

LEADING BY INTERACTION IN EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: THE IMPERATIVES OF LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION AND COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

Communicating for organisational leadership and effective complaints management is essential for educational organisations to achieve leadership communication. This is particularly the case in recent time when poor communication poses grave danger to business success and leadership. This is in line with what Fairclough (1992) calls ‘linguistic turn’, a period in leadership and business management, when communication is the mainstay of good leadership. A properly harnessed leadership and communication strategies brings about leadership communication, which anticipates as well as takes cognisance of approaches to avert or curb miscommunication, bad leadership and frequency of complaints for organisational success.

(Key Words: Leadership Communication, Educational Organisations, Complaint Management).

INTRODUCTION

Studies have shown that (effective) communication is the hub of good leadership and business growth (Kotter, 1990; Kakabadse et al., 1988:38). It is pertinent for managers and leaders, who desire to effect competitive performance, change and innovation in their organisations to have good communication strategies. Thus, the amount of time managers and leaders spend communicating underscores the importance of communication (Eccles & Nohria, 1991; Mintzberg, 1973:59). Also, as Mai and Akerson (2003) assert, having a good knowledge of communication tools makes an effective leader, thus, he or she will appreciate how to communicate in ways and manner that will positively impact organisational performance through his or her individual communication skills. Communication is an important strategic method of harnessing the resources of an organisation for growth; it links leadership to organisational objectives and ideals. To communicate effectively aids group members sustain trust, respect and bond; it equally fosters achieving group goals, organisational objectives and good leadership (Moor et al., 2006: 118). It is an approach that modifies the attitudes and behaviours of workers (people) in order to meet group goals, targets and objectives. This brings about commonality of goal (Baltoni, 2004:65).

Thus, when there is commonality in targets or goals, which largely stems from effective communication, healthy relationships will be built – and this helps in creating a harmonious work environment and good performance culture. Effective communication is one of the crucial ways of removing barriers in communication,

which is a threat to survival of organisations' goals and growth. In addition, effective communication makes room for leadership communication, which utilises the full range of communication skills and resources to transcend interferences, as well as to establish and deliver messages that motivate, guide, and inspire others to action.

THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNICATION

The word communication is derived from the Latin word *communicare* – meaning to share or create commonness amongst people or a social group. This means that communication is an interpersonal process; message or information needs to be transmitted from one person (source) to another (receiver). Communication is basically about making sure information is transferred from one person to another through the communicative process, which involves the sender, receiver and the message (Smith, 1993; Smith et al., 2002; Fill, 2006; Smith & Taylor, 2006; Brannan, 1995). This therefore means that communication is not a one-way flow of information. For communication to take place, the receiver of the message or information has to understand the intention of the speaker or communicator. Smith & Taylor (2006: 72) in their observation confirm this:

“Communication is not a one-way flow of information. Talking at or to someone does not imply successful communication. This only occurs when the receiver actually receives the message that the sender intended to send. Message rejection, misinterpretation and misunderstanding are the opposite of effective communication”.

Communication amongst human beings is problematic. This is even more complex in business organisations as well as educational institutions where leading people through effective communication is the emphasis.

Rogers and Roethlizberger (1991) consider the significance of communication in the overall survival of organisations. In recent time, the centrality of communication in assessing organisational performance and leadership is in line with what Fairclough (1992) calls “linguistic turn” in leadership and communication development; a period when communication, language and leadership are at the centre of organisational and social phenomena. In addition, in a scheduled discussion about organisations' burning issues and problems, leaders are primarily concerned with how planned solutions get in shape (or don't fit) into the bigger picture of the organisational targets (Kotter, 2007). Most of an organisation's debate revolves around communication (Akhter et al. (2009). Thus, in most successful transformation efforts, good leaders resort to using all existing communication channels and methods to transmit their vision (Kotter, 1990; Kakabadse et al., 1998).

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Communication could take place without effective communication. In communication theory and studies, effective communication is being considered as the process in which the intended meaning of what is being transmitted is understood. The hardest part of communication is making one's message to be understood (Barrett, 2006). Thus, an effective communicator or leader is a person who makes sure his messages that is passed across is understood (Akhter, 2009; Cialdini, 2001; Smith, 1993). Effective communication rests on three factors: sender, receiver and

message. It also makes use of feedback for proper understanding of information transmitted. It is within these parameters that Manion (1998) has suggested that effective communication brings about shared meaning, capable of making communication a mutual thing regarding understanding.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical basis of this paper is that leadership communication, which is a model of communication and leadership gained by transcending certain barriers in both concepts, is a function of interactive communication rather than transactional communication. Transactional communication entails that actual communication does not flow from the sender (speaker) to the receiver (hearer) and back and forth, rather there is a continuous, bidirectional and reciprocal exchange between the sender and the receiver. None of them, that is, the sender and receiver has control of the communication process. (Mohan et al., 1992) suggest that meaning of what is communicated is evolutionary – it is not a constant variable – rather it depends on the environment of speech. However, the main objective here is to relay content only. In the case of interactive communication, it is not merely about relaying contents or exchanging information, rather, it deals more with the aspect of social relations when communicating. This is more related to collaborative model of communication, which depicts that full understanding of referring expression relies on amount of active participation in the conversation (Schober & Clarke, 1989; Smith & Taylor, 2006). Active participation here means that all involved in the communication process gets their views expressed as well as taken on board.

A recent study on the significance of communication skills to leadership has suggested the importance of managing the growing concerns about this phenomenon (Tavakol & Torabi, 2007). In order to facilitate communication amongst people in any social setting, especially in educational organisations, good knowledge of communication skills, knowing how to engage with issues, and choosing the appropriate communication means are crucial for smooth operation of such organisations. This is important in complaint management. It also fosters interactive communication, a departure from transactional communication. In addition, this cannot be substituted or supplanted by any other type of “technical communication device” (Charvatova, 2006). According to Akhter et al. (2009: 113), good communication skills are a correlate of good, effective leadership by executive so as to lead change. Good knowledge of communication skills makes it easy for leaders to motivate, lead, and have the trust of subordinates, as well as to strategically position their organisations for competitive edge. Effective leadership stems from communicative ability, which leaders utilise to shape, empower and motivate others to do things in their own way; they also use these skills to shape their vision and for persuasion (Charvatova, 2006:99; Barrett, 2006:74).

In educational establishments an aspect of effective communications which may act as a marker for leadership and communications is complaints handling. This means a system that allows people’s complaints to be taken on board. In addition, Acker-Hocevar (1996) suggests a more comprehensive model of leadership and communication called “education quality culture model”. This model of leadership takes into consideration some performance measures to help gauge leadership

performance of schools as well as their communication skills for leading change as well as managing complaints. The factors are interconnected.

- Good Information system
- Human resource management and development
- Strategic planning
- Systems thinking and action
- Quality services
- Visionary leadership

BARRIERS TO (EFFECTIVE) COMMUNICATION

Barriers to effective communication involve “noise” (Maguire, 2002: 246) that could be generated by the volume of information, which would make it difficult if not impossible for us to understand what is being communicated to us in a given environment. In this instance, the informational passed across is not confrontational, it is rather transactional, not interactive. Rogers and Roethlisberger (1991) see communication barrier as that which blocks us from understanding what is being communicated to us. Ojo (2009) reasons along the same line when he asserts that communication barriers prevent people engaged in interpersonal communication from reaching any mutual understanding. For example, communication barrier could result if a conflicting signal or information is relayed; and it could also occur if the source of information lacks credibility. The reasons for barriers in communications are stated below.

1. Psychological Factors, Perceptual Set and Emotional Distortions

In communication studies, psychological factors usually affect what is being perceived. Psychological factors are internal; they include personality, knowledge, education, and learning. These factors affect the way in which messages are understood. Their combination, gives rise to a set of tendency towards perceiving certain stimuli with readiness to respond in a particular way. Following Mullins’ (2010: 213) analysis, this stimulus-response mechanism is referred to as “perceptual set”, which is a product of person’s perceptual conditioning, shaped by a combination of past experience, motivation, training, interests, personality, and intelligence among other factors. These factors do sometimes, constitute barrier to communication. Also, people’s frame of mind as a result of worries, danger, and wrong judgement of situation could affect their perception as well as communication.

2. Stereotyping

This is a common way of thinking or assessing situations/people by basing judgement on mutual mental picture, perception or belief system that is value-laden as well as mutual thereby shaping the method in which people relate to each other. This is a likely barrier to effective communication as it distorts the way in which people should be properly perceived, which again affects the communicative process. Stereotyping is evaluative; this could lead to unreasonable assessment of what is being communicated (Oakes, et al., 1994; Franzoi, 1996).

3. Gender Disparity

This is considered a major obstacle to effective communication in organisations. Women are sometimes considered to be unequal to men in certain areas of life. Organisationally, this could have an effect on what a person from a particular sexual group says and how it could be received from another group. Traditionally, women are seen to be less empowered than men to carry out certain tasks in organisations. This is a deterrent to effective communication.

4. Lack of Feedback

Feedback has been considered as a process of observing the receiver's reactions or behaviour following message receipt. Feedback might not be honest in the event the relationship between the sender and the receiver is not built on trust or mutuality. When feedback is negative, communication breaks down; it also makes a case for the sender to think the receiver has an attitude (Manion, 1988).

5. Interpersonal Factors

a. **Ritual:** Ritual is about repetitive statements or information transferred from a speaker to their listeners. In such instance, when a speaker regularly repeats or says a particular thing virtually all the times, it becomes mere business-as-usual to the listener, who does not see any meaningful, fresh information to be grasped. This again limits level of contact and communication.

b. **Withdrawal:** This happens when people engaged in communication refuse to be in touch because of poor understanding, poor medium of communication, tiredness, and other factors. As they feel withdrawn, it limits the quantity as well as quality of information they may want to take in or give.

6. **Wrong channel or medium:** This could result to miscommunication when people engage in communication. In exemplifying this, choosing writing channel instead of speaking to workers, which has more of emotional and psychological impacts could bring about miscommunication.

7. **Muddled message:** This is usually a function of wrong grammatical or semantic language in communication. If this happens, oftentimes, the receiver of the information passed across could be misinformed.

8. **Cultural differences:** This is based on how people from different cultural background understand certain concepts in relation to the environment. So, people from different cultural background would tend to understand certain information differently.

9. **Physical barriers:** In this case, the emphasis is on being paying attention to something else when information is passed across from one person to the other. This might bring about miscommunication.

10. Poor listening/attention lack of affective communication: This is the situation where the receiver of information is not paying keen interest in trying to understand what is being communicated to them.

GATEWAYS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Making sure barriers are removed is one of the best ways to improve communication. Gateways to communication entail methods and framework that help to deliver effective communication. As noted by Krogh et al. (2000) gateways to effective communication are the factors that facilitate mutual understanding and commonality of vision in organisations. Echoing the same point, Rogers and Roethlisberger (1991) consider the gateways to effective communication as the act of “listening with understanding”. According to Rogers & Roethlisberger (1991), these gateways or facilitators consist of the following.

- Listening in non-evaluative way
- Communicating when emotions are low
- By getting into the private world of our speaker
- Listening with understanding in order to achieve “real communication”
- Having sense of imaginativeness.

Apart from the views highlighted above by Rogers & Roethlisberger (1991), other gateways to effective communication include the following: adequate feedback system, strategies for managing conflicts, methods of appraising performance, and leadership communication, among others.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Effective communication has been considered by many authors (Mullins, 2010; Armstrong, 2010) as the process of making communication a shared act between speaker and receiver. Reasoning along this line, Charvatova (2006) has identified the following as the characteristics of effective communication: respect, openness, directness, responsibility and aim. Effective communication removes barriers to proper understanding of the vision and objectives of the leader. Effective communication is characterised by leadership that insists on choosing appropriate medium of communication, as well as the one that has the capacity to include everybody in the communication process.

In the same vein, Fola-Adebayo (2005) reasons that effective communication is based on three factors: 1. it increases sense of solidarity amongst leaders and their subordinates 2. It brings about organisational development 3. It is based on individual responsibility and contribution. This same perspective is echoed by Kakabadse et al. (1988) as they see effective communication as part of the visioning process of an organisation, which is capable of creating dialogue building, necessary for effective leadership. Manion (1988) identified qualities of effective communication; they are graphically illustrated in the table below.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION
1. Delivering information plainly as well as having appropriate feedback
2. Creating a message with impact through collective bargaining
3. Getting the listener's attention
4. Establishing commonalities with listeners
5. Utilising gestures and movement
6. Utilising analogies and metaphors
7. Good listening skills
8. Asking the right questions

FUNCTIONS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Ojo (2009) considers communication as the lifeblood of organisations. Armstrong (2009) sees it in the following ways: 1. it helps to avert resistance to change 2. It enhances commitment from employees 3. It generates trust and sense of belonging amongst people. Mullins (2010) concurs to this view: effective communication impacts on brainstorming – “thought showers” or “cloud bursting” (2010: 355), which helps to advance organisation’s creative process in terms of new, innovative ideas for organisational growth. This is crucially important in educational institutions, where learning and development is of essence. Effective communication in organisations particularly in the educational institutions brings about the following.

1. Visioning

The visioning process is dependent on the quality of communication (Kakabadse et al., 1988). Visioning is a crucial part of the leadership process; it is an imaginative programme of a desirable future (Conger, 1999:88). Interestingly, effective communication is consequent upon this. Fundamental to relationship building, organisational learning and good leadership is dialogue, which is basically a process of internal reflection through the prism of experience sharing, enabling one to gain an understanding of others’ thought and practice. This is made possible through effective communication.

2. Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution is the process of managing as well as resolving conflicts. When understanding of reality is not shared by a leader and his followers, there is a tendency to have conflict. But through effective communication, conflicts that are consequent upon this are managed or even resolved (Smith, 1993:66).

3. Increased Students’ Participation in Decision-Making

Since effective communication ensures collaborative action in terms of views on the part of the leader and the led for decision-making, in the educational setting, this will help in increasing contributions of students in making decisions that will bring good leadership to such institutions. This process supports leadership by shared vision (Manion, 1988:133).

4. Team-Building and Trust

Effective communication brings about solidarity and oneness in leadership and communication. In the educational institutions, when the views and ideas of students as well as other members of the organisation are made bare through a strong communication system, it sustains spirit of oneness necessary for good leadership that is transformational in scope (Armstrong, 2009:45).

5. Compliance-gaining

Effective communication also brings about agreement or compliance-gaining. Compliance gaining is about mutual consent brought about by respect for each other's views and opinions. This is important for any change process. When people's opinions are not sought, it brings about resistance to any change (Mullins, 2010; Armstrong, 2009:78).

6. Dowsing of student-staff dichotomy

Effective communication tears down any communication barriers as well as removes differences in opinion. When students' (or staff's) views are sought through appropriate communication networks and channels, they feel compliant to change because they are part of the process (Sergiovanni, 2007:74).

7. Leading, motivating and respect for other people's opinion

In educational organisations, student-staff dichotomies or differences are usually minimised if when communication engagement takes into consideration the views of others no matter how different from others. This would in turn bring about mutuality respect of each others' opinions and suggestions for better leadership (Sergiovanni, 2007:88; Smith, 1993:165).

8. Communicating expectations not demands

Effective communication in this instance entails that since there is mutual respect as well as understanding, expectations sought through mediation would be granted, rather than demands, which are forced on people (Sergiovanni, 1997:55).

NETWORKS AND METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

In order to rise above the challenges posed by communication barriers, it is relevant to state methods and strategies through which effective communication could be enhanced in educational organisations. Effective communication should be clear and concise as well as properly channelled to address the needs and expectations of all – including students, members of staff and the management at this educational organisation. The methods are as follows.

- Team briefing for performance appraisal and strategies for managing conflicts
- Intranet and incident reporting system
- Seminars and workshops
- Notice boards
- Speak-up programmes
- Adequate feedback procedures

- Suggestion box
- Improved HRM – Training and development of staff.

LEADERSHIP

According to Yukl (2006), leadership is an issue that has for a long time generated considerable amount of interest amongst people. This view is also shared by Maurik (2001). It is basically for this reason that so many definitions have been given regarding the term: leadership. Bass (1990) sees the multiplicity of definitions on leadership in this way: “there are as many definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept”. This is why Crainer (1995) sees leadership as a “veritable minefield” in terms of multifarious definitions accorded to the concept. Manion (1988) reckons that the definition of leadership as a concept is elusive. The imprecision about the actual meaning of leadership has created some kind of ambiguity (Janda, 1960:98). Sometimes, words like authority, management, administration, control, and supervision are mistaken for leadership (Yukl, 2006:87).

However, as one of the twentieth century’s leading writers and theorists on the theme of leadership, Warren Bennis, notes that leadership is like beauty, hard to identify, but easily recognisable (Maurik, 2001: 101). Armstrong (2009) asserts that “leadership is the process of inspiring people to do their best to achieve a desired result” (376). Leadership can also be described as the capacity to persuade others enthusiastically to act in a different way. The capacity to make a difference is what Useem (2000) identifies to be the essence of leadership. Mullins (2010) echoes the same point made by Armstrong (2009) that leadership is about directing people’s activities to achieve group goal and vision in a manner that motivates, inspires, influences and mobilises. The act of making people do things in a manner that impacts positively to shared vision and goals is *prima facie* the function of (effective) leadership. This is what Kotter (1990) refers to as “energy surge” (64), the feeling of sense of drive and shared vision in followers.

In contextualising the educational organisations, leadership has to be fashioned to take into account collective as well as collaborative efforts. Such collaborative efforts are arrived at through effective communication, which means that everyone is part of the building and decision-making process. This is about expansion of the leadership process through increase in leadership capital that gets students and the management of educational institutions involved (Sergiovanni, 1992). Harris (2003b) calls this “distributed leadership”. It is a form of leadership that brings to focus what Senge (1990) has identified as “community of leaders and learners”. It is in this regard that Sergiovanni (1997) defined school leadership that is broad-based and collaborative as a result of effective communication that seeks everybody’s view in this light:

“Leadership for meaning, leadership for problem solving, collegial leadership, leadership as shared responsibility, leadership that serves school purposes, leadership that is tough enough to demand a great deal from everyone, and leadership that is tender enough to encourage the heart – these are the images of leadership we need for schools as communities” (Sergiovanni, 1997, p. 3).

LEADERSHIP STYLES/MODELS FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

A few leadership styles shall be considered in this study. The first serious work on leadership styles was by Lewin (1939). Lewin's (1939) leadership style schema borders on three major styles of leadership: democratic – participative, autocratic – repressive and laissez faire – representative (White & Lippitt, 1960). After Lewin's (1939) model of leadership, came Burns' (1978) transformational leadership theory.

Transformational leadership brings about change in organisations, causing people to rise above self-interest and to think collectively (Bass, 1985:95; Burns, 1978:59). Transformational leadership in the Kuhnian sense is about finding alternative leadership style that impacts leading change (Bass, 1985). As Burns (1978) pointed out, at the heart of transformational leadership is the concept of transformation, a change with variation in performance, productivity and management that brings a break from the norm; marked departure from existing leadership structure. Basically, it entails bringing about motivation amongst people in a manner that generates leadership by consent rather than coercion. This is a procedure that allows 'leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation' (Burns 1978: 20).

The second feature of Burns' theory is transactional leadership. Transactional leadership is about transaction or sheer exchange of something of value that the leader has or controls which the follower wants in return for their services or commitment. The difference between transactional and transformational leadership is prompted by the gradual disappearance of "authority" as marker for command. In the view of Yammarino (1990), the best leadership model is both transactional and transformational; transformational leadership does not erode the importance of transactional leadership, it rather augments it. However, while transactional leadership is necessary to organisational leadership strategy, it does not generate results that are as high as transformational leadership (Bass, 1985:104) particularly in terms of change.

Educational organisations need to rethink leadership as making a difference (Useem, 2000). Therefore, to make a difference or to lead change in schools, there should be focus on should be focus on transformational leadership than sheer management. There has to be a line drawn between management and leadership; (transformational) leadership should be the case, not management, which is basically based on control and authority. In this way, the emerging leadership landscape should be in agreement with Bennis' (1994) contention that management is about doing things right, while leadership is about a leader doing the right thing. To this end, Peck and Dickinson (2008) have asserted that managers are virtually transactional, while leaders are transformational.

Bass (1985) takes further Burns' (1978) transformational leadership model. According to Bass (1985) and Avolio et al. (1991) transformational leaders do exhibit four different characteristics that are tagged the Four I's.

- **Intellectual stimulation:** In Bass' (1985) concept, this means the ability of a leader to stir and change his followers' perception to issues, awareness of them

and solutions by awakening their intellectual involvement. It promotes the process of thinking innovatively and creatively by followers.

- **Inspirational motivation:** Leaders explore inspirational motivation appeal to stimulate people and to raise their awareness concerning the outcomes of not doing the right thing. Such leaders should be able to have the ability to inspire the people to have a vision of how they want things to be in the future. Thus, as Kotter (1990) avers vision plays a central role in producing positive change by serving to direct, align, and motivate actions on the part of large numbers of people.
- **Idealized influence:** This factor means transformational leaders serving as role models to followers (students). This also refers to charismatic behaviour of the leader that is based on beliefs, sense of purpose and values (Bass, 1985). Among the landmarks of idealised influence (consideration) are building of trust, identification with the leader, respect and solidarity, all gained by inspiring the people to do more than they intend to do.
- **Individualized consideration:** This deals with the leader's ability to recognise or applaud his subordinates' conducts and performance, which in the end motivates them to be committed to the organisation (Bass, 1985). Also, the leader's tendency to improve on personal development of his subordinates adds to individualised consideration.

In terms of theory of leadership, it is necessary to consider the contingency model of leadership (Fiedler et al., 1976; Fiedler, 1971) or situational leadership style (Vroom & Yetton, 1973). Contingency theory espouses no one right way to lead will fit all situations. In Everard et al. (2004: 155), this approach states that there is no perfect way to lead an organisation; rather situations determine the way to lead at a given time. In spite of different positions on contingency theory, ranging from Fiedler's model (1971) that emphasises individual leadership to Hersey and Blanchard's situational theory (1972) that stresses follower maturity, an extension of Blake and Mouton's (1964) Managerial Grid Model, the point being stressed is that there is a break from Weber's bureaucratic model and Taylor's scientific management theory – both largely neglected the impacts of the environmental factors as well as encouraged vertical management structure. The shift from the Taylorist framework is characteristic of Vroom and Yetton's (1973) participative contingency theory, as well as Northouse (2004), among others in this perspective. However, no matter the position one takes on contingency or situational leadership, the hallmark is that it is predicated upon leader-match theory, meaning that it matches leaders to appropriate situations or environment (Browning, 2007: 190). Northouse (2004) echoes the same point: “It is called contingency because it suggests that a leader's effectiveness depends on how well the leader's style fits the context” (109). Another leadership theory to be considered is the traits theory.

The traits approach came to focus in the 1940's with the rise of emphasis on natural attributes of leaders. It focuses on personalities of leaders, skills, values and inherent qualities that leaders possess (Stogdill, 1948). In addition, varying ideas about leadership has caused theorists on the subject to come up with different schools of thought such as path-goal theory by House (1971), leadership participation

inventory by Kouzes and Posner (1983), the managerial grid by Blake and Mouton (1957), McGregor's theory X and Y (1960), Likert's management/leadership style (1967), charismatic leadership style by Weber (1947), leadership continuum theory by Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1973) and Servant leadership style by Greenleaf (1970), among others. In making this assessment, factors, which include psychological profiling, behaviour, personal traits, situations, and organisational structure among others help to shape how leadership is defined or classified. In the diagram below, this shall be made clearer.

APPROACH	EMPHASIS	DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATION
1. Great man	Personal traits	Few – leader are born, not made
2. Situational/personal—situational	Context dependence	Can develop the interpersonal to some degree, but mostly developing use of different approaches in certain contexts
3. Psychological profiling	Psychological traits	Limited development of the interpersonal
4. Behavioural	Actions appropriate to followership	Development of the intrapersonal
5. Transformational	Relationship between leader and follower	Development of the inter and intrapersonal
6. Post-transformational	Sense making	Development of the inter and intrapersonal

Source: Adapted from Peck and Dickinson (2008), *Managing and Leading in Inter-agency Setting*, Bristol.

LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION AS A CATALYST FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONZ

Leadership is usually sustained by effective communication, which is a correlate of leadership communication. It shall be established here that the combination of effective communication and leadership gives rise to leadership communication (Barrett, 2006). The importance of this in leading change in educational institutions has made leaders in this industry to constantly spend about 70 to 90 percent of their time every day in ensuring leadership communication is achieved (Mintzberg, 1973; Eccles & Nora, 1991). This is why Cialdini (2001) argued that without mastering the art of communication, no leader will lead effectively. The foundation of any relationship is communication. Without communication – be it symbolic communication, e-mail, intranet, notice board, flyer, suggestion box, or face-to-face communication, leadership is hardly sustained. Simply, the capacity to communicate effectively puts people in the lead (Rider, 1999:39).

Cialdini (2001) made it clear that leadership is about mastering the art of effective communication. Leadership communication is about transcending the illusion that what a leader communicates has been understood; it is also about rising beyond the barriers encountered in miscommunication. According to Rider (1999), the capability to communicate without any doubt puts someone in the lead. This is the mainstay of leadership communication. Barrett (2006: 389) has defined this as using the full range of communication skills and resources to rise above interferences and to generate as well as deliver messages that guide, direct, motivate, or inspire others to action. Leadership communication is an important feature of leadership in educational organisations.

The choice of transformational leadership for change in schools means that they need leadership change; transformational leadership is about leadership change in a positive manner, capable of restructuring leadership process for increased productivity (Burns, 1978:89; Bass, 1985:78). Educational institutions need positive change in terms of effective communication and leadership. To bring both to fruition, leadership communication is of essence, as indicated earlier. In addition, even though the concept of transformational leadership has its origin in non-educational environment (Burns, 1978), the works of scholars in education, which include Sergiovanni (2000) and Leithwood (1999) among others reason that transformational leadership has serious link with educational settings.

To this end, Tng (2009) notes that “transformational leadership is an effective leadership approach for school administrators” (3). The choice of transformational leadership as leadership style to be explored is underscored by the fact that educational institutions require change in the right direction for properly managed school system. According to Leithwood (1999), transformational leadership theory affects educational organisations in six ways:

- Building school vision and ideals
- Symbolisation of professional values, norms and practices
- Demonstration of lofty performance expectations
- Development of structures to support participation in schools’ decision-making process
- Intellectual stimulation
- Individualised support.

Managing Complaints in Educational Institutions: Accounting for Strategies

An effective complaint system is a complaint management approach that is sensitive to mechanisms and strategies to help manage or curb and possibly eradicate complaints as well as conflicts (Pilbean & Corbridge, 2010). This is crucially important for schools in order to lead effectively. An effective complaints system/process takes into account the following in order to help foster effective conflict management.

- Educational institutions should adopt a clear-cut, effective framework for complaints management; a good complaints management system will help reduce or prevent future occurrences of complaints. This framework involves the following, which are sub-sets of this clear-cut, effective mechanism for complaint management:
 1. Disciplinary procedures
 2. Warnings – verbal, written and documented warnings.
 3. Dismissals based on fair, justified hearings.
 4. Adequate communication/monitoring of outcomes of incidents reported.
 5. Organisational rules as blueprints/benchmarks for assessing degree of cases reported.
 6. Rating scales for gauging seriousness of cases reported.
 7. Critical incident reporting sheets/forms.
 8. Proper documentation of incidents reported.
- There should be appropriate feedback system to help in this regard.
- Communications silos and barriers should be taken into account when making decisions on strategies to help facilitate effective communication.
- For better led educational institutions, emphasis should be placed on leadership communication. Leadership communication uses full range of communication strategies to overcome any interference for effective leadership. It also brings about what Sergiovanni (2007) has considered in his book, *Rethinking Leadership* as “collegiality and intrinsic motivation” (120), capable of bridging the gap between current practice and possible future in educational leadership and culture.
- Horizontal communications network that will give students and non-students opportunities to express their views should be put in place. This will foster student leadership (Crowther et al., 2002:78).
- Adequate procedure for lodging complaints and grievances will be beneficial for effective communication as well as help avert potential conflict (Korabik et al., 1993; Day, 2000:93).
- Emphasis should be placed on workshops, seminars and training that will impact on staff’s awareness of the principles of best practices in the areas of educational leadership/management, management of grievances, conflict resolution and managing aggressive behaviours. This will be beneficial to the front line members of staff, who are in the forefront of driving change at educational institutions. Learning and development has been considered as a method and process responsible for making people (staff and students) to change quantitatively their previous way of assessing issues by broadening their ideas about how to deal with issues.
- There should be 360-degree appraisal system. This is a process whereby feedback is ensured in organisations by taking into account all the suggestions and complaints lodged in all the departments in (educational) organisations (Armstrong, 2009:87).

Other ways in which educational institutions can avert potential conflict and manage conflict are by asking the following questions.

- What are the Impacts of cultural literacy imparted?
- What is the quality of negotiation and mediation knowledge?
- What are the effects of leadership through collaboration and integration?
- How sustainable is the community of learning?
- How are barriers in social relations confronted in terms of student-teacher communication gap or differences?
- Is the nature of communications at schools interactive – involving everybody?

CONCLUSION

What can be considered worth adopting in management and leadership practice in relation to educational institutions is that effective communication and good leadership are basic ingredients to properly manage conflicts and friction arising from factors, which include gender disparity, frequency of complaints, and lack of effective HRM system among others. Failure to make these factors part of the focal points of educational institutions will generate complex, challenging issues for healthy management of educational organisations. Further to this, in order to make sure educational institutions in real-world adopt the suggested strategies articulated in this study, educational policy formulators, administrators and leaders have to put into consideration the perspectives which this research has offered when making educational policies, as well as when adopting blueprints to overhaul such institutions. This will go a long way in helping educational institutions deal with future leadership and communication problems that may arise. Also, this will bring about leadership communication, a strategy that transcends communication interferences and leadership problems. Thus, the points and insights which this study has outlined will be useful in understanding better the issues of communication and leadership in the context of managing educational institutions, as well as leading effectively.

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