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

Nanncy Adagala, **Prof.**Bowen Michael

IPRJB
INTERNATIONAL PEER REVIEWED
JOURNAL AND BOOK PUBLISHING

A Communication Audit of the Internal Publics of Privately Owned Secondary Schools: The Case of Nairobi County, Kenya.

[1*] Nanncy Adagala,

[1*]School of Arts and Social Sciences, Department of Media, Film and Communication

Maasai Mara University

*Corresponding Author's Email: nadagala@mmarau.ac.ke

[2*] Prof. Bowen Michael PhD,

Lecturer, Daystar University

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to conduct a communication audit of the internal publics of privately owned Secondary Schools (POSSs) in 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 POSSs 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

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 POSSs promote idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspiration motivation and individualized consideration as they influence performance positively.

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

African Journal Of Education And Practice
ISSN xxxx-xxxx (Paper) ISSN 2518-881X (online) (Online)
Vol.2, Issue 1No.1, pp 1 - 25, 2017

www.iprjb.org

1.0 INTRODUCTION

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 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).

1.1 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 in Kenya (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 was against this back-drop that the study sought to establish the style of communication existing in POSSs. However, to achieve this required a communication audit of the internal publics of the POSSs. It was therefore, necessary to audit communication channels used by the internal publics of POSSs to yestablish 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.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

- To identify the communication channels used by the internal publics of POSSs.
- To establish the key message types communicated amongst internal publics of POSSs.

- To describe the feedback mechanisms used in POSSs.
- To evaluate whether effective communication took place among the internal publics 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 down-up), 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 agentry, public information model, one-way asymmetrical and the two-way symmetrical model. The press agentry 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.

African Journal Of Education And Practice
ISSN xxxx-xxxx (Paper) ISSN 2518-881X (online) (Online)
Vol.2, Issue 1No.1, pp 1 - 25, 2017

www.iprjb.org

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

4.2: Face To Face Communication

The findings presented in Table 4.2 showed that different aspects of face to face communication are one of the important aspects of communication amongst internal publics. However, the researcher preferred to round of the percentages of the findings for ease of presentation and so what was presented does not add up to exactly 100%

Table 2: Face To Face As a Communication Channel for Various Activities

	No response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
Duties and other school activities	2.5%	0%	2.5%	0%	50%	45%
Changes in curriculum	2.5%	2.5%	9%	3%	49%	35%
School program	4.5%	4%	10%	2.5%	39%	40%
Time table	2.5%	0%	28%	1%	22.5%	46%
Teachers sacking	5%	26%	28%	16%	10%	15%
Discipline matters	4.5%	8%	0%	4.5%	34%	49%
New staff	10%	1%	8%	14%	30%	35%
Student matters	10%	2.5%	2.5%	5%	38%	42%
Others	92.5%	0%	0%	5%	2.5%	0%

African Journal Of Education And Practice
ISSN xxxx-xxxx (Paper) ISSN 2518-881X (online) (Online)
Vol.2, Issue 1No.1, pp 1 - 25, 2017

www.iprjb.org

The findings indicate that 95% of the respondents agreed that face to face communication was used in communicating school duties and other activities (the analysis combines the strongly agree and agree categories). Further, its use in communicating curriculum changes was reported by 84% of the respondents. Another 79% of the respondents reported face to face interaction was used while making the time table and communicating teachers' sacking. The use of face to face communication in discipline matters, communicating with new staff and communicating students' discipline matters were each reported by 83%, 66%, and 81% of the respondents respectively. These findings show a general agreement to the statements. It further implies the significance of face to face communication to POSSs.

Telephone Communication

Telephone communication is one of the important aspects of internal publics' communication. The findings in Table 3 demonstrate how telephone was used as a channel of communication in POSSs.

Table 3: Telephone as A Communication Channel

	Missing	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Duties and other school activities	3%	16%	20%	6%	43%	12%	100%
Changes in curriculum	5%	19%	38%	11%	15%	12%	100%
School program	5%	26%	40%	1%	20%	8%	100%
Time table	3%	31%	40%	6%	13%	5%	100%
Teachers sacking	5%	41%	38%	8%	8%		100%
Discipline matters	3%	36%	38%	10%	10%	3%	100%
New staff	5%	21%	41%	15%	18%		100%
Student matters	5%	19%	45%	3%	25%	3%	100%
Others	83%			3%	11%	3%	100%

Websites are one of the important aspects of communication amongst internal publics of organizations. They are usually used for sharing information with both internal and external publics, whereupon the website visitors' views, suggestions and complaints are gathered and frequently asked questions are addressed. This study sought to know how websites were used as a channel of communication amongst the internal publics of POSSs. The findings are presented in Table 4.; figures have been rounded off for ease of presentation.

Table 4: Website as a Communication Channel

	No response	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
Duties and other school		34%	33%	5%	14%	14%

African Journal Of Education And Practice
ISSN xxxx-xxxx (Paper) ISSN 2518-881X (online) (Online)
Vol.2, Issue 1No.1, pp 1 - 25, 2017

www.iprjb.org

activities						
Changes in curriculum		36%	33%	8%	14%	9%
School program	3%	33%	28%	10%	12%	14%
Time table	3%	39%	33%		22%	3%
Teachers sacking		41%	41%	10%	5%	3%
Discipline matters		41%	30%	5%	15%	9%
New staff		36%	35%	4%	20%	5%
Student matters		39%	30%		31%	
Others	59%	19%	12%	5%	5%	

Over 50% of the respondents disagreed that websites were used to communicate information on duties and other school activities, changes in curriculum, school program, time table, teachers' sacking, discipline matters, new staff and student matters. This means that websites were used minimally to pass information in POSSs Nairobi County. The researcher found out that POSSs do not have the infrastructure that supports the acquisition and maintenance of ICT thus occasioning poor internet use.

Communication Audit

Key Communication Indicators

A communication audit methodology was used in line with what is propagated by Coffman (2008) that in conducting a CA, information flow and the relationship through which information is exchanged should is examined. The study sought to examine the communication indicators in POSSs. The findings are presented in Table 5 below;

Table 5: Key Communication Indicators

	Yes	No	Not applicable	No response
An organization chart exists.	49%	26%	17.5%	7.5%
Written down communication plan exists.	61%	18%	14%	8%
There is clarity of reporting responsibilities and lines of communication.	74%	10%	10%	6%
The school have a whistle blower policy	35%	34%	26%	5%
Whistle blower policy displayed in the most visible place	30%	39%	26%	5%
students and staff aware of the whistle blower policy	33%	34%	28%	5%

From the findings, 49% of the schools audited had an organization chart. Further, it was confirmed that there were written organizational plans, clarity of responsibilities and lines of communication, each with a response rate of 61% and 74% of the cases respectively. This shows that there were some schools which did not have some of the indicators as presented in the table above. The institutions without these indicators imply a likelihood of ineffective communication. These findings are consistent with those of Steinberg (2005) who highlights the importance of organization charts, communication plans, clarity of responsibilities and reporting lines in

facilitating effective communication. According to Steinberg (2005), hierarchy is a crucial phenomenon when examining organizational communication because the quality of messages in an organization is controlled by a hierarchical structure. This is consistent with Birgen (2009), who holds that schools have a hierarchical system which directly affects the transmission of information at all levels and it is related to the chain of command system because it follows the super-ordinate-sub-ordinate structure (*cf.*Appendix G).The above findings are consistent with Ravi-prakash's (2004) suggestion that a system of communication in schools is essential in order to have an efficiently run organization and that communication in schools is embedded in a school structure. Raviprakash acknowledges that school structures contribute significantly to the way communication in the school flows because they are structurally transmitted. Ravi-prakash's findings compare well with those of Hall (2002) who reports that the very establishment of an organizational structure is a sign that communication is supposed to follow a particular path. Thus, the findings imply a major gap/shortfall in communication amongst the internal publics of POSSs.

Inventory Analysis

Inventory analysis is an important step in conducting a communication audit as it highlights the inconsistency of messages sent to internal publics. The findings are presented in Table 4.8:

Table 6: Inventory Analysis

	Yes	No	Not applicable	No response
Obtain letter heads, business cards, fact sheets, brochures, magazines and publications, audiovisuals, Web material, and any other collateral materials used by the organization.	70%	12%	15%	3%
Do the pieces look similar?	54%	22%	16%	8%
Do they look like they came from the same organization?	65%	15%	15%	5%
Do they use the same basic design elements: type fonts, type size, colors, layout, use of pictures, graphics, and illustrations?	39%	44%	13%	4%
Do we have pieces that are very dramatic?	32%	36%	24%	8%
Do we have pieces that seem lackluster or dull?	45%	29%	21%	5%
Do the pieces carry the same basic information about the organization: mission statement, vision, 25-word organization description, and descriptions of programs and services?	40%	29%	19%	12%
Are there pictures, graphics, and illustrations?	45%	26%	21%	8%
Are these used in a consistent manner?	50%	23%	23%	4%
Is there anything missing in pictures, graphics, and illustrations?	38%	30%	28%	4%
Does the organization have a style manual for its publications?	50%	30%	12%	8%
Is it routinely followed in the communication practices of the organization?	48%	33%	16%	3%

The findings on inventory analysis show that 70% of the cases studied, there were letter heads, business cards, fact sheets, brochures, magazines and publications, audiovisuals, Web material, and any other collateral materials used by the organization out of which 54% were similar while

65% looked like they came from the same institutions. Further, the findings revealed that material used had the same basic design elements such type fonts, type size, colors, layout, use of pictures, graphics, and illustrations reported by 39% of the respondents. However, 33% of the inventory materials were dramatic while 45% were dull or lackluster as reported by 45% of the respondents. Another 40% of the cases indicated that they all carried similar basic information about the organization such as mission statement, vision, 25-word organization description, and descriptions of programs and services with 45% having pictures, graphics, and illustrations while 50% had pictures, graphics, and illustrations used consistently. However, among 38% of the cases, gaps in the pictures, graphics, and illustrations were noted. The study further found out that 50% of the POSSs had a style manual for their publications. Also, amongst the 48% cases communication practices of the organization were routinely followed.From the above findings it can be concluded that a gap in communication efficacy among internal publics of POSSs exist. This is in tandem with what Gregory, (2000) and Balasen, (2008) found out that the inconsistency in the messages carried on different communication materials/tools signals inefficiency in communication flow which may result in communication anxiety.

5.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study revealed that the majority of the school managers and HODs were male thus implying that female teachers were not commonly deployed to administrative positions in POSSs. Also, 62% of HODs had a university degree as the highest level of education. Further, the respondents had served in their current schools for about 6 years. Most of the POSCO surveyed were above 16 years of age implying that they were mature enough to give their views on the nature of communication in their respective institutions.

Communication Channels used by the Internal Publics of POSSs

Study findings indicated that communication channels such as face to face meetings, telephone communication, written communication such as memos and letters, and electronic channels such as emails, and websites were used. The findings revealed that the 50% of the respondents agreed that face to face communication was used as a communication channel for duties and other school activities, and for changes in the school curriculum respectively. Another 43% of the respondents strongly agreed that face to face communication was used as a communication channel for time table, discipline matters, new staff and student matters. However, 28% of the respondents disagreed that face to face communication was used as a communication channel for information about teachers' sacking.

On telephone communication, 43% of the respondents agreed that telephone was used as a communication channel for duties and other school activities. Close to 40% of the respondents disagreed that telephone discussion was used as a communication channel for changes in curriculum, school program, time table, discipline matters, information about new staff and communicating student matters respectively. Only 41% of the respondents strongly disagreed that telephone was used as a communication channel to relay information on teachers' sacking.

The findings also show that 56% of the respondents agreed that letters and memos were used as a communication channel for duties and other school activities, changes in curriculum, school program, time table, information about teachers' sacking, discipline matters and communicating student matters respectively. Only 28% strongly disagreed that letters and memos were used as a communication channel for information about new staff.

Regarding emails, results from this study indicate that the majority of the respondents (49%) disagreed that emails were used as a communication channel for duties and other school activities, changes in curriculum, school program, time table, information about teachers' sacking, discipline matters, information about new staff and communicating student matters respectively. This implies that emails as a communication channel for messages was limited in secondary schools. This further implies that use of emails differ in terms of pupils and facilities that a school has.

Perhaps the most interesting findings of the study are the apparent lack of school managers who regularly use technology (internet and website) for the delivery of instruction and for administrative purposes in all the schools under investigation. Further findings on the use of websites indicated that 49% of the respondents strongly disagreed that website was used as a communication channel for duties and other school activities, changes in curriculum, school program, time table, information about teachers' sacking, discipline matters, information about new staff and communicating student matters respectively. These findings may be explained by low internet connectivity and poor ICT infrastructure in POSSs.

Study results also show that 49% of the respondents strongly disagreed that radio and television were used to communicate duties and other school activities, changes in curriculum, school program, information about teachers' sacking, discipline matters and communicating student matters respectively. Only 40% of the respondents disagreed that radio and television were used as communication channel for time table and information about new staff. These findings may be explained by the reluctance of POSSs to use radio and television due to the high cost charged by media houses.

From the above findings, it is evident that schools use all the communication channels (oral, written and electronic channels) identified in the study. However, some of the channels were given greater emphasis in transmitting information than others. For instance, in the category of oral channels of communication, face to face communication is more emphasized than telephone communication. Further, written channels such as letters and memos are emphasized in the same strength as face to face meetings. However, it is also clear from the results that electronic channels of communication such as emails, website, were least used. The results on channels are in agreement with those of Canary (2001) who explains that 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.

Message types communicated amongst internal publics of POSSs

The results on the message types communicated amongst internal publics of POSSs reveal that the mean response for duties and other school activities was 4.03, changes in curriculum had 4.04, school program had 3.98, time table had 4.09, teachers sacking(4.01) while discipline

African Journal Of Education And Practice
ISSN xxxx-xxxx (Paper) ISSN 2518-881X (online) (Online)
Vol.2, Issue 1No.1, pp 1 - 25, 2017

www.iprjb.org

matters, new staff and student matters3.96, 3.93 and 4.08 means respectively. These findings imply that the majority of the respondents were in agreement with the statement that school activities was one of the message types communicated by internal publics of POSSs.

Feedback mechanisms used in POSSs

Findings on the feedback mechanisms used in POSSs revealed that58% 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 ettiquette 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 that32% 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.

Effectiveness of communication and existence of communication gaps

The findings on the effectiveness of communication among internal publics in POSSs showed communication gaps and potential areas where new communication channels could be

www.iprjb.org

introduced .The study revealed that there existed communication gaps in the area of key communication indicators. This observation is supported by 26% of the respondents who indicated that an organisation chart, communication plan, clarity of responsibilities and communicating lines did not exist. Lack of an organization chart and clear communicating lines implies that there is a possibility of misunderstanding and misdirection of communication. Steinberg (2005) highlights the importance of organization charts, communication plans, clarity of responsibilities and reporting lines in facilitating effective communication. According to Steinberg (2005), hierarchy is a crucial phenomenon when examining organizational communication because the quality of messages in an organization is controlled by hierarchical structure. Schools have a hierarchical system which directly affects the transmission of information at all levels. It is related to the chain of command system because it follows the super-ordinate-sub-ordinate structure (Birgen, 2009).

In addition, results revealed that 13% of the respondents indicated that communication materials such as letter heads, business cards, fact sheets, brochures, magazines and publications, audiovisuals, web material, and any other collateral materials were not obtained.These findings imply that some schools were behind in effective communication as there was no evidence of inventory such as letterheads, magazines and publications. Further, 23% of the respondents reported that the communication pieces were not uniform. Another 15% of the respondents indicated that communication pieces did not look like they came from the same school. These findings show that the communication tools may be sending conflicting messages to internal publics. The results imply that the communication inventory such as letterheads, magazines and publications may have information conveying different messages.

From the findings, 44% of the respondents reported that the communication tools did not use the same basic design elements: font type, size, colors, layout, and use of pictures, graphics, and illustrations. The results imply that having different basic design elements may convey different messages. Another 36% of the respondents revealed that some communication pieces were dramatic, while others looked lackluster or dull, and that the communication pieces did not carry the same basic information about the organization's mission statement, vision, the 25-word organization description, and descriptions of programs and services. Thecommunication tools did not have pictures, graphics, and illustrations, an indication that the pictures, graphics, and illustrations were inconsistently used. There were some characteristics missing in pictures, graphics, and illustrations, Some did not have a style manual for their publications, and the style was not routinely followed in all the communication tools observed. All these findings point to a gap in communication and imply some level of communication ineffectiveness.

The findings also show that 19% of the respondents reported that their school did not have a website. This means that schools under study could be missing a huge opportunity in employing a cost effective way of communication. The findings on the content perspective revealed that website did not present all of the organization's essential information in a manner that quickly meets needs of the user, and invite users to browse and learn more about the school and its services as reported by 25% of the respondents. Another 19% of the respondentsindicated that websites were not easy to maintain and update, that the websites did not permit visitors to do what they wanted with little or no assistance, that the websites did not accommodate additional content areas and allow new functionalities to be added without major restructuring. Further,

websites were not considered to be a good platform that integrated several communication functions. They were not interactive and able to promote automated services, such as online registration. Also, websites did not encourage users to share and exchange experiences, ideas, and knowledge respectively. These results imply that most of the websites were not user friendly and this may have a negative implication on communication. These findings further imply that website as a communication tool was not effectively used.

Communication gaps in email use

Results from the study indicate that 39 % of the respondents reported that there was no written email policy. Staff and students were neither aware of the email policy nor the email policy prohibiting sharing of pass words. Also there was no policy against writing in capital letters (shouting), and sharing of confidential information with competitors respectively. The findings imply that there existed loopholes in the email policy and hence email as a communication tool was not as effective. The findings are consistent with those of Perrigo and Gant (1982), who argue that although people tend to view email as an informal written message, it is important to formalize written email in the school setting. In, the event that a school has adopted the use of email then it would be prudent to borrow from Perrigo and Gant (1982) who posit that all schools should develop and communicate a sound email policy to communicate proper usage of the school email system to the internal publics.

Conclusions

This study concludes that oral channels such as face to face meetings, telephone communication, written channels such as memos and letters, and electronic channels such as emails, websites, were used. Schools use all the channels (oral, written and electronic channels) but some of the channels are given greater emphasis in transmitting school information than others. Written channels such as letters and memos are emphasized in the same strength as face to face meetings but electronic channels of communication such as emails, website, radio and TV are the least used. Further, the study established that teachers did not openly express their opinion or provides upward communication for fear of victimization and dismissal.

This study also concludes that communication of school duties and other school activities such as changes in the curriculum, school program, time table, teachers sacking, students' discipline matters, new staff and student matters were some of the message types communicated by internal publics of POSS. Regarding these uses, the study observed that there existed gaps in feedback mechanism as departmental staff did not always give timely and appropriate feedback.

This study established that there existed a communication gap in the area of key communication indicators such as the non-existence of organizational charts, communication plans, clarity of responsibilities and reporting lines. The findings also implied that communication gaps existed in POSS as the communication inventories sent conflicting messages to internal publics. From the findings of the study, It was established that website as a communication tool was not effectively used. This is because some POSSs did not have websites, and those that had, did not exhibit user-friendliness.

Further, most school managers communicated with their internal publics about school routine, school timetable, and meetings. However, most school managers communicated to the student

body verbally and in the same breadth HODs communicated to the school managers verbally. Although all types of communication in schools are important under different circumstances, most school managers preferred use of verbal other than written communication.

Many POSCO respondents stated that they met with their class teachers regularly but never met with the school managers since the school managers communicated to the students through the class presidents or class teachers. This method of communication is ineffective because it discourages free dialogue and upward communication between the school manager and the students. The information conveyed through class teachers and class presidents may lead to filtered and distorted information.

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.

REFERENCES

Adeyemi, M. A. (1984). Strategies for integrating educational media into higher education in Nigeria. *Educational Technology in Nigeria*, 1, 2

Afrol News Staff Writer. (July 23, 2008). Kenya bans use of mobile phones in schools. *Afrol News.* Retrieved September 23, 2008 from http://www.afrol.com/articles/29964.

Aggarwal, J. C. (1992). *School administration*. New Delhi: Man Sigh Arya Book Depot.

American Society of Civil Engineers. (2000). *Quality in the construction project: A guide for owners, designers and constructors* (2nd Ed.). United States of America: American Society of Civil Engineers.

Aron, P.M. (1989). *Making schools more responsive toat- risk students*, New York: Urban Education Publishers Inc.

Asugo, M. N. (2005).*Communication strategies used by head teachers in the management of public secondaryschools in Nyamira District .*Unpublished M. Ed. Thesis, Kenyatta University.

Austin, E. W., & Pinkleton, B. E. (2001*). Strategic public relations management; planning and managing effective communication programs*. Lawrence: Elbaum Associates Publishers.

Ayers, L., Michael, S., & Simonson, R. (2006). *Education.* New York: Chipman and Hell Publishing Company.

Baran, S. (2010). *Mass communication theory*. New York: Wadsworth Learning Centre.

Belasen, T. & Allan, M. (2008). *One theory and practice for Corporation Communication*. Los Angeles's: Sage Publications.

Birgen, P. (2009).*The compendium of teachers; career path and professional growth*. Nairobi. Image Books Limited.

Black, L. D., & Hartel, C. E. J. (1995*). Public relations orientation: The construct and its dimensions*. New York: Pitman Publishers.

Bland, M., & Jackson, P. C. (1990). *Effective employee communication*. London: Kogan Page.

Blanchard, D. (2008). *Risk communication and individual response.* Colorado: University of Colorado Publishing Company.

Bradley D. F., & West, J. F. (1994). Stafftraining for the inclusion of students withdisabilities: Visions from school-basededucators. *Teacher Education and SpecialEducation, 17,* 117-128.
Canary, M. (2001). *Communication and organizational knowledge contemporary issues forTheory and Practice*, Florence, KY: Tailor and Francis Publishing Company.

Carlsmith, L., & Railsback, J. (February 2001). *The power of public relations in schools: schools and the public, then and now*. New Jersey: North West Regional EducationalLaboratory. Retrieved June 11, 2010 from http://educationnorthwest.org/webfm_send/447.

Cheney, G. (2001). *Organizational communication in an age of Globalization: Issues,reflections, practice*. Long grove, Illinois: Wave Land Press.

Cohen, L., Manion, D., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in Education*. New York: Rutledge; Taylor and Francis Group.

Cornelissen, J. (2005). *Co-operate communication theory and practice.* London: Sage Publishers.

Covey, S. (1990). *The seven habits of highly effective people*. New York: Fireside Books.

Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Education research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (3rd Ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall.

Cuttlip, M., Scott, P., Centre, A., & Broom, G. (1994). *Effective public relations.* London: Prentice Hall

D'souza, W. (2007). *Encyclopedia of communication media*. Washington, DC: Anmol Publications.

Davis, J. (1970).Communication skills: *The British Journal of Sociology of Education*, *1(2),* 198.

Deetz, S. A. (1992). *Democracy in an age of corporate colonization: Developments in the communication and politics of every day life.* Albany, New York: New York State University Press.

Ellis, D. G. (1993). *Crisis communication: A Case book approach*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Fearn-Banks, K. (2002). Crisis communication: A casebook approaches (2nd Ed.). Mahwah, New
        Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Fergusson, S. D., & Fergusson, S. (1990). *Organization communication.* New York: Prentice
        Hall Publishing Company.Fortner, S. R. (2007). *Communication,*
media, and identity: A Christian theory of communication. United Kingdom: Rowman Little
Publishers, Inc.

Fox, N. J. (1991). Postmodernism, rationalism and the evaluation of health care. *Sociology
        Reference, 39(4),* 709-744.

Gans, J., & King, S. (2005). *Privately owned schools.* New York: South Western Publishing
        Company.

Gartside, L., (1986). *Modern business correspondence*: London. Great Britain: McDonald Evans
        Publishers.

Goldhaber, G. M. (1976). The ICA communication audit: Rationale and development. *Working
        paper presented to the Academy of Management convention,* Kansa City, Missouri.

Goodman, M. B. (Ed). *Corporate communication: Theory and practice.* Albany, New York:
        New York State University Press.

Gregory, A. (2000). *Planning and managing public relations campaigns* (2nd Ed.). London:
        Kegan page Ltd.

Grunig, J. E., &Grunig, L. A. (1992). *Models of public relations and communication*. Hillsdale,
        New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Grunig, J. E. & Hunt, J. (1984). *Managing public relations*. New York: Holt, Rinehart
        &Winston.

Hall, R. H. (2002). *Organizations: organizations, processes and outcomes* (8th Ed. London:
        Pearson Education Limited.

Hargie, O., & Tourish, D. (Eds) (2009). *Handbook of communication audits for organizations.* London: Routledge.

Harris, A. (1993). *Teaching and learning in the effective school*. Aldershot: Ash gate Publishing.

Hicks., & Gullet, C. R., (1975). *A psychology of human psychology*. London: University of London Press.

Holbrook, M. C., & Koenig, A. J. (Eds)(2000). *Foundations of education: Instructional strategies for teaching children and youths with visual impairment.* New York: American foundation of the Blind Press.

Hoy, W. K. & Miskel, C. G. (1982). *Education administration: Theory, research and practice* (2nd Ed.). New York: Random House, Inc.

Kerlinger, F. N. (1973). *Foundations of behavioural research*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Koehler, K., Anatol, W. E., & Ronald, A. (1976). *Organizational communication:Behaviouralperspective.* New York: Library of Congress.

Kothari, C. R. (2008). *Research methodology: Methods and techniques* (2nd Ed.). New Delhi: New Age International.

Lucey, T., & Lucey, T. (2002). *Quantitative techniques* (6th Ed.). London: Thompson Learning.

Ludlow, R., & Panton, F. (1992). *The essence of effective communication*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.

Lunblad, S. S., & Stewart, G. K. (2005). *Public relations for schools: A resource guide forPrincipals.* Information Age Publishing Inc.

Lunenburg, F., & Ornstein, A. C. (2008). *Educational administration, concepts andpractices (*5th Ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Malarz, L. (1996).Using staff development to create inclusive schools. *Journal of Staff Development, 17(3),* 8-11.

Mbiti, D. M. (2007). *Foundations of school administration*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press.

McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (1997). *Research in education: A conceptual introduction* (5th Ed.). New York: Harper Collins College.

Mehta, A. (2009). *Organization development: Principles, process and performance.* New Delhi: Global India Publications PVT Ltd.

Miller, K. (2006).*Organizational communication approaches and processes* (4th Ed.). Belmont, CA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Ministry of Education. (1987). *A manual for heads of secondary schools in Kenya* (Rev Ed.). Nairobi: Government Printer.

Modaff, D. & DeWine, S. (2002). *Organizational communication: Foundation, challenges and misunderstandings.* USA: Foxberry Publishing Company.

Modaff, D., DeWine, S., Butler, J. a. (2007). *Organizational communication: Foundations, challenges and misunderstandings* (2nd Ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Mange, P. R., & Contractor, N. S. (2002). Managing knowledge networks. *Management Communication Quarterly, 16(2),* 249.

Moorhead, G. (1995).*Essays on public documents and government policies*. London: Haworth Pr Inc**.**

Mugenda, A., & Mugenda, O. (1999).*Research methods: Qualitative and quantitativeapproaches*. Nairobi: Acts Press.

Muindi, B., & Ngirachu, J. (July 31, 2008). Schools take tough measures after riots. *Daily Nation.* Retrieved September 23, 2008 from http://www.accessmylibrary.com/article-1G1-188665592/schools-take-tough-measures.html.

Muka, J. (2006). Barriers to effective communication in the management of public secondary schools in Starehe Division, Nairobi. *Unpublished Masters' thesis,* Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya.

Mulusa, T. (1990). *Evaluation research for beginners: A practical guide.* University of Auckland New Zealand: Sage Publications Ltd.

Mutai, B. K. (2002). *How to write quality research proposals: A complete and simplified Recipe*. New Delhi: Thelley Publications.

Myers, M. T., & Myers, G. E. (1982). *Managing by communication: An organizational approach*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Nation Team. (July 24, 2008). Rioters to be expelled, warns PS. *Daily Nation.* Retrieved February 20, 2010 fromhttp://www.nyando.org/news/schoolcaning.php.

National Council of Churches of Kenya. (2004). Students' unrest in Kenya. *Unpublished Report*,Ministry of Education, Nairobi, Kenya.

Newscom, D., & Scott, A. (1981). *The realities of public relations* (2nd Ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Offor, O. G. (1998). Awareness through forms and illustrations. *Journal of Communication Arts*, *1(1),* 156-157.

Ogili, E. E. (2001). Strategies for effective communication in educational instruction.

   Malaysian Online Journal of Instructional Technology, 2(1). Retrieved September 12, 2010 from http://pppjj.usm.my/mojit/articles/pdf/April05/07-Ezeja.pdf.

Okumbe, S. (1999). *Educational management: Theory and practice.* Nairobi: Nairobi University Press.

Orodho, A. J. (2003). *Essentials of educational and social sciences research methods*. Nairobi: Maola Publishers.

Pankake, A. M., & Palmer, B.   (1996).Making the connections: linking staff development interventions to implementation of full inclusion. *Journal of StaffDevelopment, 17(3),* 26-30.

Patel, S. (1989). *Communication revolution: A study of video penetration in India.* New Delhi: India space research organization. Portland Oregon. Retrieved August 10, 2010 from http:// www.nwrel.org/request.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). Qualitative research and evaluation methods (3rd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Pawlas, A. M. (1989). *Making schools more responsive to at-risk students*. New York: Urban Education Publishers.

Pawlas, A. M., &Pawlas, G. (2005). The administrator's guide to school-community relations. Larchmont, New York: Eye on Education, Inc.

Perrigo, E. M., & Graut, D. (1982). Is academia in "sync" with the business world? *Journal of career planning and employment,54*(3), 58-60.

Pearsons, H. G., & Tompskin, M. A. (1997). *Cognitive-behavioural case formulation.* New York: Guilford Press.

Peterson, B. (2004). *Bluesreak inside setblue: The upstart that rocked an industry.* New York: Portfolio.

Punch, K. (2001). *Introduction to social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches.* London: Sage Publication Ltd.

Quinn, D. (2004). Internal Communication Audit: A case study. An *International Journal, 9(2), 146-158.* Retrieved October 2009 from http://www.emeraldinsight.com/journals.htm?articleid=858093&show=abstract.

Ravi-prakash, T. (2004). *Advanced educational administration*. New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers

Robbins, S. P., & Judge, T. A. (2007). *Organizational behavior* (12th Ed.). Europe: Pearson Education, Inc.

Robbins, S. P., Judge, T. A., Ondendaal, A., & Roodt, G. (2009). *Organization behaviour: Global and southern African perspectives* (2nd Ed.). Pinelands, Cape Town: Pearson Education (Pty) Limited.

Sharma, Y. K. (2008).*Comparative education: A comparative study of educational systems*. New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers.

The Ominde Report. (1964).*Republic of Kenya Education CommunicationReport.* Nairobi, Kenya: Government Printers.

Theaker, A. (2004). *The public relations handbook* (2nd Ed.). Great Britain: Taylor and Francis.