Staff Reaction to Information Management in Formal Organizations: A Case Study of Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, Edo State, South-South, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study is designed to investigate the correlation between information dissemination in formal organisations and workers' morale and productivity. The population for this study consists of senior and junior academic and non-academic staff of Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi. Out of this population, 600 academic and non-academic staff were selected by random sampling technique. Results of the analysis showed that hoarding of information by management with regard to delays in payment of salaries, promotions and fringe benefits impacted negatively on staff morale and organisational harmony. Based on the findings, it is recommended that staff be informed whenever there is delay in payment of monthly salaries, promotions and fringe benefits.

Key words: Formal organizations, information management, morale, productivity, salaries, staff reaction

INTRODUCTION

Information is central to the success of any organisation. Without information, there can be no stability, peace, progress, morale or productivity. It is used for planning, organizing, directing, coordinating and controlling. In other words information is the blood-stream of an organisation. It carries nutrient to all parts of the organisation. Without information, there will be no motivation and job satisfaction and morale and productivity will be low. Therefore, information is essential for the survival of organisation.

Information flow between management and staff in an organization goes a long way to promote organizational and industrial harmony. However, where the management of an organization fails to carry the staff along by keeping them abreast, particularly with matter that concern their welfare, there is possibility of disaffection and ill-feelings among the staff towards the management. This may lead to low morale and may not make workers in the organization to give off their best. This no doubt, is capable of negatively affecting productivity in an organization.

It is on this basis that the study undertakes an empirical investigation into staff reaction to information management in formal organisations, using Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, as a case study.

Kiragu (2002) has argued that information flow is at the core of every manager, government system, public or private and the correct interpretation of information is a critical attribute of an effective manager. Such interpretation is the basis of all rational decisions which is the essence of management. He went further to say that information is a product of processing (i.e., analysis and synthesis) of factual data. Hence data, which is collected and stored in various forms, is the raw material for producing information. Incorrect or incomplete data, therefore, gives rise to defective information. Defective information can also arise from poor processing of data. Another factor that contributes to poor information is ineffective communication because of delays, incompleteness, or distortions. This is capable of affecting the morale and productivity of employees negatively. Therefore, developing and sustaining systems that produce, store, transmit and process information is a priority function in public administration and the management of development (Kiragu, 2002).

To Lucey (1997), information is defined as the collection of data that have been interpreted and understood by the recipient of the message. It is the data which has been analyzed, summarized or processed to produce a message or report. To this end, information is very vital to the sustainability of a business or office or organization, for its growth as well as for proper planning, controlling, directing and forecasting. It is hypothesized that information that is not concise, relevant and timely can lower the morale and productivity of employees in an organisation.

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Umara (2006), has equally observed that information is the bedrock of efficient management of any organisation because it depends on processed data which is translated into information for decision making. To Lemay (2002), formal communication is essential to any organisation. It promotes the value of accountability. Effective use of formal communication reduces disparities and discrepancies in policy, procedures, rules and regulations. When properly used, formal communication saves time and allow information to be more fully developed.

According to Argyris (1957), when implementing public policy, administrators will inevitably please some people and offend others. A major function of leadership in a public organisation is to craft communications in ways that inform and please the most and offend the least . . . Communication is best understood as a social process that significantly influences the functioning of any agency and it is best viewed in relation to the social system in which it occurs and the particular functions it performs in that system (Argyris, 1957).

Communication can be seen as the basis upon which effective leadership rests. A leader should at all times show signs of communicating with both his subordinates and his superordinates as this is capable of boosting morale and productivity in an organisation. According to Omoile (2005), information flow is what a leader needs to take decisions affecting both the employees and the organisation. Therefore, he should exhibit a complete mastery of the various communication techniques. An effective leader must be one fully equipped with modern communication techniques and having the intention of promoting free flow of information among his competitors and environment.

Moorhead and Griffin (2001), cited in Akpoveta and Orhewere (2005), summed it up thus: Through information sharing, the leader is able to request, define and x-ray organisational goals and objectives; suggestions are tabled and deliberated and choice made; in decision making, zeal, hope and confidence are inspired and lighted as motivation; duties and responsibilities delegated; result are assessed and evaluated.

Arising from the aforementioned facts, it can be clearly understood that effective information system can make the management to be able to possess the knowledge on how best to interact with its employees and the numerous publics that are indispensable in the attainment of its organisational goals.

This study is therefore of the view that effective dissemination of information in formal organisations as Auchi Polytechnic will increase the morale and productivity of employees. To this end, the researchers seek to conduct an empirical research to ascertain how information duly or unduly disseminated by the management of Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, affect the morale and productivity of its employees.

Statement of the problem: As much as employees want to be informed about matters concerning their welfare in the organisation, management often neglects to meet this staff yearning. In the face of this, the study will seek to find answers to the following questions:

- Does lack of information concerning delay in staff salaries affect their morale and productivity?
- Does delayed promotions affect staff morale and productivity?
- What impact does lack of information with regard to withheld fringe benefits have on staff morale and productivity?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study is an empirical research using the survey design. The instrument of data collection was the questionnaire designed to find out the effect of lack of dissemination of information by management to staff. The specific areas the research is concerned with is the area of delayed staff salaries, delayed promotions and fringe benefits. The population used for this study is academic and non-academic staff of Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi. Out of the population, a sample of 600 was selected using the random sampling technique.

The instrument consisted of 2 parts. Part A was designed to collect personal data, such as age, sex, academic qualifications, marital status and position in the organization. Part B contained 9 items, each seeking to find out how each respondent felt towards information black-out with regard to delay in their monthly salaries, promotions and non-implementation of fringe benefits agreement.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The primary question this study addresses is: Does information flow between management and members of staff of organisations affect workers' productivity and morale?

In order to answer this research question, the respondents were first required to express their feeling towards being invited to meeting by management. Table 1 presents a summary of their reactions.

Table 1: Respondents' reaction on how much they would like regular meetings between staff and management

Reaction	Frequency	Percentage
Very much	216	36.0
So much	363	60.0
No	16	2.7
Do not care	5	0.8
Total	600	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2006

Table 2: Frequency of management meetings with staff

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Very often	18	3.0
Often	24	4.0
Not often	281	46.8
Never	277	46.2
Total	600	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2006

Table 3: Respondents' reaction to invitation to meetings by management

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Very happy	126	21.0
Happy	446	74.3
Not happy	22	3.7
Do not care	6	1.0
Total	600	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2006

Table 4: Provision of information on reasons for delays in payment salary

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	121	20.2
No	479	79.8
Total	600	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2006

Table 5: Provision of information on delays in promotion

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	207	34.5
No	393	65.5
Total	600	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2006

Total 6: Reaction to lack of information on delays in payment of salary

Reaction	Frequency	Percentage
Very satisfied	8	1.3
Satisfied	44	7.3
Not satisfied	366	61.1
Frustrated	182	30.3
Total	600	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2006

Table 7: Reaction to Lack of Information on delays in promotion

Reaction	Frequency	Percentage
Very satisfied	27	4.5
Satisfied	190	31.6
Not satisfied	301	50.2
Frustrated	82	13.7
Total	600	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2006

Data in Table 1 show that the respondents both recognised the value of regular meetings between management and staff in the smooth running of any organisation and expressed the desire for the strategy in order for the organisation to reap the benefit associated with it. About 96% of the respondents stated that they would like a situation where management held regular meetings with staff. It is, therefore, not far-fetched to anticipate organisational failure where this strategy is not applied to the advantage of the organisation.

The study however, found that the organisation did not place any significant premium on inviting its staff for meeting despite the importance that the staff attached to attendance at such meetings. As data in Table 2 show, only 7% of the respondents indicated that they were often invited to meetings, while the remaining 93% stated that such invitation were either not often or never occurred at all.

Invitation to management meetings boosts staff morale where it is a policy of management. It gives the staff a sense of belonging and happiness if their contributions are sought and obtained through such meetings. For instance, the respondents in this study were asked if they would be happy to attend meetings with management. A summary of their reaction is presented in Table 3. As the table shows, only about 5% of the respondents would not be happy or would not bother about such meetings, while 95% would gladly be part of meetings with management.

The next important policy this study addressed was information flow between management and staff. The study adopted a two-step approach to obtaining data on this subject. First, the respondents were asked to indicate the frequency with which information on the common phenomenon of delays in payment of salaries and promotions was provided to them. Their responses are presented in Table 4 and 5. Only 20.2% of the respondents stated that information on delays in payment of salary was provided. In the case of information on delays in promotion, it was 34.5%. The implication of this is that a majority of the staff in the organisation never had any information on delays in payment of salary or promotion.

The value of information flow in organisations cannot be overemphasized. Where information is lacking, frustration, rumours and anxiety take over to the detriment of the smooth management of affairs in the organisation. The organisation loses eventually. The data presented in Table 6 and 7 summarise the reaction of the staff on lack of information on these delays. It is only to be imagined that with such feelings management efficiency must be at low ebb in the organisation.

They were further asked to indicate if information flow between management and them as workers could affect their morale and productivity. Their responses are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Respondents' opinion on the correlation between information flow and staff productivity and morale

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	325	54.2
Agree	268	44.7
Disagree	5	0.8
Strongly disagree	2	0.3
Total	600	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2006

Table 9: Respondents' opinion on alienation due to lack of consultation

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Do not care	34	5.7
No	103	17.2
Much so	306	51.0
Very much	157	26.1
Total	600	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2006

As the table shows, almost all the workers (about 99%) felt a strong correlation between information flow between management and staff and their productivity and morale as workers. In other words, the more there was free flow of information in the organisation, the higher their productivity and morale. Conversely, if the management of the organisation withheld information from the staff, productivity and morale must wane proportionately.

Finally, the respondents were asked if they would feel alienated from the organisation, if not consulted by management on the administration of the organisation. Their opinions are summarized in Table 9.

Disorientation, disillusionment and alienation among workers are often dysfunctional characteristics found to be responsible for low staff productivity and eventual failure of large organisations. A majority of the respondents in this study (77%) clearly indicated that they felt alienated by the fact that the organisation with which they ordinarily would like to identify, failed to consult them in matters concerning the administration of the organisation. Naturally, everybody feels a need to make a contribution to the success of a system he identifies with. Such contributions are lost where the individual, by design or default, is denied the opportunity of making them.

The conclusion arising from the foregoing analysis is that workers perceive a strong relationship between information flow between them and management as a factor that could affect productivity and morale.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study, the following recommendations are hereby made for the smooth running of the affairs of the organisation as follows:

The management of Auchi Polytechnic must ensure that it meets regularly with staff. This will boost staff morale, give them sense of belonging and happiness since their contributions are sought and obtained through such meetings.

The management should place high premium on information flow between management and staff, particularly when there is delay in salaries and promotions. The study has revealed that where this information flow is lacking, frustration, rumours and anxiety take over to the detriment of the smooth management of affairs in the organisation.

The management of Auchi Polytechnic should always consult with workers on matters concerning the administration of the organisation. Workers feel alienated if not consulted by management on the administration of the organisation. This should be prevented since disorientation, disillusionment and alienation among workers are often dysfunctional characteristics found to be responsible for low staff productivity and eventual failure of large organisations.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the correlation between information flow and workers' morale and productivity in formal organisations, using Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi as a case study. It revealed that lack of information flow between the management and staff, particularly when there is delay in payment of salaries and promotions, can lead to frustration, rumours and anxiety which do not augur well for the smooth management of the organisation. It also revealed that workers feel alienated where they are not consulted in matters concerning the management of affairs of the organisation. This also has dysfunctional effects on the productivity of workers and eventual failure of large organisations.

The study concluded that the management of Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi, must endeavour to always carry the staff along through information flow between it and staff. This no doubt, will ensure smooth management of the organisation, as workers would have a sense of belonging.

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