

Improving Library Services through Effective Communication: The Case of Delta State Polytechnic Library, Ogwashi-Uku, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This work examines the role of communication in improving library services in Delta State Polytechnic library, Ogwashi-Uku, Delta State. The study is a descriptive research. The population consists of 3,504 registered users and 50 library staff. From the target population, the sample size of 150 was randomly selected. 130 were library users while 20 were library staff. All members of staff completed and returned their questionnaire while 120 library users completed and returned theirs. Simple percentages were used to analyze the data collected. Major finding shows that communication channels in the library should be improved to enhance good communication between library staff and library users. This study concludes by advising Library management to make up-to-date materials available to library users and Internet facilities should be made available for effective communication.

Keywords: *Communication, library services, library materials, library staff*

INTRODUCTION

Communication is the process whereby one conveys ideas, opinions, attitudes, feelings, sentiments, beliefs, or impressions on others. It is a means by which one sends and receives information. For communication to serve its purpose, it must be effective. Effective communication is therefore a much-needed factor in libraries for utmost and precise delivery of services. Communication remains the life wire of every vibrant organization, but it is more to libraries. It is the highest common factor for all those who congregate in libraries, especially in academic libraries where teaching, learning and administration duties form the bedrock of their functions. Following this, effective communication is a pre-requisite for working and walking in academic libraries, and for the achievement of their goals and objectives. Sherlekar (2001) sees communication as the ongoing process by which people attempt to share meaning via transmission of message. It provides a common thread for all management processes of planning, organizing, leading, controlling and proper coordination. Cole (2002) views communication as the process of creating, transmitting and interpreting ideas, facts, opinion and feelings.

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It is a process that involves sharing, that is, a mutual interchange between the two or more persons to carry organizational functions, the sources which is the originator of the function to be carried out as to communicate with the receiver via a channel which could be written, in form of circular, or oral, that is, more verbal communication and the actions could only be taken provided the fidelity of that communication is achieved. That is, the receiver is able to understand the information being communicated. Academic libraries are information centers established in tertiary institutions. Library transmits information needed to staff, students, and researchers in the academic community.

The Importance of Communication in an Organization

These can be summarized as follows:

1. Communication promotes motivation by informing and clarifying the employees about the task to be done, the manner they are performing the task, and how to improve their performance if it is not up to the mark.
2. Communication is the basis for decision-making process, as it helps identifying and assessing alternative course of actions.
3. Communication also plays a crucial role in altering individual's attitudes, that is, a well-informed individual will have better attitude than a less-informed individual. Organizational magazines, journals, meetings and various other forms of oral and written communication help in moulding employee's attitudes.
4. Communication also helps in socializing. In life, the presence of another individual fosters communication. It is also said that one cannot survive without communication.
5. Communication also assists in controlling process. It helps in controlling members' behaviour in various ways. There are various levels of hierarchy and certain principles and guidelines that employees must follow in an organization. They must comply with organizational policies, perform their job role efficiently, and communicate any work problem and grievance to their superiors. Thus, communication helps in controlling function of management.

According to Kritner and Buelens (2002), effective communication occurs when the richness of the medium is matched appropriately with the complexity of the problem or situation. Furthermore, they state that ineffective communication results when the medium is either too rich or insufficiently rich for the comprehension of the problem or situation. Both types of media are found in libraries, and only the appropriately rich are required for successful academic services. In their own assessment of effective communication, Tubbs and Moss (2006) state that it is a situation that occurs when the stimulus as it was initiated and intended by the sender or source corresponds, closely to the stimulus as it is perceived and responded to by the receiver. Effective communication is the process by which information is appropriately transmitted and understood between two

or more people. As a process, effective communication takes this format:

Sender (source) --- Encoding (Messages) --- Channel (media)---Receiver (destination) ---Decoding (messages - response and feedback).

While communicating, we rarely reach a level of perfect sharing but we aim for it when trying to reach library clientele and achieve academic library objectives.

Effective communication is central to the activities of library services. 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. This assertion is further explained by McFarland (1994) who observes that communication is a central element in all aspects of life. Communication is the chief means through which an organization or its members influence one another. The success of any library depends not only on having qualified personnel but also on the interaction among them. Effective communication plays a very vital role in knowledge creation and management. When we talk of organizational communication, reference is made to individual workers who operate and communicate within the organization. As they communicate at all levels (verbally and in writing), they share necessary information that results in the development of knowledge, which is very important for serving customers.

Lesikar (1999) says that communication is the ingredient which makes organization possible. To achieve its objectives, libraries must have good communication systems. Merrihue (1980) defines effectiveness of communication as any initiated behaviour on the part of the sender which conveys the desired meaning to the receiver and causes desired response behaviour from the receiver. Communication effectiveness in the library setting involves two or more people (a sender and receiver). The Polytechnic librarian communicates, not with him- or herself alone but with the library staff, users, researchers, and the polytechnic community. Feedback is essential for understanding in any communication system. It refers to response from someone who has received a message. Based on the feedback, the communicator can repeat, elaborate, or explain the message. In this regard, Hoy and Miskel (1998) describe two effective communication channels. The two-way communication is a reciprocal process with each participant initiating and receiving message. In this process, each person is a source or receiver with the roles shifting as the message is passed. Unlike one-way communication, information travels in both directions in the channel.

The developers call this mutual feedback, which means that each participant initiates messages and each message affects the others.

Hoy and Miskel (1998) identify three criteria of communication effectiveness. The first is the qualities and presentation of message: clarity, timing, consistency, and mutual interest. Second is the achievement of desired results. Third is the time perspective. Thayer (1991) also lists primary functions of administrative communication: informing, instructing or directing, evaluating and

influencing. In the Polytechnic library, the Polytechnic librarian must take care to identify the audience. The sender's choice of words must correspond to the receiver's status. 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 communication itself.

Communication is the life wire of any organization. For any establishment to succeed, effective communication is needed. Hence, this study improving library services through effective communication: the case of Delta State Polytechnic library, Ogwashi-Uku. To ensure effective library services, good communication becomes necessary. As a result, the extent to which the library Administrator applies its communication roles in directing library services is hereby examined. The following questions will be answered in the course of this work:

1. What are the roles of communication in library services?
2. What are library users' responses on the effect of communication in library service?

METHOD

This study investigates how to improve library services in Delta State Polytechnic Library, Ogwashi-Uku through effective communication. The study adopts the descriptive research design. The population consists of 3,504 registered users and 50 library staff. From the target population, the sample size of 150 was randomly selected, thus, 130 were library users, while 20 were library staff. A total of 120 library users and 20 members of staff returned completed copies of questionnaire. The survey had a response rate of more than 90%. Simple percentage and frequency count were used to analyze the data collected for the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As shown in table 2, almost all respondents agreed that effective communication systems enhances library services. Respondents agreed that communication through memos enhances library services. More so, majority of the respondents disagreed that application of internet to communication enhances library services. As shown in table 3, seventy seven per cent agreed that effective communication channels boost library services. Majority of the respondents disagreed on the use of verbal communication enhances library services. Also, 35.8% respondents agreed that the application of internet services in communication enhances library services. Respondents strongly disagreed that up-to-date information are not available in library. More than 70% of the respondents were not satisfied with the communication systems in the library. The use of ICT promotes development

and improves services in organization. It is sad to observe that a majority of users indicate that the low level of ICT availability does not enhance library services.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents

| Subjects | Sample size | Questionnaire returned |
|---------------|-------------|------------------------|
| Library staff | 20 | 20 |
| Library users | 130 | 120 |
| Total | 150 | 140 |

Source: Survey, 2016

Table 2: Library staff responses on the role of communication in library services

| ITEMS | SA(F (%)) | A(F (%)) | DA(F (%)) | SD(F (%)) |
|--|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Effective communication system enhances library services. | 14(70) | 5(25) | 1(5) | -(-) |
| Communication through memo's enhances library services | 9(45) | 10(50) | 1(5) | -(-) |
| Application of internet services in communication enhances library services. | 2(10) | 4(20) | 9(45) | 5(25) |

Source: Survey, 2016

Table 3: Library users' responses on the effect of communication in library services

| ITEMS | SA(F (%)) | A(F (%)) | DA(F (%)) | SD(F (%)) |
|--|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| Effective communication channel boost library services. | 50(41.7) | 42(35) | 15(12.5) | 13(10.8) |
| Verbal Communication enhanced library services | 10(8.3) | 18(15) | 50(41.7) | 42(35) |
| Application of internet services in communication enhances library services. | 18(15) | 25(20.8) | 40(33.3) | 37(30.8) |
| Up-date-information are available in the library. | 12(10) | 34(28.3) | 34(28.3) | 40(33.3) |
| Library users are satisfied with the communication system in library | 26(21.7) | 4(3.3) | 60(50) | 30(25) |

Source: Survey, 2016

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study investigates the role of effective communication in improving library services in Delta State Polytechnic Library, Ogwashi-Uku. Libraries are assessed on the basis of their services delivery ability and promptness. For this to be achieved, effective communication is a must. This is because much of what the library workers do to serve and deliver knowledge to library users is communication through verbal, memo's, electronic services and so on. For these to be a successful means of communication, library staff and library users must be effectively communicated. Effective communication attracts a lot of usefulness in academic libraries.

The following recommendations were made, based on the findings above. The communication channels in the library should be improved to enhance

effective communication between library staff and library users. Library management should make available up-to-date materials to library users. Internet facilities should be made available for good communication.

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