

Trade union movement, communication and impact on representativeness from the perspective of the Federal University of Espírito Santo

Movimento sindical, comunicação e impacto na representatividade sob a ótica do servidor da Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to verify the opinion of the administrative servant about the Union Movement held at Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo - UFES. It is justified by the relevance of the technical Servant entity, specifically pertinent to the representativeness of the organization from the perspective of the servant. In the theoretical framework were discussed the construction of labor and trade union structures in the public service and the means of dissemination and marketing employees for union communication in Brazil. The fieldwork took place in two stages, two methodological techniques were used: a quantitative analysis was developed from the survey carried out with the administrative staff of the university servers and qualitative analysis, carried up interviews with the coordination responsible for communication the union and the university president. At the end, it was found that there is evidence that the communication significantly affects the representativeness of the entity for both the server and the institution. This noted, the proposal is that the entity rethinks programs and actions that result in a greater interest in the work to make it reflect on your life at work, for more efficient means of communication.

KEYWORDS: Unionism in public service, unionism in UFES, union communication, union density, review of trade union movement.

RESUMO

O objetivo deste estudo é verificar qual a opinião do servidor técnico administrativo quanto ao movimento sindical realizado na Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo - UFES. Justifica-se pela relevância da entidade na vida do servidor técnico, especificamente pertinente à representatividade da entidade sob a ótica do servidor. No referencial teórico foram abordados a construção das estruturas trabalhistas e sindicais no serviço público e os meios de divulgação e marketing empregados para a comunicação sindical no Brasil. A pesquisa de campo ocorreu em dois momentos e foram utilizadas duas técnicas metodológicas: a análise quantitativa foi desenvolvida a partir da pesquisa de opinião realizada com os servidores técnicos administrativos da universidade e, na análise qualitativa, procederam-se às entrevistas com a coordenação responsável pela comunicação do sindicato e com o reitor da universidade. Ao final, foi apurado que há indícios de que a comunicação afeta significativamente a representatividade da entidade tanto para o servidor quanto para a instituição. A proposta deste artigo é fazer com que a entidade repense programas e ações que resultem em um interesse maior no trabalhador, de modo a fazê-lo refletir a respeito de sua vida no trabalho, por meios mais eficientes de comunicação.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Sindicalismo no serviço público, sindicalismo na UFES, comunicação sindical, densidade sindical, opinião sobre movimento sindical.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This article discusses the trade union communication and the related aspects in a federal university, regarding communicativeness and representativeness. The trade unions represent the interlocutions between the working class and employers, providing the path for a dialogue. Despite, there is a lack of studies concerning the trade union's activity from the servants' optics. Therefore, the relevance of this research line relies on the goal to contribute to the development of the university and to the implementation of new work policies, which can redirect institutional planning, as well as increase the number of affiliations.

From the point of view that communication between union and servant may or may not strengthen representativeness, this study aims to answer the following question: what is the servant's opinion regarding communication and union activity in the advocacy of their interests? Being cautious on the limits of this study, its scope is the following: to verify UFES servants' opinion about the union at the university and to investigate the pertinent activities towards union-servant communication.

About the methodological aspects, approached by Vergara (2009), this study used the deductive method through exploratory and descriptive research, combined with field study. The chosen treatment of data was quantitative allied with qualitative analysis, since they complement each other. The research was developed in a federal university with a questionnaire of closed and open-ended questions, with a sample size of 329 respondents.

2 ON AGENDA: THE UNION COMMUNICATION

In order to achieve the interests of the working class, it is believed that the labor union needs to have its focus grounded on a set of information, appeals and stimuli. The doctrine considers it quite a challenge to the unions, since they need to communicate with their clientele, including if they aim at more affiliations. According to Santiago & Giannotti (1998), in a world of faster and faster communication, it becomes much more necessary for the unions to consolidate the ties with their affiliates.

Regarding union press activity, Miani (2002) claims that it is recent, considering that unions have only gained significant proportions with the implementation of the official labor movement, during Getulio Vargas' government, in the 1930s. However, Santiago e Giannotti (1998) highlight that, in the course of time, the reality of the working class has suffered lots of changes, but union communication remained the same. Therefore, the union challenge nowadays is knowing how to dialogue with workers, as well as discovering the proper channel to do so. Santiago and Giannotti (1998) point that, since the 1980s until today, some unions started to implement media and public relations departments, but in an embryonic way, with no standardization.

Regardless of the chosen mean of communication, to Santiago e Giannotti (1998, p. 41), the purpose is to "show a concrete and irrefutable message", since its content, besides being tied to the action, represents an adhesion vector to the cause and to the unions themselves. It is also significant to highlight that the channel is important, no matter if it is a newsletter, a good speech or a good radio show, because all of them are able to talk to the affiliates and often succeed.

Thus, it is said that, among the features of union effectiveness, stands out the dialogue with the working class, which consolidates a clear and accessible channel of communication: clarifying, opinion-oriented and, at the same time, cohesive, aiming to grow criticality and citizenship in the unionized.

Even if this channel is acknowledged, there is also a barrier at the end of the communication process: the receiver and the crystalized culture in Brazil marked by poor adhesion in the “reading field”. Frequently, a great deal of authors point out that there is almost an agreement that, in Brazil, reading habits are not a part of the majority of the working class’ life on a daily basis. As a challenge, Santiago & Giannotti (1998) says that communication is a binomial composed by the need to dialogue with the affiliates and the encouragement to reading, in order to grow in them a willingness to read. That is, it would be interesting if the material to be produced were made available in a way that it could generate a reflexive union environment, thanks to reading.

Nowadays, the most effective form of communication would be the most persuasive strategy, *i.e.* a language capable of communicating and engaging the audience communication. This means that the communication vehicle is the one that brings informative content and can transmit, inform policy and action plan, and also attract positively the audience, so that the affiliate, co-opted the rhetoric and form, becomes faithful to union communication and to the union itself.

It is believed that the union should address other communication panoramas, especially studies on the influence of advertising and aspects directly linked to the attention given to the message content, *i.e.*, it is necessary to know how to convey the message to the servants. In this sense, Fonseca (2006), draws attention to two perspectives: the first known as shareholders' phenomenon, which is an almost static interaction between partners, since by technological means information are shared, in an interaction with the use of media (TV, computers), allowing a feeling that the author calls "intimacy at a distance". And a second perspective, also defended by Fonseca (2006), arising from interpersonal relationships, direct and unmediated.

Knowing these concepts, the interesting case of the institutions, explains Fonseca (2006), would be to make use of both relational dynamics because they have certain peculiarities that differentiate them, given the ways in which relational subjects interact. The author says that there is need to create a link between sender and receiver, bringing them closer: this strategy aims to strengthen the link and reduce the gaps in the communication process.

Therefore, it is up to the communicator to raise means to conquer this goal. Coherently, Fonseca (2006, p. 15) points practices for the issuer’s activity, which contributes to reduce this gap and strengthen communication:

Trust and commitment permeate the entire dynamics of the brand-consumer relationship [...] increased familiarity and proximity in the 'we' allow increased confidence in the relationship due to the emergence of the safety and predictability of the relationship.

On the relevance of the trade union communication, Santiago e Giannotti (1998) observes that the actions do not end in only providing information: the union communication brings results that can alter the institutional direction. It is therefore important that the union know the servants’ profile and choose the appropriate communication strategy to encourage unionization, becoming the interests of the densest servers to be pleaded more intensely - with increasing number of accession. In the following section, the empirical aspects of this work are discussed.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 FIELD WORK AND DATA ANALYSIS

The research was conducted through two procedures: quantitative and qualitative, between August and November 2014. For the quantitative analysis, the software SPSS (version 2.0) was used, guide

lined by Field (2009), with the frequency distribution method, associated with descriptive statistics in terms of percentages.

In the respondents' profile, characteristics of the main group of servants were revealed: the majority of them work at the Goiabeiras campus (92.7%). As for the age group, most respondents are over 49 years old (33.7%). A considerable amount of respondents (51.1%) have been working in UFES for no more than 5 years. However, only 28.5% of them are affiliated, against 70.5% unaffiliated.

When analyzing the working time in the institution and the linkage with the union, the answers demonstrated that the longer the working time in the university, the larger the number of affiliates. However, it was found that there are large numbers of unaffiliated in all time ranges. In the range of those over 24 years of work at the university, the number of affiliates are very representative, adding up to 58.90%.

Otherwise, the most part of unaffiliated is between servants that have less than 5 years of work at the university, which is 81.50% of that group.

To understand how groups behave when working time and impediments to affiliation are considered, the unaffiliated who were interviewed justified that the impediments to affiliation are basically due to a lack of interest in unionization. It was observed that this response is constant because it is repeated in other groups, almost in equal number until the range of 12 to 17 years of working time.

Other aspects to support the density are representative nature. In this case, the ratio of frequencies significantly linked and that may incur indifference or union avoidance by the servant was related.

As for representativeness, about 90% think union representation is currently very good and at the same time evaluate as satisfactory union communication, proving that the variables are interlinked and differ. Therefore, for those who judge representation to be poor, they also agree that the union communication is bad (55.8%). With the same syllogism, the other 63% of respondents who believe communication is good also believe that representation could improve. Therefore, it was found that communication correlates with union representation, that is, when the union communication improves, representation is immediately noticed.

Based on these results, the observations that servants make regarding the current communication practiced by the union were investigated. For this purpose, a cross from the variable union communication parameterizing with other variables in order to verify the significant responses was carried out. Therefore, when investigating the important factors that could interfere and improve communication with the union, there was verified evidence reported below.

As for receiving meeting minutes, 98.6 % of respondents are dissatisfied with the communication and also did not receive information through the minutes. For those who are satisfied with communication and also have received the minutes of the meetings there is a percentage of 14.9% satisfaction. From that, it is possible to deduct that there is evidence that the receipt of the minutes is related to satisfaction with union communication. It is noticeable that the reader understands that the minutes are a document that legitimizes the meeting.

About the newspaper, the highest satisfaction ratings are among those who read it from time to time (59.60%). However, also in this group, it was found that there are high percentages of people who show little (68.40%) or no satisfaction (61.10%) with the union communication. These signs indicate that readers are not interested in reading or publication is not attractive for the category, which corroborates the story of Santiago and Giannotti (1998), assuming that poor reading habits is a fact in Brazil. However, it is recommended that this "disinterested" reader is not abandoned, being

up to the union to insist and encourage reading, looking for means and promoting in the servants the urge to read.

When relating satisfaction with union communication to presence in meetings, it is clear that the satisfied add up to 78.7%, *i.e.*, meetings, for their high acceptance rate should be increased. Although this action does not solve the problem of trade union communication on itself, it certainly contributes to it.

Regarding those who have requested information to the union, it is clear that for those whose requests were met, there was communication (57.4%). Among these, there are complainants who disapprove of the availability of certain information, making believe that depending on the information requested, this may or may not be met. Considering the results it was found that the provision of information services is key to satisfaction with the union communication, it should be constantly optimized, since the satisfied are among those who request and are answered.

Still in the panorama of communication from the perspective of quality of information, it is emphasized that one should explore other points that can support research and conduct new guidelines for improvements in trade union communication. Even though it was a well-rated service in the individual aspect, the issue of information is still a serious matter.

In the pursuit for quality information and finding points to be improved, an investigation was made to learn about the reliability of the information provided and related news.

As it can be seen in Table 1, from the total respondents, 169 (51.4%) are afraid on some information provided and 67 (20.3%) have difficulty understanding them (because they are not clear or are not enough). In this case, the union must commit to study what are the specific circumstances to which servants are referring to, given the high percentage (51.4%) of suspicion about the credibility of the information.

TABLE 1

Credibility of the information.

CREDIBILITY OF THE INFORMATION	FI	%
Depends on the information	169	51,4
Not clear	36	10,9
Not enough	31	9,4
Yes, always	53	16,1
NA	40	12,2
TOTAL	329	100

Fonseca (2006) highlights a need for activity of the information's issuer with practices that contribute to noise reduction between agents; the measure to strengthen dialogue, trust and commitment can perhaps contribute to increase confidence due to predictability in the relationship. The author also points out the importance of interpersonal relationships in an exchange relationship between the class agents and servants.

In the open questions, it was proposed to respondents to comment on the subject, in which were found feelings of disappointment about the attention given to new servants of the university. The reports also point to other relevant aspects of communicability, among them the requests of sectorial meetings, the provision of information of the meeting minutes on the website and also transparency in accountability. In some cases, they feel in need of attention and anxious to know the positioning of the category.

Having made these considerations, it can be understood that the quantitative part of the survey was able to reflect the proposed objectives. In order to support this work, the following demonstrates the qualitative part of the survey, emphasizing that the two forms of data collection - qualitative and quantitative - are complementary. In an interview applied to the union's communication coordinator, the obtained results are shown and discussed below.

Firstly, the coordinator reported that there are 1,319 affiliates in The Union of Servants of the Federal University of Espírito Santo (SINTUFES). In this case, the question to the coordinator is based on the issue of membership extension, as Cardoso (2003, p. 207), which assigns the term “necessary measure” of representativeness. Since SINTUFES’ affiliation rate is approaching 60%, it was considered that this represents a significant number both in percentage terms, as well as the number itself. Still, when seeking improvements, it is important to consider that, likewise, 40% of the servants are not affiliated for some reason, so it is also good for the union to unveil it.

As for the servant's participation, it was found that 44.4% of respondents are not members and do not observe the activities of the union. As participation is the primary contribution to the space demarcation, an attempt was made to relate these rates with Bordenave’s Communication Theory (Bordenave, 1994), which classifies the level of interest in three types: Watchful, participatory and co-manager. Therefore, when asked about this, the coordinator pointed out that, according to their criticality, the affiliates are classified into all items in satisfactory level of collaboration. In this regard, it is reiterated the need to conduct a search that might give the trade union some feedback, especially about the interests and barriers.

The representative capacity, as seen, is a great ally in union density, “moreover, union membership can, in certain cases, represent the organizational arrangement of certain unions “(CARDOSO, 2003, p. 213). Therefore, given the relevance of the subject, it is necessary for the union to strive in this direction, especially as the role of recruiting as many affiliates as possible, as mentioned by the author.

Another relevant fact researched is the budget for union advertising, the coordinator said that investments available are enough for information disclosure and that there are no studies in action planned to improve it, neither to communicate with servants. He said the disclosure of information is carried out “by newspaper, website, Facebook, pamphlets and periodicals”. It also reported that the newspaper has a monthly circulation from 1500 to 2000 copies and there is a perception that, with communication activities established, the expected responses will be achieved.

As seen, there is a wide range of means to spread the union’s information and disclosure tools are not supported by any method of studies focused on marketing dynamics, tending to an infeasibility of building a solid channel of communication with the target audience. On the issue of costs and expenses, marketing research can also point what would be the best venture for investment. Costa and Matias (2006) set down that: “[...] spending on advertising is a very important variable for any company. Whatever the situation of the company, advertising will have a very positive effect on brand loyalty.”

Therefore, for not knowing the public and their best interests, often the communicator invests in channels that do not reach the ultimate goal, which is to inform or to promote the organization. As one throws himself in the market, moving in all directions, sometimes one cannot identify which mean offers a favorable response. Considering also that all this advertising apparatus has low effectiveness and financial costs, it is reasonable that the institution outsource this activity.

About the disclosure of recreational activities for the servants, the coordinator reports that the union uses direct mail, posters, e- mail etc. When asked about the union brand, he said that there is not

any research on the logo receptivity analysis alongside the servants. In this regard, Nunes and Haigh (2003) highlight it is a worrisome point, since the brand is critical to the success of organizations, not only for commercial companies and professionals, but also for any type of institutions, whether philanthropic, political parties, among others. Therefore, the brand is a financial asset and strategic for organizations.

When finalizing the observations, especially about the works related to the servant and carried out by the union, it appears that there is an effort to communicability flow; however, the union needs to professionalize.

In order to establish the latter part of the triangulation between the actors, it is necessary to consider the point of view of the institution from the Dean's perspective. Early on, the Dean was asked how the university sees the union and he replied that, institutionally, the Federal University of Espírito Santo does not issue any political opinion, because it is important to respect union activity, since it is a constitutional right. He adds this is how the public officials responsible for the management of the institution should behave, as union activity within the university is free and based on legality.

As seen, there is no evidence that the university has any involvement with the trade union movement. It is noticeable that there is a detached recognition. In this regard, the statement of the institution consistent with Lobos (1988), this highlights the presence of the trade union body in organizations as a disturbing factor.

On the assessment of the institution regarding servant participation in the trade union movement, it is clear that the institution tends to only observe the movements of servants without making assessments. As described by the Dean, the current legislation enshrines the right to participate in activities of the professional category of the technical and administrative servants in education union. According to him, it is not up to the university to run any interference in union activity, being a faculty for each servant to exercise his right to participate or not in union movements. The university does not encourage nor inhibits such participation, provided they comply with the legal parameters governing union activity in the country.

In his assessment, the Dean spoke in the sense that there is at university no systematic process of analysis of the trajectory of the labor movement, showing that union membership does not seem to be a concern of the institution, bringing evidence that perhaps there is a weakening by the union, affecting therefore the power to pressure the government. In either way, the strengthening or weakening of unions has become a constant anguish, given the theory of structures necessary for effective trade union movement.

On the changes in the labor movement in view of the institution, the Dean pointed out that some aspects can be perceived, such as the ideological profile of the union representatives. About communicability with the labor union, there is a dialogue with militants, which he considers permanent and open as the institution applies plurality and dialogue with different segments, groups and entities involving the university community. Regarding the difficulties of communication with the union, faced by the public manager, it was highlighted by him the isolation or lack of dialogue, since communication loses support when the union disregards the need for dialogue or despises its importance.

As shown, although the institution has made itself available and recognizes it needs to improve its communication channels with the union, it brought no alternative or practical proposal for greater communicative viability between the parties. It is good to note that communication is materialized through dialogue that assumes the willingness of both parties to the negotiation. However, one must recognize that the channels of communication can always be improved and the University Management is always willing to move forward in this process.

It is inferred that, at the end of the interview, when relating questions to existing studies, considerations can be pondered in order to explain by themselves why certain conflicts occur in the institution. It is certain that there is no justification for attitudes such as the invisibility that the institution has towards the union, neither the union coercion that denies dialogue. Nor can it be accepted the rebellion of both sides, *i.e.*, the inflexibility in communication. This research reiterates that the union should create more means for approaching the institution, as well as the university should receive union leaders in order to promote the best solutions to possible litigations. This way, the University, through its representatives, becomes more flexible working proactively.

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In analyzing the survey, results revealed that groups with lesser working time in UFES also have fewer members. It was also verified that there still is a high degree of indifference when it comes to the trade union movement. Among others factors, this lack of interest are credited to the low communication, because the role of trade union communication reflects the representativeness, showing that there is a huge relationship between these approaches. It was found that although there is an effort by the union, the issue of representation is affected by inefficient communication channels.

Another relevant point to discuss is the communication channel chosen by the union. Considering that the communication and its tools are provided with transforming potential, poor adhesion to the reading means as a newspaper makes communication inefficient and onerous. Here, it would be up to the trade union body to opt for other channels more agile and more attractive as the financial costs; the internet is a good example.

When approached the matter of reliability on information provided by the entity, it was realized that there is evidence of suspicion with certain information passed on by the Union. In this circumstance, it can be stated that there are problems of communication between the affiliates and the Union: these ambiguities are related mainly to the credibility of the information provided, as both variables (trust and information) are interconnected. As seen, respondents are well aware of this difficulty and point that the union communication should be based in a concrete message conveyed by a clear channel of communication and easy access.

Another fact that drew attention was the report of emptiness as the icon that graphically represents the union. For respondents, this symbol must be created, studied and shown to the community, because it strengthens the necessary links between the participants, strengthens the institutional image and brings imagery safety to affiliates.

The sample was particularly important in enabling the finding that a dissonance between the union communication and how the servants would like to receive such information coexists, so there is evidence of a lack of engagement between the central actors in this study. The lack of focus and exploitation of many resources is not always enough if what is being communicated does not meet the expectations of the servants and they feel uninformed.

From the findings collected in the field research, actions were proposed in an attempt to improve the channels of communication and the relationship between the social actors of the research. Certainly, the implementation of affiliate mapping would be essential to begin to understand the tastes and expectations of those represented. This study would not be an arduous task, since as seen in this survey, there are regular meetings involving the clientele of the union and these are a boost towards better knowing the public.

One can also point out that if, in a general way, the lack of dialogue with workers was noticed, especially with those who have less time in the institution that the Union has to adopt a more adherent attitude to the represented, meaning, in this case, dialoguing with their clientele. This implies, in addition to reporting on the daily bureaucratic situations managed by the entity, getting involved in the affiliate in a reflective and enlightening communication.

It was deducted from the research that if the server feels neglected and forgotten, especially in the group with less time of institution, they claim that the attention has been directed to older groups, present in the institution and that this attention is innocuous, as this group is retiring in the short term. It should be noted that, in the university, this group will be replaced by new servants, which somehow opens up a range for the affiliation of new members, if they are approached.

To conclude, it is recommended that the organization give attention to their affiliates, therefore, the entity should strive to strengthen its foundations, integrating it and becoming partners of workers. By the search for new members or maintenance of those who are already associated with the entity, it becomes essential to search for information leading to develop strategies to increase the density and union penetration. While there are limitations to the accession of new members - this seems to be the new challenge for unions - seeking new members and retaining current ones is a strategy to consolidate the union bases.

Anyway, it is believed that the union mobilization is responsible for defending the immediate and historical interests of workers in the struggle for better conditions of life and work. Thus, the approach between union and servants should be encouraged to obtain familiarity, welfare, and hence credibility, providing a favorable environment for the partnership.

The information in this article is of sole responsibility of their authors. The issued opinions do not represent the views of the Organization and Technical Teams in this collection.

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