototypes in Polish (praxeology rediscovered).

In this paper we will present two (due to the limited volume of the article) sample characteristics of effective communication as actions, defined by the classics of praxeology as essential: purposfulness and efficiency. The presentation is done in the following way – first, the definition of general characteristics and its brief description is provided (the original definitions given below are generally available in the literature. Next, the description in terms of communication will be presented.

These features relate to communicative action in two senses – one of these being a narrower and the other – wider. The narrower meaning concerns the creation of the message and the message itself, as a result of this action. The wider meaning concerns the observed changes in behavior (or knowledge) of the receiver under the influence of this message.

2. EFFICIENCY AS A PRAXEOLOGICAL CATEGORY UNDERSTOOD CUMULATIVELY AND DISTRIBUTIVELY

T. Pszczołowski distinguishes two meanings of "action efficiency": collective and distributive.

"(...) In synthetic (general) terms, efficiency is usually referred to as all practical virtues of action, that is its features positively evaluated. Action A is more efficient than action B if it has more of these specific assessments or, in case of the same set of ratings, if in operation, these are of higher level, i.e. efficient acting in this sense is both more effective, beneficial, economic (economical and efficient), rational, etc. (...). 2. In universal terms, efficiency is each of the values of good work in isolation, i.e. efficiency is its effectiveness, efficiency is its benefit, efficiency is its economy, etc." [Pszczółowski, 1978: 227]

Both approaches are put in the order by K. Piętko, who distinguishes "efficiency in the sense of a synthetic, universal, and methodological manipulation" and then groups the matter: collective = synthetic, and distributive = universal. Methodological efficiency "is the ability to use all known methods and ways to improve efficiency. The basis for obtaining this efficiency is to have all the available data in terms of knowledge and scientific achievements, to ensure maximum efficiency, as can be expected with proper care actions." [Piętko, 1976: 132-135].

Being effective, economical, beneficial¹ [Zieleniewski, 1969: 223-236] is considered the basic set of features of action efficiency in the distributive sense. In addition to these three basic qualities, a lot of others are singled out – purity, precision, accuracy, correctness, neatness, being fit for use, simplicity, reliability, repairability, reliability, detail, excellence, efficiency, rationality, productivity.

The distributive – universal meaning is the basis for discussion later in this paper.

3. DISTRIBUTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNICATION SKILLS – A FEATURE OF PURPOSEFULNESS AND EFFECTIVENESS

The feature of purposefulness is understood in two ways: first as a simple act, including any impulse, or second as complex factors leading to the intended purpose (i.e. perceived in this sense as effective) [Pszczółowski, 1978: 90]. In the latter interpretation, this feature is therefore identified with efficiency characteristics². Effective action is the one "that leads to the effect desired as the goal." [Kotarbinski, 1973: 113]

The distinction between purposefulness and effectiveness is warranted because of the criterion on the ex ante and ex post situations. In the case where the purpose of an action is considered before its execution – one can speak of the action having a characteristic of purposefulness, – it is important whether what is to be done will lead to an event intended as a purpose or not – the purposefulness is thus no gradual. "If anyone, while assessing the prospects for achieving the purpose state of operation, for example, to come first in a sports event, says that in a given situation what can be achieved is the first runner-up's position, then, in fact, his aim is the second, and not the first place. We assumed,

after all, that the purpose may be just what you want (and not all of what you desire) and the wanted end may be what is believed to be achievable." [Zieleniewski, 1964: 220] – an action is, by definition, intentional or it fails to be an action, because there is the "three-connectivity" of features of operation: 1 intentional, 2 conscious, 3 not forced (voluntary). Only if all the three elements together are fulfilled can one talk of an action, otherwise it can merely be named as some form of reflex activity, state of the subconscious or state of unconsciousness [Pszczółowski, 1978: 56-59].

After an operation is performed, it is assigned the characteristic feature of effectiveness. Hence, in praxeology, there is no purposeful action which proves ineffective. If the activity was considered ineffective post factum, it means that it had not been previously allocated the feature of purposefulness – that means that the activity at the outset was pointless, which the perpetrator could not see.

"Because of the language habits, we use the term ex ante to speak about an intentional action, while ex post to denote an effective one. However, in praxeology one cannot use ex post about one's action that it was intentional, but ineffective. The action which, from the perpetrator's point of view, leads to a goal, but failed, could be methodologically rational. Ex ante we predicate of something that it is rational and thus probably intentional, by basing on a theoretical background, as in the case of practical directive. However, if, after it takes place, the operation proves to be ineffective, we affirm that our hasty assessment of its purposefulness proved to be false, because the goal was not achieved." [Pszczółowski, 1978: 34]

Praxeology scientists have found that both the purposefulness and effectiveness concern the following: the action itself, effects of action and modes of action. They occur in a dimensionless form, but the purposefulness is found exclusively in the form of ungradable, whereas the efficiency can take two forms:

- gradable – "Efficiency is basically gradable, that is a multi-valued measure (which exceptionally happens to be the "zero-one" measure, when the action has only one purpose and that is not the gradable one, and the considered period contains only one elementary event)." [Zieleniewski, 1969: 225] "The group of climbers did not reach the peak of the mountain today, but came quite close, closer than any other company. In such cases, one is entitled to speak of a greater or lesser performance and, of course, by analogy, in other cases, a greater or lesser counter-efficiency. Efficiency and counter-efficiency are gradable; only the neutral status receives no gradability. (...) In the cases of a various degree of effectiveness, in a way, one can observe a various degree of success in paving the way to the goal." [Kotarbinski, 1973: 116; Pszczółowski, 1978: 220]
- and ungradable – "You can sign or not sign the check; return a borrowed book, or not; get married to a person or not. You cannot make the check more or less signed; books – more or less returned, the bride – more or less legally wedded" [Kotarbinski, 1973: 116].

A given action is the more effective than another, the closer it is to the intended goal. In the process of assessing effectiveness, only the degree of the intended purpose achievement should be taken into account: "(...) among the

¹ Long before the Polish praxeology school raised W Jastrzębowski paid attention to "Effectiveness, reliability, accuracy, regularity and efficiency, taking the form of performance or cost savings measures that the action – having the following characteristics – is improving as the improvement of subject objects." [Jastrzębowski, 1970: 129]

² „not – purposefulness means unefficient, counter – purposefulness, counter-efficient" [Pszczółowski, 1978: 34]

effects of an action – only the predicted and positively evaluated effects or, in other words, only those results that correspond to the part of or all purposes." [Zieleniewski, 1964: 218]

What fails to be taken into consideration are operating costs and positively evaluated effects which were not anticipated prior to the action. "(...) We took into account only positively evaluated and predicted (main and side) effects, that is only those effects which correspond to the main and side objectives of somebody's action. (...) We did not, however, consider, first, any effects that were not anticipated at the time of the person's action, even post factum (...) Someone evaluated it positively. (...). Secondly, we did not take into account any negatively assessed effects." In assessing effectiveness we did not take into consideration the cost of ingredients, and among the ingredients of useful result only the anticipated effects." [Zieleniewski, 1969: 224-225].

Thus, an action can be called effective if the purpose has been achieved in full (no gradable effectiveness) or in part (gradable effectiveness), even if the value of the result is lower than the value of costs incurred as a result of the achievement.

"You can also speak of the effectiveness of an action mode. An effective manner of action can be such that ensures efficiency. "[Zieleniewski, 1964: 221] This effective way of action may undergo gradation and is proportional to the effectiveness of this action. One can also distinguish the degree of effectiveness of a mode of operation intended at the point of making decisions about the choice of action – 'the intended mode of action A can be considered (...) to be more effective than the other way B, if the assessment of the expected action by mode A in a given situation allows to achieve the objectives more desirable than if we have acted in manner B. "[Zieleniewski, 1964: 221]

The effectiveness of modes of action can also occur in the ungradable form of and take the value of 0 or 1, if the objective is no gradable.

Praxeology academics recognize that "In addition to activities and modes of action, the terms »effective« or »ineffective« can also characterize the means of action (...)" [Zieleniewski, 1964: 223] However, this statement seems to be a mental shortcut, created just to improve communication. No form of efficiency including effectiveness is a characteristic that belongs to any tool or thing. Means of action may be more or less useful (fit for use) in performing some action and ensuring the effectiveness of this action, and, in doing so, achieving the goal. At the same time, "their" so-called efficiency is gained through accurate applications of the perpetrator of a given resource. "For our purposes, things (such as individual units of resources) cannot be assigned to (...) the concept of efficiency. Contrary to frequently used everyday sayings such as »effective headache killer pill«, etc., it is not the pill itself that is effective, but our action involving the particular way of using it in a given situation." [Zieleniewski, 1964: 223]

Performance review assesses the achievements. It takes the following form:

$$Sk = \frac{o}{z} \quad Sk \in \langle 0;1 \rangle \quad (1)$$

Sk – effectiveness

o – the achieved/obtained result (realized effect evaluated positively)

z – the desired result (estimated effect with a positive outlook)

Efficiency is not the perfect or the only measure of good and efficient operation. Knowing its limitations, one can successfully use it, but with other, different measures. "The efficacy can be (...) used to compare with each other only options for action representing a total of »family activities«, i.e. the set of variants leading in various ways to the same or very similar objectives." [Zieleniewski, 1966: 26] Furthermore, this viewpoint omits positively evaluated the effects which were not foreseen while setting objectives of an action. What's more, the evaluation of effectiveness does not inform at all about the expense of action that arriving at the objective incurred.

The concept of failure (inexpediency) is distinguished from the concept of counter-efficiency (counter-purposefulness). An ineffective event occurs when the degree of approximation to the goal is zero, the action taken does not facilitate the achievement of any of its objectives, that is, if what was defined as the final goal of action has not happened, despite the action taken. Counterproductive action is the one which prevents the achievement of the objectives in view, and also leads to a result different from, contrary to the previously stated objective.

The action of communication in a broader sense should be characterized by both the purposefulness and effectiveness. The sender of a message should know in advance what purpose they would like to achieve by passing it (whether and what changes in the behavior or the state of mind of the receiver is expected).

An effective means (mode) of communicative action (in both senses: the narrower and wider) is a language code used by the sender and adapted to the needs of the receiver, and, as such, a message (used by the sender in the communication situation) which aims at a goal achievement.

A communicative action is therefore effective if the receiver's change of behavior under the influence of the message received at time t_2 can be identified with the aim of the operation (the target is a change) and this change is the same as the one that, at time t_1 , the sender assumed achieving (t_1 is the time when the goal is formed, and t_2 is the time of the appearance of the result). Out of any two communicative actions, the more effective communication is considered that which is achieved with the greater effect bearing a positive relation to the objective.

The formula for communication effectiveness rate remains the same in relation to the generally applicable one in praxeology³:

$$Sk_{dzk} = \frac{o}{z} \quad Sk_{dzk} \in \langle 0;1 \rangle \quad (2)$$

³ Since the consideration of the feature of "efficiency" does not take into account unintended, positively assessed consequences, the relationship remains $z \geq 0$ (the effects achieved will never be greater than intended, at most equal), not vice versa. The more the value of the intended effects approaches the values of the impact made, the more the value of the indicator increases.

Zieleniewski described "the minimum effectiveness" as: "(...) such action we consider to be at least minimally effective, the useful result of which is at least so great that – taken as a goal – would still be able to lead the perpetrator to taking specific action." [Zieleniewski, 1964a: 18] This is not a formal-praxeology but behavioral criterion, as it relates to a specific individual in a particular situation.

Thus, an ineffective communication action is such whose index value remains below the minimum for an effective operation and is close to 0; it is the action which, despite sending the message, does not bring about the desired result. In other words, there is a mismatch between the result of communicative action – the receiver's response and the intended purpose at the time of the message transfer by the sender.

Counter effective communication action is the one in which, despite the correct message, the recipient does

something that moves the organization and himself from achieving its objective. Once the message is given out by the sender, the receiver takes action which results in dismissing himself and his organization from achieving what the sender meant at the time of transmitting the message.

4. CONCLUSION

The above considerations lead to the outlining of a more complex problem of whether it is possible to make a full and comprehensive description of communication in the organization in terms of efficiency. The efficiency is the problem domain of praxeology – therefore, another question arises – is it possible to measure communication within the organization with the tools of praxeology? The questions still remain open, though the present study may indicate the direction of seeking answers to them.

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Magdalena ZALEWSKA-TURZYŃSKA, PhD, Eng,

Chair of Methodology of Organisation and Management within the Department of Management, the University of Lodz
ul. Matejki 22/26, 90-237, Łódź, Poland
e-mail: mzalewska@uni.lodz.pl