Comprehensive Dissemination of Information: *a sine qua non* for Effective Communication in Maritime Academy of Nigeria, Oron

Ifenyin, Okon Silas
Ndekhedehe, Affiong Iso
Department of General Studies,
Maritime Academy of Nigeria, Oron, Akwa Ibom State.

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on Comprehensive Dissemination of Information as a sine qua non for effective communication in Maritime Academy of Nigeria, Oron. The purpose is to examine the methods and patterns of effective communication in the Maritime Academy of Nigeria, Oron. Timely dissemination of information with appropriate methods and patterns results in effective communication in an organization. This study also establishes some negative influences on communication in an organization, suggesting ways of improving communication by reducing or eliminating ineffective communication in an organization. The study also identifies the causes of ineffective communication in an organization and discusses ways of achieving effective communication as an ingredient in the growth of an organization. The study recommends that modern communication equipment should be implored with the obsolete ones being phased out if effective communication must take place. The study also recommends that periodic seminars should be organized by the establishment to enable the growth of effective communication.

Key Words: Communication, Organization, Growth, Effective, Ineffective, Maritime Academy of Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Mass communication is more complex and sophisticated in conveying or exchanging ideas, knowledge, or message whether by writing, speech, or signs. The way to communicate effectively is to establish between common meaning, common groups, common understanding (Murphy, 1980). Gray and Strake (1988) state that communication is the process that involves the exchange of ideas, opinions, beliefs, and information between individuals, and groups. It is important to note that

communication aims to pass a meaningful and understandable message or convey important information. Communication can take the form of telephones, cables, internal memos, reports, or conversations between people occupying the same position (Udall and Udall, 1979). The information exchange could relate to working policies, instructions, queries, promotions, demotions, and other information that concern the individuals working in the organization (Evans, 1990). Hence, communication must be effective to achieve the desired goal. Effective communication must be sent in the coded speech or written within the context that both the sender and receiver understand (Inyang *et al*, 2003). Lack of effective communication in an organization creates room for massive fraudulent activities by various levels of personnel in an organization (Ating, 2003). Despite the importance of communication in human relations, there are situations where this exchange of ideas or meaning fails to make the desired impact, thus creating problems. These problems usually constitute hindrances or bottlenecks in organizations. It will be seen clearly how these factors lead to uncertainties and unwillingness to contribute on the part of the workers, towards positive development. The purpose of this work is to examine the methods and patterns of effective communication in the Maritime Academy of Nigeria, Oron,

Communication *as sine qua non* for Organizational Growth

Communication is the transference of information between individuals or a group of individuals through a common system of symbols (Pearson *et al* 2003). Communication, however, is accomplished not only through speech and written words. Sounds that are merely noises can communicate meaning if both the sender and the receiver understand them (Wilson, 2006). For example, a dog that barks when the doorbell rings indicates a new presence. Non-verbal communications such as clapping of hands convey meaning too, it indicates meaning likewise people who cannot hear or speak communicate with sign language. According to Ating (2003), musical notes, sharps, and flats when we listen and understand them can serve as a form of communication too, for a good listener is important in the exchange of communication. Eyre (1983) opines that communication does not involve the giving

of information only but the giving of understanding by the encoder/decoder so it could be acted upon.

Communication takes place in some physical locations and some solid situations. Forsdale (1981). This context influences the meanings of communication behaviours. If the context is not fully shared by both the encoder and decoder, there may be a communication breakdown (Abia, 2014). The subject matter of the encoder must be understood by the decoder. To some extent, the meaning of every word we use and every gesture we make is affected by the social, physical, and linguistic context in which are communicable.

Eyre (1979) says communication is "the giving of understandable information and receiving and understanding meaning. Akpan (1970) defines communication "as sharing of meaning with oneself or with others". Udall & Udall (1979) look at communication as "the process by which one person (or group) shares and impacts information to another person (or group) so that both people (and group) clearly understand another while Chappell and Read (1984) describe communication as "any means by which a thought is transferred from one person to another". It is a two-way affair. There must be an encoder who sends the message and a decoder who receives the message and the response which is feedback. Adelstein & Davis (1988) see communication as "the transmittal or exchange of information between or among individuals". Communication can be verbal and symbol in terms of form. Ating (2003) says communication is like an umbilical cord, for it connects us to others by providing contact necessary for our existence as humans. We are social beings, meaning we need contact with other people.

Ating (2003) further explains that communication means successful imparting or exchanging information between those involved in the process and can be achieved by various techniques including speaking, writing photographs, and models. Business communication is the means whereby people in an organization exchange information regarding the operation of an enterprise, which is the interchange of ideas, facts, and emotions by two or more persons through the use of words, letters, and symbols (Appleby, 1981). Communication as defined by Koontz (1998) is "the transfer of

information from the sender to the receiver, with the information being understood by the receiver".

According to Koontz (1998), communication is the process by which one person (or group) shares and imparts information to another person (group) so that both people (and groups) clearly understand one another. These definitions although without the mention of the medium or channel of communication, have added an important point to the already stated definition that is the dissemination of meaningful and understandable or comprehensible information. After reading this definition, one can understand the concept of effective communication.

Effective Communication

Communication is effective when the stimulus initiated and intended by the sender to the destination corresponds as it is perceived and responded to by the receiver (Wilson (1997). If "**S**" stands for the person who is the sender or source of the message and "**R**" is for the receiver of the message. The communication is complete when the response (**S**) intends and the response (**R**) provided are at variance. In the difference between the intention and the response received, the more ineffective the communication becomes. In other words, people may find it difficult to create a communication process and understand themselves (encoder and decoder). Evans (1990) opines that an effective communication network is the flow of messages within a network of independent relationships.

The Importance of Effective Communication in an Organization

Effective communication has been a vital tool for management (Ating, 2003). Effective communication makes the various managerial functions of controlling, directing, leading, motivating, and decision making, easy and successful (Gray and Strake, 1988). Hence, effective communication can ensure the smooth running of an organization.

Effective communication, as rightly put by Ating (2003), occurs "when the sender of the message correctly and sends the message and the decoder receives without distraction and the feedback given is positive". Then the communication could be said to be effective. With this, there will be a peaceful and harmonious interpersonal relationship among members of an organization (Stephen, 1991).

Effective communication can motivate workers especially when they are allowed to know what they should hear and say and what should be said about the activities of the organization and its members (Ating, 2003). This is beneficial for workers' interest, productivity, and efficiency. Effective communication reduces or eliminates the frequent uses of rumours and grapevines which are dangerous informal means of communication in an organization that gives one the opportunity of knowing what is happening in an organization through officially recognized communication channels (Akpan, 1970).

Effective communication makes decisions look collective and generally accepted (Ating, 2003). This is because when members' opinions are sampled before making decisions, members will feel that they are part of the decision-making and would do everything possible to make such a decision a success. Effective communication is an important tool in the resolution of organizational conflict and a means of pacifying workers who are on strike, contrary to the wish of the management of an organization (Gray and Strake, 1988). On this, effective communication can be used to apologize and persuade striking workers to call off the strike.

Barriers to Effective Communication

Many barriers tend to affect effective communication between encoder and decoder. The following constitute barriers to effective communication. They include language, time, channel or medium, attitude, communication skills, and environmental factors.

The language of communication must be understood by all participants (Abia, 2014). If the Head of Department does not inform the workers about decisions taken in the management meeting and the workers go against it; it leads to a query, which means

communication is impaired. Our decoder should be able to understand our language, especially if we are using technical jargon. Also, in Maritime Academy of Nigeria, Oron, which is seen as a ship, and the language used is the language on board a vessel. For example, the close of work by 4:00 pm in other organizations is known as 1600hrs and referred to as "after secure". A stranger or a new staff in the institution will get confused and might not understand the language until a while. Thus, many words and language usage are misconstrued in most organizations. If participants in a communication situation cannot understand each other, there is bound to be communication breakdown, language barrier impede communication.

There is a necessity to communicate at the appropriate time (Udall and Udall, 1979). For instance, it will be wrong for a memo to be sent out to all departments by 3:55 pm, when all offices in the organization have started shutting down for the day. Communication could be ineffective because it is already late. Channel or medium must be appropriate to convey information (Abia, 2014). For instance, using a postcard (post office) for the conveyance of confidential information would not be appropriate. Attitude is the desire or tendency to approach a person or situation. It has intensity and direction. Attitude affects communication through the various components of the process (Evans, 1990).

The ability to encode or decode messages is a function of communication skills (Millet, 2003). Deficiency in this aspect limits the ideas available to the sender and the receiver as well as the ability to manipulate the few ideas (Inyang *et al*, 2003). Various environmental factors such as the economy and cultural settings, availability of electricity, the influence level, the literacy level of the society, and the provision of basic infrastructures such as accommodation and seating arrangement can seriously affect organizational communication (Akpan, 1970).

Ineffective Communication

Organisational Communication can also be said to be ineffective if the message is not understood or if the interpersonal relationship is not cordial between the organization

and the workforce Ineffective communication is a situation in which people cannot understand what is communicated. This situation could arise out of the following circumstances:

i.   Structural barriers
ii.   Psychological barriers
iii.   Information overload
iv.   Human attitude
v.   Semantic barriers

In the event of the above barriers obstructing the free exchange of ideas or messages, the effective realization of goals is hindered. Poor communication also breeds mutual suspicion and causes industrial unrest. This can be corrected through the adoption of proper communication channels to enhance the interchange of information among individuals both within and outside the organization (Adelstein and Davis, 1988).

These channels are:

i.   Semi vertical communication channel
ii.   Vertical communication channel
iii.   Horizontal communication channel
iv.   Diagonal communication channel

The free flow of information along these channels helps in integrating all the managerial functions in an organization. Most importantly, good communication helps in leading, directing, motivating, coordinating, and creating an atmosphere in which people can contribute.

Causes of Ineffective Communication

Ineffective communication in an organization is caused by various factors that hinder the comprehensive and effective dissemination of information. These factors include distortion of information, faulty communication process, physical problems, rightful information, semantic problem, and communication overload.

Distortion of information happens when there is a wide gap between the communicators, for example, the managers/head of units and their subordinates (Stephen, 1991). Hence, the message could be distorted or altered before it eventually gets to the intended receivers or the subordinates.

Faulty communication at any stage of the process can be a barrier to effective communication in an organization (Akpan, 1970). For example, giving wrong instructions or directives to a subordinate by a supervisor, the sending of the message through the wrong medium or channel, or the inability of the receiver to comprehend a given message will lead to the giving of response, which in turn constitutes a problem for effective communication.

When a line of communication and moving locations increase the practical difficulties of communicating efficiently (Murphy and Peck, 1980), physical problems occur. The effects in mechanical and electronic apparatus, such as faulty telephone connection, breakdown, or lack of service could hamper effective communication (Eyre, 1983). For instance, this may be due to a poor effective word processor and similar apparatus and the absence of a competent switchboard operator.

When the rightful information on wages and salaries, annual and casual leaves, payment of medical facilities, welfare, and social amenities, length of service, security (for oneself and other colleagues), promotion opportunities, and training programmes are not made correctly (Ating, 2003). In the aspect of passing vital information on this, when there is a rampage or chaos, it is like casting pearls before a bottle of wine or pouring water into a basket (Eyo, 2013).

Semantic problem is also a factor. The dissemination of vague, ambiguous, meaningless information, jargon can lead to ineffective communication. These can generate problems of interpretation, which can prevent receivers not only from understanding the intended or exact meaning of the message received but also from responding appropriately to the message (Adelstein and Davis, 1988).

Communication overload arises as a result of too much information. If the information or message is not clearly disseminated or directed, the message could not be carried out effectively; the message would not be responded to successfully (Pearson *et al*, 2003).

Consequences of Ineffective Communication

Untimely dissemination of information at an appropriate period will result in ineffective communication in an organization (Wilson, 1997). Ineffective communication demoralizes workers' commitment and productivity in their duties (Ating, 2003). Non-effective communication results in misunderstanding, lack of confidence and insecurity, conflict, and inability to make effective decisions (Appleby, 1981).

Forms of Organizational Communication

Ating (2003) defines organizational communication as the formal and informal communication flow. Organizational communication has to do with messages, the flow, purpose, direction, and media. It involves an individual's feelings, attitudes, relationships, and skills (Millet, 2003). Organizational communication can be internal (within the firm itself) and external (outside the organization) (Jumes *et al*, 1990).

Internal patterns of communication have sub-classes, which include vertical, semi-vertical, horizontal, and diagonal communications; there are a lot of information flows in an organization.

Vertical communication is two-way communication. Here, there is a downward flow of information in an organization. The directives and instructions from the management of the Maritime Academy of Nigeria (MAN) move from the Rector down to the last grade in the establishment. If any of the staff wants to apply for something, it must be through the Head of Department (HOD), then the information will move upward until the highest person in the organization receives it. In MAN Oron, the Governing Council is the head of the management.

In a semi-vertical method of communication, messages flow from the top to the bottom and vice versa within a school environment (Gray and Strake, 1988).

The Rector at the top may send a message to a particular Head of a department, skipping the Director of the school where the Head of a department belongs. This is passing over of message direction through a typical flow of information in an organization, which is referred to as quasi-vertical. In this situation, the Rector may send a particular message which concerns the restructuring of curriculum to the Head of Marine Engineering Department. When the information gets to the Head of Department, he now acts without passing through the Director of School, and the Rector gets the feedback too. This is rampant recently in most organizations. It is not healthy for the smooth running of organizations. This style of message flow in an organization is sometimes situational (Abia (2014). Trade Union officials, for instance, who meet with the top management directly, bypassing middle management, employ semi-vertical communication patterns.

Another form is the horizontal method of communication. Communication must also flow across the organization since no department is an island (Ating, 2003). Each department and section is linked to the organization (Evans, 1990). For example, in the Maritime Academy of Nigeria, Oron, the Head of the Department of Nautical Science knows what is happening in the Maritime Transport department and the General Studies department. It is presumed to be the method of communication pattern among equals in an organizational setting. Horizontal communication flow promotes information sharing and good human relationships. It also coordinates the activities of all departments within the organization (Abia, 2014). This type of communication pattern works well when high morale and a cooperative attitude exist between departments, otherwise, there will be rivalry among equals who may not want to share their knowledge with others for fear of being victimized or exploited.

In addition, diagonal communication is angular in direction (Ating, 2003). The Rector at the top may want to communicate directly with porters and portresses of hostels to know the problem of cadets instead of the regimental unit commanders who now

furnishes him with Cadets' problems. The porters and portresses report the activities going on in the hostel to the Rector. Ating (2003) attests that there are several reasons which account for the method of communication flow in an organization. The Rector considers the report from the porter and portresses, thereby wanting to know the correct position of things from them by boycotting the regiment. Also there might be a suspicion on the financial impropriety and lack of favourable communication between the Rector and the Regimental Unit which might encourage this choice of pattern.

External Flow of Communication

Stephen (1991) confirms that every firm has to be linked with the outside world, including customers, suppliers, government departments, branches, subsidiaries etc. He notes that external communication is complex because of interwoven network of message flow. Since there is no organization that can stand on its own, external communication becomes a navel from which organization must feed.

In Maritime Academy of Nigeria, Oron, the customers are the students who are the carriers of the product, as well as parents, future employers, governmental bodies, sponsors, etc. who are contacted through letters, postcards, souvenirs, cables, telex, E-mail, telegram, WhatsApp and telephones etc. are used in external communication.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Communication is an aspect of a human relationship without which there will be no interaction of meanings and ideas. This interaction facilitates symbols, words, designs, gestures, etc. Effective communication is a vital tool for management because, without it, all attempts to carry out the activities of an organization will prove abortive. Instructions can neither nor carried out by the workers where there is no interaction. No contact could be made with superiors and subordinates and no policies provided would be planned, organized, and executed. It is necessary to note that ineffective communication constitutes an impediment to the smooth interchange of ideas, thoughts, feelings, and information among individuals both within and

outside the organization. Hence, to ensure a standard and effective communication, this reduces the problems of ineffective communication in Maritime Academy of Nigeria, Oron, the following propositions are made:

i.   Management should from time to time organize seminars and workshops or symposiums in which papers on communications, human relations, and other related matters would be presented.

ii.   Modern communication equipment and system should be installed while obsolete equipment be phased out.

iii.   Progress report on healthy communication should be emphasized by management so as to keep the staff of the organization well informed.

iv.   Management should create a consultancy service unit to monitor strictly the way and manner communication is being sent out within the organization.

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