

INFLUENCE OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION ON EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT AS A REFORM IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Electronic communication is the form of communication that is broadcasted, transmitted, stored or viewed by the use of electronic media such as computer, phones, emails and video. Over years, communication in institutions has been either verbal or written. An advance in information technology has provided through media a close substitute for face-to-face communication. The study investigates the influence of electronic communication on effective management as a reform in tertiary institutions. Three research questions guided this paper; what is the benefit of electronic communication among academic staff in tertiary institution, what are the commonly used means of communication and what are the challenges of electronic communication. The paper adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study was all the teaching staff in Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education Owerri with a total population of seven hundred and ninety-seven staff. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire which was used to elicit information and the data collected was analyzed by the use of mean. The responses gathered have a positive response to the influence of electronic communication in tertiary institution. The researcher recommended among others that all staff of the university should visit the internet regularly to access information and management of institutions should map out funds for staff to have data regularly.

Introduction

Communication is the sharing of information between two or more individuals or groups to reach a common understanding. It is a vital attribute that has the capacity to exchange information with others. People like paying attention to each other even when smiling and this shed light to communication (Michael, 2023). Communication is a human endeavor and involves individual and groups. Communication cannot be assumed to have taken place unless a common understanding is reached. Good communication is essential to increase efficiency by updating the production process to take advantage of new and more efficient technologies by training workers to operate the new technologies and expand their skills (Jones & George 2009). Good communication is necessary for administrator to learn about new technologies, implement them in they organization or department and train workers and subordinate on how to use them.

Jones and George continuing expressed that effective communication improves quality. Managers of institutions need to communicate to all members in an organization the meaning and importance of high quality and the routes to attaining it. Subordinates also need to communicate quality problems and suggestion for increasing quality to their superiors and members of self managed work teams need to share their ideas on involving quality with one another. Extroverts in organization most likely express their passion and feelings outwardly, they need motivation which comes up through motivation (Ben 2024). Another importance of communication is that it creates innovation which often takes place in cross functional team. This is done in such a way that different member come together to learn the method, techniques or style which most often is digital which is managed globally. Team member in the organization or department needs to communicate with the manger/administrators to secure the resources the need for the adoption and development of a new method; innovations in organization are increasingly taking place on a global level. Communication is a vital ingredient of every organization or environment. It is the activity of conveying information (Uchegbu-Basil & Anorue 2021).

According to Rachael (2024) communication process consist of two phases; the transmission phase and the feedback phase. Transmission phase is about information being shared between two or more individuals or a groups, feedback shows that a common understanding is ensured. In establishing the transmission phase of the communication the sender or the group wishing to share

information with some persons decides on the message to communicate, then the sender translates the message into symbols or language process called ‘encoding’ into words, once a message is encoded it is transmitted through a medium to the receiver, be it a person or a group. The medium are pathways like a phone- call, a letter, a newspaper, or face to face. The process through which the receiver received, interprets and makes sense of the message is called decoding. The feedback phase is initiated by the receiver who is the subordinate. The receiver of the information encodes it, and transmits it through a chosen medium. The administrator who is the original sender decodes the message and makes sure that a common understanding has been reached.

The process of encoding messages into words written or spoken is verbal communication. It can be seen as personally addressed communication. There is also a process of encoding messages without using writing or spoken language such is referred as non-verbal communication which is expressed by means of facial expressions (smiling, raising an eyebrow, frowning, dropping one jaw), body language (posture, gestures, nods and shrugs) and even style of dress (casual, formal, conservative, trend) (Kara, 2023). There is also the face-to-face type of communication; this medium is the highest in information richness. When the supervisors or managers communicate face to face they can as well have an advantage of verbal communication by also interpreting each other's nonverbal signals such as facial expression and body language. It is worth noting that with the growing proliferation of electronic forms of communication, administrators, managers of institutions fear that face-to-face communication is being short-lived to the detriment of building common understanding and rapport.

Electronic communication is any form of communication that is broadcasted, transmitted, stored or viewed using electronic media such as computer, phone, emails and video. An electronic communication medium includes email, instant messaging apps, video calls, phone calls, blogs and text messages (proof point 2020). Electronic communication is an integral part of modern life and its important to understand the different types available in order to make informed decisions about how best to use it. Electronic communication is the exchange of digital messages and data over a network or through electronic means. Digital communication provides a wide range of uses, from business to personal to educational to recreational. It is a vital foundation into today's connected world.

Email as one of the electronic means of communication that allows users to send written messages with attachment such as images and document to another users of email address or group to do work quickly and easily. A study in the international journal of public Administration (2021) explored how electronic communication affects decision making process in administrative setting. The study found out that electronic communication can enhance decision making speed and accuracy. The use of electronic communication in office works makes it so far for information can easily be disseminated to staff across board. Staff respond to mails speedily and conclusion can be made easily on a matter without everybody coming around. Also electronic communication can increase transparency and accountability in administrative processes (jopart,2023). Email can be utilized to receive notices from the manager or directives on how members or staff can handle issues or have meetings on –line.

Instant messaging apps which is another form of electronic communication is such that allows the users of it in any organization to send real time text message between two or more people without waiting for response as in emails eg. Whatsapp, face book, messenger, we chat, Skype, YouTube, telegram etc. (Sciencedirect2003). Photos, videos, files, links etc associated with staff in an organization can be used in this form of communication but users most time are at risk of revealing sensitive or confidential issues to the general public. Messages here can be attacked by virus or by cybercriminals. These pose great challenges to the use of this app in dismantling information in institutions.

Video conferencing tools enable people at different places to bridge the distance between them and connect virtually face to face by the use of webcams and microphones while sharing screens. This type of electronic communication allows everyone to see one another during discussion even when at distance apart. It can create good forum for conference/meeting between superiors and their employees or subordinate at any distance by the use of zoom, Google hangout, Go to meeting, Microsoft teams and Join me. Its disadvantage create security risk where cyber attackers can breach

sensitive data but by the use of secure password and ensuring secure internet connect it can establish strong cyber security. (Siyavula 2020).

Social media are also electronic communication that enable people from anywhere around the world to connect one another through post, comments, likes and shares. The common ones are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc. The users create profiles that others can follow and post things visible all over the globe. Social media allow organization employees to engage with their customers over social media channels, monitoring activities like tertiary institution's admissions, graduation etc. When social media comments are not well monitored by an institution, it can create problem in an institution.

Text messaging is an electronic communication that allows users to quickly and easily send short messages through phones or other mobile devices. It is commonly used for both personal and organizational purposes; the risk associated with the message is that it can easily be made public if phone is lost except there is a set up of encryption.

File transfer protocol (FTD) is an electronic communication method that transfers files between computers, though not widely known, it is one of the oldest methods of file sharing. It connects two computers over a network and allows them to exchange data. Its risk is that information on it could be intercepted and read by malicious individuals on the same networks therefore organizations should take steps to secure their network against attacks from unauthorized users of File transfer protocol.

The use of electronic communication as a reform in tertiary institution has become a legitimate and valuable means of communication. E-mail has become one of the primary forms of communication for workers in the institution. Electronic communication through the internet communication technology (ICT) has improved teaching and learning in the classroom. Teachers can make use of Google classroom set up to teach students online. The students respond to teacher questions, assignment messages, voice note, chat etc. the same way the teachers can assess their performance, evaluate and score them. It reduces cost of, saves time and inconveniences. The classroom today has moved far beyond the early 1990s integration of computer rooms of desktops, keyboards etc. The use of electronic communication through WhatsApp, Instagram, blogging, e-mail, YouTube etc has made fundamental impacts on teachers, students and all levels of schools staff.

There is easy and better collaboration among students and teachers, managers and staff. The use of cloud based apps helps to solve problems from homes, classroom or offices. Also, internet uses in tertiary institution has made information to be easily disseminated among staff in the institution within leaders and among staff and students.

The general public can easily get information about an institution and communicate back as quickly as possible. To this effect, a study in the journal of leadership and organizational studies (2018), expressed that electronic communication enhances leadership effectiveness and communication. Institution administrators utilize different internet platforms to inform the general public on the activities of the institution thereby drawing the attention of the public on areas they need to know about the operation of the institution. The use of electronic communication has brought about a paradigm shift in the traditional method of office management of manual files in file jacket to documentation of all files in the system, recording and sending messages through WhatsApp; e-mail, Instagram, blogging etc for quick dissemination, response and retrieval of feedback.

Electronic communication allows employees to share files and collaborate in real time without everybody being in the office at the same time. The use of Skype, WhatsApp and other digital communication for zoom meeting can replace travel expenses and still create increased performance and productivity. (Andra, 2020) continuing, these communication channels make it easier for employees to brainstorm ideas in real time by use of Skype, zoom, Google hangouts etc with quick feedback.

According to Andra (2020), in a 2018-2019 survey by work front, 63 percent of baby boomers and 78 percent of millennials said that instant messaging is an effective means of communication between teams and business units. About 44 percent of respondents expressed the need for more tools to manage work. Collaboration of electronic platforms in form of video conferencing software and other internet tools facilitate communication and eventually lead to greater productivity. Continuing Andra expressed that the essential benefit of electronic communication was seen during the COVID-19 outbreak where all the tertiary institution management was purely on the

use of internet communication platform both in the teaching learning process and in the administration of office works. Electronic communication is an essential tool in today's digital world but it carries its own risk which ranges from privacy concern to malicious cyber attacks. These risks are identified as data breaches, malware infection and compliance risk. In data breaches hackers can exploit vulnerabilities in communication to gain unauthorized access to confidential data by use of password or social security numbers. Malware infection causes serious damage or data theft from virus and worms to spyware ransomware and Key loggers (Oxford 2023). Also, a study in the journal of Applied Communication Research found out electronic communication can alter communication patterns and networks within administrative settings. Most often staff who are not very much acquainted with the use of electronic communication patterns may hinder flow of information by not readily responding to information given, so also due to irregular visit to their emails can distort communication flow. Weak communication and misunderstanding during virtual meetings can give way to resentment and rifts when cameras are turned off (Michael2024).

Reform is to make changes in something, especially in an institution or practice in order to improve it. It is the action or process of reforming an institution or practice (Google). It can also mean to make improvement especially by changing person behavior or the structure of something (Cambridge dictionary online). It is an improvement or set of improvements made to a system, law, organization in order to make it more modern or effective. Education reforms refer to plans, programs or movement intended to bring a gradual change in the education theory or practice across a country or community (Wikipedia 2020). Reforms may be proposed by policy makers, planners, implementers in the society, the led or even the leaders as a way to redress societal ills or imbalance (Shuara 2007). It is to be noted that not all reforms have proven great advantages for which they were designed in the long run while other has. Many reforms have been short lived, while some are still passing through the test of times and technology to see how far it can go. The goal of reforms is to address specific challenges, issues or shortcomings in the education system such as; improving student outcome; updating curriculum and pedagogy, introducing new technologies and innovation etc(Cambridge English Dictionary). Reforms aim to create a more effective and equitable education system, ultimately leading to better learning outcomes.

Effective management can be defined as the competence of getting things done efficiently and effectively with and through other people. It involves planning, organizing, directing and controlling of resources including people, material, and money to achieve organizing goals (Business studies 2005). Management is an unpredictable process because it involves, making right decision to avoid making too much mistakes and continually striving to find ways to increase organization goals. Both the administrator and manager work in organization which is a collection of people who work together and coordinate their actions to achieve a wide variety of goals or desired future outcomes. Management is the planning, organizing, leading and controlling of human and other resources to achieve organization goals effectively and effectively. According to Okunamiri (2010) Educational planning is the application of rational and systematic analysis of the educational production function whether past or present with a view to suggesting or deciding what actions or measures would make the production of education more efficient and effective.

It can also be referred to as role to be performed to achieve organizational goals that required a clear understanding of the social and educational goal of an institution, a thorough analysis of the job to be done and the awareness of the interest and skills of the staff management of the tertiary institutions that the leader communicate effectively and efficiently, with his subordinate. All members of the organization have inherent desire to know what is going in their work; information is gained through communication with others (Iheonuekwu 2011). Tertiary education institutions in Nigerian are institution offering higher and advanced form of education in the nation through universities, colleges of polytechnics and monotechnics.

Problem of Study

Over years the communication processes in tertiary institution have been face-to-face, written document, memo, paper, file in offices, chalkboard books, desktops etc. In recent times the use of electronic media in communication is taking a lead in making changes in the management of tertiary institution. In every institution, especially tertiary institution its performance is a measure of how

efficiently and effectively leaders use available resources to satisfy the public or the stakeholder and achieve organizational or institutional goal. This paper seeks to observe the influence of electronic communication on effective management as a reform in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Purpose of Study

The general purpose is to determine the influence of electronic communication on effective management as a reform in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Specifically, the paper sought to look into;

1. What are the benefits of electronic communicate among staff in tertiary institutions?
2. What are the commonly means of electronic communication among staff in tertiary institutions?
3. What are the dangers in the use of electronic communication in tertiary institution?

Method

The descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The study was carried out in Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education Owerri. It is made up of a total number of 797) teaching staff with seven faculties (source; staff personal unit). Using a simple random sampling, four hundred (400) teaching staffs were selected which is approximately fifty percent (50%) of the entire population. Three research questions guided the study which focused on the Influence of electronic communication on effective management as a reform in tertiary institutions.

The research instrument was a researcher made questionnaire which was validated by experts in educational measurement and evaluation from Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Owerri. The questionnaire titled Influence of Electronic Communication on Effective Management as a Reform in Tertiary Institutions (IECEMTI) was structured along the modified liker style of strongly agree (4) agreed (3) disagreed (2) and strongly disagree (1) data collected was analyzed by the use of mean. Mean rating of 2.5 and are accepted as positive response well below 2.5 were seen as negative response.

Researcher Question One: What are the benefits electronic communications in your institution?

Table 1 showing academic staff response on the benefits of electronic communication

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	X
1	It makes teaching and learning to be done from anywhere	200	100	75	25	3.9
2	It is faster and quicker in transmitting information.	300	70	20	10	2.9
3	It does not require face-to-face meeting before communication.	280	100	20	-	2.9
4	Information shared among staff is accurate and authentic.	100	100	120	80	2.55
5	Staff meetings can be done online with ease.	160	100	80	60	2.9
6	It saves time and tress.	280	100	20	-	3.65

The findings revealed the responses of the staff to the benefits of electronic as having an average mean response that exceeded 2.5 showing that the benefits are too many.

Research Question Two: What are the commonly use means of electronic communication in your institution.

Table 2 showing the commonly used means of electronic communication in institutions
In this finding, the responses gathered show that the staffs of Alvan Ikoku Federal University of

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	X
1	Use of Whatsapp	300	100	-	-	3.25
2	Use of Email	200	100	50	50	3.12
3	Use of text messaging	300	100	-	-	3.75
4	Use of instagram	70	80	150	180	2.5
5	Use of YouTube	100	120	100	80	2.1
	Average					3.80

Education are more conversant with whatsapp, text message and the use of email more than other means of communication networks.

Research Questions Three: What are the dangers associated with electronic communication.

Table 3: Showing the dangers in the use of electronic communication in tertiary institution.

The findings revealed that despite the benefits in the use of electronic communication in the tertiary

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	X
1	Irregular visit on line to access information by staff.	180	100	60	60	3.0
2	It is expensive to have data regularly.	190	180	30	30	3.25
3	Most staff doesn't join online meetings.	150	100	80	70	2.82
4	Information on internet can be hacked by fraudsters.	170	130	50	50	3.05
5	Messages sometimes get corrupted by virus.	180	150	60	10	3.2
		Average				3.83

institutions there are still lapses associated with. This was expressed by average mean of the total responses of 3.83.

Discussion of Findings

The study has attempted to investigate the influence of electronic communication on the effective management as a reform in tertiary institution. The first research question focused on the benefits of electronic communication. The findings revealed that staffs are of the opinion that it is beneficial. This agrees with Andra (2020) which maintain that internet uses in tertiary institution has made information to be easily disseminated. Also proofpoint.com (2001) also expressed that digital communication provides a wide range of uses from business to personal to education and to recreational.

Research question two identifies the various means of electronic communication available to staff in the institution. Those were identified by sencienedriect.com (2003) by establishing that instant messaging apps allow the users to send real-time text message between two or more people without waiting for responses eg WhatsApp, facebook, messenger, Skype etc. Text messaging is an electronic communication that allows users to quickly and easily send messages through phones or other mobile devices.

In research question three, questions were sought to find out the dangers associated with electronic communication. From the result the respondents agreed there are challenges to electronic communication which is reflected in the average mean of the total respondents of 3.83 which is very high above the generally accepted mean of 2.5. To this effect (Siyavula, 2020) expressed that its disadvantages create security risk where cyber-attacks can breach sensitive data but by the use of secure password and ensuring secure internet connect it can establish strong cyber security. Also (Oxford 2023) express that in data breaches, hackers can exploit vulnerabilities in communication to gain authorize access to confidential data by use of password or social security numbers . Malware infection causes serious damage or data theft from viruses and worms to spiore adware ransom are and key loggers.

Conclusion

The use of electronic communication has made the dissemination of information easier and faster. The use of internet connectivity in spreading message widely remains beneficial to tertiary institution. It has reduced the burden of carrying files, misplacement of files and the emergency call of face to face meetings for communication.

Recommendation

1. All staff of tertiary institution should have access to regular visit to internet, management of institution should map out funds for staff to access data regularly also provision of institutional website is essential.

2. Each faculty or department should identify and make it compulsory that one out of the many means of communication serve as their own communication channel.
3. Consultation with experts on how to secure data or information on the internet should be made available by the management of tertiary institutions.

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