

Achieving Effective Administrative Communication through Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined Effective Administrative Communication through Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua, Nigeria. It has been observed that, besides the global ranking of the United Nations E-Government survey for 2022, which placed Nigeria in the 144th position of 193 countries, practically, there is not much progress beyond the theoretical because the diffusion and adoption of ICT in tertiary institutions at all levels has been dismal. To achieve the objectives of this study, the survey research method was adopted and data were obtained from both primary and secondary sources for the study. The finding revealed that e-communication had a significant impact on administrative communication. Based on the above finding, it was recommended amongst others that the management of the institution should embark on a vigorous staff and student training on ICT if the full benefits of this facility are to be achieved.

Keywords: *E-communication, communication administration, ICT, Information administration, Tertiary Institution*

1. INTRODUCTION

The world is said to have moved from the industrial era to the information age. Nigerian governments have at various times taken quite a number of steps in implementing electronic government and stimulating the use of information technology throughout the country. The National Policy for Information Technology (NPIT) of 2001 was a major leap in IT policy in Nigeria. Its specific mission was to use information technology for education, creation of wealth, poverty eradication, job creation and global competitiveness. Since then,

information and communication has become more wide spread throughout institutions of higher learning in Nigeria.

The major thrust of ICT applicability in institutions of higher learning has been to effectively manage the e-system of the institutions under the following sub-heads: e-learning, e-communication, e-registration, e-payment, e-research, e-library, e-examination and to develop, manage and secure a computerized management information system (MIS) data base for the institutions. It is worthy to note that the Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic located in Ikot Osurua, a school which offers technical education to students in various programmes is not left out in the application of ICT to providing services to students in e-learning resources, e-payment and e-administration. ICT has come to replace the manual way of doing work thus making the work, easier to accomplish in split seconds. For instance, the e-payment and e-administration platforms are utilised for e-registration, payment of fees and other dues, registration of courses, clearance for final year students and so on. Accordingly, the e-communication resources platform has also been encouraged for the facilitation of communications within the organisation.

Expectedly, the ICT has been received with open arms as being effective by making the work of both students and staff easier. Many studies have supported the fact that ICT has effectively replaced the old way of doing things (McNamara, 2001; Whiskey, 2006). Most of these studies have attributed their observations to the fact that efficiency has been achieved through the application of ICT as waste of time has been averted. Besides, the level of productivity have increased because the employees are now working smart as enabled by the various ICT platforms.

Despite these positive developments, however, Nigeria continues to trail in many indicators of e-government readiness and practice. For instance, in the United Nations E-Government Survey for 2022, Nigeria ranked 19 out of top 20 African countries and 144 globally (out of 193 countries). Though this was an improvement on Nigeria's ranking when compared to the 2012 and 2013 surveys, the picture remains dismal. Beyond the global ranking, at the level of practice, there is not much progress beyond the theoretical (or what is on paper). Though, like tertiary institutions, federal government ministries, department and agencies complied between 2011 and 2015 with some of the ministerial directives in many areas such as having a website presence, they have not explored the totality of ICT application as a significant strategy in achieving their mandate on service delivery. This is observed from the most basic (lack of dynamism and interactivity of websites) to the complex (absence of innovative utilization of task-oriented application). This situation raises the call for the examination of factors that hinder or facilitate a more expensive diffusion and adoption of ICTs in tertiary institutions at all levels.

Considering the enormous benefits that are supposed to accrue to tertiary institutions as a result of ICT applicability, these services are often moribund. It is thus against this perception that the researcher seeks to find out whether the applications of ICT in tertiary institutions in Nigeria has actually enhanced effective organisational communication.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were:

- i. To examine the impact of e-communication on the level of organisational communication.
- ii. To identify the challenges of ICT applicability in the institution.
- iii. To suggest measures that should be employed to improve the applicability of ICT amongst staff, students and the management of the institution.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 The Concept of Information and Communication Technology

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a term is broader than computer. It is the combination of the potentials of computer telecommunication and electronic media using the digital technology. Information and Communication Technology has impacted positively on every aspect of human existence, thereby creating a powerful force for changes in how human beings live, convey information, process information, and conduct business, and in fact, determined the status of the Nations. Information technology has potential not only in introducing new teaching and learning practices, but also for acting as a catalyst to revolutionize the education system. It can empower teachers and learners and promote the growth of skills necessary for 21st century work place (Tricano, 2005).

According to United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP, 2001) ICTs refer to technologies people use to share, distribute, and gather information and to communicate, through computers and computer networks. In this study ICT is viewed as set of tools that can be used to process, avail and access, information and communication services or products. The services and products may include hardware and software; Internet, telephones/mobile phones, telefax, type writer, calculators, radios, televisions, hydraulic machines used in industries, among others.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and information technology (IT) can be used interchangeably. Information can be seen as idea conceived in the human mind, while communication is the transfer of that information from the original source to the destination where it is needed with the intention of producing a change in behaviour of the receiver (Adekomi, 1999). When information and communication drifts away from the orthodox verbal and print media towards the more recent electronic media, then the concept is known as ICT. This is why Badru (2002) defines ICT as the science and activity of processing, storing and sending information by using computers. She further defined Communication Technology as the use of hardware and software to enhance communication. In other words, there is an overlap between the function of Information Technology and Communication Technology. According to her, it is due to this great similarity in the function of IT and CT that the two became fused into ICT. Therefore, ICT is the means of accessing or receiving, storing, transferring, processing and sending ideas, perception or information through computers and other communication facilities (NCET, 1995).

ICT is used in maintenance of student and staff records and for communication and document management. Furthermore, Kumar and Kumar (2005) have mentioned about the positive perception towards the use of ICT in education. It is mentioned in the study that students of different universities reported the usage of ICT for communication and for on-line discussion forums. ICT facilitated contact and information exchange and also promoted access to higher education. ICTs included systems for student admission and records, examination results and transcripts, finance database, human resources database, and management information.

Information administration is one part of overall administration of educational institutions which mainly covers general and day-to-day operational activities. Hence, it could be concluded that information administration cycle includes three major components namely, student administration, staff administration, and general administration. Information administration in this context refers to activities relating to the management of higher education institutions which is often mentioned in other studies as managerial activities in higher education institutions. The administrative systems include Personnel administration, student administration, resources administration, financial administration and general administration (Maki, 2008).

The important items identified under this category relates to the automation of admission process through e-media. This includes admission enquiry by students, applying for admissions through electronic media, registration/enrolment using computers, course allotment, and availability of information like timetable/class schedule in electronic form and attendance monitoring/maintenance through e-media. Furthermore it includes the various communications relating to transport, hostel accommodation and other communication to guardians/parents. The integration also helps in expansion of the geographical boundaries for student intake, thus facilitating cross-border higher education. Staff administration includes recruitment and work allotment of faculty and staff in the institution, their attendance and leave management, and performance appraisal. This also includes relevant communication to and from the institutions and among peers. Staff administration done through Information and communication technology (ICT) helps in processing of voluminous records in a quick, meticulous, and impeccable manner thereby making data retrieval easier (Obeng, 2004).

2.2 Organisational Communication

Organisational Communication refers to that communication that takes place within and among organisations members (Daramola, 2003). Communication is effective when organizational members can transmit instructions, ideas and feelings upwards, downwards, and side wards within and without the organization. Digital media facilitate good communication, which is essential to effective running of any tertiary institution. Digital media assure institutional and personal communication at horizontal and vertical levels. Ibe-Bassey (2000) and Wilson (2005) identified digital media commonly used for information dissemination among institutional members to include e-mail, voice - mail, picture message

and live calls. Udoh (2007) asserted that these communication media are electronic information resources capable of facilitating transactional communication and interaction among humans and machines within and outside organizations. It is an effective and efficient means of information dissemination.

Etuk (2008) described information dissemination as the process of transmitting a message from a sender to a receiver, the interpretation and digestion of the content of the message by the receiver and the receiver's behavioural reactions to the meanings attached to the message. It is the means through which members of an organization relate to one another by interchanging ideas, facts, feelings through the use of words, symbols, pictures and illustration, or a combination of these information formats as in the multimedia approach to information dissemination. In tertiary institutions digital media are vehicles carrying ideas, facts and feelings through use of words, letters, memoranda, symbols and bulletins, posters, cartoons, illustrations, graphs and drawings. It is the active roles played by a sender and a receiver of information that make organizational communication effective.

2.3 Challenges in the Application of ICT in Service Delivery

The use of ICT has been a major challenge faced by the populace in their day to day activities even in higher educational institutions in Nigeria. According to Cuban (2006:12), United Kingdom Open University established in 1969, was their first educational institution in the world which was wholly dedicated to open and distance learning. The institution uses radio, television and in recent years, online programming to supplement print media. Many other countries like America, Ghana and South Korea have been connected over the decades to the world of ICT when Nigeria is still lagging behind.

Lecturers can only pass on skills and ideas to their students if they themselves are masters of their trade. The quality of lecturers' instructional service delivery cannot be divorced from their utilization of ICT in our tertiary institutions, which Aginam (2006) puts at less than 5 percent. According to him, most Nigerian tertiary institutions have little or no infrastructure for cyber centres, computer equipped classrooms or high speed internet and do not even have the funds to implement such infrastructure on their own. In addition to these inadequacies are the problems of no regular power supply, dysfunctional telephone lines, lack of requisite telecommunications infrastructure, and low level of internet connectivity amongst others. Worse still, Nigeria has no specific policy for ICT in education. It was in February 2007 that the Federal Ministry of Education created its ICT department (Aginam, 2006).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a survey design to enable the researcher elicit information from a sub-set of the population. The study relied on both primary and secondary data: while the secondary sources included academic journals, textbooks, government bulletins and other documentary sources, primary data were obtained through the survey questionnaire and

interview schedule. The population of this study comprised of the current staff strength and students population of Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua.

3.2 Sample Size and Sample Procedure

The sample of this study which is systematically selected from the populations of staff and students is 400. The multi-stage sampling technique (cluster, stratified and simple random sampling techniques) was employed to select the sample for this study. This was done based on departmental/unit levels for both students and staff.

3.3 Sources and Method of Data Collection

The researcher made use of both primary and secondary data. The primary data included structured questionnaire and personal interviews from the respondents. While the secondary sources included official documents on the ICT application in Akwa Ibom State polytechnic, Ikot Osurua. Others include texts, books, newspapers, and unpublished works.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

4.1 Data Analysis

This aspect of the paper focused on the analysis of the data obtained from the field through the structured questionnaire. Frequency counts, tabular presentations, and simple linear regression were adopted for the analysis of data. The frequency counts were used to analyze all the data obtained from the field. For purposes of testing the null hypothesis, the simple linear regression analysis was employed at 0.5 significant to establish the impact between e-communication and organisational communication. These analyses were executed with the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS- Ver. 20.0).

Presented below are the responses to the items on the questionnaire

Analysis of responses on e-communication

S/N	Items	SA	AG	DA	SD	Total
1.	Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic has an effective and efficient e-communication platform.	73	160	91	47	371
2.	E-mails and intercom are often used to discriminate information among staff within the institution.	27	67	183	94	371
3.	Management encourages staff to submit in their reports and assignments through the online platform.	23	122	146	80	371
4.	The management interacts often with the staff through the e-conferencing platform.	21	41	162	147	371
5.	I have easy access to information about the institution at all times.	147	164	41	19	371

Key: SA = Strongly Agree; AG = Agree; DA = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree.

Source: Field Survey

Interpretation of responses on e-communication: The analysis in the above table has shown that 19.7% of the respondents strongly agreed; 43.1% agreed; 24.5% disagreed; while 12.7% strongly disagreed that Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic has an effective and efficient e-communication platform. For the next item on this variable, 7.3% strongly agreed; 18.1% agreed; 49.3% disagreed; while 25.3% strongly disagreed that e-mails and intercom are often used to disseminate information among staff within the institution. For item ten, 6.2% strongly agreed; 32.9% agreed; 39.4% disagreed; while 21.6% strongly disagreed that management encourages staff to submit their reports and assignments through the online platform. Finally on this variable, 5.7% of the respondents strongly agreed; 11.1% agreed; 43.7% disagreed; while 39.6% strongly disagreed that the management interacts often with the staff through the e-conferencing platform.

4.2 Result and Findings

The impact of e-communication on the organisational communication in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic is not significant.

Table 4.2: Regression analysis of the impact of e-communication on the organisational communication in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic

Group	N	β	R Square	Df	t calculated	t critical	P value	Decision
e-communication				1				
	371	0.333	.111	369	4.646	1.96	.000	H ₀ : rejected
organisational communication				370				

β = regression coefficient

Source: SPSS Version 20.0

Decision Rule: Reject null hypothesis if t calculated is greater than ($>$) t critical. Accordingly, if the p value is greater than ($>$) 0.05, then there is no significant contribution, but when the p value is less than ($<$) 0.05, there is a significant contribution of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

Interpretation: The regression output table for the hypothesis presents the result of the impact of e-communication on communication. Based on the coefficient of determination (r-square), only 11.1% of the total variation in organisational communication was explained by e-communication. The results of the regression also revealed a significant positive impact of e-communication on communication ($\beta = 0.333$, t calculated =4.646, t tabulated =1.96, $p < 0.05$). Hence, the hypothesis that was stated that there is no significant positive impact of e-communication on the organizational e-communication in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic is rejected.

4.2.1 Discussion of Findings

The regression coefficients of ($\beta = 0.333$, t calculated = 4.646, t tabulated = 1.96, $p < 0.05$), was obtained for the impact of e-communication on organisational communication. It therefore implies that since the t value of 4.646 was obtained against the table value of 1.96, then there was a significant impact of e-communication on organisational communication in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua.

The finding of the regression analysis of e-communication on organisational communication also revealed that only 11.1% of the total variation in organisational communication was explained by e-communication. The regression coefficients showed a positively significant impact of e-communication on organisational communication. The implication of this finding is that Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic has an effective and efficient e-communication platform. However, in the course of this survey it was revealed that e-mails and intercom are not often used to disseminate information among staff within the institution. Accordingly, the finding of the study also revealed that management does not encourage staff to submit their reports, tasks and assignments through the online platform. The major plus of this finding was that the e-conferencing platform in the institution is functional.

This finding is consistent with the view of Chaffey (2006) who opined that digital communication media had been identified as most effective and versatile means of disseminating information in co-operate organizations. Digital media when effectively selected and efficiently utilized ensure proper dissemination of information; facilitate message quality, reach, and temporal utility to satisfy the information needs of academic community. In this era of media and information boom, staff of tertiary academic institutions is meant to be communicators capable of using recent forms and formats of digital media to achieve the gains of good communication in academic institutions. Desirable level of institutional communication is informative, behaviour modifying, free from delay, distortion, message lost and line loss. Such an effective communication in tertiary institutions facilitates positive school climate, human, industrial and media relations, and conflict free academic environment. Poor communication is germane to organisational conflict and institutional crisis.

4.3 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the empirical analysis, it was concluded that e-communication had a significant impact on organisational e-communication in Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua. This is because e-communication also enjoyed that same perception of having a positive impact on organisational communication in the school. However, the result showed that the management needed to do more in encouraging the full utilisation of all the facilities that comes with the ICT platform. For instance, a careful observation of the responses revealed that e-mails and intercom are seldom used to disseminate information among staff within the institution.

It is therefore recommended that there is need for the management of the institution to encourage both staff and students to utilize the ICT platform more frequently to fulfill daily task and assignments. Efforts should be made by the management to get staff and students involved in the use of the e-communication platform of the institution to disseminate information. This can be achieved by ensuring that e-mails and intercom are frequently engaged in getting across information to staff and students. To achieve this, the school management should implement the policy of one personal computer to a staff.

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