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**A COMMUNICATION AUDIT OF THE INTERNAL PUBLICS OF
PRIVATELY OWNED SECONDARY SCHOOLS: THE CASE OF
NAIROBI COUNTY, KENYA.**

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to analyze feedback mechanisms used in POSSS: the case of Nairobi County, Kenya.

Methodology: The study used a descriptive research design engaging both the qualitative and quantitative approaches. A sample size of 18 schools with a total of 162 individuals was selected consisting School Managers (SMs), Heads of Departments (HODs) and Presidents of the Students' Councils (POSCO) - categories using stratified and purposive sampling methods. The preferred data collection tools were questionnaires and an interview guide. Data was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics

Results: Findings from the study indicated that private secondary schools use all the communication channels; oral, written and electronic identified in the study even though some of the channels are given greater emphasis in transmitting school information than others. The findings also pointed to loopholes in feedback mechanisms since effective feedback was not always obtained in Privately Owned Secondary Schools (POSSs). The findings also pointed towards an existing communication gap in the area of key communication indicators such as the non-existence of organization charts, communication plans, clarity of responsibilities and reporting lines. The communication gaps existed in POSSs as the communication inventories sent conflicting messages to internal publics. The study also showed that websites as a communication tool was not effectively used since some POSSs had no websites, and those that had, were not effective for various reasons. The findings implied that there existed challenges in the use of email and hence email as a communication tool was ineffective.

Policy recommendation: The study recommended that future studies can then investigate whether this status quo had changed. In addition, the study had contributed to communication audit methodology because of its rigorous and methodical approach in verifying the existence and

effectiveness of communication in POSS promote idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspiration motivation and individualized consideration as they influence performance positively.

Keywords: *communication channels, Communication Audit, Internal Publics*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Communication audits are necessary in establishing, fostering and developing an institution's growth and stability. In a time when the education section has been commercialized (Patel, 1989) it is important that such audits be carried out regularly. Education industry has many resources which include the management, buildings and teachers which are considered as the factors of production. Students on the other hand are the raw materials and the publics are seen as the market for education services (Carlsmith & Railback, 2001); all must be maximized to ensure all internal publics speak effectively in order to ensure symbiotic relationships in the institution. In this perspective, secondary schools must devise all the available means to communicate effectively to the internal publics because communication is of indispensable significance to relationships in any organization.

There has been a tremendous increase in both the number of secondary schools and the student intake enrolment in response to the rapidly growing number of primary school graduates seeking entry to secondary school level (Aron, 1989). Only about 50% of the pupils that sit the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) get places in public secondary schools (Aron, 1989). This has led to the necessity to increase the establishment of POSSs to help absorb the students who are not successful in securing placement in public secondary schools (PSSs) (Aron, 1989).

The emergence of POSSs in Kenya has helped to ease pressure on the rising population of students needing form one placement. The Ominde Report (1964) had recognized the growth of educational institutions at all levels. The report recommended that private schools be allowed to continue for parents who prefer such schools and are able to meet the cost. The Kamunge Report (1988) recommended the need for the government to acknowledge, accommodate and support the role of other education providers such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), religious organizations and private school developers in its effort to "reach all unreached". More recently after President Kibaki launched the Free Primary Education (FPE) in 2003, the government drafted Sessional Paper No. One (2005) as a roadmap to achieving the goal of Education for all by 2015. But after a thorough analysis of the required resources to accomplish the objective the government realised that that it was unable to foot the bill required. "In view of the heavy public support required, there is need for increased participation by the private sector in the provision and expansion of education", it noted. The government then moved to encourage investment from the private sector to sustain expansion and gave incentives to private developers to make private education more attractive. As a result the number of privately owned schools grew exponentially. In spite of this recommendation, the MOE does not recognise POSSs in its organisational structure (*cf.* Appendix E).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The importance of proper communication in facilitating the development of the education system in Kenya cannot be overemphasized. A report from the Task Force Report on the Discipline and

Unrest in Secondary Schools in Kenya (2001) points towards a growing need to address the lack of clear established channels of communication and blockages in the freedom to express opinion by teachers and students which eventually result in system failure. Another research by the Higher Education Board (2008) notes that public secondary schools were the most affected by strikes and this was a sign which heralded the existence of communication gaps in those schools.

One way of gauging the nature of communication in an organization is through a communication audit. Any organization is keen in making sure that its internal publics receive adequate information, promptly and through appropriate channels, in order to enable them execute their responsibilities effectively. To facilitate this, the right channels ought to be availed by the organization. It is therefore, necessary to audit the communication channels used by internal publics of POSSs using a communication audit methodology to establish what is working and what is not; and that there is no gap in the communication process. The measurement of an internal audit would create allowance for school managers to obtain feedback from their internal publics by collecting information from fundamental areas of internal communication in order to make a distinction between the actual situations against that which management perceives to be the situation.

The months of June and July 2008 saw a spiral of unrests in many public secondary schools (Daily Nation 24, July 2008). Reports from the local media indicated that Form 4 students were not willing to take up Trial Kenya Certificate of Secondary Examination (TKCSE) as is the norm in most secondary schools during second term. The matter was further discussed in parliament and Members of Parliament called for dialogue between the teachers and their students (Behaviour-Online, 2008). Most schools that suffered the unrests were public secondary schools; (Afrol News Staff Writer, 2008). However, Afrol News Staff Writer reported that a few privately owned secondary schools got caught up in the disturbances some of which included Sunshine Secondary School, whose students were sent home three times. This was an indicator that the problem of unrest in schools also affected private schools, thanks to a report by (Muindi & Ngirachu, 2008) aiming to prove that POSSs had potential to explode when communication bottlenecks arise.

The one sure way of keeping a school relatively free of students' unrests is to keep communication channels open for them to inquire and to be given the right response by school managers. A good internal communication system is crucial to a school because it ensures proper messages flow to its publics. Schools have a hierarchical nature and the hierarchy is divided into classes, departments and the management that communicate all the time through various communication channels.

It is against this back-drop that the study seeks to establish the style of communication existing in POSSs. However, to achieve this requires a communication audit of the internal publics of the POSSs. It is therefore, necessary to audit communication channels used by the internal publics of POSSs and establish any gaps in the communication processes with an aim of using the findings as a reference point to other schools and also to facilitate improvement of the existing communication systems in POSSs.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

- To describe the feedback mechanisms used in POSSs.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Empirical Review

According to Robbins & Judge (2001), an organization is a consciously co-ordinate social unit composed of two or more people that function on a relatively continuous basis to achieve a common goal or set of goals. Communication is the cement of an organization's activities.

According to Mbiti (2009), communication is the lifeblood of any organization. It permeates all aspects of social life and promotes interaction between individuals and groups (Robbins & Judge, 2007). In the school context, it is unimaginable to run any of the activities therein without a proper communication system (Mbiti, 2009). Communication can make or break any human organization. It has an intricate nature and structure which can be quite demanding but useful in the context of institution administration. According to Deetz (1992), we participate in organizations in almost every aspect of our lives. Further, he states that we are born in organizations, educated by organizations, and spend much of our lives working for organizations i.e. from birth to death; organizations impact every aspect of our lives. The cord that binds together all organizational activities is effective communication. This is in agreement with Robbins & Judge (2007) who states that we organize together what we cannot accomplish individually, and organizing happens through effective communication. Many institutions perpetually take deliberate efforts to ensure effective communication as a means of strengthening their production.

Organizational communication is related to several concepts and tasks, such as trust or understanding, and communication skills like holding meetings and listening. Communication is the thread that holds the various interdependent parts of an organization together. The functions of planning, coordination, and control are very important processes. If communication were somehow removed from industry, it would collapse instantly (Rogers & Agarwala-Rogers, 1976).

According to Hoy and Miskel (1982) a school is defined as a formal organization which has been deliberately established for a specific purpose. Davies (1970) argues that "we lack anything like an adequate sociology of the school, and that one aspect of that lack is in terms of our knowledge of school as an organization" (P.250). As formal organizations, schools have goals, rules, regulations, structures and division of labour; all consciously designed to guide the activities of its members.

Schools communicate with their internal publics in diverse ways. Communication in a school is important for the purpose of management and planning. There is no doubt that communication is the lifeblood of a school community. All the internal publics who constitute the school community; be they students, teachers or the management, all need to be kept informed of what is happening within their organization. While much of this communication is about imparting essential knowledge, the national project indicates the importance that students attach to being able to explore issues that affect them, or have the potential to do so. The field of education is experiencing a paradigm shift from providing isolated services for students with special needs to collaborating within schools to include all students. Simultaneously, teaching is evolving from an isolated act to one requiring increased interaction (Walther-Thomas *et al.*, 2000). To achieve this, effective communication must be applied. According to Marie-Therese-Jensen, (2003) effective communication starts with effective skills in listening, speaking, questioning and sharing feedback.

Organizational study shows that organizations consist of paths through which communication travels (Perrigo & Gaut, 1982). These paths are categorized into two sections: formal and informal

.According to Myers and Myers (1982), messages do not just sit around waiting to be discovered, nor do they float around randomly to be picked up by some lucky accidents. Messages are crafted by a sender, sent through a vehicle then received by a receiver.

Communication in schools is sent through various directions using the formal and informal channels while taking vertical or horizontal directions in both channels. Hierarchy is a crucial aspect to consider when examining organizational communication.

In a school hierarchy, messages are transmitted formally through vertical (top-down and downup), lateral (horizontal) flows and through the informal grapevine. The formal downward has dominated the process of communication in schools (Canary, 2001). It is used by school managers to direct and influence the activities of those who occupy the lower hierarchical levels. School managers convey their messages downward to the staff and students through memos, policies, instructions, directives, speeches, notice boards, newsletters, manuals, and oral media among many others. It is mostly done for information dissemination. Patton and Griffin (1974) explain that “formal channels influence the nature of messages in several important ways. Organizations tend to specify the nature of the messages that flow through formal channels” (PP.299-300). According to Katz and Khan (1998) goals of this type of communication are expected to achieve: implementation of goals, job instructions, procedures, performance feedback and socialization. However, Tourish (2010) criticizes this flow and argues that messages can be distorted if they travel a great distance from their sender to the ultimate receiver down through the formal school organization hierarchy.

2.2 Theoretical review

This study shall be modelled on the Two-way symmetric model of Public Relations. It was developed by Grunig and Grunig (1992) through four categories of relationships: - press agency, public information model, one-way asymmetrical and the two-way symmetrical model. The press agency model thrived on manipulation, public information model on press releases, the one-way asymmetrical model on persuasion and manipulation, and the two-way symmetrical model on communication and negotiation with publics to promote mutual understanding (Theaker, 2004).The Two-way symmetric model introduces the idea of feedback. According to Theaker (2004) communication in this model is fully reciprocal and power relationships are balanced. Windhal *et al.* (1992) in Theaker (2004) argues that the terms ‘sender’ and ‘receiver’ are not applicable in such a communication process where the goal is mutual understanding.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive research design engaging both the qualitative and quantitative approaches. A sample size of 18 schools with a total of 162 individuals was selected consisting School Managers (SMs), Heads of Departments (HODs) and Presidents of the Students’ Councils (POSCO) - categories using stratified and purposive sampling methods. The preferred data collection tools were questionnaires and an interview guide. Data was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics

4.0 RESULTS FINDINGS

4.1 Response Rate

Out of anticipated 162 responses, the study successfully received back 100. This represented an overall response rate of 61.7%. This response rate was considered sufficient to provide adequate data for analysis and generalization. This is supported by Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) who assert that a response rate of 50% is appropriate in guaranteeing accuracy and minimizing bias.

Response distribution of the respondents’ target groups are presented in Table 4.1 below. The number of schools that responded was 18.

Table 1: Response Rate

Category	Count	Percent
HOD	80	80
POSCO	10	10
School Managers	10	10
Total	100	100

This study sought to find out whether departmental staff/colleagues acknowledged receipt of memos. The findings are presented in Figure 1

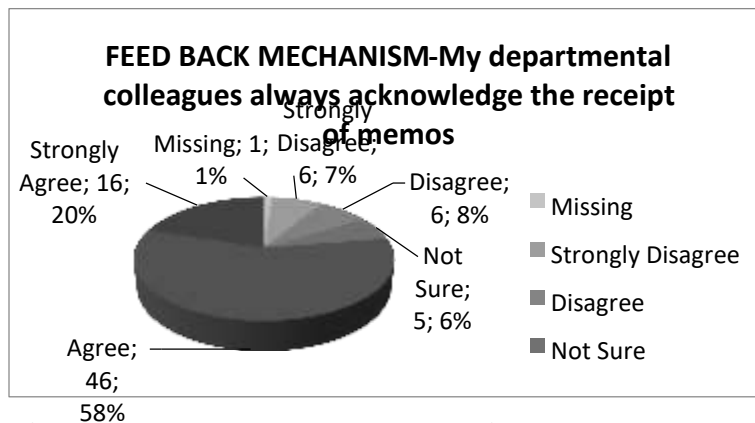


Figure 1: Memo Feedback Mechanism

From the findings, 58% of the respondents agreed with the statement that, “my departmental colleagues always acknowledged receipt of memos.” However, 13% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. This finding shows that the majority of the memo recipients acknowledged receipt. However, the realization of respondents who disagreed with the statement shows some inefficiency in the feedback mechanism relating to acknowledgement of receipt of memos. These results are consistent with Moorhead and Griffin (1995) who reported that feedback is the response of the receiver to the sender’s message. Feedback ensures that the message was actually received exactly as intended. Therefore, its importance cannot be underestimated since it is the loop of communication without which meaningful contact halts and communication cannot make progress (Watson & Hill, 1993).

Further, this study sought to find out the level of agreement to the statement that, “my departmental colleagues always acknowledged the receipt of email.” The findings presented in Figure 2 indicate that 30% of the respondents agreed with the statement, 22% strongly disagreed, while 23% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. This implies that there was a weakness in feedback relating to acknowledgement of receipt of email.

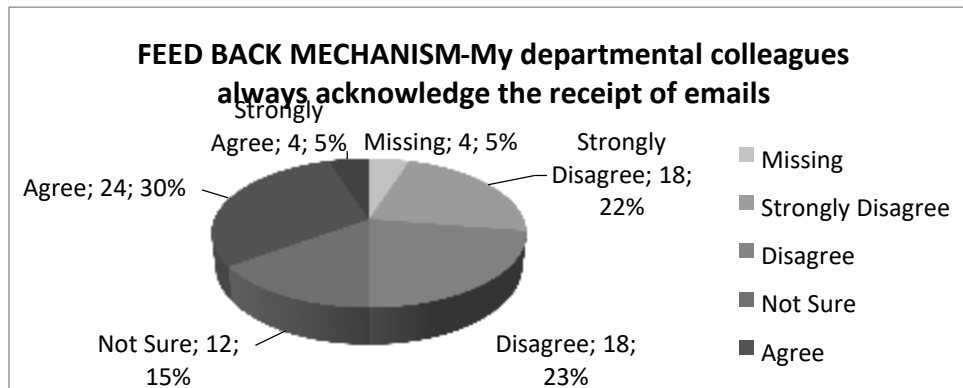


Figure 2: Email Feedback mechanism

This study sought to find out whether departmental colleagues always replied to email. Findings from the study indicate that 31% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Another 16% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that “*my departmental colleagues always replied to email.*” Together with these respondents, 15% were not sure while 5% were missing. Thus use of email was the least used feedback mechanism. This implies that there exists a gap in feedback mechanism. These findings support the research of Ezeanya (2001) who summarized effective communication as essentially messages sent and received, and confirmation of their receipt and interpretation is returned from a sender, to ensure a two-way process.

The findings are presented in Figure 3.

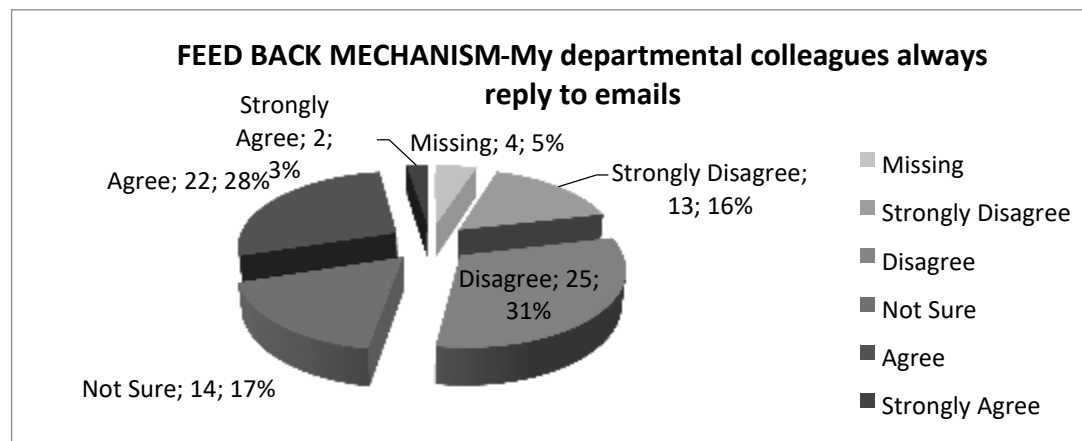


Figure 3: Email Reply

This study further sought to find out the level of agreement to the statement that departmental colleagues always return calls left on voice mail. The findings are presented in Figure 4.10 below.

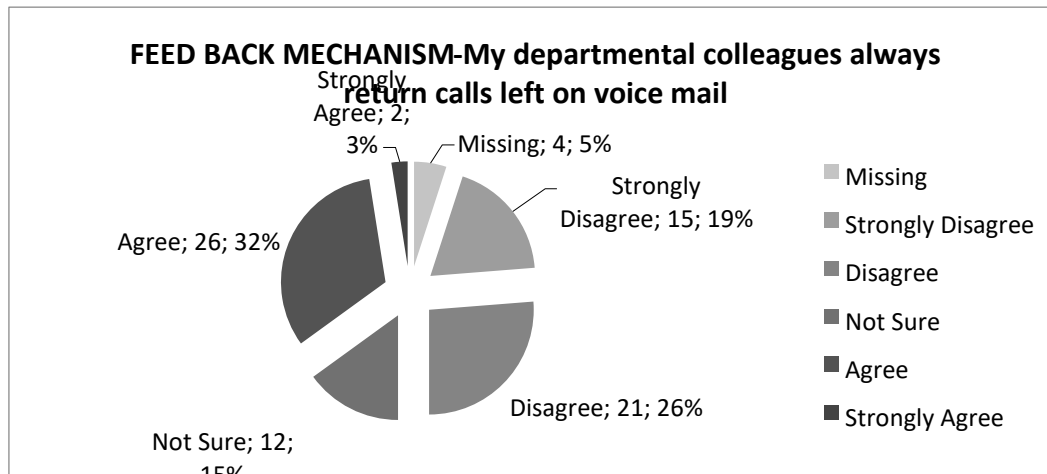


Figure 4: Response to Voice mail Messages

From the findings, the majority of the respondents (32%) agreed with the statement, 19% of the responses strongly disagreed, and 26% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. This shows that there was a weakness in feedback relating to returning calls left on voice mail with most respondents (45%) not responding to voice mail messages. The findings on the respondents' colleagues' confirmation of attendance or non-attendance to departmental meetings presented in Figure 4.11 show that 66% of the respondents agreed with the statement that departmental colleagues agreed that they attended departmental meetings with another 18% strongly agreeing to this statement. However, 14% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. Further results are presented in Fig 5

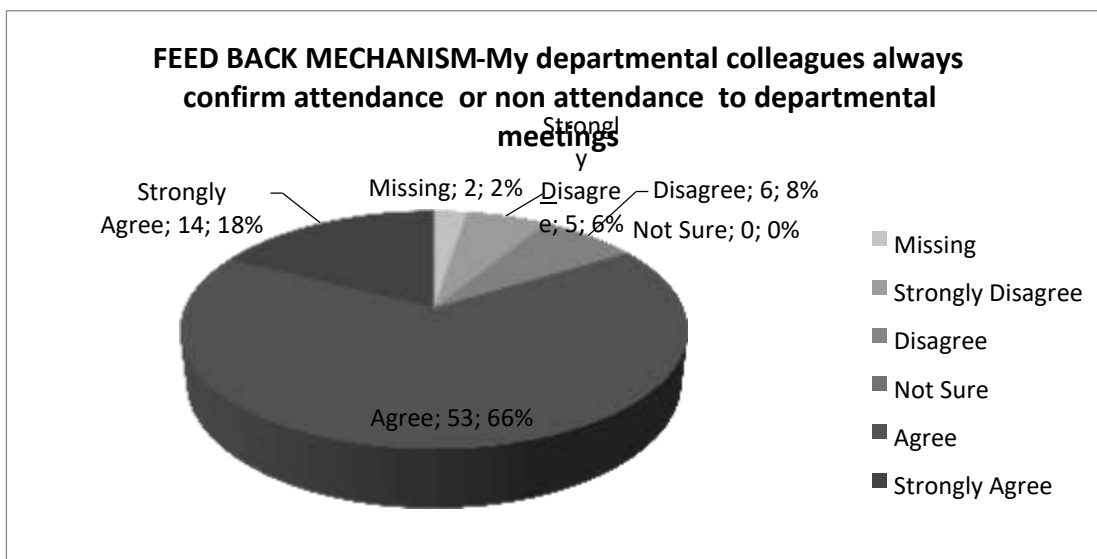


Figure 5: Confirmation of Meeting Attendance and Non attendance

The findings in this section are in line with Grunig and Grunig's (1992) two-way symmetrical model. The two-way symmetrical model on communication and negotiation seeks to promote mutual understanding by introducing the idea of feedback. Thus the application of the downward, upward and horizontal organizational communication flows (Gartside, 1986). Hence the demonstration of a fully reciprocal model and power balanced relationships (Theaker, 2004). What seems to be the conclusion from these findings is that, departmental meetings are well attended and may be one of the effective ways of communication in POSSs.

Analytical Reviews

In-depth analytical reviews are important as they highlight areas that were not covered in a general audit. This study sought to find out if it was necessary to carry out in-depth analytical reviews on the communication systems of the schools. The findings are represented in Figure 6.

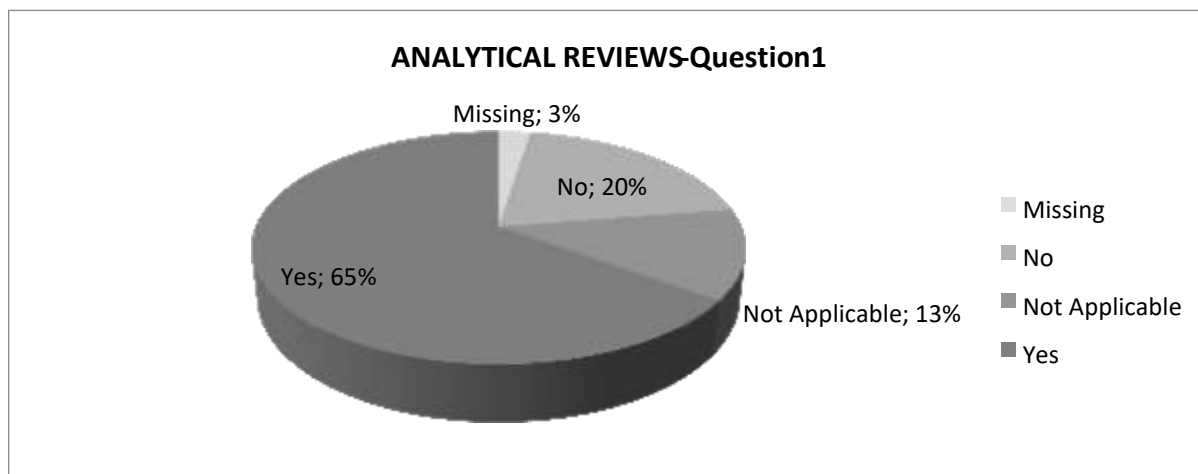


Figure 6: Analytical Reviews

The findings indicate that the majority of the respondents(65%) confirmed that it was necessary to do further analytical reviews on the POSSs communication systems. This further implies that an indepth communication audit for every school is necessary. The findings are consistent with those of Muka (2005) who conducted a study on Communication Barriers in School Management in Starehe Division and recommended that communication systems used in schools should be regularly evaluated.

The findings in Figure 7 show that 80% of the respondents confirmed that they had been misunderstood before when they communicated some message.

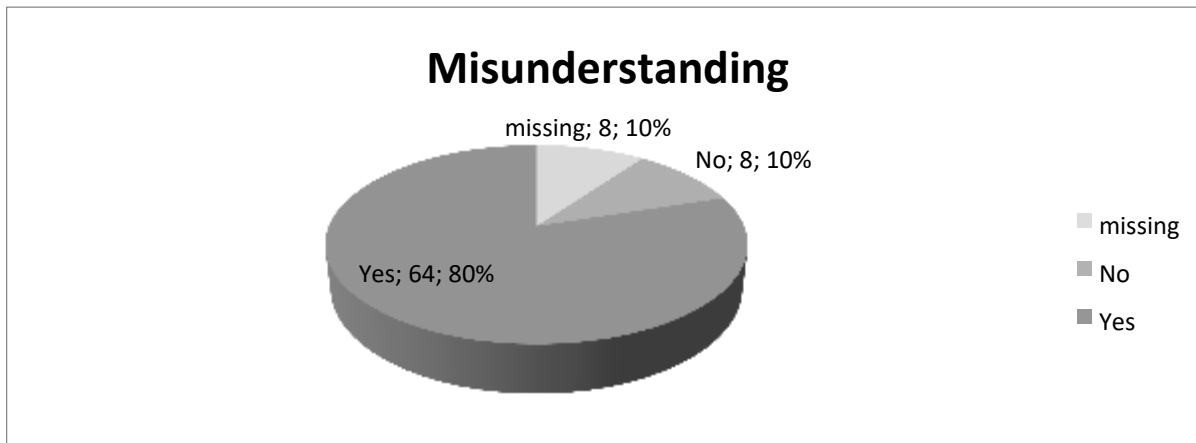


Figure 8: Miscommunication/Misunderstanding

This study sought to find out the causes of misunderstanding. The findings presented in Figure 9 show that the respondents indicated that the main cause of misunderstanding was as a result of conflicting duties and resistance to new ideas reported by 24% of the respondents, attitudes had a response of 13%, wrong mode of communication had 13%, maintaining discipline had 8%, while personal characteristics of recipient and sender such as age and intelligence had a response of 8%. Ambiguous questions and instructions was reported by 5% of the respondents while ensuring performance among staff and negotiations for better salary were each reported by 5% and 3% of the respondents respectively. These findings were in agreement with the findings of the studies by Muka (2005) which showed that some of the challenges of effective internal communication in schools are a lack of clear communication channels, and school managers not acting on feedback.

These results are also in line with Baran's (2010) explanation that some of the barriers to effective communication include frame of reference where people involved in the process of communication may elucidate the same message differently or filtering where information transmitted from sender to receiver in either direction is manipulated to a favourable way to suit the receiver. It could also be due to information over-load where the person involved in the communication process is frequently over-loaded with information than they can effectively handle or semantics where misinterpretation of words can be a barrier because meanings are not in the words but in the minds of the people who receive those words, and status differences where the higher one's status in the school, the less likely the person will have effective communication with personnel a few levels removed.

Also, Asugo (2006) in a study on communication strategies used by head teachers in management of secondary schools in Nyamira District found out that school administrators did not properly address their students' grievances due to lack of clear communication channels. Some respondents cited distortion of the message as it passed from one person to another since most of the information was said to be relayed. Filtration of messages was rampant since the information conveyed would be manipulated and omission of parts of the intended message was noted due to fear of retributive consequences.

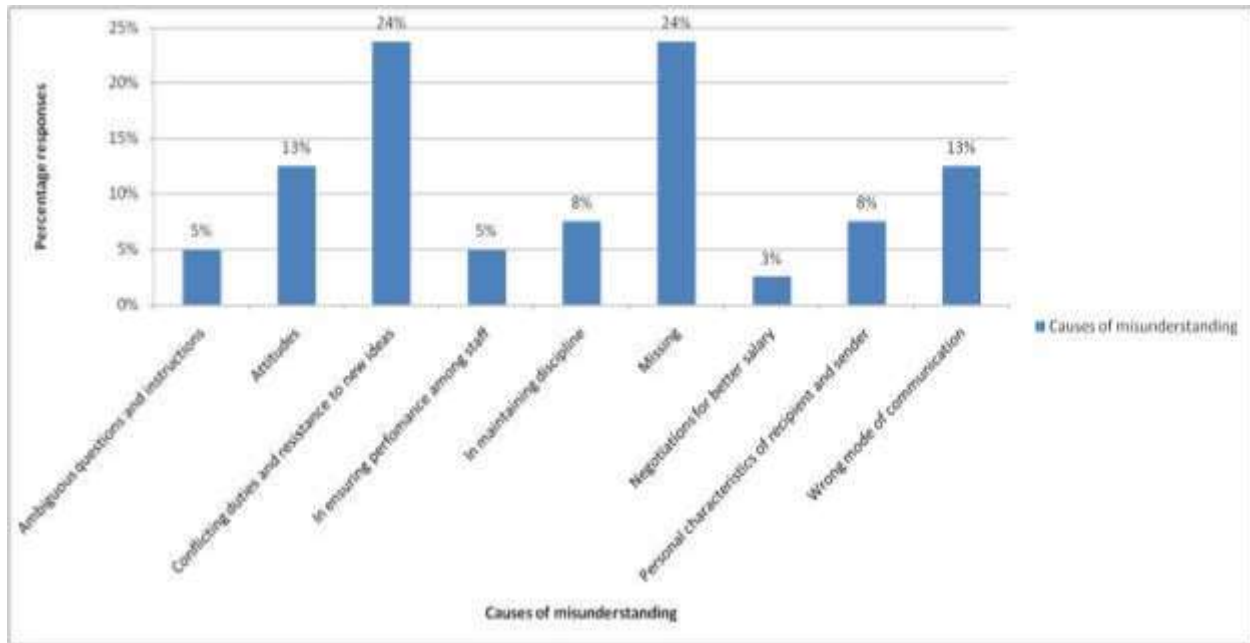


Figure 9: Causes of Misunderstanding

Suggestions for Improving Communication

The study sought to find out if there were any suggestions for improving communication in POSSs. The findings are presented in Table 4.11

Table 1: Suggestions for Improving Communication

Grouped responses question 20	Count	Ways of improving communication
No response	41	51%
use of organization charts, Sacking of teacher be well agreed upon e.g. contract letter	2	3%
clear speech	2	3%
employ face to face discussion in resolving department matters, memos, documentation of information	9	11%
school to use suggestion boxes confidentiality	2	3%
Document the information wherever communication takes place so that reference of it can be made	6	8%
Increase the use of emails since it is fast in communication	4	5%

Team work , learning from others, learning how to listen	4	5%
Through telephone calls and sometimes writing letters	2	3%
talking to them directly discussing over all relevant issues	2	3%
Need to update the website, introduce Email policy and increase the number of computers	4	5%
Open discussion with colleagues and students on matters concern them	2	3%
Total	80	100%

Respondents in the HOD category recommended that the school management should employ face to face discussion in resolving departmental matters; and use of internal memos and documentation of information should be increased. From the findings 11% of the respondents felt that there should be an introduction of the use of email as a communication channel since it is fast while 5% suggested that the existing websites be updated and an introduction of email policy put in place. This calls for the need to invest in ICT infrastructure and increase the number of computers with internet connectivity in the POSSs. Another 5% of the respondents suggested that the use of the suggestion box be introduced to cater for confidentially for those members of staff who might fear being perceived as outspoken or “whistle blowers”. More open discussions with colleagues and students were reported by 3% of the respondents. This implies the need for a feedback mechanism and encouraging the upward, downward and horizontal communication as echoed by Gartside (1986).

POSCO Responses

Gender of POSCO respondents

This study sought to find out the gender composition of POSCO respondents. The findings are presented in Figure 5

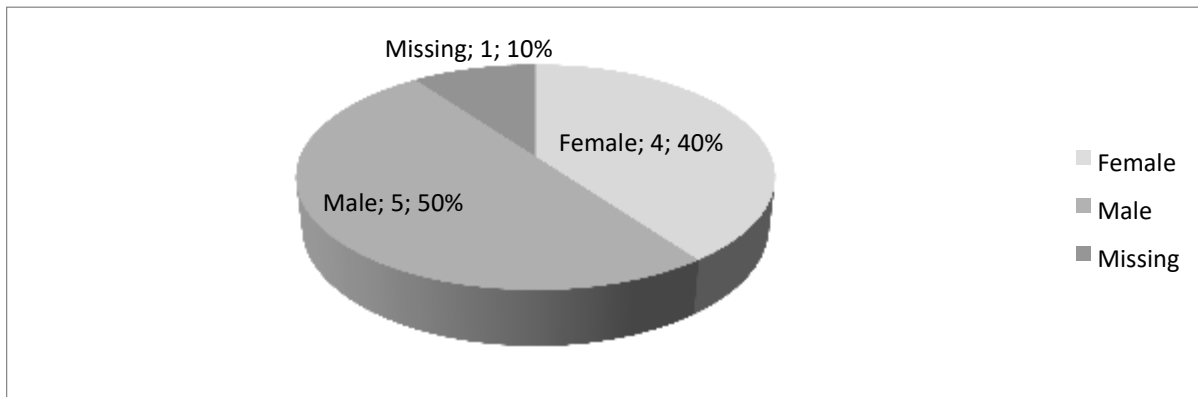


Figure 5: POSCO Gender Response

From the findings, 50% of the respondents in the POSCO category were male while female respondents were 40%. These findings show that there were more males than females in POSCO.
Age of POSCO

The study sought to find out the age distribution of POSCO respondents. The findings are presented in Figure 6

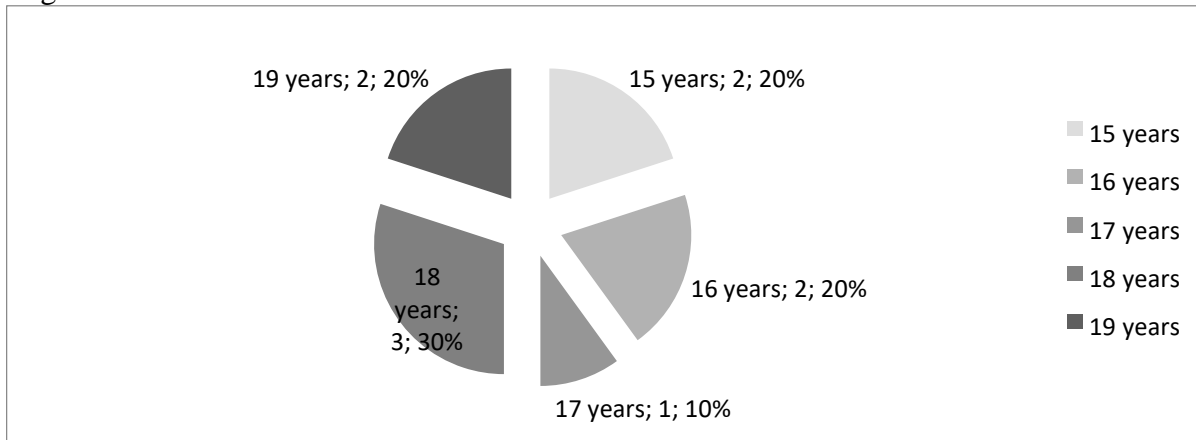


Figure 6: Age of POSCO Respondents

The findings show that less than half of the respondents (30%) were aged 18 years, respondents aged 19, 16 and 15 years each had a 20% response while 10% of the respondents in the POSCO category was aged 17 years. This indicates that about 50% were aged between 16 years and 19 years implying that they were considered responsible enough to be entrusted with the leadership role in their schools. They were also considered mature enough to offer their views on communication flow in their respective schools.

Class

The findings presented in Figure 12 show that 60% of the respondents in the POSCO category were in Form 4 while 40% were in Form 3. This means that POSCO had been in their respective

schools long enough and understood the communication patterns in their respective institutions.

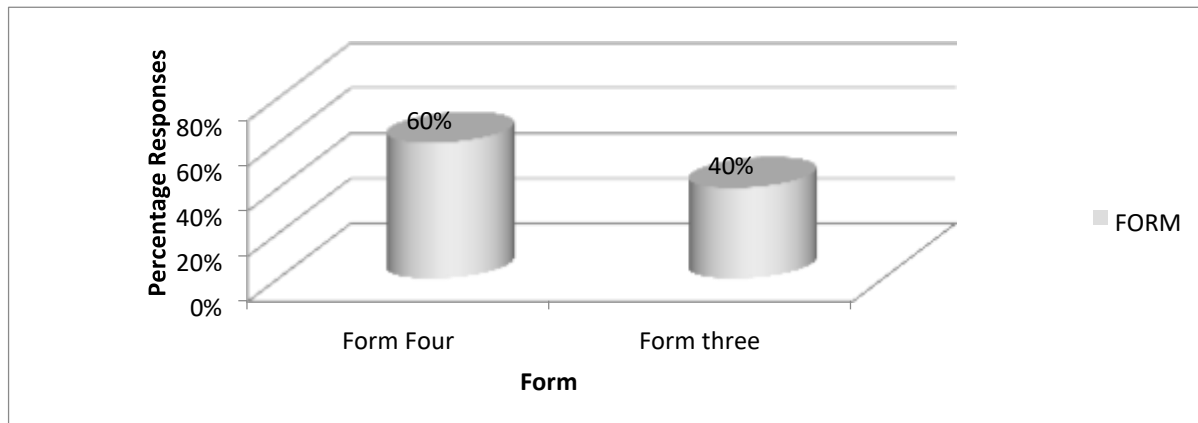


Figure 7: Form Knowledge about the School

The study sought to find out how the POSCO respondents knew about the school. The findings are presented in Figure 8.

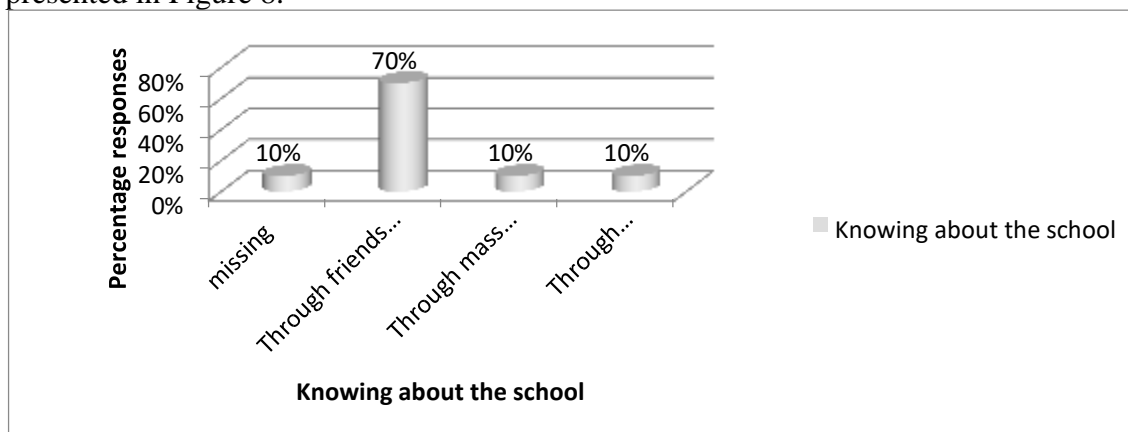


Figure 8: Source of Information about the School

The majority of the respondents (70%) knew about the school through friends who were either current students or had attended the same school earlier. The finding implies that private secondary schools rarely advertise through the mass media and rely heavily on word of mouth.

Channels used for Communicating Information

This study sought to find out the channels of communication according to the view of POSCO. The findings are presented in the following Table 4.12

Table 2 : Channels

		count	Percent

school program	Announcement	1	10%
	Missing	5	50%
	Parade	1	10%
	Sign- up sheet	2	20%
	student council	1	10%
school activities	Announcement	1	10%
	departmental representative	1	10%
	Missing	5	50%
	Parade	3	30%
time table	class announcements	1	10%
	class meetings	1	10%
	class secretary	1	10%
	in class	2	20%
	Missing	5	50%
school rules	class meetings	1	10%
	deputy principal	1	10%
	Missing	5	50%
	notice board	2	20%
	Parade	1	10%
calendar of events	administration{ school principal)	1	10%
	Missing	5	50%
	notice board	2	20%
	Parade	2	20%

emerging critical days	Missing	5	50%
	notice board	2	20%
	Parade	2	20%
	student council	1	10%

From the findings, 10% of the respondents in the POSCO category indicated that announcements, parade, sign-up sheet, student council were channels used to relay information about school program. Another 30% of the respondents indicated that announcements, departmental head or, parade were channels used to relay information about school activities while 10% indicated that class announcements, class meetings, class secretary, were channels used to relay information about time table. Another 10% of the respondents indicated that class meetings, deputy principal, notice boards, parade were channels used to relay information on school rules.

Further, 20% of the respondents reported that school managers, notice board and parades were channels used to relay information on calendar of events. In addition, 20% of the respondents indicated that notice boards, parade announcements, and the students' council were some of the channels used to relay information on emerging critical issues. It is evident from the results that the findings in this category did not differ from those of the HOD category regarding communication channels

5.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

Findings on the feedback mechanisms used in POSSs revealed that 58% of the respondents agreed with the statement that the departmental colleagues always acknowledged the receipt of memos. However, the respondents who strongly agreed or disagreed showed that there was a weakness in feedback relating to acknowledging receipt of memos. Moorhead and Griffin's (1995) argues that feedback ensures that the message was actually received exactly as intended. Therefore, the importance of feedback cannot be underestimated. This is also in conformity with Watson & Hill (1993) who assert that feedback is the loop of communication without which meaningful contact halts and communication cannot make progress.

In addition, these results reveal that 30% of the respondents agreed with the statement that 'my departmental colleagues always acknowledge the receipt of emails'. However, a significant 22% strongly disagreed and 23% agreed thus showing inefficiency in feedback mechanism relating to acknowledging receipt of emails. The findings further indicate that 31% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that 'my departmental colleagues always reply to emails'. Another 16% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that 'my departmental colleagues always reply to emails', an indication that there exists a gap in feedback mechanism. These results are consistent with other results in the email etiquette section which highlight that use of email and lack of an email policy presents a communication gap in POSSs. These findings are also consistent

with the results in the section determining the communication channels used by POSSs. It was evident that email use was rare among internal publics in POSSs.

The study further reveals that 32% of the respondents agreed with the statement that 'my departmental colleagues always return calls left on voicemail'. However, a percentage of 19% responses strongly disagreed, and 26% that agreed, an indication of inefficiency in feedback relating to returning calls left on voice mail. This is in line with Smith (1992) who suggests that effective communication should result in shared meaning which occurs through feedback thus making communication an alternate exchange of messages, lack of which impedes successful communication from taking place.

Finally, the findings from the study indicate that the majority of respondents (66%) agreed with the statement that 'my departmental colleagues always confirm attendance or non attendance to departmental meetings'. However, 14% of the respondents disagreed with the statement showing that there was a gap in feedback relating to departmental colleague's always confirming attendance or non-attendance to departmental meetings. The findings are in line with Grunig and Grunig's (1992) Two-way Symmetrical Model. The two-way symmetrical model on communication and negotiation seeks to promote mutual understanding by introducing the idea of feedback. According to Theaker (2004) communication in this model is fully reciprocal

Conclusions

Effective feedback mechanisms were lacking in POSSs since some school managers failed to encourage direct communication between themselves and the student body. This was perceived as a potential problem which was likely to cause tension or disruption, especially when students feel they have been left out of the decision making processes affecting them. Effective communication can be enhanced in schools by putting in place both formal and informal feedback mechanisms to establish how the messages flowing in the schools are interpreted by the student body thus encouraging free flow of communication from all directions

Recommendations

From the findings of the study, the researcher made the following recommendations. Firstly, privately owned secondary schools should employ face to face discussion in resolving departmental matters, and the documentation of that information applied. POSSs should also invest in ICT since the use of email as a communication channel is fast and reliable. The introduction of an email policy is crucial and the number of computers in the schools should be increased. The POSSs that have existing websites should consider updating them with relevant information about the schools and making them user friendly. The use of a suggestion box for teachers should be adopted to cater for confidentially while open and free discussions on matters affecting the internal publics of the schools should be encouraged without fear of reprisal.

Secondly, more communication space should be opened up to allow students to freely express themselves. The respondents indicated that more interaction between the students and the school management should be encouraged. There was an indication that use of suggestion boxes for both teachers and students should be established. Some POSCO indicated that student involvement in decision making concerning school affairs should be implemented since they are part of it and they

make the school. Further, students should be given an opportunity to exhale and air their views. A few respondents suggested that more notice boards should be put up.

Thirdly, it may be necessary that school managers hold frequent meetings with the student body instead of relying on class teachers and class presidents. This may encourage openness and enable the school managers to handle any accruing issues as they arise instead of waiting until they became emergencies.

Finally, the internal publics should overcome various communication barriers while conveying information by using clear language to the receivers thereby avoiding “noise” in the communication and ensuring feedback. Also, all the communication facilities and channels used should not lead to filtration and distortion to ensure that the intended message reaches the intended target the way the sender intended.

Lastly, proprietors and/or developers of private secondary schools should invest in staff development of their school managers with a deliberate emphasis on corporate communication since private secondary schools are run like corporate/ private businesses.

Recommended Areas for Further Studies

The study audited communication among internal publics of POSSs in Nairobi County. Similar studies should be conducted in public secondary schools. The study also recommends that regular in-depth communication audits be conducted in all POSSs with a view to understanding the actual communication gaps. The study has shown that communication audits of internal publics of organizations need to be conducted regularly and follow-up of audit findings and recommendations done. The study further recommends that a comparative study of a communication audit in the private and public secondary schools in Kenya be conducted to fully understand the level of communication audit effectiveness in the public schools *vis-a-vis* the private schools, with a view to highlighting the differences, if any. Finally, the study recommends that the scope of internal audit services should not be limited to the audit of regular activities only. Also, budgetary allocation and vote heads for communication audits amongst internal publics in POSSs should be established.

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