

STUDY OF CRISIS COMMUNICATION IN THE MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES OF COTE D'IVOIRE

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Abstract

In Cote d'Ivoire, the paralysis of public universities due to strikes by teachers' unions calls into question the management method. These crises unwrap the management issue: what analysis can be made of crisis communication in the management of Ivorian public universities? This question evokes the responsibility of managers in university administration in times of crisis, on the one hand, and demonstrates the need for adequate management for effective higher education, on the other. This study is based on systemic analysis, falling under the psycho-sociological methodology of organizational dynamics. In a variety of ways, there is a set of communication analysis provisions which exposes the concepts of empowerment, influence, decision-making power in management. The paradigm of crisis communication is fundamental in the face of the new demands of organizational management. Indeed, no organization can develop without adequate communication and responsible strategic management. Communication is the alpha and omega of organizational management at all times, especially in times of crisis.

Keywords: Organization, Management, Empowerment, Crisis communication, Development, Ivory Coast

1. Introduction

The various crises that have arisen in Ivorian public universities are linked to the management policy implemented by the heads of these institutions. Indeed, the disturbances in schools and universities impose various political, social, academic and educational debates, because the stakes are enormous. Conflict situations between people or groups that do not find solutions in an objective, rational and respectful framework inevitably lead to crises of emotional tension, aggressiveness in actions or in speech. These confused moments lead to a degradation or even a breakdown in human relations in the organizational environment (M. Gabay, 2005).

To resolve a conflict, we must discover and analyze the grievances, objectify them and build solutions from the diagnosis. In fact, the various crises that have arisen in the Ivorian Education-Training sector, from 2018 to the first quarter of 2019, show poor governance of the national education system. Also, the paralysis of Ivorian public universities, due to union strikes and other crises in higher education, examined and / or mentioned in the media, calls out to everyone on the management method, and exposes the problem of the management (K. Goa, 2016) of university organizations: what analysis can be made of crisis communication in the management of Ivorian public universities?

Such a question calls forth the dynamics of empowerment (Ph. Liger, 2016) in the management of university institutions for quality education, in a peaceful academic environment. It thus evokes the responsibility and competence of the manager in the administration of his group. In fact, for the sake of harmonization and optimization of his organization, the manager must take into account the needs, interests and opinions of stakeholders. He must also consider the work environment, offer an appropriate socio-professional living environment and aim for the integral development of the institution while avoiding major crises if possible.

Crises are more evident in societies of uncontrolled consumption, governed by the paradox of hyper-modernism and the absence of labels. This is the consequence of a selfish and perverse self-interest society where backward behavior is modeled. Crises are in exaggerated evolution in the 20th century (E. Morin, 2008) and every manager must be aware of this, especially since management is a science of action applied to the conduct of organizations in any

context, normal or crisis. As a science, the management of organizations (A. Bartoli, 1991) integrates theoretical and methodological approaches that characterize it and give it its specificities.

2. Theoretical and methodological framework of the study of communication and management

Theoretical and methodological considerations of organizational management bring together tools, concepts and theories relating to several disciplines of the human sciences (P. Watzlawick et al, 1967). Thus, the aims of functionalism are clear: to agree to study and interpret society, modern culture and communication in their relationship to crises (Ph. Breton and S. Proulx, 2006). As a result, the functional or functionalist theory constitutes the theoretical reference base of our study. It shows that the bankruptcy and failure of an organization is born from the occurrence of an inter-relational crisis. Here, the problem is defined as the set of dysfunctions and dysfunctions of the different institutional functions, and leads to functional disturbances which deconstruct the development of the structure (A. Kabou, 1991).

Functionalism (L. Niklas, 2012), a theory giving eminent value to the function of the constituent bodies of a system and to the functioning of the whole system, sets out three fundamental principles. These are the principle of functional unity (each element is functional for the entire system), universal functionalism (each member performs a function) and the principle of necessity (each structure is indispensable). With regard to this functional theory, the development of an organization in crisis depends on the “crisological” approach (E. Morin, 2016) which demonstrates that any institution must understand the contrasting evolution of its environment in order to adapt to it. Functionalism also assumes that each group constructs an Actors-Systems-Contingency approach. Thus, it makes it possible to understand that the ideal structure is linked to the context (D. Wolton, 1997).

This study is obviously based on systemic (J-P. Meunier, 2003), transactional, behavioral and content analysis (A. Mucchielli, 2006) based on the psycho-sociological methodology of group dynamics. This methodological approach to data highlights the diagnosis of relationships between human beings in the phase of communication, calm or conflict. In

various ways, this work involves a set of communications analysis provisions relating to Dwight Harold Lasswell's prototype (1946).

Thus, the communicational or systemic approaches developed by French-speaking (A. Mucchielli) or Anglo-Saxon (Hall, Watzlawick, etc.) researchers and the socio-psycho-linguistic approach advocated by the Center of Speech Analysis (D. Maingueneau, 2014) consider communication as much from the angle of the content exchanged (messages) as from the aspect of identities, power games or even the situation that underlies and affects any act of communication. As a result, analyzes of media discourse (audiovisual, written press) or the examination of new information and communication technologies borrow from sciences that were previously watertight and compartmentalized. This study shows the purpose of the approach of any system and any communication.

In fact, Alex Mucchielli (1998) in his book "Systemic and communicational approach to organizations" refers to the determination and characterization of a communication system within an organization. For him, the responsibility for crisis situations observed in an organization cannot be linked only to the individuals concerned, but to the entire system of interaction, around these individuals. The strategic analysis of events, sources and actors of crises or communication systems, guides the perception of the relationship between communication and crises in Ivorian higher education. Observation of communications writings and events, on the one hand, and assessment of situations of disharmony, on the other hand, are necessary in gathering information, results and conclusions of any human process. The analysis (R. Mucchielli, 2006) covers the following communications and events (see sample in appendix):

- statements from government, university and trade union authorities related to crises in higher education;
- demonstrations and events relating to the crisis in public universities in Côte d'Ivoire;
- media information evoking the crisis in Ivorian higher education.

Communication is eminently multidimensional and global. It aims to determine the various paradigms of a phenomenon ranging from micro-phenomenon to macro-event, and exposes a wide range of possible, complementary, modular arguments depending on the research subject. It helps to situate the debate. In this communicational approach, the contextual

dimension constitutes the anchoring point of the research and includes the notion of framing of the system which is always done in situation (in an organization). Otherwise, the analysis of the environment makes it possible to understand the management crisis in Ivorian universities, on the one hand, and presents the need to design an operational management of university organizations, especially in times of crisis.

3. Communication and crisis in public universities in Côte d'Ivoire

The crisis is originally a contradiction, an incompatibility or a disagreement. It is a period when social, economic, political and / or ideological difficulties are felt to be extremely strong in a group or a community. Thus, the concept of crisis encompasses all the contexts in which there are natural persons (individuals) or legal persons (groups) whose goals and cognitions (thoughts) are antithetical and lead them to oppose.

Determining the concept of crisis comes down to analyzing the types of crisis encountered in the existence of an organization, from various points of view. Indeed, the difficult definition of crisis lies in its many forms and its occurrence in any context. Indeed, the concept of crisis encompasses all the contexts in which there are organizations, groups of people or individuals whose objectives, cognitions (thoughts) or emotions are contradictory and lead them to oppose. Here, the manager is invited to resolve multiple internal and / or external contradictions. It is also a time when the psychological imbalance reaches a higher intensity of stress following high tension.

With regard to the definition of the notion of crisis, forms of crisis appear. We determine three kinds (K. Goa, 2013, p.95):

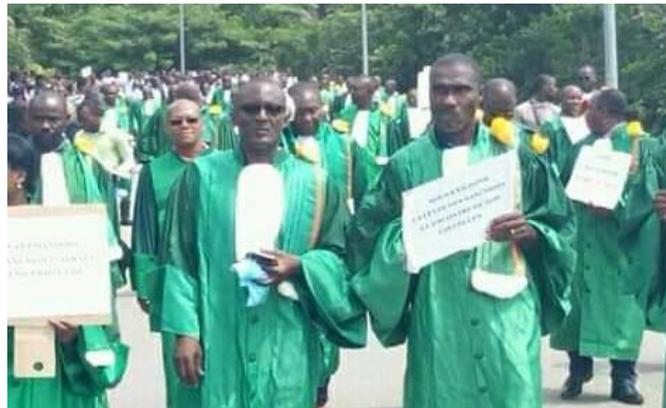
- the crisis of objectives: it presents a context in which the goals and / or the outcomes proposed by the groups are obviously in contradiction;
- the cognitive crisis: at this level, it is a question of a situation in which the respective thoughts or conceptions of the parties involved are perceived as incompatible (L. Festinger, 1967). This is the case with the different perception of the teachers' strike by the authorities and the various unions;
- the emotional crisis: this is a context that highlights the disagreement between individuals through their feelings, behaviors or emotions.

In fact, Ivorian higher education has been in crisis for several decades, in particular, due to insufficient material and human resources as well as poor governance of university institutions. The university crisis relates to demands linked to infrastructure and equipment (equipment for laboratories, university libraries and practical work / tutoring rooms), working conditions and the social needs of stakeholders (effective granting of study trips and refresher courses for teacher-researchers and researchers; rejection of tampering with educational models whose sole purpose is to reduce Complementary Hours (HC) to the detriment of the quality of student training. the problems of internet connection throughout the university space; construction of amphitheatres, classrooms and offices for teacher-researchers and researchers...).

This crisis especially confirms the poor governance of Ivorian public universities. In the latter case, the emphasis is on opening discussions on the modalities for the designation of university presidents, directors of Training and Research Units (TRU) and Institutes, as well as directors of Departments. ; and on the revaluation of the salaries of teacher-researchers and researchers in view of national realities and the REESAO conventions relating to the LMD system. The demand also includes full and unconditional payment for so-called abusive and unfair charges on HCs; and the establishment of research funds for laboratories and research teams in universities in Côte d'Ivoire.

Subsequently, the crisis in higher education in Côte d'Ivoire is a crisis linked, mainly, to the poor management of public universities in a difficult work and study environment for the actors. Thus, at the Félix HouphouëtBoigny University (UFHB) of Abidjan-Cocody, the teachers' unions denounce a crisis of bad governance, irresponsible and retrograde management of the management team. For organizations of teachers and researchers in public higher education, the president of the oldest Ivorian university has submitted teacher-researchers and researchers, administrative and technical staff (PAT), and students to an autocratic management worthy of the theories of the Classic School of Organizational Management (K. Goa, 2016, pp.33-50), in force during the industrial revolution. This governance prescribes the dehumanization and contempt of workers, objectified by those in charge and working in very difficult conditions, as denounced by the unions.

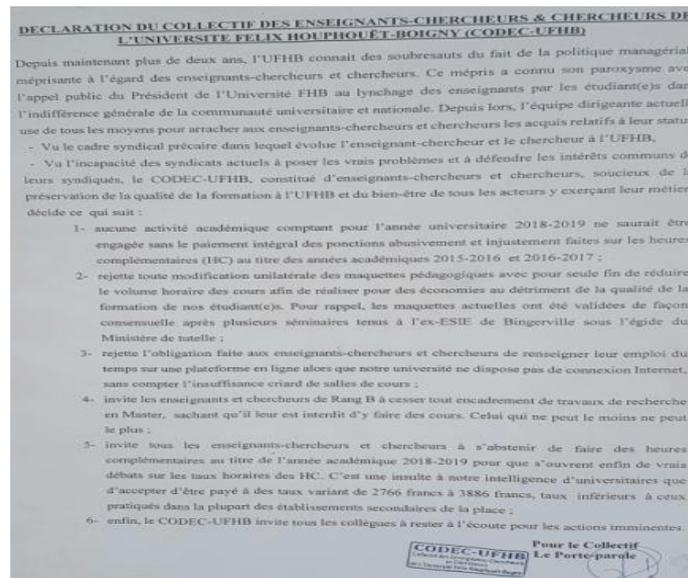
Otherwise, the trade unions condemn the contempt of teachers and researchers by academic and political authorities. Evidenced by the green march of protest by teacher-researchers (image 1), the front page of the newspaper LG Info n ° 2105 of February 12, 2019 evoking the strike in the universities (image 2) and the declaration of the Collective of Teachers-Researchers and Researchers (image 3) below:



1-Protest by teacher-researchers



2-Front page of the newspaper LG Info n ° 2105 of February 12, 2019 evoking the strike in the universities



3-Declaration of the Collective of Teachers-Researchers and Researchers

Sources: *Images taken from the Goa Kacou survey sample on Management and Crisis at School*

All strikes and protests are forms of communication (D. Wolton, 2019). These are crises born out of incomprehension between actors and / or partners in higher education. Forms of crisis involve two or more groups who see themselves as opposites about their respective choices in terms of goals and / or values, behaviors, attitudes.

In fact, the conflicting relations between the presidency of the university and the unions arose from the existential, cognitive and behavioral confrontation, on the one hand, and the objectives of the interlocutors present, on the other. This source of crisis is perceptible in the dialectic of master and slave of the German philosopher Friedrich Hegel (JC Goddard, 1998), which shows a conflict where two attitudes struggle for survival. This assertion is also shared by Jean Paul Sartre who says that exteriority is the place where opinions oppose one another.

In various ways, management is the body of knowledge concerning the organization and management of groups. Management is also the cause of both the failures and the success of institutions. It involves the coordination of material and human resources to achieve the objectives of the organization. The roles of management are to lead the group, optimize resources, manage communication with partners, promote individual and collective performance, and ensure the development of the structure. Otherwise, the success of the management of an organization depends on the competence and quality of the manager (N. Aubert, 1996).

Indeed, the intelligent manager must thus promote a positive way of thinking, acquire a systemic vision of situations, and reconcile efficiency in the short, medium and long term. It is about resolving crises differently by allowing the evolution of the organization. Hence the strategic management which involves the policy and strategy to be implemented to enable the group to carry out its missions, its survival and its development in a dynamic environment. This vision assumes the integration of empowerment in the management of higher education structures in Côte d'Ivoire.

4. Dynamics of crisis communication in the management of Ivorian universities

The management of organizations exposes the concepts of empowerment, influence, decision-making power. The managerial conception invites each manager to better motivate subordinates when we discuss with them the notion of objective to be achieved rather than imposing despotic decisions on them. There is undoubtedly a prospect for managers of organizations in crisis to grasp the convenience and opportunity that communication offers in managing people. To this end, communication remains the alpha and omega of the management of any organization in normal situations and in times of crisis, as Lucien Sfez (1993) thinks. Most models of crisis communication are adaptations of research conducted by Harold Dwight Lasswell, American sociologist. A pioneer in studies of the relationship between communication and power, he assigned the social sciences, in "Power and society" (1950), the mission of contributing to the solution of the crises of our time.

Among the authors interested in the notion of crisis and crisis communication, one can count Michael Ogrizek (2000) whose work entitled "The communication of crisis" is similar to that of Thierry Libaert (2005). These two works of the same title, but different in substance, present the characteristics of a crisis, and explain communication strategies in times of crisis. They recognize, de facto, the importance of communication in any organization, especially modern. These two authors agree to some extent on the scope of the crises. For them, crises are times of dysfunctional systems of an organization or community, because from an organizational perspective crises are synonymous with instability, rupture and failure. They offer prevention and dynamic management based on communication to develop the organization and its environment.

Organizational changes change the obligations of manager at all hierarchical levels. The necessary focus on the work to be done, the effectiveness of teaching and the performance and / or quality of universities can no longer be dissociated from the focus on teacher-researchers and researchers, on staff and students, their motivations (A. Maslow, 1943), their (in) formation and their relations in the university space. There are obviously expectations. Indeed, the theory of expectations or VIE theory (Valence, Instrumentality, Expectation) of Victor Vroom (1992) makes it possible to understand the reasons why certain performance indicators imposed on agents or managers cause results that are contradictory to those whom 'we want to achieve what Christian Morel (2012) calls "absurd decisions". Hence the importance of empowerment in the management of organizations.

4.1- Importance of empowerment in the management of organizations

The management paradigm is fundamental to the evolution of organizational and communication systems from the perspectives of operational management and positive communication. Indeed, no organization can develop without adequate communication and responsible strategic management (G. Koenig, 1990) relating to empowerment in the governance of institutions, companies, organizations, in general.

From this perspective, the governance of Ivorian universities and public institutions must take into account managerial empowerment (Phil. Liger, 2016) which is built on the basis of three (3) important vectors, namely:

- vision: it is about building, developing and popularizing the characteristics of communication in the management of organizations. This vision shows the importance of communicating to employees and / or partners the objectives and expectations;
- autonomy: any good manager must motivate the group's players or employees to take initiatives in carrying out their tasks or missions. For the manager, it is about promoting distinctive skills and gradually supporting employees in their professional life so that everyone can work within the limits of their decision-making power;
- ownership: through participatory management, the manager must encourage group members to adhere to decisions concerning the group. The manager must promote cooperation and involvement of stakeholders in the operation of the organization.

Each member must feel like a "co-owner" of the organization and attest to their need to belong.

The goals to be achieved are enormous for successful Ivorian university organizations. This is to demonstrate the need for communication in the management of modern organizations (R. Reix, 1998) and to show the importance of crisis communication. African managers, especially Ivoirians, are invited to use communication as the basis of their community actions by presenting the outlines of managerial empowerment (B. Vallerie, 2018) and communication in relation to the group's environment. There is a need for empowerment and operational crisis communication (J-P. Meunier and D. Peraya, 2010) in the management of university organizations in Côte d'Ivoire.

4.2-Need for efficient management of university institutions in Côte d'Ivoire

The diagnostic analysis of the higher education sector in Côte d'Ivoire revealed the usefulness of schools, especially scientific research, in the Ivorian economy. Indeed, whatever the sector of activity, scientific research is called upon to find appropriate and lasting solutions. These solutions are confirmed by the design of relevant research projects and activities, the implementation of which necessarily requires their integration into a national strategic framework for the development of research structures and adaptation to the national and international environment. And the success of this mission requires efficient and competent university institutions.

Thus, for an Ivorian school and higher education that are competitive, without major crises, the dynamism of university structures requires recourse to adequate crisis communication (B. Miège, 2005) and to a vision of managerial empowerment, in particular:

- guaranteeing good governance of educational and university institutions by appointing competent officials by election;
- create an environment conducive to studies and research with modern and adapted infrastructures and equipment;
- have an inclusive communication and discussion around projects concerning school and higher education;

- improve the living and working conditions of teachers, researchers, administrative and technical staff, by adapting texts, salaries and bonuses to the current context of life and work in Côte d'Ivoire;
- take into account the different points of view and honor the needs of the actors of the education system in place;
- avoid the intrusion of politics at school;
- ensure and support the franchise of schools and universities;
- protect freedom of expression and trade unionism for school stakeholders in Côte d'Ivoire.

Higher education is of paramount importance in awareness of investments and modalities of sustainable development in a country. By controlling crises (P. Loiseau et al, 2004) and by verifying the issues and proposing solutions for a quality Education-Training sector in Côte d'Ivoire, it is also important to think about the perspectives of empowerment in management Ivorian organizations, especially university institutions.

The primordial perspectives of management are perceived through the functions and methods of governance of organizations (D. Hellriegel et al, 1989). For a rational management of the universities of Ivory Coast, we must first develop a new way of thinking about management situations. This conception supposes to diagnose the preferred modes of managerial thinking in each situation; identify the interests and limits of management practices; and to define individual avenues for improvement and collective competence.

It is also important to acquire a systemic vision of management situations which makes it possible to expose the basic tools of systemic analysis (A. Mucchielli, 1999) and the role of each sub-system; understand how the overall system works; to understand the reading levels of reality and events in order to identify the relevant levels of intervention in normal or crisis periods.

To another extent, the manager must reconcile short, medium and long term efficiency in the management of the group. The person in charge must act and decide in the present for the future of the university institution by anticipating, on the one hand, the consequences of

management decisions and acts, and by ordering, on the other hand, the method of "best assumed catastrophes "during a crisis.

Otherwise, the Ivorian manager must resolve relational tensions within the organization by considering communication as a dynamic system. In this perspective, he will be able to distinguish the problem from the symptom when diagnosing the situation and soak up the crisis to better resolve it. The person in charge must come out of "symmetrical escalations" to contextualize any decision-making (Marcel K. Zadi 1998).

In fact, empowerment in the management of Ivorian universities requires fostering the evolution of the organizational structure by identifying stakeholders and their expectations or needs to better understand the difficulties associated with a contextual change and respect the balance of team for an integral development of the group. Also, managerial competence consists of transforming the group's difficulties into opportunities to promote the sustainable development of the organization.

Thus, both in the study of the role of the manager and in the management of the actors who make up the organization, the human factor becomes essential. The optimizing mode of operation requires that managers (leaders) are constantly able to make the right decisions all the time and at the right time, especially in times of crisis. In this vein, the manager must practice crisis communication and practice managerial empowerment (N. Parkinson & M. Rustomij, 1988).

5. Conclusion

Intra-organizational (internal) crises and / or inter-organizational and supra-organizational (external) crises are critical periods for the development and even the survival of the organization. In this sense, they divert the organization of missions, administrative methods, and primary objectives of a normal period of management. To counter the harmful impacts of conflicts of interest and use them for its own benefit, the organization must use crisis communication in the dynamics of managerial empowerment. These are organizational development strategies through a dynamic systemic approach to communication (M-H. Westphalen, 2000) and management in constant watch. In fact, the crisis communication policy consists in destroying the failings at the origin of disagreements, in building prospects

or prospects for effective and sustainable communication and organization, and in preventing organizational dissonance.

In this vein, crisis communication (P. Loiseau et al, 2004) reflects operational performance and the repositioning of the group, through the effectiveness of the communication function in crisis situations. Indeed, this observation demonstrates the vectors of communication and organizations in a situation of managerial difficulties. First, there is marketing communication including advertising strategies, marketing techniques, communication policies, semiological and semiotic studies, media systems, and communication for behavior change. Then, we note the requirements of organizational and communicational management which is based on the methodical or methodological management of organizations, the aspect of communication in negotiations, and the need for the systemic administration of the communication of organizations, in relation to the audit, study and communication advice.

The management also emphasizes the techniques of written, audiovisual and cybernetic presses, editorial or editorial and documentary mechanisms, relative to the sociology of media and organizations. Finally, this analysis makes it possible to determine the ethnography of communication, in particular, the culture of organizations and communication, the right to informational pragmatics, and the psycho-sociology or sociolinguistics of communication (M. Bromberg and A. Trognon, 2004).

Otherwise, in a crisis situation, crisis communication must be put in place for an organizational dynamic linked to the empowerment of management. Otherwise, a crisis unit must be set up which will develop a communication strategy based on effective means depending on the context. It is in this vein that it is important to provide a crisis communication strategy that will boost the overall communication system and institutional management. This strategy consists of making the communication and organizational system profitable in relation to the strengths and weaknesses observed (J-F. Moine and J. Colombo, 2002). In this perspective, it is up to channeling the systemic manifesto and the prospects for better communication in management. Thus, the development of the group should be thought of through a dynamic system of communication and organization in constant watch.

Communication is the alpha and omega of organizational management at all times, especially in times of crisis. This is crisis communication. Each modern organization, concerned with its sustainable development, therefore needs an internal communication structure, responsible for its intra-organizational and extra-organizational communication. Communication is life (K. Goa, 2018).

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APPENDIX: CRISES IN EDUCATION IN COTE D'IVOIRE

Source: Information and declarations collected by GOA Kacou, 2019

1-MEDIA INFORMATION ON THE UNIVERSITY CRISIS IN COTE D'IVOIRE





2-DECLARATIONS FROM CERTAIN ACTORS AND PARTNERS ON THE UNIVERSITY CRISIS IN 2019

