



Institutional Communication in the Italian Public School System

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Abstract: Institutional communication in Italian public schools is a crucial element for promoting transparency, democratic participation, and trust between institutions and citizens. This article analyzes the importance of a strategic approach to communication, highlighting how Law 150 of 2000 has influenced communication practices in public administrations. The role of internal and external communication in schools is discussed, with particular attention to the use of digital tools and the need for clear and correct language. Finally, the adoption of a communication plan is proposed as a fundamental tool to align communication activities with educational objectives and to improve community engagement.

Keywords: institutional communication, Italian public school, communication plan, strategies, school principal.

Introduction

Since the 1990s, institutional communication has taken on an increasingly central role in the context of Italian public administration, alongside a broad reform of the sector. There has been a growing recognition of the importance of effective communication to improve the relationship between institutions and citizens, promote transparency, and foster democratic participation.

A key element of this evolution has been the development of e-government, which has led to significant transformations in the internal organization of administrations, the services provided, and the communication methods adopted. The use of digital tools has simplified procedures, made information more accessible, and improved interaction with citizens.

In recent years, there has been an increasing use of social networks by public administrations, considered particularly suitable for establishing a constant and constructive dialogue with citizens. The ability to interact in real-time, receive feedback, and share information directly has contributed to strengthening the trust relationship between institutions and the community.

Despite the progress made, institutional communication in Italy is still an evolving process that presents some challenges. Political ambiguities, cultural and organizational resistance, as well as shortages of human and economic resources, represent obstacles that slow down the full realization of the potential of institutional communication as a tool for modernizing public administration.

Institutional communication plays a fundamental role in the governance strategies of public entities. In a complex and varied context, characterized by an increasing need for transparency and

democratic participation, it is configured as an indispensable tool for establishing and consolidating trust between citizens and institutions. It is essential to create a dynamic and adaptable approach to communication that is not merely an obligation of institutions but represents a significant opportunity to transform the relationship with citizens into a constant and constructive dialogue. Communication must be designed to provide information clearly, actively engage, and promote a careful and conscious understanding of public decisions and activities. This approach makes institutional processes accessible and understandable, providing citizens with concrete tools to actively participate in public life. In the information age, trust is an invaluable asset, especially in the context of institutional communication. To be effective and efficient, institutions must demonstrate responsibility and transparency, making their activities understandable and open to dialogue. Only in this way can communication become a vehicle for social cohesion and a pillar of democratic strengthening. An essential regulatory reference in Italy is represented by Law 150 of 2000, which governs the ways in which public administrations communicate both internally and externally. This law places particular emphasis on the creation of offices dedicated to communication and information, modernizing and making the dialogue between administrations and citizens more efficient. Furthermore, it underscores the importance of clear, accessible, and service-oriented communication, promoting transparency, participation, and collaboration.

The activities of institutional communication aim to achieve three main objectives:

- Promote transparency: make information regarding decisions and activities of institutions accessible.

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- Foster democratic participation: actively involve citizens in decision-making processes and stimulate constructive dialogue.
- Strengthen trust: build a relationship of shared responsibility between institutions and the community.

According to Floris (2001), institutional communication is not limited to the simple dissemination of information but is configured as a bidirectional process that encourages the active involvement of citizens. Rossi (2015) also highlights the importance of digital tools, which have revolutionized the modes of interaction between public entities and citizens, making communication more immediate and accessible.

For public communication to be truly effective, it is essential that it is supported by a complex network of internal activities within the Administration. This approach aims to build a new knowledge relationship between the public entity and citizens. Well-structured and correct public communication not only reduces the risks of illegitimacy, arbitrariness, and service failures but also improves the internal climate within the Administration, as it promotes a strong sense of belonging among staff. Moreover, by disseminating clear and transparent information regarding its activities, the Administration can enhance its image, thereby strengthening trust and collaboration with the community.

Institutional Communication in Schools: Tools and Strategies

In the school context, institutional communication assumes an educational and participatory role aimed at creating a stimulating and collaborative environment. It is essential to develop an open and inclusive communication system capable of strengthening the sense of belonging and shared responsibility among all members of the school community, from families to teachers to students. This context underscores the need for an effective internal and external communication system. Although relationships with the public are crucial for improving the quality of the organization and the services offered, this discussion will focus exclusively on internal communication, which is essential for fostering the involvement of all school components. It is fundamental that the work of each member is not perceived as an individual task but as part of a shared goal. It is crucial that school leaders have effective strategies for communicating during critical moments, ensuring that information is clear and timely for all members of the school community. Finally, the use of technology offers new opportunities to improve communication within the school. The adoption of digital tools can facilitate the sharing of information and make communication more accessible and immediate. In summary, an integrated approach to these elements not only enriches institutional communication but also contributes to creating a more cohesive and collaborative school environment, in line with the modern needs of educational institutions. In the realm of official communication, clarity and correctness are fundamental elements to ensure effective interaction between institutions and citizens. Therefore, to ensure correctness and clarity in official communications, it is recommended to adhere to the rules of the Italian language. These rules not only promote more comprehensible communication but also help maintain a high standard of professionalism and respect towards the public. The use of linguistic solutions that conform to Italian orthographic tradition is essential to avoid ambiguity and misunderstandings. A well-formulated communication that respects grammatical and

orthographic norms not only facilitates the understanding of the message but also reflects the public entity's commitment to providing clear and precise information. In a context where citizens' trust in institutions is fundamental, accurate communication becomes a key element in building and maintaining that trust. Furthermore, adherence to linguistic rules helps standardize the language used in official communications, creating consistency and recognizability. This is particularly important in an era where information travels quickly and communications can be disseminated through various channels, including social media. Clear and correct communication not only improves the institution's image but also facilitates dialogue and active participation from citizens. Finally, it is essential that all those working within public institutions are trained and made aware of the importance of linguistic correctness. Investing in staff training regarding the rules of the Italian language and best communication practices is a fundamental step to ensure that official communications always meet citizens' expectations.

Effective internal communication is a strategic tool to overcome the perception of the school as an organization divided into rigid compartments. It should instead be perceived as a collaborative network, inspired by what Federico Butera defines as the "4 Cs": cooperation, knowledge, communication, and community. According to Butera, cooperation is based on people's ability to work together towards common goals, developing shared rules and communities of practice. Communication, in this context, is understood in an "extended" way, also supported by appropriate technological tools. However, respecting social prerequisites remains fundamental: rules, resources, and objectives must respond to the collective needs of the community rather than individual interests.

As the head of the institution, the school principal is responsible for planning and supervising the internal communication system. Among their duties is the prevention and management of potential conflicts. However, it is desirable for the school to identify specific figures, such as an instrumental function, to handle documentation and coordinate communication-related activities.

It is advisable to prepare a communication plan to ensure that communications are aligned with the Three-Year Educational Offer Plan (PTOF) and the institution's educational objectives. Before initiating any communication activity, it is necessary to define the strategic direction and identity of the school. In this sense, the PTOF serves as a foundation for communication, establishing the guidelines to follow. In addition to ensuring consistency between messages and the school strategy, the communication plan also serves an educational and informative function. It helps prevent internal and external confusion by providing clear guidance on how to communicate with families, students, and staff, manage potential crises, promote school events, and enhance educational activities. Having a written document reduces the risk of impulsive decisions and ensures effective and transparent communication.

A typical school communication plan includes several key elements:

- **Situation Analysis:** Evaluates the context in which the school operates, analyzing the territory, the school community, available resources, and educational trends.

- **Definition of Objectives:** Establishes specific objectives to be achieved through communication, such as improving family participation, increasing transparency of school activities, or highlighting student achievements.
- **Message Creation:** Identifies key messages to communicate, ensuring they align with the PTOF and the school's educational values.
- **Choice of Communication Channels:** Determines which channels to use to reach the target audience, such as the school website, social media, emails, meetings, paper notices, and events.
- **Operational Plan:** Defines concrete actions to be taken, assigning specific tasks and establishing an editorial calendar.
- **Measurement of Results:** Establishes metrics to monitor to evaluate the effectiveness of the plan, such as the participation rate in meetings, the number of website views, and family feedback.
- **Monitoring and Modifications:** Indicates when and how to monitor communications and make any changes based on the results obtained.

Conclusions

Institutional communication in Italian public schools represents a fundamental element for strengthening transparency, participation, and trust between educational institutions and the community. Through a strategic and well-structured approach, schools can not only improve the quality of their interactions with citizens but also promote a more inclusive and collaborative learning environment.

The analysis conducted has highlighted how Law 150 of 2000 has provided an essential regulatory framework for communication in public administrations, emphasizing the importance of clear and accessible communication. However, despite the progress made, significant challenges remain, including cultural resistance and resource shortages, which require constant commitment from school leaders and all educational staff.

The adoption of digital tools and the integration of effective communication strategies are crucial for overcoming traditional barriers and facilitating open and constructive dialogue between schools and families. Internal communication, in particular, must be valued as an opportunity to build a cohesive school community, where every member feels like an integral part of a shared educational project.

In this context, the preparation of a communication plan represents a fundamental step to ensure that communication activities are aligned with educational objectives and the Three-Year Educational Offer Plan (PTOF). A well-defined plan not only facilitates clarity and consistency of messages but also contributes to creating a climate of trust and collaboration among all involved parties.

In conclusion, institutional communication in Italian public schools must be seen as a dynamic and continuously evolving process, capable of adapting to the needs of the community and responding to the challenges of the contemporary context. Investing in staff training and creating an open and inclusive communicative environment is essential for building a school that not only

educates but also serves as a reference point for the community, promoting values of participation, responsibility, and social cohesion.

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