

Summary of doctoral thesis

THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF THE COMMUNICATION IN THE CRISIS SITUATION. THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE LOWER SILESIAN VOIVODESHIP.

The thesis was dedicated to the mechanisms, standards and relations between public administration, dispositional groups and media connected with the communication process during crisis situations, and to assessing their level of professionalization. The research was carried out in the Lower Silesian voivodeship. The author analyzed the structural conditions and its perception by people engaged in the communication process. The aim of the thesis was to diagnose the standards (both the official principles and the informal rules) of journalists, the public administration staff and the representatives of the dispositional groups in crisis situations. Thanks to this it was possible to indicate good practice, problems and difficulties, which could have an influence on the process and effectiveness of the communication. The analysis allowed to make a complex characterization of the communication in crisis situations. The author was faced with the task to prepare a universal scheme of relations between public administration, dispositional groups and media in crisis and provide a recommendation which could increase the effectiveness of information transfer after its adaptation.

In the dissertation, three hypotheses were put forward with over a dozen research questions. The hypotheses were verified based on the empirical research carried out for this thesis. The first of the methods, which belongs to the quantitative methods, was a survey. The surveys were sent twice to representatives of public administrations, dispositional groups (police and fire brigades officers) and media outlets from the Lower Silesian voivodeship in 2017. For each group of respondents a special questionnaire was prepared including more than 30 questions, adapted to the role and performed tasks in a crisis situation. Some parts were in common for all respondents. The author has received 90 surveys from the representatives of public administration, 43 from journalists, and 11 from the dispositional groups' officers. The quantitative method was complemented by a qualitative analysis. It was based on 15 in-depth interviews with representatives of public administration (4), the dispositional groups officers (4), and the media (5). Two additional interviews were made for comparative purposes with people who were responsible for crisis managing and contact with the media during the "Millennium

Flood” in Wrocław in 1997. The questionnaire had an uncategorized character, and thanks to that the concrete issues could be spontaneously expanded on during the conversations with the respondents. Both research tools used for the analysis of the dependence between the representatives of public administration, the dispositional groups and media outlets, were complemented by desk research consisting of studying archival materials, and comparative analysis which is the basic method in examining commonalities.

In the dissertation, a lot of space was dedicated to characterizing the crisis situation term, based on the crisis management act of the 26th of April 2007, and obligations of public administrations and dispositional groups. It was the starting point for deeper considerations about the role of communication in sudden and large scale events, forms of information transfer, the mission of the media and ethical principles which should be respected. Thanks to this research, a communication process scheme was created. Next, the author proceeded to the verification of the hypotheses. The analysis showed that in the respondents’ opinion, a professionalization of communication has occurred, but the perceptions weren’t unanimous. The level of the communication formalization in public administration and dispositional groups, and techniques of information transfer, were characterized. The organizational aspects of how the press office functions were analyzed, and the hierarchy of people responsible for contact with media outlets, as well as the mutual perception of how the public administrations and dispositional groups fulfill their duties, especially in terms of professionalization, were described. A conflict of interest was recognized between the administration, the fire brigades and media outlets – both in editorial line, respect for ethical principles and journalistic reliability. Those results were compared with the journalists’ opinions about cooperating with the entities responsible for crisis management. A high degree of informal relationships, the most common ways to put pressure on press offices, and cooperation areas between public institutions and media outlets were characterized. A lot of attention was devoted to the opportunities for direct transmission of information using new technologies, without the media’s participation. The author has also presented possible research directions, which could be developed in the future.

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