

Full Length Research

Effective Communication in the Administration of Services in Two Federal Academic Libraries of Nigeria

Adeyemo Oladapo Olakunle

Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun-State Nigeria.

E-mail: adeyemooladapo2000@gmail.com

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Communication is an indispensable management tool of achieving productivity in libraries and it is the means by which people are linked together. The objectives of this study were to examine the effect of communication on the administration of services and the perception of staff on communication procedure in the library.

Research survey design was adopted for the study using total enumeration technique. Questionnaire was developed to acquire information from staff of two Federal universities in Oyo and Osun-State. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics consisting of tables of frequency and percentages.

The findings of this study revealed that the library staff prefers the written format of communication over the verbal process and that the written channel improved library services. The study also revealed that interpersonal communication enhanced library services. Library staff are friendly with one another in the work place. It is observed from the study that the staff that are not in management position did not get up-to-date information in written format.

Keywords: Communication, library services, productivity, information, cooperation and management

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INTRODUCTION

Communication is a transactional process of sharing information with others. Communication involves the giving and receiving of information, signals or messages by talk, gestures and writing. Communication is part of the process whereby rules, regulations, and responsibilities are designed and presented to members of the organization. Kreps (1990) states that communication in an organization serves to establish managerial control, provide workers with job instruction, and enable managers gather information for planning.

Communication should not be overlooked when considering ways to improve services.

Koontz (2001) states that communication is the transfer of information from the sender to the receiver with the information being understood by the receiver. Hybels and weaver (2001) see communication as any process in which people share information, ideas and feelings, and that it involves not only the spoken and written words but also body language, personal mannerism and style, anything that adds meaning to a message.

Communication in an organization is essential so as to enable and energize employees to carry out its strategic intent. It is essential for organizations to have the capability to quickly identify, send, receive, and understand strategically relevant information. When making decisions on strategy and policy, the necessity and the challenge of communication must be taken into account, and organizing the communication so that it functions effectively must be a part of the organization's strategic priorities.

Communication skills seemed to be used everywhere, for instance they are used for assessing user needs for collection development, executing a thorough reference interview, informing funding sources of our needs, carrying out daily interactions between members of the library staff, setting meaningful performance goals for individual library staff members, working with vendors to fill various needs, and working with media to inform the public of our library's services. Everything seemed to be based on effective communication skills.

Communication serves two key functions: it provides a vehicle by which one can implement a plan of action coordinated towards a common goal and also provides a means by which members of an organization can be motivated to execute the plans willingly and enthusiastically. The issuance of orders and the eliciting participative responses are totally dependent on communication. Communication is the most important factor in any establishment, there is no way a work place can move forward without efficient communication. Efficient communication in this case means the receiver of the information must understand what the sender must have sent and there must be a feedback in which the sender will be certain that the information passed across was received and understood.

Sillars (1999) further stated that there are several channels of communication; they are written, verbal, oral, visual, audio-visual, electronic, special needs just to mention a few. Oral communication is by word of mouth and it may be direct, when two people meet and talk and when the telephone is used. The examples of oral communication included; unplanned exchange, planned formal talk, interview, telephone call, group meeting, committee meeting, full staff or employees' meeting and formal presentation. Forms of written communication include informal note, memo, letter, circular letter, press release, forms, notices, reports, and electronic means among others. He further listed examples of visual communication as, moving images, graphic communication, photographs, pictures and drawings.

A breakdown in the communication channel leads to an inefficient flow in information. Employees are unaware of what the organization expects of them. They are uninformed of what is going on in the library. This will cause them to become suspicious of motives and any changes in the organization. Ineffective communication

during organizational change is reported to negatively impact the way an organization functions. For example, ineffective communication can lead to resistance to the change, rumors, and promote exaggeration of the negative aspects associated with the change as well as to act as an overall negative influence on corporate culture of a library. Communication barriers lead to poor productivity. The benefits from quality communication in a library cannot be overemphasized. Hence, it is important to examine the role of effective communication in the Library. The extreme need to improve or find solutions to the highlighted problems and barriers is imperatively necessary.

The objectives of this paper are to determine the perception of library staff to communication in the library and examine the effect of the level of communication on library services.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The main purpose of communication is to enable and energize employees to carry out its strategic intent. It is essential for organizations to have the capability to quickly identify, send, receive, and understand strategically relevant information. When making decisions on strategy and policy, the necessity and the challenge of communication must be taken into account, and organizing the communication so that it functions effectively must be a part of the organization's strategic priorities. Communication can flow in three directions: downward, upward and horizontally. As an example for downward communication we can use managers communicating with their subordinates. Upward communication flows to a higher level in the organization. Communication that flows between employees at the same level in the organization is horizontal communication. There must be an effective balance between downward and upward communication. Employees need to work out the meaning of a message they have received, this is called "decoding". (Hartley and Bruckmann, 2002).

Communication is the transfer of information from a source to a receiver. It is effective when the sender of information and the recipient have a common comprehension of the message. The importance of communication in the world in which we live today cannot be overstressed. According to Koontz and O'Donnell (2005) communication is important to all phases of management by every individual within the system and is particularly important in directing and leading any system.

Communication is not just about exchanging of information, it is about understanding the emotions and intentions about the information. To achieve effective communication, the communicator must encode the message to fit the relationship between the sender and

the receiver and reduce distortion. Anene (2006) asserts that some communicators overlook the volume of the message which can overwhelm the system. In the library organization, communications occur in a network of human relationships which affect the quality of the communication itself.

Achieving effective communication in organizations like libraries and information agencies is a difficult challenge. Phenomenological methods of communication have the potential to engage and involve everyone in the organization by enabling all to comprehend fully the nature of what is common and what is to be accomplished. (Budd and Velasquez, 2014). Academic libraries have been discovering communication as an important organization process. Communication seems to be a relevant and important factor so as to connect with library customers and also to involve and to captivate library customers. (Huizing, 2014). Effective communication in any establishment improves the teamwork, decision making and problem solving and managerial administration. A frequent complaint in libraries is poor communication. One department may receive information long before another, an individual may feel that he or she has been left out of the flow of information or morale may be low in a unit where there has been verbal conflict between a supervisor and a staff member. Communication among the library staff will only be as good as the leaders who are responsible for providing and promoting that communication. Leaders must possess the skills and knowledge necessary to avoid misunderstandings, low morale, and feelings of mistrust. Their careful use of communication can go far in producing a positive environment and a satisfied and productive staff. (Riggs, 1992).

In a library system, effective service can only be discharged if library management creates an effective communication structure. Ola and Oyibo (2000) submit that communication conflicts arise from misunderstanding in the communication process. This could be due to semantics, physical barriers, or ambiguous information. According to Nzurrike (2005), effective communication can knock down these barriers, allowing the message transmitted to be decoded and understood, resulting in a change in behavior of the recipient. Borchers (1999) discusses interpersonal communication from two different perspectives. He observes that interpersonal communication differs from other forms in that there are fewer participants involved, they are in close physical proximity, many sensory channels are used, and feedback is immediate. Borchers also asserts that interpersonal communication means communication that occurs between people who have known each other for some time, viewing each other as unique individuals.

Interpersonal communication is an important aspect of life and no human endeavors can subsist or thrive without it. For any human activity or venture to succeed, the

exchange of ideas or information must be given due attention. Ajibade (1994) also views communication as an essential part of organizational settings and concludes that any business will come to halt without its effective implementation. Nzurrike (2005) perceives that in an organization, effective communication is measured in terms of attitude and performance because it affects the morale of employees and their attitudes toward organizational leadership, organizational effectiveness, human resources management, and consequently productivity. She concludes that the quality of communication skill possessed by staff determines their degree of accomplishment and organizational effectiveness. Every workplace must rely on teamwork and cooperation in order to carry out their work properly. The employees must also stay motivated. Disgruntled employees will never work efficiently. It is proper communication that encourages and upholds this spirit of teamwork and cooperation amongst the employees. If the employees are friends with each other, obviously they will work better with each other. (Thadani, 2013)

There is always a solution to a problem, whether permanent or temporary. Problems of communication in the library are inherent, but they can be solved to a degree. To maintain smooth running of the library, the university librarian should ensure there is a regular contact formally and informally with the staff so as to be informed with activities and maintain a constant check through deputies on the other staff to guide them away from irresponsibility and a nonchalant attitude to work. The librarian can institute regular meetings with the top hierarchy, beginning with a weekly briefing on all library matters, to facilitate understanding of problems and to formulate the best possible strategy for resolving them. This demands two-way communication and can lead to consensus and action. This broader basis for decision-making can result in better planning and more cooperation from staff (Coing, 1999). The librarian should give incentives to staff to motivate them.

Effective communication is needed for productivity. Open or effective communication is not always obtained. Diwan (2000) asserts that "the problem of effective communication is unfortunately greater than just the recognition of its scale and importance. People may be unaware that their attempts at communicating have not been successful. The free flow of information within an organization is an ideal to be achieved. When the information received far exceeds that required, the recipients cannot give proper attention to what is really needed. A library that is staffed with unqualified librarians, who do not actually know their duties and responsibilities and who cannot communicate effectively leads users to lose interest in using the library. A lot of attention has been focused on the direction of the communication flow, but very little attention on the quantity of information in the communication chain. In an

organization, a question might be asked if the daily message flow is high or low. In most cases the organization would operate more effectively if the message flow increased; however, it is worthy to note that there is a limitation on the number of messages an organization can handle. Too much of information might cause an overload for employees to retain and execute such information.

Communication with management is very significant for employees, and managers should be visible among employees regularly, especially when the organization is very hierarchical or scattered to an extensive area geographically. For this, managers should arrange situations to meet employees and come to the office and walk around and chat with personnel. (Tourish and Hargie, 2010).

Internal communication is an important tool to construct a clear and precise image inside the work place. At the same time internal communication supports the organization by securing the knowledge about the organization among the employees. (Dolphin, 2005).

Internal communications may be defined as information shared between individuals and groups at various levels and in different areas of specialization and that information are intended to design and redesign organizations and co-ordinate day-to-day activities. (Dolphin, 2005).

The employees are expected to know the organization and everything that has to do with where they work, they will be most probably asked about the library by the information users and they will have discussions for example of the current situation of the library. This is when internal communication becomes very significant. If the internal communication is very well taken care of, it gives a whole staff preparedness to answer questions about the establishment. It is essential to give the information in a clear and understandable way. There are two kinds of information concepts in the organizational communication. They are basic assumptions regarding the working community and everyday matters. Basic assumptions are things like company's vision, mission, values, ideas and strategies. Everyday matters are things that aim at keeping the individuals interested in their work, their working community and working environment. Such everyday matters are for instance things like the economical situation of the working community, future plans and targets of the organization, changes in the organization, one's own work, training, personnel policy, leisure time activities (Kalla, 2006). Internal communication is also important for removing existing conflicts between employees (Dupuy, Devers and Raynaud, 1988). The employee must be provided honest, necessary, and sufficient information that is based on transparency (De Mateo, 2007). An efficiently satisfactory work environment positively influences the motivation of workers (Conrad, Scott Poole, 2005). Internal

communication enables employees to adequately adapt to constant change in the organization (Elias, Mascaray, 1998). Change is common in a workplace and it is a strategic issue for internal communication professionals; many internal communication campaigns are frequently implemented to respond to internal changes, such as departmental reorganizations and the implementation of new modes of operation (Dutorme, 2007). Internal communication positively affects employees because it helps them to integrate into the organization (Molina, 2002).

METHODOLOGY

Two Federal university libraries, Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University Ile- Ife and Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan were used for this study. Fifty (50) questionnaires each were distributed to Library and Library officers in the two university Libraries totaling one hundred (100) and ninety one (91) were returned from both universities. Open ended questionnaire was used to collect information from Librarians and Library officers. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section obtained information about the perception of staff about the Library while the second section obtained information about the effect of communication on library services. The data assembled were analyzed using frequencies and percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The library is geared toward serving the users. The library needs a way to make meaning and understanding between the clientele and the staff of the library, in order to achieve desired results. Library administration is the control and supervision of a library or library system, including planning, budgeting, policymaking, personnel management, public relations and program assessment with responsibility for results (Reitz, 2004). A nonchalant attitude to service and responsibility on the part of some library staff results in failure to communicate effectively with the clientele and leads to inefficiency and poor service. (Shibanda, 2000). Effective communication is a keystone of any good administration. The goal of proper communication in the library is to ensure that users make good use of the library's resources bought with scarce funds, that library staff know what their responsibilities are and perform them properly, and that the libraries' parent bodies can know and appreciate the problems of the libraries and offer necessary assistance regularly (Nzurike, 2005). The failure to establish a meaningful and understandable exchange of information between the staff and the clientele will give rise to inefficiency on the

Table 1. Perception of library staff about the communication in the library

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Undecided	Total
My boss pass across information to me	51(56.0%)	26(28.6%)	6(6.6%)	6(6.6%)	2(2.2%)	91(100.0%)
I prefer verbal communication than written	12(13.2%)	14(15.4%)	53(58.2%)	10(11.0%)	2(2.2%)	91(100.0%)
I prefer receiving information in written format	22(24.2%)	16(17.6%)	31(34.1%)	16(17.6%)	6(6.6%)	91(100.0%)
I get up to date information in the written format	22(24.2%)	16(17.5%)	31(34.1%)	16(17.6%)	6(6.6%)	91(100.0%)
I prefer to get information through telephone or e-mail	19(20.9%)	22(24.2%)	36(39.6%)	14(15.4%)	0(0.0%)	91(100.0%)

Source- field work 2015

Table 2. The effect of effective communication on Library services.

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	UD	Total
Interpersonal communication enhances library services	32(35.2%)	57(62.6%)	2(2.2%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	91(100.0%)
My colleagues are friendly at work	42(46.2)	39(42.9)	10(11.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	91(100.0%)
Communication through written channel improves library services	34(37.4%)	51(56.0%)	4(4.4%)	0(0.0%)	2(2.2%)	91(100.0%)
There a check back policy on information passed across to staff.	21(23.1)	16(17.5)	28(30.7)	22(24.1)	4(4.3)	91(100.0%)

Source- Field work 2015

part of the library, and lack of direction on the part of the clientele.

Table 1 shows the perception of library staff about the communication in the library. It is observed that 77% agreed that the boss passes information across to members of staff while 12% disagreed. This is in line with Tourish and hargie (2010) who stated that managers should arrange situations to meet employees and come to the office and walk around and chat with personnel.

About, 71% of the respondent disagreed that they prefer verbal communication than written while 28.6% of the respondents agreed. Furthermore, 58.2% of the respondent disagreed that they prefer receiving information in written format, while 41.8% of the respondents agreed. Also, 58.3% of the respondent disagreed that they get up to date information in the written format, while 41.7% of the respondents agreed. Finally, 54.9% of the respondent disagreed that they prefer to get information through telephone or e-mail,

while 45.1% of the respondents agreed. The results of findings shows that library staff prefers written communication to any other format in the library.

The ultimate aim of every organization is to accomplish its set goals. But more often than not, the attainment of this noble target is always ensured or jeopardized by the communication network put in place by the management. Communication is a central activity to human existence. It bears on every sphere of human endeavor. It is the medium through which relationships are established, extended, maintained and sustained. It informs all human actions because it is occasioned by the need to interact with fellow humans. An organization on the other hand, is a social system composed of interdependent groups of people attempting to achieve commonly recognized goals.

Table 2 shows the effect of communication among library staff on the library services. 97.8% of the respondent agreed that interpersonal communication

enhances library services, while 5.2% of the respondents disagreed, this is in line with Akanbi (2005) who stated that interpersonal communication is a crucial and fundamental phenomenon in life and no human endeavors can subsist or thrive without it. The result reveals that majority 93.4% of the respondent agreed that the communication through written channel improves library services, while 6.6% of the respondents disagreed. Furthermore, 89.1% of the respondent agreed that their colleagues are friendly at work, while 10.9% of the respondents disagreed. This finding corroborated the view of Thidani (2013) who stated that if employees are friends with each other, they will work better with each other. It is observed that 40.6% agreed that there is a check back policy in the library while 54.8% disagreed. This is in line with Diwan (2000) who stated that the problem with effective communication is that people may be unaware that their attempts at communicating have not been successful.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings arising from the study indicates that the library staff admits that interpersonal communication enhances Library services. It is also observed that colleagues at work are friendly with one another which create a good environment for the improvement of library administration and services. It is also observed from the study that communication through written channels improves library services. The library staff prefers communication through written channels. However it was observed that they don't get up-to-date information in written format, consequently there should be an improvement on the "check back policy" in the library whereby management must ensure the staff understands the information passed across to the staff and that their attempt at communicating have been successful.

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