

**INTERNAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN A MOROCCAN PUBLIC  
INSTITUTION  
CASE STUDY: NATIONAL SCHOOL OF APPLIED SCIENCES IN AGADIR (ENSA)**

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**Abstract**


Public sector in Morocco has gone through many reforms in order to improve its internal management by creating relationships based on trust, transparency and accountability of its staff. Within this context, higher education institutions have an opportunity to move from traditional public management to a new public management system that promotes the exchange and sharing of information internally thanks to the adjustments dictated by law 01.00 (National education council,2019). On the same basis, internal communication has become a central point of management and plays a major role in the functioning of an organization. Its objective is to promote the flow of information downwards as well as lateral communication to motivate staff, to boost their skills and to foster a spirit of cooperation in order to improve the functioning of the organization. In this perspective, our study is carried out in a public institution in order to highlight the contributions of internal communication in the quality of services provided to users taking the National School of Applied Sciences of Agadir as our field of investigation.

**Key words:** Public Administration, Higher Education, Internal Communication, Plan.

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## 1. Introduction

Internal communication refers to an entire process within an organization including how information is shared up and down communication channels in order to achieve the organization goals (Men, L., R., & Tkalac Vercic, A., 2021). It also regulates an organization's relations with its users and stakeholders (Jo, S., & Sung, 2005, Kang, M. and Sung, M.,2017). Improving these relationships has always been a common concern. However, internal communication has always been attributed a secondary role in a public administration. Recent researches have shown that there often is a difficulty of communication between the hierarchical levels and the staff, a poor dissemination of information and a poor knowledge of the problems, which impacts negatively the quality of the services provided to users (Chalmers,S.,2008). The aim of this study is to highlight the contributions of internal communication plan and to analyze communication practices at the National School of Applied Sciences taken as a case study in this article. Conducted in a higher education institution, this study seeks to respond to the requirements and expectations of public administration users through shedding lights on the main findings, the causes, the consequences and some recommendations mainly in a digital era.

## 2. Context of the study

Recently, public administration in Morocco has witnessed many changes necessary to the modernization process (Boumlik, S., 2022). The new public management covers a set of practices inspired from the private sector in order to guarantee a better-quality service to users. These strategies aspire to the implementation of objectives and results perspective and to rationalize administrative management. Within this context, Christopher Hood underlines several principles (Hood, 1995):

- The public sector adopts strategic units organized by product
- Competition between public organizations
- Implementing private sector management techniques
- Rationalizing the use of resources and adopt lower-cost production means
- Adopting measurable performance and results' standards

With these principles in mind, Moroccan public administration faces serious challenges related to the modernization process in order to improve the services provided to citizens (Jianua, E., Ciobanub, N., Cioboataa, R.,.2013)This imposes new governance modes that need to cope with the new requirements of the modern era. In this perspective, the new public management needs to foster communication modes mainly internal communication structure in order to enhance staff trust and accountability (Grunig, J. E., 1992). Within this context, this article tries to investigate the strategy of internal communication in a higher education institution as a case study.

### 3. Problem statement

This study tries to shed light on the importance and role of internal communication strategy in a public organization. Many study sub-questions will be discussed in this article including:

- What are the difficulties in terms of information flow?
- What are the different causes of dissatisfaction linked to the current communication strategy?
- What are the impacts on the quality of services provided to users?
- What are the benefits of good internal communication plan?

### 4. Methodology and instruments

In order to deal with these questions, we have adopted a mixed method approach combining quantitative and qualitative studies. The qualitative survey has dealt with a documentary analysis and a series of interviews with managers and staff, both administrative and pedagogical. The quantitative survey through the questionnaire aims to quantify the trends of the observed phenomenon. Our research is therefore an exploratory study that will allow us to raise the expectations of civil servants regarding the internal communication strategy, the constraints that arise during the process of its implementation and to analyze the study findings that will form the basis of an internal communication plan.

#### 4.1 The questionnaire survey

The questionnaire built through Google Forms can demonstrate whether an internal communication structure is implemented as well as its effect on staff motivation and productivity, and to know the various means of communication used. The questionnaire includes relevant questions that address the study objectives.

The questionnaire that is addressed to students includes 14 questions, grouped in 2 parts. The first one concerns the phase before their enrollment in the school (ENSA) and the second one will allow us to evaluate the quality of the provided services within the institution. The second questionnaire was administered to the staff and included 26 questions within four sections:

- The 1<sup>st</sup> section deals with personal information including gender, age, educational level
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> section refers to the current situation of internal communication
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> section highlights the degree of importance of internal communication and how it is perceived by the staff as well as its impact on the quality of services
- The 4<sup>th</sup> section addresses the obstacles that may prevent internal communication from fulfilling its purpose

In both cases, the questions are either closed questions that allow the participants to answer with yes or no, or multiple-choice questions (many answers are possible).

## 4.2 The interview

This method has allowed us to collect and analyze several items including opinions, expectations, the level of social climate, suggestions, etc. Thus, we have had the opportunity to get a close look at the daily reality by inviting the interviewees to talk about their experiences. The targeted population in this school is the administrative staff which is distributed as follows:

The population includes 825 students and 88 staff members detailed as follows:

*Table 1 Target population categories*

Category	staff
Managers	04
Teaching staff	61
Administrative staff*	23
<b>Total staff</b>	<b>88</b>
Students	825

\* ENSA suffers from a lack of personnel

We used a semi-structured interview which includes main items guiding the interview and a series of sub questions which can be adjusted during this interviewing process.

The interviews took place in private (absence of other people), but also in different settings, both inside and outside the offices (refreshment room, media library...) for reasons of flexibility and to distance the interviewees from the pressure of their administrative routines. Our task is limited to taking notes of the answers and making sure that the questions are clear to the interviewees because there is a staff for different educational levels.

## 5. Result and discussion

Our exploratory study allows us to draw conclusions based on the findings from the analysis of the previous results: findings related to the documents' analysis and others resulting from the survey and the interview.

### 5.1 Findings from literature review

According to literature review, it can be noted that there is a lack of professionalism in terms of tools. The available means because their main objective is to give instructions and not to ensure a communication function within the institution (Boon, A., 2010). As for the notice board as illustrated in figure 1 below, it is located at the bottom of the staircase, poorly lit and not easily checked by the staff because most of them use the elevator to access the staff room.

Figure 1 PVC bulletin Board

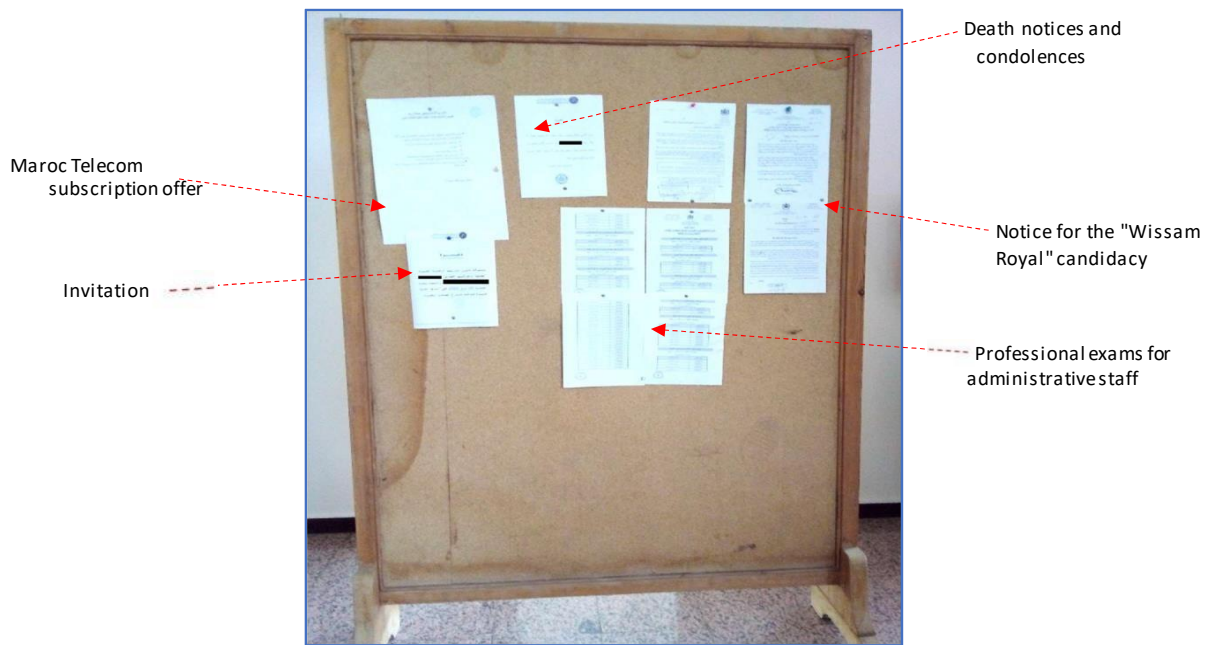


In addition, we have noticed that the posted documents are not regularly updated. As illustrated in the photograph taken on May, 11<sup>th</sup> 2022 (figure 2), documents dated 2018 and 2020 are still posted.

Figure 2 Documents not updated (details of figure 1)



Figure 3 Wooden notice board



As the size of the notice board near the staircase did not allow all the documents to be displayed, some documents are displayed on departments' windows as shown in the following photos.

Figure 4 Documents displayed on department windows



We often notice that the posting is randomly done on the windows of the offices.

The following table summarizes the findings from the literature review.

*Table 2 Findings from literature review*

Analyzed Elements	Conclusions	
Welcome booklet	Not available	
Internal documents	available	Insufficient A directive aspects
Notice board	available	Not used effectively Not updated despite its importance for internal communication strategy No indexing of information, roughly displayed
Electronic messaging	available	Communicate messages and texts
Staff activity reports	Not available	
Regular meetings	rare	Very rare Prescriptive rather than informative No meetings to discuss staff problems and needs
Monitoring and assessment	available	



## 5.2 Findings from the questionnaire administered to students:

The following findings can be drawn from this survey and are presented in the table below:

*Table 3 Findings from the questionnaire administered to students*

Analyzed Elements		Conclusions
<b>NTIC</b>	Platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ENSA does not have a platform through which students wishing to apply for the school can obtain necessary information.</li> </ul>
	Messaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school does not use e-mail to respond to their requests for information even though three contact e-mail addresses are listed on the website</li> </ul>
	Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school's website does not provide information for students wishing to enroll</li> <li>• The information on the ENSA website is insufficient to provide students with complete information about the institution and is not regularly updated. So, students are compelled to seek information via other means such as social networks, contact with former graduates or through acquaintances or friends</li> </ul>
<b>In situ</b>	Information	The information provided in situ is unclear and complex
	Reception	Reception is unsatisfactory
	Display	The display is unsatisfactory
	Administration opening hours	Not satisfactory
	Availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• staff availability is unsatisfactory</li> </ul>
	Service quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• service quality is average and falls short of user expectations</li> </ul>
	Student relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unsatisfactory relations with other students</li> </ul>
	Requests and complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unsatisfactory responses to requests</li> </ul>
<b>Suggestions</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving and updating the website</li> <li>• More information about the streams</li> <li>• Extended working hours</li> <li>• More efficient use of e-mail to receive administrative documents</li> <li>• Appointment of a guidance counsellor to provide students with relevant information</li> </ul>

### 5.3 Findings from the staff survey

The survey through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews allowed us to get close to the daily reality of the civil servants and the analysis of the answers have shed light on some criteria associated with the perceived value of internal communication and also allowed us to bring about some concepts that could solve the problem.

The main findings from the study are:

*Table 4 Findings from the staff survey*

Analyzed documents and survey items	Conclusions
Communication structure	Not available
Current tools used	Telephone and meetings are rarely used
Claims	Are rarely taken into consideration
Tools to determine staff needs and expectations	Not available
Information sources	The management of the institution
Internal social network	Not available
Coherence between departments	Not available
Internal information	Not relevant
Barriers to good internal communication	Lack of willingness on the part of managing staff Lack of information for staff Change of information without notice
Communication with line managers	Lack of willingness on the part of managing staff Compartmentalization between departments
Raising staff awareness	Not at all satisfactory
Communication with colleagues from other departments	Not reported by the survey participants
Communication with other departments	Quite satisfactory
Internal information sharing	Unsatisfactory

## 6. Discussion

The findings of the study reveal that the administration tends to consider the responsibility of the administrative staff to be limited to the execution of tasks without having the possibility to take part in the communication process in order to express their expectations and suggestions. Thus, internal documentation is primarily a top-down hierarchical communication and there is no documentation for a bottom-up or cross-functional communication (Gharbi M., Regragui,, 2004). We have also noticed that there is no support from either the management or the Human Resources department and we have also noted that there is a problem of lateral communication between the different departments, and the means of communication are almost non-existent with a few rare meetings after insistence by the staff.

The situation of internal communication is therefore critical and accentuated by the absence of an internal communication structure and by the absence of an internal communication manager. (Hamdi, M. & El Abbadi A.,2020). Therefore, information supports are not available and verbal communication is the main circuit of information through intermediaries or messengers (Lignac F.,1992). In addition, there is a difficulty in communicating with other departments, while social communication takes a back seat to the classic problems of daily management.

## 7. Conclusion

Our study has focused on Internal Communication within a public administration and its contribution to the quality of services provided to users. The immersion in this field of study allowed us to adopt a privileged position for an empirical research based on a qualitative and a quantitative research method. The survey has shown that there is not enough communication from the management to the staff, and that the staff is aware of the importance of internal communication. It has not been questioned or challenged, but rather accepted as a necessity for the good governance of the institution. The survey has also revealed that social relationships are very significant within an organization as the lack of sharing information makes the actors work without being involved (Hassani N. & Ellioua H.,2018). The items that we have focused on during the surveys confirm that the poor quality of the service is due to a lack of motivation that affects the staff performance. Thus, a good internal communication strategy can increase the motivation of the staff and consequently contributes to a high-quality service. The creation of internal communication structure can to be fulfilled if the management staff would like to implement an internal communication plan and to guarantee the commitment and involvement of the whole staff.

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