

## A HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF WORKPLACE COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT IN DIFFERENT CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS

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### Abstract

Understanding of a historical perspective on workplace communication management facilitates better opportunities for meaning co-creation, motivation of involved parties, and prevention of misinterpretation in German companies operating in Latvia. The aim of this work is to analyse the historical development of communication management between 19th-21st centuries in Germany and Latvia, underpinning the comparative analysis of the two approaches to workplace communication management in Germany and Latvia. The research is qualitative in nature. The research implementation proceeded in logical and sequential steps. It proceeds from pre-selection of scientific literature for analysis, then theoretical analysis and interpretation, theoretical modelling, comparative analysis, and, finally, to the definition of similarities and differences related to the three approaches, namely the German approach, the Anglo-Saxon approach, and the Latvian approach, to workplace communication management. The theoretical analysis foresees the transformation of these three approaches due to the globalisation processes. The research stresses the benefits of the use of the mixed methodology for the investigation and modelling of workplace communication management. Also, a tendency and trend related to the research area of workplace communication management have been proposed.

**Keywords:** Anglo-Saxon approach, German approach, historical development, Latvian approach, tendency, trend, workplace communication management.

### INTRODUCTION

**Research topicality and problem.** Globalization has changed the world economy through the increased flow of goods, services, capital, people, and ideas across international borders (Cote, 2021). International companies play a key role in the globalization process, as they not only ensure the movement of goods and services across borders, but also disseminate management practices and organizational models, adapting them to diverse cultural and institutional contexts (Lauring, 2011).

Germany, as one of Europe's largest economies, is a leading source of foreign direct investment, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, including Latvia (Becker and Ciešlik, 2020). There are around 160 German companies currently operating in Latvia (Limanskis et al., 2022). These companies make a significant contribution to the Latvian economy by creating jobs, increasing its competitiveness and promoting sustainable development in the country (Hofbauer et al., 2022). German enterprises are very satisfied with Lithuania as their investment location (Consultus Magnus, 2025), too.

One of the key challenges for modern organizations is communication management in the workplace, as differences in values, communication styles, and organizational traditions can increase barriers that can affect efficiency, trust and employee participation (Mietule et al., 2024). Traditionally, the German management model is characterized by hierarchy, formality and a strict orientation towards rules (Brodbeck, Frese, and Javidan, 2002). At the same time, the Latvian management model tends to be more flexible and involve employees in the goal-setting and planning processes in companies (Līduma and Lūsēna-Ezera, 2021). This discrepancy leads to that German companies operating in Latvia face problems when organising communication management in the workplace.

Participants in intercultural communication at workplace often have to create a common meaning by adjusting and adapting to each other, integrating and cooperating with representatives of different cultures. Improperly organized communication can lead to conflicts, misunderstandings, decreased employee satisfaction and deterioration of organizational

effectiveness. In conditions of asymmetric communication in an organization, employees often have a low level of trust in management and do not feel identification with the company (Men et al., 2022; Yue, Men, and Ferguson, 2021). In German companies in Latvia's context, these problems may be exacerbated by cultural aspects, such as the German focus on top-down communication, which may limit employee participation and reduce levels of engagement in work processes. While two-way communication promotes greater trust, engagement and sustainability in working relationships (Lee, 2024; Yue, Men, and Ferguson, 2021).

Understanding of a historical perspective on workplace communication management facilitates better opportunities for meaning co-creation, motivation of involved parties, and prevention of misinterpretation in German companies operating in Latvia. Another advantage of considering a historical perspective is that it helps for

- carrying out a phenomenon's segmentation
- defining its features,
- structuring its procedural aspects,
- formulating its novel definition,
- identifying trends and tendencies of its development.

The enabling research question has been formulated: How does the evolution of communication management between 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries impact the development of modern workplace communication management in Germany and Latvia?

**The aim of the research.** The aim of this work is to analyze the historical development of communication management between 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries in Germany and Latvia, underpinning the comparative analysis of the two approaches to workplace communication management in Germany and Latvia.

**Research methodology.** The research is qualitative in nature. The research implementation proceeded in logical and sequential steps: First, the research implied the analysis of scientific literature. Then, the theoretical analysis together with the interpretation method were used for obtaining findings from scientific literature. Afterwards, the formulated findings initiated theoretical modeling that helped outline the approaches to workplace communication management in Germany and Latvia. The comparative analysis of the approaches to workplace communication management in Germany and Latvia as well as Anglo-Saxon model of communication management was applied to characterize the two approaches to workplace communication management in Germany and Latvia.

**Research results.** The historical analysis outlines the development of the term "workplace communication management in different historical periods. The research results in the identification of three approaches to workplace communication management, namely the German approach, the Anglo-Saxon approach, and the Latvian approach. The theoretical analysis foresees the transformation of these three approaches due to the globalisation processes. The research stresses the benefits of the use of the mixed methodology for the investigation and modelling of workplace communication management. Finally, a tendency and trend related to the research area of workplace communication management have been proposed.

**Originality/Value of the article.** The originality of the research lies in that the historical analysis served not for the establishment of historical facts related to the development of workplace communication management. The historical investigation of the evolution of workplace communication management was undertaken for forecasting of tendencies and trends in research in workplace communication management.

The value of the article is ensured by the description of the three approaches, namely the German approach, the Anglo-Saxon approach, and the Latvian approach, to workplace communication management. The presented features, related to the three approaches, allow recognizing each approach's strengths and weaknesses as well as benefits and barriers for the

organization of effective workplace communication management in diverse cultural environments including digital space.

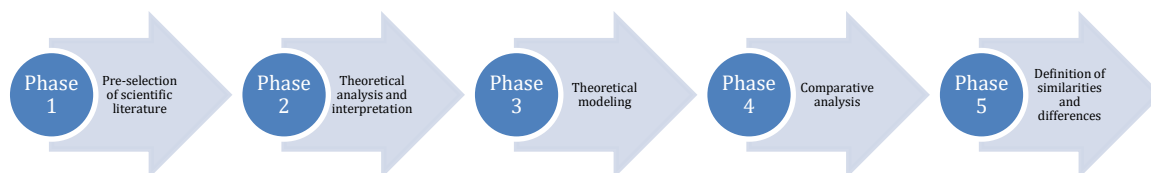
The historical analysis of the development of workplace communication management lays the ground for defining workplace communication management in modern conditions of globalization. This can be followed by empirical studies to be carried out in German companies operating in Latvia.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research is qualitative in nature as the research intention is to carry out theoretical analysis, modeling and comparative analysis of the development of historical perspectives on workplace communication management in Germany and Latvia. Also, for comparative purposes, the research refers to the Anglo-Saxon approach to workplace communication management as the middle way to stress the differences between German and Latvian models.

The research implementation proceeded in logical and sequential steps as demonstrated in Figure 1:

1. First, the research implied the analysis of scientific literature for pre-selection of appropriate sources.
2. Then, the theoretical analysis together with the interpretation method were used for obtain findings from scientific literature.
3. Afterwards, the formulated findings initiated theoretical modeling that helped outline the approaches to workplace communication management in Germany and Latvia.
4. Next, the comparative analysis of the approaches to workplace communication management in Germany and Latvia as well as Anglo-Saxon model of communication management was applied to characterize the two approaches to workplace communication management in Germany and Latvia.
5. Finally, similarities and differences of the approaches (German, Anglo-Saxon, and Latvian) were pointed.



1 fig. Phases of the research methodology

Source: compiled by the authors

The selection of scientific literature focuses on the content that can help compare the approaches to workplace communication management in Germany and Latvia as well as Anglo-Saxon model of communication management. For this, analysis of scientific sources focused on

1. definitions of an approach, communication, management, workplace,
2. communication aspects in intercultural environment, and
3. description of historical events that could impact workplace communication management.

However, scientific literature, published only in English, was analysed. This can be explained by that the topic of the present research is novel. For the topic investigation, researchers formed international groups with the use of English as the language of communication. Scientific literature in German or Latvian on the topic of this research is currently scarce.

The interpretation method helped organise the content, found in scientific sources, into thematic groups. The content of thematic groups was further analysed and used for theoretical modelling of the approaches to workplace communication management in Germany and Latvia as well as Anglo-Saxon model of communication management. Finally, all the three models were compared, and their similarities and differences were emphasized.

## **RESEARCH RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS**

Across different historical periods and scientific traditions, workplace communication management has been defined by different terms (Zerfass and Volk, 2020):

- communication,
- corporate communication,
- organizational communication, and
- communication management.

Communication management is directly linked to the cultural context, which shapes

- values,
- attitudes toward uncertainty,
- perceptions of power, and
- leadership style.

Hofstede (2001) argued that power distance, individual or collective orientation, and uncertainty avoidance influence communication management.

Since Germany is characterized by uncertainty avoidance and moderately low power distance, this leads to the establishment of clear rules, procedures, and a hierarchical structure, which serves as the foundation for predictable and controllable communication (Hofstede, 2001). Thus, the German approach to organizational communication management embraces a clear structure and precision, which help minimize risks and reduce ambiguity.

Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) argue that German organizational culture can be characterized as

- universalistic, which implies the existence of universal rules, standards and procedures applicable to all situations, and as
- an achievement culture, which implies that an individual's status is determined by his or her knowledge, results, professional competence and merit.

At the same time, Anglo-Saxon cultures (USA, UK, Canada) have a lower power distance and a higher degree of employee involvement in decision-making processes (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997). Communication in these countries is characterized by its flexible and democratic organizational structures, since it is formed through the principles of managerial participation and mutual information exchange (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004).

Furthermore, Scandinavian countries that do not belong to the “Anglo cluster” are also characterized by low power distance and high levels of trust, which creates partnership-based and open communication (House et al., 2004). Thus, the German approach can be characterized by structured top-down communication, in contrast to the Anglo-Saxon approach, which emphasizes open, bottom-up dialogue.

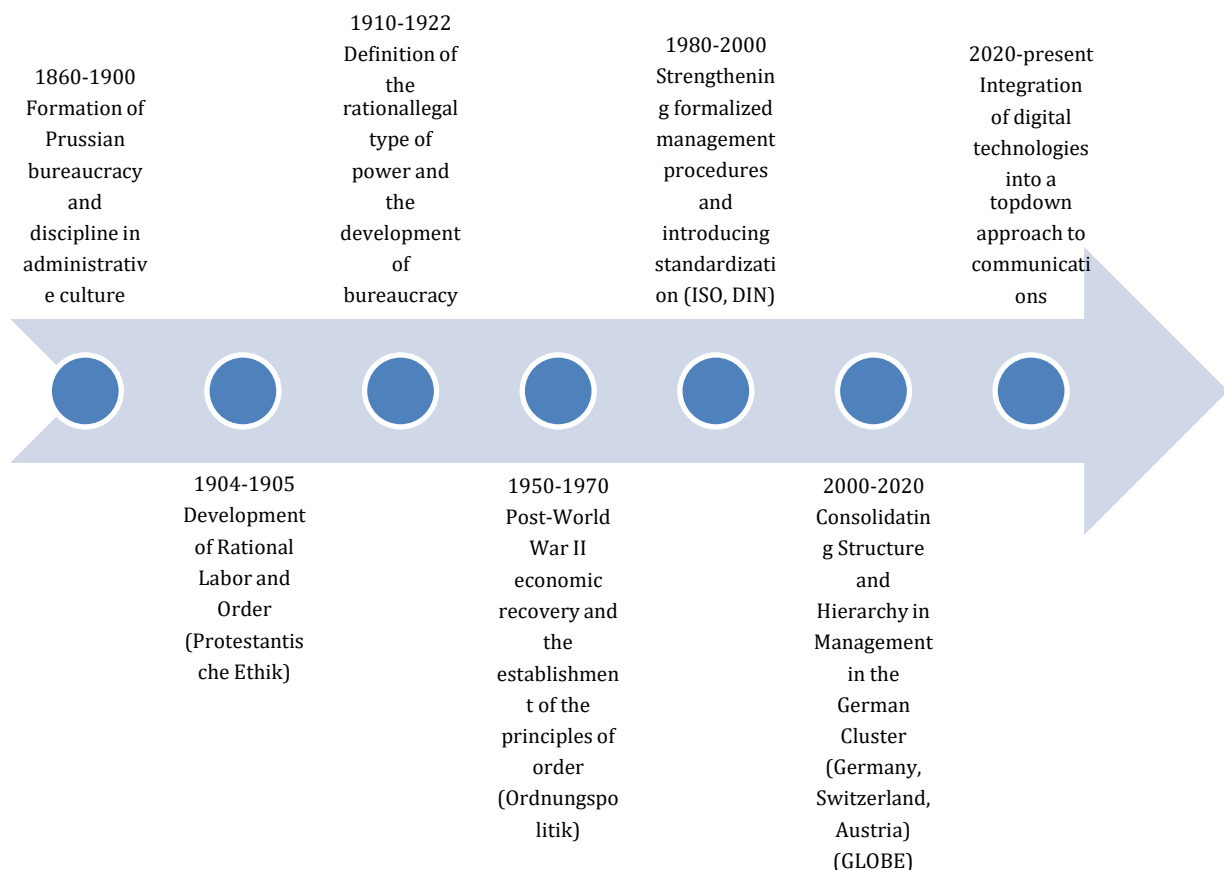
The Latvian approach, on the other hand, can be characterized by more flexible communication practices. Baltic International Centre for Economic Policy Studies (BICEPS, 2023) notes that communication in Latvian small and medium-sized companies is based on trust and personal relationships, while Western European companies (particularly German ones) prefer to follow formalized standards and adhere to written documentation of decisions. These differences highlight the influence of cultural and national aspects on the implementation of organizational communication, promoting a balance between structure and flexibility, which is important to consider when analysing German companies in the Latvian context.

The resilience of German companies to a top-down approach to communication reflects Germany's historical and cultural characteristics. Weber (1978) classified power in Germany as rational-legal, viewing bureaucracy as the most effective form of rational organization. He believed that to ensure the stability and predictability of an organizational system, management should be implemented according to (Weber, 1978)

- rules,
- job descriptions, and
- written procedures.

According to his principles, the position plays a key role in management, meaning that a manager's authority is determined not by their personal qualities, but by their job title and established rules. He also described the German administrative system of the late 19th and early 20th centuries as the most effective management organization, characterized by high formalization, discipline, and strict adherence to procedures, which served as the foundation for the development of hierarchical structure and documentation of organizational communication processes (Weber, 1978). After World War II, the principles of efficiency, discipline and clear division of roles were enshrined in the economic policy of order in the 1950s (Ordnungspolitik) and served as the basis for the organization of corporate governance in Germany.

Figure 2, based on Weber (1978), Hofstede (2001), House et al. (2004), Zerfass and Volk, (2021), and BICEPS (2023), depicts the timeline of the evolution of the German top-down approach.



2 fig. Evolution of German top-down approach to workplace communication management  
Source: compiled by the authors

The evolution of the German top-down approach to communication reflects its adaptation to changing social and technological conditions. Despite its historical formation in a rational-

legal bureaucratic system (Weber, 1978), its resilience remains today, reinforced by cultural characteristics and the integration of digital technologies to strengthen control in the organization (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004; Zerfass and Volk, 2021).

Contemporary research emphasizes that the key characteristics of German management are the principles of rationality, which consist of objectivity, predictability and orientation towards rules and standards, and systematicity, which presuppose the interconnectedness and orderliness of organizational elements (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004). German managers tend to rely on formal processes and clear division of responsibilities, which contributes to their focus on results and discipline, and to avoid uncertainty, which enhances their desire for control and order (House et al., 2008; Hofstede, 2001). German researchers Raupp and Hoffjann (2012) view organizational communication as a process that can be planned, structured and controlled to ensure transparency (Transparenz) and responsibility (Verantwortlichkeit) of the overall management system. In the modern digital era, German organizational communication has retained its core principles of formalization, structure, and control, while integrating the use of digital technologies into the traditional management approach (Zerfass and Volk, 2021). This analysis indicates that the German top-down approach is not a manifestation of authoritarianism, but a rational bureaucratic tradition based on the desire for efficiency and reliability of management processes in the organization.

The conducted theoretical analysis allows identifying the key features of the top-down approach in Germany and compare them with other widespread communication approaches characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon and Baltic cultural clusters. The German approach (Top-down) is based on rational bureaucracy and is characterized by high structure, vertical hierarchy and clear distribution of responsibility (Weber, 1978; Hofstede, 2001). At the same time, Anglo-Saxon (Great Britain, USA, Canada) approaches to management are characterized by a greater democratic and interactive nature of communication, focusing on involving employees in dialogue and on the exchange of ideas from the bottom up (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997; House et al., 2004).

In Latvia, on the other hand, a mixed approach is predominantly used, which combines the principles of the top-down and bottom-up approaches. Small and medium-sized Latvian companies build their communication on the basis of interpersonal relationships and trust, while German-owned companies prefer a formal and documented communication style.

Thus, the differences between communication approaches in different countries, reflected in Table 1, based on the analysis of literature authored by Weber (1978), Hofstede (2001), House et al. (2004), Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997), Raupp and Hoffjann (2012), Zerfass and Volk (2021), BICEPS (2023), European Investment Bank (EIB) (2025), Foreign Investors Council in Latvia (FICIL) (2024), are manifested in

- the degree of formalization,
- the level of employee participation in decision-making processes, and
- the direction of communication in the organization.

**1 table. Comparison of cultural aspects in communication formalization**

Criteria	German approach (Germanic Europe)	Anglo-Saxon approach (Anglo cluster)	Latvian approach (Baltic context)
Cultural background	The German approach is based on rational-legal bureaucracy, characterized by a high focus on rules and procedures (Weber, 1978; Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004)	The Anglo-Saxon approach is based on individualism, characterized by flexibility and a focus on employee participation and the use of innovation (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997; Hofstede, 2001)	The Latvian approach is based on a mixture of formal and informal norms and was formed under the influence of German and post-Soviet practices (BICEPS, 2023)
Communication direction	Communication occurs from the top down by	In the countries of the Anglo-Saxon cluster, two-way	In the Latvian context, a combined approach to

	transmitting decisions and instructions from management to employees (Weber, 1978; House et al., 2004)	communication prevails in organizations, which encourages active participation of employees (bottom-up) (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997; House et al., 2004)	communication is used, which includes both formal communication channels and personal and informal discussions (BICEPS, 2023; FICIL, 2024)
Formalization degree	High; In organizational processes regulations, documentation, reporting and standardization (ISO, DIN) are actively used (Hofstede, 2001; Zerfass and Volk, 2021)	Medium; Communication is focused on flexibility and trust, with less use of formal procedures (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997; Hofstede, 2001)	Medium/low; organizations have formal rules and follow business norms, but personal interactions between employees/management are often predominant (BICEPS, 2023; FICIL, 2024)
Leader's role	The manager is a coordinator who personally controls communication and is responsible for the accuracy and efficiency of work processes (Weber, 1978; Raupp and Hoffjann, 2012)	The manager is the leader and motivator in the organization who supports the team and the initiative of employees (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997; House et al., 2004)	The leader combines managerial and interpersonal roles, focusing on trust within the team (BICEPS, 2023; FICIL, 2024)
Purpose of communication	Communication is used as a tool to ensure control, order, transparency and stability of management processes (Raupp and Hoffjann, 2012; Hofstede, 2001)	Communication is used as a tool to engage employees, develop creativity, and exchange opinions within the organization (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997; Hofstede, 2001)	Communication is used as a tool to maintain a balance between efficiency and interpersonal interaction (BICEPS, 2023; EIB, 2025)
Attitude to uncertainty	The German top-down approach is characterized by high uncertainty avoidance, which justifies the use of rules, standards, instructions and stable procedures (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004)	The Anglo-Saxon approach is characterized by low uncertainty avoidance, flexibility and higher tolerance for change (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004)	The Latvian mixed approach is characterized by a medium level of uncertainty avoidance, which is reflected in the willingness to adapt to changes while maintaining stability and predictability in work (Hofstede, 2001; EIB, 2025)

Source: compiled by the authors

A comparison of communication approaches across different cultural clusters helps explain the challenges in managing organizational communication that German companies operating in Latvia may face.

German managers, accustomed to order, strict hierarchy, and strict adherence to established procedures, may perceive Latvian flexibility and interpersonal communication as a lack of discipline in the work environment. Latvian employees, on the other hand, tend to expect greater involvement in decision-making and opportunities for open exchange of opinions, which is partly explained by the influence of post-Soviet and Scandinavian cultural traditions (BICEPS, 2023). Effective interaction between the German and Latvian parties requires the use of a mixed approach (top-down and bottom-up), which combines German precision, predictability, adherence to formal procedures, and the use of tools for dialogue with employees: the introduction of regular meetings, feedback, and joint discussion of ideas (FICIL, 2024; EIB, 2025). This adaptation promotes a work environment that is

- inclusive,

- participatory,
- sustainable, and
- consistent with modern corporate standards and international business ethics.

Consequently, understanding cultural differences shapes the development of effective, inclusive, and sustainable workplace communication management in German companies within the Latvian and European context.

Along with the development of democracy, the bottom-up approach emerged in the 1980s and became an important tool in managing workplace communication (Heyden et al., 2016). Heyden et al. (2016) noted that initiatives that arise at the level of ordinary employees and middle management can influence organization performance by increasing the flexibility and engagement of employees. The subsequent development of democratic principles and concepts led to the transformation of the bottom-up approach into a tool that ensures (Wilson and Irvine, 2013)

- transparency,
- knowledge sharing,
- participation, and
- employee motivation.

In today's environment, this approach is an important element of workplace communication management, facilitating dialogue and shared decision-making, and ensuring support for change at all levels of the organization (Wilson & Irvine, 2013). The modern historical period, characterized by democratic processes, underlines the significance of employee involvement in workplace communication management.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. The analysis of historical development of workplace communication management in different cultural backgrounds shows that previously workplace communication management was shaped in each cultural background separately. However, in contemporary times different cultural backgrounds interact with each other that impact the enhancement of workplace communication management. German companies operating in Latvia serve as an example.
2. The analysis of the historical context allows identifying three approaches to workplace communication management:
  - The German approach that is characterized by the dominance of top-down structures and procedures,
  - The Anglo-Saxon approach that is featured by the prevalence of bottom-up initiatives, and
  - The Latvian approach that is described using the combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches.
3. The globalization processes persisting in the modern world will transform the three existing approaches to workplace communication management by their wider and deeper blending due to German companies' representation in other countries. For example, German companies will incorporate their best practices, obtained in other countries than Germany and Latvia, into the operations carried out in Germany and Latvia.
4. The implementation of the mixed research methodologies is beneficial for the update a phenomenon's definition or model, for the segmentation of procedural process, and for the development of trends and tendencies.
5. The use of mixed research methodologies will remain prevailing as it allows examining a phenomenon from the two aspects, namely qualitative and quantitative.
6. The mixed research methodologies are advantageous for the phenomenon analysis with the focus not on the examination of each element of the phenomenon but on the interaction

between the phenomenon's elements. Therefore, new structures and features of a phenomenon might emerge.

7. The historical evolution of workplace communication management allows determining the steps of this term development
  - from communication in Phase 1,
  - through corporate communication in Phase 2,
  - via organizational communication in Phase 3,
  - following by communication management in Phase 4, and
  - to communication management in the workplace in Phase 5.
8. Together with the digitalisation of communication in the workplace, digital communication management has become crucial and an important field of study. Along with that the research trend is to investigate hybrid models for the organization of workplace communication management.
9. The analysis of the historical perspective on workplace communication management allows determining the tendency that the focus of research on workplace communication management will shift from intercultural communication, while it remains an impacting factor, to the creation of its algorithm.

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