

A CASE STUDY OF COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS IN MILITARY SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN OYO STATE NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined the types and effectiveness of the Communication Systems in use in Military Secondary Schools in Oyo State of Nigeria. The Instrument for data collection was a 16 item structured questionnaire which was administered on 589 respondents randomly sampled from three groups, namely, 140 military staff, 201 civilian staff and 248 senior students in the 3 military secondary schools. A chi-square (χ^2) statistical analysis of the responses revealed, among other things, that significant differences existed in the opinions of the 3 categories of respondents with regard to the communication systems used in the schools as well as the effectiveness of the systems. The electronic and typed modes of communication were found to be most effective. It was recommended that modem system of communication as well as information storage and retrieval should be provided for use in the schools.

Introduction:

The survival of modern societies hinges on formal organizations. One of such organizations is the secondary school. School organizations are often departmentalized to allow for efficiency in job performance. When this is done, there is bound to be competition as individuals, units and departments compete for scarce resources (Otu, 1999). One major way of avoiding unhealthy rivalry is to establish an effective system of communication in the organization. Effective communication is very vital to an organization to make it thrive and achieve the set goals. However, such communication must be directed through the vertical, horizontal, diagonal, upward and downward channels if the organisational goals are to be attained. As people are brought together to work for the achievement of the school's goals, it is imperative that they communicate with and among themselves, as well as with the outside community. Thus, communication in the school system is very vital and a continuous force for the smooth running of all the school activities. It is, therefore, necessary for secondary schools to ensure that the most effective communication media or processes are adopted.

Communication, without doubt, is the key to the success of educational organizations; without communication, there would be no organizations. As people come into the school to work, the different tasks are split among several people, it is essential that there are some kinds of communication among the staff and between the staff and the managers. In a lot of ways, communication acts as oil or blood that keeps a school organization running smoothly just like blood circulation in the human body (Paul, 1985). To buttress this view Afolayan (1989) simply states that communication is the life-blood of an organization. If communication is well utilized, it leads to organizational goal attainment. On the other hand, poor utilization of communication system in the school system could lead to or result to crisis, chaos, misunderstanding between groups of people and general break down of law and order.

Concept of Communication

The word communication originated from the Latin word "Communis" which means to make common, to transmit and to impart. Bending (1980) defines communication as the process by which one mind influences another mind. He added that communication occurs not only between humans but from machines, such as computers, to humans and from humans to machines, however, the machines are activated only by human thoughts.

On his part, Charlan (1985) affirms that communication means to impart, share and make common information that is available. The ability to communicate and to participate in communication focuses on the giving and receiving of information.

Other scholars such as Gorton (1980), Katz and Hahn (1985), Smithson and White-head (1990) and Peretomode (1991) described communication as the exchange and sharing of information, attitudes, ideas and emotions. This definition emphasises that communication is not confined to written or oral exchange of simple messages only but embraces the collective activity of sharing an experience at a variety of verbal and non-verbal levels, that is, communication is any means that an individual uses to transfer messages, ideas, feelings, emotions, or attitude to others. They include for instance, speechless messages that are transmitted by facial expressions, by use of the eyes, body movement, gesticulations and with the hands, shaking or nodding the head in approval or disapproval, smiling or frowning. These are sometimes accurate ways of expressing oneself than the conventional oral or written manner.

The Purpose of Military Secondary Schools in Nigeria

Military secondary Schools in Nigeria were initially established as welfare schools to take care of the children and wards of military officers and other ranks whether stationed in that area where the school is situated or not. This helps to alleviate worries of parents especially the military personnel, who, whenever transferred complained of difficulty in securing schools for their children or wards. This would make it easier for their children to be placed in these schools and complete their secondary education without undue

disruption. However, with the incursion of the military in the politics and governance of the country, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, civilian children have found their ways into these schools. Once a child passes the required examination and interview, he is qualified for admission into the school of his choice. The military schools are monitored by the Directorate of Education of the respective force (Air Force, Army and Navy) and partially funded by the Ministry of Defence, the Parents' - Teachers' Association also play a vital role in the funding of these schools. With the introduction of quota system to reflect the federal character nature in the country, the admission policy into these schools has also greatly changed. All the children/wards who pass the prescribed examination may not be offered admission depending on his or her State of origin. It is worth noting that civilians constitute a significant portion of the personnel of these schools. With the combination of people, civilian and military, in these schools, the feelings of all have to be considered since it has been observed that the military style of administration appears to be regimental in nature. In other words, military decisions tend to be final. If this happens, it may affect the effectiveness of the communication system in the school.

Problem of the Study /

In any organization there are likely to be conflicts and crisis which may be traced to poor communication. Nigerian secondary schools have in the recent past been plagued with students' crises, demonstrations and unrest, and teachers have embarked on industrial strike action times without number.

In the case of the military secondary schools, a civilian working in a military setup can be said to be uninformed in terms of being able to understand and use military language effectively in communication. Failure to do this may result to a breakdown in the communication process. Similarly, a military secondary school may find it difficult to accommodate such civilians who are not conversant with military orders, slogans such as "obey the last order", and military protocols in channels of communication. The military secondary schools, in addition, have a divergent mass of students and staff from various socio-cultural backgrounds. It is said that environment, however, has to follow in every detail the channels of communication, the "language" of communication, the time for communication, what to communicate and with whom. The observance, or lack of such principles in communication cannot be over emphasized especially in a military-civilian mix-up such as the case of military secondary schools.

Research Design, Methodology and Procedure

There were three military secondary schools in Oyo state at the time of the study (1999/2000 session). They are: Air Force Comprehensive Secondary School, Ibadan; Command Secondary School, Ibadan; and Command Day Secondary School Ibadan. The 3 schools had the following human population: 220 military personnel, 420 civilian staff and 700 students in Senior Secondary (S.S) III. The samples for the study consist of 140 military personnel, 201 civilian teachers and 248 students. There were selected using the stratified random sampling technique.

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The main instrument for data collection were structured (check-list or close and structured interview schedule. The questionnaire consist of 16 - items relating to c' of and the effectiveness of communication used in the schools. A - 3 point slightly modi was used in rating the responses from the subjects, namely, Agree, Disagree, Undecided; Effective and Undecided. The structured interview was meant for top ranking military officers involved in the running of the schools. The result of the oral interview was used to items on the questionnaire and to beef up and enrich the discussion of the data analysis. Statistics of chi square (X^2) at one tail was used to test for legal of significance at a confidence ii 0.05 or $p < 0.05$.

Presentation of Results, Data Analysis and Discussion.

Presentation of Results on Communication Systems Used.

Hypothesis I.

There is no significant difference in the opinions of the three categories of respondents with regard to the communication system used in the military secondary schools.

Table 1: Opinions of the Respondents in Respect of the Communication Systems Used in Military Secondary Schools**n 1 = Military = 140 n 2 = Civilian = 201 n 3 Students = 248**

Communication System Variables	Respondent Groups	Respondents in Frequencies and		
		A	D	U
1. In the M.S.S., information flows from the top to the bottom	Military	70 (50)	47 (33)	23 (17)
	Civilians	101 (50)	67 (33)	33 (17)
	Students	124 (50)	83 (33)	41 (17)
2. In the M.S.S., information flows from the bottom to the top	Military	51 (37)	70 (50)	19 (13)
	Civilians	74 (37)	101 (50)	26 (13)
	Students	91 (37)	124 (50)	33 (13)
3. Communication is always in writing through memos	Military	94 (66)	37 (27)	9 (7)
	Civilians	134 (66)	54 (27)	13 (7)
	Students	166 (66)	66 (27)	16 (7)
4. Communication is done verbally in most cases	Military	28 (20)	84 (60)	28 (20)
	Civilians	40 (20)	121 (60)	40 (20)
	Students	49 (20)	150 (60)	49 (20)
5. In the M.S.S., a combination of written and verbal means of communication is used.	Military	98 (70)	33 (23)	9 (7)
	Civilians	141 (70)	47 (23)	13 (7)
	Students	174 (70)	58 (23)	16 (7)
6. Official protocol is strictly followed in communication even in urgent matters	Military	94 (66)	23 (11)	33 (23)
	Civilians	134 (67)	20 (10)	47 (23)
	Students	166 (67)	24 (10)	58 (23)
7. Official protocol is flexible especially on urgent matters	Military	19 (13)	93 (67)	28 (20)
	Civilians	27 (13)	134 (67)	40 (20)
	Students	33 (13)	166 (67)	49 (20)

Nigeria Statistical Tests:

Military Personnel Critical X^2 value = 5.991 df = 2p = 0.05 (one tailed test)
 overall obtained X^2 value - 23.21 Overall
 critical X^2 value = 21.026; df= 12
 P = 0.05 (one-tailed test)

Civilian Staff

Critical X^2 value = 5.991 ; df = 2; p = 0.05 (one tailed test)
 Overall obtained X^2 value = 24.31 Overall critical X^2 value =
 21.026; df = 12; p = 0.05 one tailed test).

Students

Critical X^2 value = 5.991; df = 2; p = 0.05 (one tailed test)
 Overall obtained X^2 value = 22.21 Overall critical X^2 value = 21.026; df = 12 P = 0.05 (one tailed test).

Opinions of the Three Groups of Respondents on Communication Systems Used in the M.S.S.

Table 2:

Communication System Variables	Responses in Frequencies and Percentages				X^2
	A	D	U	X	
1. In the MSS, information flows from the top to the bottom	295 (50)	196 (32)	98 (18)	2.3	7.01
2. In the MSS, information flows from the bottom to the top.	216 (37)	295 (50)	78 (13)	1.8	7.11
3. Communication is always in writing through memos	393 (67)	157 (26)	39 (7)	2.5	14.80
4. Communication is done verbally in most cases	118 (20)	353 (60)	118 (20)	1.7	9.76
5. In the MSS, a combination of written and verbal means of communication is used.	412 (70)	138 (23)	39 (7)	2.5	19.00
6. Official protocol is strictly followed in communication even in urgent matters.	393 (67)	58 (10)	138 (23)	2.6	15.58
7. Official protocol is flexible especially on urgent matters.	78 (13)	393 (67)	118 (20)	1.7	15.22

The Three Groups Combined

Critical X^2 value = 5.991; df = 2; p = 0.05 (one tailed test)

Overall obtained X^2 value = 24.21

Overall critical X^2 value = 21.026; df = 12 p = 0.05 (one-tailed test)

As shown in Table 2 above, the opinions of the 3 categories of respondents were treated as one entity; the obtained X^2 value of 24.21 is greater than the overall critical value of 21.026 at 12 df. The null hypothesis was, therefore, rejected. In essence, there is a significant difference in the respondents' perceptions in respect of the communication system used in the Military Secondary Schools in Oyo State.

Effectiveness of Communication Systems in the Schools.

The second hypothesis of the problem under study states that:

There is no significant difference in the opinions of the three categories of respondents with respect to the effectiveness of the communication systems used in the military secondary schools.

Table 3: Opinions of the Three Respondent Groups on the Effectiveness of Communication Among Staff and Students in the Schools.

n1 Military Personnel = 140, n2 = Civilian Staff = 201, n3 = Students = 248

How would you rate the effectiveness of communication between the following categories?	Respondents Groups	Responses in Frequencies and Percentages			X	X^2
		E	NE	u		
1. Military and Military (Senior cadre)	Military	47 (33)	14 (10)	79 (57)	2.3	9.80
	Civilian	67 (33)	20 (10)	114 (57)	2.4	8.92
	Students	83 (33)	24 (10)	141 (57)	2.4	9.80
2. Military and Military (Senior Vs. Junior)	Military	51 (37)	5 (3)	84 (60)	2.3	14.60
	Civilian	74 (37)	7 (3)	120 (60)	2.2	12.14
	Students	9 (37)	8 (3)	149 (60)	2.5	9.84
3. Military and Military (Junior Vs. Junior)	Military	135 (97)	0 (0)	5 (3)	3.0	16.26
	Civilian	194 (97)	0 (0)	7 (3)	3.0	16.62
	Students	240 (97)	0 (0)	8 (3)	3.0	16.62

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4. Military and Civilian (Senior vs. Senior).	Military	9 (7)	126 (90)	5 (3)	1.2	12.34
	Civilian	13 (7)	181 (90)	7 (3)	1.2	11.43
	Students	16 (7)	224 (90)	8 (3)	1.1	12.43
5. Military and Civilian (Senior vs. Junior).	Military	9 (7)	131 (93)	0 (0)	1.3	18.80
	Civilian	13 (7)	88 (90)	7 (3)	1.3	12.34
	Students	16 (7)	232 (93)	0 (0)	1.4	10.14
6. Military and Civilian (Soldiers vs. Students)	Military	5 (3)	126 (90)	9 (7)	1.1	18.84
	Civilian	7 (3)	181 (90)	13 (7)	1.2	11.44
	Students	8 (3)	224 (90)	16 (7)	1.2	10.10
7. Civilian and Civilian (senior vs. junior)	Military	135 (97)	0 (0)	5 (3)	3.0	16.26
	Civilian	194 (97)	0 (0)	7 (3)	3.0	16.62
	Students	240 (93)	0 (0)	8 (3)	3.0	16.62
8. Civilian and Civilian (staff vs. students)	Military	131 (93)	0 (0)	9 (7)	3.0	16.26
	Civilian	188 (93)	0 (0)	13 (7)	3.0	16.62
	Students	232 (93)	0 (0)	16 (7)	3.0	16.60
9. Civilian and Civilian (Students vs. students)	Military	47 (33)	14 (10)	79 (59)	2.3	9.8
	Civilian	67 (33)	20 (10)	114 (57)	2.4	8.92
	Students	83 (33)	24 (10)	141 (57)	2.4	9.80

Note: E = Effective, NE = Not Effect ve, U = Undecided.

Statistical tests:

Military (n = 140).

Critical X² value = 5.991; df = 2; p = 0.05 (one-tailed test)

Overall obtained X² value = 24.13

Overall critical X² value = 26.296; df = 16; P = 0.05 (one-tailed test).

Civilian Staff (n = 201)

Critical X² value = 5.991; df = 2; P = 0.05 (one-tailed test)

Overall obtained X² value = 22.12

Overall critical X² value = 26.296; df = 16 P = 0.05 (one-tailed test)

Students (n = 248)

Critical X² value 5.991; df = 2; P = 0.05 (one tailed test).

Overall obtained X² value = 23.43.

Overall critical x² value = 26.296; df = 16; P = 0.05 (one tailed test).

The statistical tests reveal that there is no significant difference in the opinions of the military staff, civilian staff and the students, with regard to the effectiveness of the communication system used in the MSS.

Table 4: Opinions of Respondents on the Effectiveness of Communication Among Staff and Students in the Schools. N = 589.

How would you rate the effectiveness of Communication between the following?	Response sin frequencies and percentages			X	X ²
	E	NE	u		
1. Military and Military (senior cadre)	196 (33)	60 (10)	333 (57)	2.5	4.28
2. Military and Military,(Senior Vs. junior)	216 (37)	20 (3)	353 (60)	2.6	3.82
3. Military and Military (junior Vs. junior)	569 (97)	0 (0)	20 (3)	3.0	5.21
4 Military and Civilian (senior vs. senior)	39 (6.6)	530 (90)	20 (3)	1.2	3.56
5 Military and Civilian (soldiers vs. students)	40 (7)	549 (93)	0 (0)	1.4	4.38
6 Military and Civilian (soldiers vs. students)	20 (3)	529 (90)	40 (7)	1.3	3.65
7.Civilian and Civilian (senior vs. junior)	569 (97)	0 (0)	20 (3)	3.0	5.21
8. Civilian and civilian (staff vs. students)	549 (93)	0 (0)	40 (7)	3.0	5.20
9. Civilian and Civilian (Students vs. students)	196 (33)	60 (10)	333 (57)	2.5	4.28

The three groups combined

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Critical X^2 value = 5.991; df = 2; p = 0.05

Overall obtained X^2 value = 23.15

Overall critical X^2 value = 26.296; 16; P = 0.05.

Table 4 is the summary of the opinions of the three respondent groups on the effectiveness of communication among staff and students in the schools. Majority of them (97%, and 92%) were of the opinion that communication was effective among the military - junior vs. junior staff, Civilian - Senior vs. junior and Civilian - staff vs. Students. The statistical tests however, reveal that there is no significant difference in the opinions of the three categories of respondents on the effectiveness of communication used in the Military Secondary Schools, it is also found not effective among the top military and civilian cadres. The respondents' opinions were sought with regard to the effectiveness of the following modes of communication used in the schools: electronic means (e.g. telephones, intercoms etc); typed messages (and-delivered); a hand written messages hand-delivered); verbal messages; non-verbal messages (sign language) and mail delivery. It was found that Electronic and Typed messages were found to be most effective as 97% and 93% of the respondents rated them effective. The modes of communication rated ineffective were Mail delivery, Verbal and Non-verbal messages as 90%, 43% of the respondents rated them not effective.

Discussion

The first hypothesis centred on the communication systems used in the schools. A significant difference was found to exist in the opinions of the three respondent groups. This is not surprising; the difference could be attributed to their different socio-cultural and economic backgrounds, and their different orientations in life. The finding agrees with that of Campbell, Gregg and Russel (1977) when they state that individuals or a group of individuals are bound to perceive communication systems differently based on their background and exposure. The obvious implications of the findings are that there will continue to be a clash of interest in the provision and use of modern and complex communication system in the military secondary schools. On the other hand, the provision and uses of the required communication systems are more likely to enhance the degree of interaction among the members of the school community. Consequently some of the problems associated with communication in the schools are likely to be minimized if not completely solved.

The focus of the second hypothesis is on whether or not significant differences exist in the opinions of the three categories of respondents with respect to the effectiveness of the communication systems used in the schools. The results showed that significant differences existed among the military staff; the civilian staff; the military and civilian staff and students alike. Communication was not effective among senior military and senior civilian staff, senior military and junior civilian staff and military staff and students. These differences could be attributed to the degree of access each of the three categories had to the existing communication systems in the schools, it was also found that effective communication existed among junior military staff; senior and junior civilian staff, as well as civilian staff and students. This could be as a result of the apparently relative peace and relaxed atmosphere pervading the country since the inception of the current democratic administration. The findings agree with the reports of Madaki (1991) and Ajimati (1993) that where differences were found to exist in grades (that is, rank, profession and socio-economic backgrounds), differences are likely to exist in terms of perception of how effective or otherwise of the communication system are used.

Summary and Conclusion

The study advocates that effective communication is an indispensable tool which administrative heads in schools such as military secondary schools need since it helps in promoting cordial relationship among the administrators, the staff and students, the parents' - teachers' association as well as between the school and the government. This in turn will help in enhancing and hastening the attainment of the educational objectives and goals.

Advancement in science and technology calls for improvement and updating of the existing communication systems used in the military secondary schools. The schools should acquire modern communication systems such as digital telephone system and H - mail for use.

The spirit of brotherlines should pervade the schools to enhance closer ties and effective communication among the rank and file of the school community.

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