# The Role of Rhetoric in the Provision of Public Services through Third Parties

**1. Objectives of the Study**

- To analyze the impact of communication on the perception of citizens towards public-private partnerships (external dimension)

- To analyze the impact of communication on the performance of public service delivery through private agents (internal dimension)

- To expand knowledge on the role of communication in public-private partnership (PPP)

**2. Final Input of the Study: Suggestions for the Practice of PPP and for the Governance and Communication Strategy**

**Very Important Previous Note:** *Regardless of your position for or against* indirect water management, we would like to focus **on how you consider internal and external communication affects water management in this PPP** context.

**Specific factors to be analyzed (to be contrasted, amplified, or refuted):**

1) PUBLIC GUARANTEE OF THE SERVICES PROVIDED IN PPP. Does rhetoric focused on communicating the public guarantee of the services provided through third parties relate positively to their performance and to citizens' perception towards these partnerships?

2) PUBLIC CAPACITY AND COMPETENCE (skills required to manage these kinds of contracts with the private sector).

   - Does rhetoric focused on communicating the public sector's capacity and competence to manage these contracts with third parties (ensuring quality levels and service coverage) positively relate to their performance and citizen perception?

   - In communications towards citizens, do you think it is being transmitted that the government is doing a good job, representing the interests of the community, and that it has officials trained to execute the project effectively?

3) IDEOLOGICAL DEBATE.

   - Does rhetoric focused on a highly ideologized political debate about services provided through third parties relate negatively to the performance of these projects and to the perception of citizens?

   - Do you consider that the current political discourse focuses on identifying the public policy objectives pursued by PPP?

**3. Topics for the interview:**

1) Presentation of the interviewee

   - Current position, how long have you been in it

   - Responsibilities/roles of your job

- Structure of your company (number of workers, headquarters, location, mission, vision...).

2) Distinctive elements of Water... what value/values does water actually have that make it differential? (in its overall perception, and subsequently detailing its attributes/meanings both as a product and as a service/management).

3) Vision/perception of PPP (openly and spontaneously):

- Definition of PPP (What is PPP for you?)

- 3 qualifying adjectives that you associate with the public/private sector

- Experiences, knowledge, expectations, advantages/disadvantages you associate with PPP, cases.

If at this point the issue of communication has not arisen spontaneously, it is suggested to ask: what role does communication between the parties to a PPP play? What role does communication play in the perception of citizens towards PPP?
In short:

- What are the main differences between the two sectors?

- What do these differences respond to?

- (Note if he/she talks about the value systems. If he/she doesn't, do suggest it)

**4. Communication (Internal Dimension)**

- And do these differences affect communication between the parties (internal dimension)?

- And in particular, which aspects have the most impact on the management of public-private communication (be it positive or negative)?

- Then suggest: stereotypes, profile of the different actors and their impact on internal communication, which profiles allow mutual communication?

- Relationship between communication and the time frame, how do the "tempos" of each party affect? (Legislature 4 years vs long-term vision of technicians/other profiles, investments at 40–50 years…).

- The resolution of the communicative conflict (internal dimension)

- Which mechanisms help promote a mutual understanding of the parties in the medium and long term?

- How do the discussed profiles influence the facilitation of that resolution?

**5. Communication to the Citizen (External Dimension)**

- What is your opinion on the role of the media in addressing PPP? What is being transmitted to the public? How is it being done?

- What agents are involved in the construction of social discourse (mass media, associations…, social media)? What is your view on them? (positive and negative aspects). And in particular…what means of communication do they use to communicate PPP to the citizen? Which ones do you think are the most effective?

- What words are being used to communicate these projects to citizens? (explore words: remunicipalization, outsourcing, privatization…)
- Identify words to which PPP relates.
- What elements are key to communication to citizens and affect their perception?
- And what elements at the communicative level do you consider to harm the perception of citizens towards PPP? In particular, for water supply as an essential good…does it require any special justification in the communication on the PPP formula? (to combat the argument "you can't do business with water")…(collect spontaneously and evaluate each of the items, then suggest the three central pillars of the proposal):
  - Communicating the public guarantee of the services provided through third parties to the citizen positively relates to the performance of these projects (internal communication) and to a positive perception of these collaborations by citizens (external communication).
  - Communicating to the citizen the capacity and competence of the public sector to manage these collaborations and guarantee the levels of quality and coverage of the services provided through third parties positively relates to their performance (internal communication) and to the perception of citizens (external communication).
  - Focusing the communication on a highly ideologized political debate about services provided by third parties is negatively related to their performance (internal communication) and to the perception of citizens (external communication).