Effect of Flow of Information on Student Engagement in Public Universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to examine the effect of flow of information on student engagement in public universities in Kenya

Methodology: The study used a mixed research design with both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The target population was all the students in the public universities within Nairobi City County. A sample of 384 students was drawn from the five public chartered universities' main campuses, using a combination of various probability sampling techniques including stratified, simple random sampling and systematic sampling. The academic registrar in each of the university was sampled for interviews using purposive sampling. The research instruments for this study were self-administered questionnaires for students and semi-structured interviews for the registrars. Quantitative data was analyzed using the SPSS software and the inferential statistics used were descriptive, correlation, regression and ANOVA analysis. Qualitative data was analyzed for themes, and triangulation of both quantitative and qualitative data done.

Findings: Lateral communication (student-student) is well established in public universities and students easily share information with one another. Downward (management-student) and upward (student-management) communication was however wanting with students feeling that they are not consulted enough even on issues that directly affect them. This is despite having representation by their student representatives at various levels of the decision-making processes in the university. Students also stated that they could not freely communicate their opinions to the management despite being provided with channels to do so.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: The study was guided by the Organizational Information Theory (OIT). The study therefore recommended that better ways of engaging students directly, such as meetings could also be considered instead of relying on student leadership representation alone. Public universities should establish clear and comprehensive communication policies that outline the channels, frequency, and modes of communication between the institution, faculty, and students.

Keywords: *Information Flow, Student Engagement, Public Universities*

INTRODUCTION

The concept of engagement has been largely studied in research seeking to predict employees' desired outcomes in organizations such as their levels of satisfaction and productivity. It therefore appears to be a concept studied more in the work setting as opposed to the education institutions (Ariani, 2015). The concept was first presented by Khan (1990) who suggested that engagement can be in three forms: physical, emotional and cognitive. In the company setting, various scholars have attempted to define engagement. Lyer (2012) defines engagement as an emotional commitment, where by the employee is psychologically involved and has the desire to achieve the goals and objectives of the organization. Saks (2006) further adds that other than the organizational commitment, engagement is also positively associated with satisfaction and also negatively associated with the desire to leave the organization.

Though engagement has not been studied much in the education sector such as universities, literature suggests that the concept of employee engagement is the same as that of student engagement. Reeve (2012) argues that the only difference there is between these two concepts is the setting in which the work is done, and that the two constructs are psychologically the same. Student engagement can therefore be defined into three forms just like employee engagement, where there is the cognitive engagement, psychological or emotional engagement and physical or behavioral engagement (Khan 1990, Harris 2011, Skinner& Pitzer 2012)

Cognitive engagement involves concentration and attention during the process of learning as well as being focused on the work at hand. Emotional engagement on the other hand involves enjoying the learning process, being enthusiastic about it and getting satisfaction from it. A student who is emotionally engaged will therefore have an inbuilt motivation as well as interest and excitement to learn. (Skinner& Pitzer, 2012) In the behavioral dimension of engagement, Skinner & Pitzer (2012) suggest that a student who is engaged is determined, applies a lot of effort and intensity in the learning process and is perseverant to the challenges they face.

Other scholars such as (Skinner & Belmont 1993, Ariani 2015) add that highly engaged students not only experience positive emotions such as enthusiasm and optimism but are also concerned, show interest in learning and are even able to choose tasks according to their abilities and also conduct when they get the chance. Student engagement therefore has to do with the overall involvement of the student, not just with learning as a process but how much they relate with and enjoy the process. It aims at increasing how much students achieve, encourages positive behavior and creates a sense of belonging so that students want to remain in school and get the maximum out of the process. (Butucha, 2016).

Within the company's setting, engagement has been seen to increase job satisfaction and organizational commitment and has been linked to a decrease in the desire to leave the organization. As universities face more competition from other universities as well as Vocational Training Centers that offer similar courses, the need to attract more students as well as retain the ones they already have becomes apparent and hence the need for more research on engagement. Kisber (2007) as cited by Butucha notes that student engagement in institutions of higher learning is becoming an increasing concern.

Schermerhorn et al (2011) assert that there are three types of information flows namely downward communication, upward communication and lateral communication. They define downward communication as that which happens from the top to the bottom, through the chain of command in the organization. It is mostly used to communicate key policies, strategies, objectives and the key developments of the organization. Adey and Andrew (as in Mbhele

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2017) also add that downward communication can also be used to give the procedures of the organization, provide instructions and also give employees their appraisals.

Hitt, Miller and Colella (in Pham 2014) on the other hand argue that other than providing information about work, downward communication is also used to communicate changes in the organization. Schermerhorn et al further note that sharing of such information makes clear the intentions of the management and reduces rumors and inaccurate information within the organization. It also creates a sense of security among receivers since they feel included in the communication loop.

Upward communication involves the flow of messages from the lower to the upper levels. This type of communication lets the management know what the lower levels are doing, any problems they may have, ideas for improvement and what they feel about the organization. Schermerhorn et al (2011) further argue that often the managers in the organization often miss out on the communication as the people in the lower levels filter out information, especially in large organizations that have bureaucracy. Hitt et al (in Pham 2014) add that there needs to be trust at lower levels, where employees do not fear reprisals from their managers for upward communication to occur.

Velma et al (2013) note that in many organizations, upward communication does not flow as smoothly as downward communication. This may be due to the management's failure to respond properly, large time gaps between the communication and the action, taking too long to approve the staff's suggestions as well as the management's defensive attitude when their actions are less than satisfactory. They propose that the organization should have an open-door policy so that staff is able to discuss their issues with the management easily. In addition to the propositions made by Velma et al, Lunenburg (2010) adds that some of the ways an organization can improve its upward communication include holding confidential counseling sessions and exit interviews with employees, having suggestion boxes and ombudspersons, having union contracts that contain a grievance procedure as well as listening carefully to the grapevine in the organization.

Lateral communication is also known as horizontal communication and is a flow of messages among employees who are at the same hierarchy. It not only passes work related messages but also provides for a platform for social interaction (Mbhele, 2017). According to Schermerhorn et al (2011), lateral communication may involve communication across various departments and may also be used to communicate with the organization's customers. Communication with customers includes providing information about the organizations products as well as providing feedback to the customers' queries.

Adey &Andrew (2002) identify a fourth type of information flow known as diagonal communication. They argue that this type of communication happens between employees who are at different hierarchical level and is mostly done during projects, where people from different departments and different levels of authority have to work together for the success of the project. They further argue that those in higher positions are required to liaise with those from lower positions and sometimes submit to them due to their expert knowledge.

Contrary to the ideas of Velma et al (2013) and Schermerhorn et al (2011), Lunenburg (2010) suggests that communication between employees and stakeholders outside the organization is a separate type of flow of information and refers to it as external communication and not lateral communication as the others scholars suggest. He notes that these external stakeholders include administrators of other organizations, parents, government officials and the community around

the organization and that many organizations create formal departments such as a public relations office to coordinate such external communication.

Various studies have been conducted on flow of information in organizations. For instance, White et al (2010) examined how employees of a multi-campus University viewed top-down communication from top administrators in positions of influence, the employees' communication preferences, their sense of community while working in the organization and how willing they were to advocate for the organization. The study utilized open ended interviews and sampled 147 employees. The findings of the study indicated that employees who had a relationship with the top administrators were more satisfied with the information they received and were more likely to advocate for the organization. This was the case even for employees whose relationships with the administrators were perceived rather than real. The study further indicated that electronic channels could be used to overcome challenges posed by the traditional hierarchical structure by enabling employees from all levels of the organization to receive information first hand from the top.

Another study by Mahto & Davis (2012), 'Information Flow and Strategic Consensus in Organizations', examined whether the intra –organizational flow of information influences how consensus is reached at the various levels of the organizational hierarchy. A quasi-longitudinal field study was conducted in a large multi-location bank in the U.S. Senior executives and middle managers were interviewed and questionnaires distributed to employees at two different points in time. 255 employees were sampled the first time and 230 the second time, with the same set of questions used every time. The two sets of data were then tested against the proposed hypothesis separately. The study concluded that the hierarchical position of the information source to a large extent determines their influence on consensus. The study also found that most communication in the organization flows downward compared to any other type of information flow.

Hoeven & Verhoeven (2013) in their study, titled '"Sharing is caring": Corporate social responsibility awareness explaining the relationship of information flow with affective commitment' sought to find out whether enhancing the employee's awareness about the organization's CSR activities through effective organizational communication can increase affective commitment. Data was collected using a web-based questionnaire where 301 respondents were selected from a Dutch healthcare insurance company. The results indicated that there was a positive correlation between information flow and affective commitment, meaning that communicating relevant information to employees makes them feel valued and hence they become emotionally attached to the organization.

Statement of Problem

The concept of engagement has attracted a lot of focus from both scholars and organizations over the past few years. This is because it is a key factor in the success of the organization in the current competitive environment. For instance, employee engagement has been associated with higher levels of productivity and organization commitment (Sarangi & Nayak 2016) as well as a decrease in the desire to leave the organization (Lyer, Israel, 2012) and these are crucial competitive advantages. Engagement has also become a burning topic for learning institutions as well, especially here in Kenya, with the recent surge in the number of public universities as well as student enrollment in these universities. While this rise in the number of public universities was meant to increase the learning opportunities for students, this is

currently not the case. This is because the surge in student enrollments does not match the expansion of the required facilities which were initially meant for fewer number.

Scholars have attributed disengagement to poor communication in organizations. In a study to investigate the barriers of effective communication by teachers and students in Saudi Arabia, 17% of the respondents agreed that ineffective communication was to blame for the poor quality of engagement with teachers (Albalawi & Nadeem, 2020). Poor communication has also been found to result in dissatisfaction and distrust in the organization (Pongtong & Suntrayuth, 2019), and a decrease in engagement, especially where the communication is ill-received and unproductive (Hart, 2016). In addition, Durkin (2007) notes that in the absence of good communication, employees are likely to doubt the future of the organization and will even think about leaving. Effective communication on the other hand has been found to be an antecedent to engagement (Macey& Schneider 2008, Ariani 2015), and may help attract and retain satisfied customers as well as gain competitive advantage for the organization (Wood, 2009). This study therefore aims to understand the effect that flow of information has on the engagement of students in the public universities in Kenya.

Theoretical Framework

Organizational Information Theory (OIT)

This theory was developed by Karl Weick in an attempt to understand how organizations use and manage the information. The theory originates from the Weick's ideas of organizing, 'The Social Psychology of Organizing' (1979) that was later developed into the theory in 1995. Weick proposes that organizations take up ambiguous and confusing messages from their environment then try and make sense of them (Weick, 1979). West & Turner (2017) note that since the information received in the organization is largely ambiguous, the organization requires input from various sources in order to interpret and make sense of the information. The theory therefore describes the processes that an organization undertakes in order to interpret or make sense out of all the information that it encounters every day. This process then leads to a change in the organization and its members. The information processing not only involves getting information but also interpreting and distributing it to the relevant departments in the organization.

In developing the Organizational Information theory, Karl Weick used two major perspectives borrowed from Ludwig Bertalanffy's General Systems theory and Darwin's theory of Social Cultural Evolution. Weick used the general systems theory to help explain the influence that the external environment has on the organization and vice versa. Bertalanffy believed that organizations are a system that is made up of different parts and that these parts are interdependent. This means that a disruption in one part of the system affects the rest of the system (West & Turner, 2017). Further, they note that though the various departments or units in an organization may have independent tasks, they must have common goals and objectives for the organization to succeed. This ideally requires sharing and integration of information among the various departments. The organization depends on sharing information in order to reach their goals and if one department fails to address the information needed to fulfill a certain obligation the whole organization may be delayed in achieving its objectives or fail altogether (Bertalanffy, 1968).

One of the key components of the General Systems theory- GST is feedback and it is essential to making sense in the organization. Feedback enables the organization to determine whether

the information communicated is clear enough and sufficient to enable the organization achieve its goals. The organization must therefore make deliberate efforts to engage in what Bertalanffy refers to as 'cycles of feedback'- where the members continuously request and provide feedback in order to survive and understand the best way to accomplish its goals (West & Turner, 2017).

Darwin's theory of Socio-Cultural Evolution was initially developed by Charles Darwin in 1948 in biology to explain the various adaptation processes that living organisms undergo in order to survive in harsh environments. Darwin explained that those organisms that could not adapt died while those that developed mutations to cope survived (Darwin, 1948). Weick therefore liked this to the various processes that organizations undergo in order to adjust to the various information pressures in their environments. For the organization to survive, it must make the necessary adjustments in relation to the other factors in its environment. According to West & Turner (2017) OIT is based on three major assumptions. One is that human organizations exist in an information environment, meaning that they dependent on information to accomplish their goals. This information is obtained from both internal and external sources and may differ in its understandability. The second assumption is that the information received by the organization differs on equivocality which refers to messages that are complicated, uncertain and unpredictable; hence the organization needs to be involved in the communication process in order to overcome this uncertainty (Rousydiy &M. Kom.I, 2020). The third assumption is that human organizations engage in information processing in order to reduce the equivocality of information. Weick notes that the organization must engage in a continuous cycle of communication by providing and receiving information to and from the other departments in order to achieve the overall goals of the organization.

The OIT has three major concepts that are key to understanding the way the theory works. They include **Information environment**, which is all the stimuli that is exposed to, the **Rules** which are the guidelines that an organization has established for analyzing the equivocality of the message and the **cycles** which is the series of communication behaviors the organization engages in in order to reduce the level of ambiguity. The more equivocal the message, the more the cycles needed to reduce the ambiguity (Herrman in West & Turner, 2017). The cycle of communication further has three stages; **act**, **response** and **adjustment**. In the communication process, action represents the statements that the communicator uses to express one's ambiguity. The response is the reaction to the act and it seeks clarification in the equivocal message. The final stage is adjustment. Once the organization receives the response for the act, it prepares another response indicating any adjustment that may have been made in the initial message. If the information is still equivocal, the adjustment may be made in form of further questions for further clarifications.

In order to reduce equivocality, Weick (1979), suggests that organizations go through three major stages; enactment, selection and retention. Enactment is how information will be received and interpreted and meaning assigned and the information analyzed for equivocality. In the selection stage decisions are made on the rules and cycles of communication to be used and the organization determines the best ways to obtain further information that may be used to further reduce equivocality. Retention is where the organization retains rules or cycles that have worked before for future use.

The Organizational Information theory has been credited as an authoritative theoretical framework that helps explain how organizations make sense of information as it focuses on the

communication process as opposed to the structure of the organization. The theory also combines ideas from different theorists and disciplines making it rich. Czarniawska (2005) also observes that Karl's work and insights have continued to remain relevant even with the growth in the academics as he seems to observe the environment and adapt his work accordingly. Despite this, the theory has been faulted for failing on logical consistency. While the theory argues that the people in the organization are guided by rules, other scholars argue that people are not always conscious in their selection of procedures and may just be following their instinct especially if they have been in the organization for long and their instinct has proven accurate and ethical. (West & Turner, 2017)

This theory is relevant to this study as it relates to three variables in the study; Quality of information, flow of information and Feedback. As Karl Weick notes, (Weick, 1979, 1995) organizations are continually faced with a lot of ambiguous and complicated information, making it difficult for the organization to process all this information. The organization therefore has to select only information that is relevant to the accomplishment of its goals. The relevance of information is an aspect of the quality of information. The OIT focuses on the communication process and postulates that the units in an organization are interdependent and therefore have to communicate in order to reduce equivocality of information. One of the assumptions of the theory is also that human organizations exist in an information environment and hence depend on communication in order to accomplish its goals. This communication among the members of the organization represents the different patterns of internal communication including the vertical, horizontal and lateral flows of information. Finally, the theory is relevant to feedback as it highlights the importance of the multiple communication cycles that enable the organization reduce equivocality in order to facilitate better understanding of information.

Research Gaps

While there has been a lot of research done on internal flow of communication and employee engagement, little research has been done on the effect of internal flow of communication on student engagement, especially in the context of public universities. Various studies have been conducted on flow of information in organizations. For instance, White et al (2010) examined how employees of a multi-campus University viewed top-down communication from top administrators in positions of influence, the employees' communication preferences, their sense of community while working in the organization and how willing they were to advocate for the organization. Mahto & Davis (2012) examined 'Information Flow and Strategic Consensus in Organizations', the study further examined whether the intra –organizational flow of information influences how consensus is reached at the various levels of the organizational hierarchy. However, none of these studies focused on effect of flow of information on student engagement in public universities in Kenya. Therefore, the study addressed this gap by examining the effect of flow of information on student engagement.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted a mixed methods cross-sectional design. The study used a mixed research design with both qualitative and quantitative research methods, where questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data. The target population for this study was be comprised of 128,824 (CUE, 2018) undergraduate students from all the main campuses of chartered public universities in Nairobi City County. This study used both random and purposive sampling techniques. The total population was 384. This study used a closed-ended questionnaire and

interviews for data collection. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 26) was used to analyze descriptive statistics. NVIVO software was used to analyze qualitative data obtained from the interviews. The data was presented inform of frequencies, percentages and means as well as identifying patterns of relationship among groups of data.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Flow of Information on Student Engagement

The study sought to establish the effect of flow of information on student engagement in public universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya. In order to establish this, a Likert scale of 1-5 where; (1- Strongly Disagree, 2- Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4- Agree, 5- Strongly Agree) was used. The results are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Flow of Information

Statement	Agree Freq (%)	Neutral Freq (%)	Disagree Freq (%)
The way the university communicates to me makes me feel like I am an important part of it	146(50)	90(30.8)	56(19.2)
I feel that the management understands the needs of the students in this university	108(37)	84(28.8)	100(34.2)
Students in this university have multiple avenues through which they can communicate with the management whenever they have issues	153(52.4)	72(24.6)	67(23)
I can freely communicate with the university management and provide opinions and suggestions on making the university better	77(26.4)	97(33.2)	118(40.4)
I am encouraged to report any new information I may find out about my department even if it is bad news	114(39)	85(29.1)	93(31.9)
Students are usually involved by the management whenever it is making decisions about matters that affect students	98(33.5)	72(24.7)	122(41.8)
I fear giving honest feedback to the management about issues in the university	101(34.6)	90(30.8)	101(34.6)
There are platforms for students to collaborate and work together in teams in the university	173(59.2)	58(19.9)	61(20.9)
Students in my university share information with one another freely	209(71.6)	48(16.4)	35(12)

The results show that (50%) of the respondent felt that the way the university communicates to them makes them feel like they an important part of it while (19.2%) indicate that the way the university communicates to them does not makes them feel like they an important part of it. (37%) of the respondents feel that the management understands the needs of the students in the university while (34.2%) do not feel that the management understands the needs of the students in this university. (52.4%) of the respondent indicated that students in the university have multiple avenues through which they can communicate with the management whenever they have issues while (23%) felt that students in the university have no multiple avenues through

which they can communicate with the management whenever they have issues. (26.4%) of the respondents stated that they freely communicate with the university management and provide opinions and suggestions on making the university better while (40.4%) indicated that they do not freely communicate with the university management and provide opinions and suggestions on making the university better. Less than half (39 %) of the respondents indicate that they are encouraged to report any new information they may find out about my department even if it is bad news while (31.9%) stated that they are not encouraged to report any new information they may find out about my department even if it is bad news.(33.5 %) of the students stated that students are usually involved by the management whenever it is making decisions about matters that affect students in their university while (41.8%) did not agree with this statement.

(36.4%) of the respondents reported that they fear giving honest feedback to the management about issues in the university while an equal percentage did not agree with this statement. More than half (59.3%) of the respondents stated that there are platforms for students to collaborate and work together in teams in the university and (20.9%) indicated that there are no there are platforms for students to collaborate and work together in teams in the university. Lastly, more than half the respondents (71.6%) stated that students in their university share information with one another freely.

The results above indicate that just as Shehu et al (2018) had concluded, university managements do not fully understand the needs of the students. Further, it was evident that there was poor upward communication (from students to management) compared to lateral (student to student) and downward communication (management to student). This was indicated by the fact only 26.4% agreed that they could freely communicate with the management and provide opinions and suggestions on making the university better while a large percentage (71.6%) agreed that students in their university share information with each other. This is in line with findings from Mahto and Davis (2012) who argued that most communication in organizations flows downward compared to any other flows.

Of interest however was the dissent between students feeling uninvolved by the management on important decisions and issues involving them and the management claiming to make various efforts to involve the students. While only 33.5% of the students agreed to the statement that they were involved by the management whenever it makes decisions on issues that affect them, observations made from interviews indicated that university managements felt they had made enough effort to involve students through their student leaders and even suggested that they have an 'Open Door' policy to enable students raise their issues. Below are some excerpts from the interviews on the same:

R2: *"Those 13 students become full members of the University Senate and they sit during, anytime we have Senate, they will attend. They're allowed to contribute as full members. They're allowed to communicate what the students are saying to help us know what the students are saying. We also give them information to also go and communicate the student body. So, at the end of the day, there's no time you'll find students saying they're not aware of what the university is doing or they're not aware of what is happening. So that way we have opened channels of communication with the students and then, like my office now, I've made it open. I've sent out, my email and for students. Now they even have my telephone number and, my office is open. So anytime students have an issue and they want to clarify, they can. We discuss, we openly respond."*

R3: *"When students have issues to raise, the director student affairs, and then the officers with them will pick very quickly and relay, where students have concerns. Some will even come here. The student leaders frequently will come to the registrar, I have a free, open-door policy come in, and you have an issue we'll discuss."*

R4: "*One, the University right from the VC, DVC(s), Registrar. Deans of schools, chair departments they actually operate the open-door system. If there is a quick matter, they can go to relevant office to communicate .They can also communicate to the relevant officers through email addresses. They have our emails they can communicate. Three, they have our telephone numbers. They can communicate. Four, students are represented on certain key committees like Senate and disciplinary committee and also Student Welfare Committee, Accommodation Committee, so whenever they have issues, they can also communicate them to the management as they participate on those important committees where they're represented."*

R5: *... "and students, if they feel aggrieved at times, just write to the vice chancellor. Or at times they text it, they even have his number. They'll text him if it's an issue that concerns academic. He will send me and he'll tell me, check this matter, I'll check. I will. If it's something I can resolve, I finish resolving and then just report to him that I've sorted out the issue of the student."*

The responses of the students and those of the university management therefore point to a disconnect when it comes to student involvement and the flow of communication in general.

Effect of Flow Information on Student Engagement in Public Universities in Nairobi City County

The inferential results show how the flow of information affects the student engagement in public universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya. The results shows that flow of information has a statistically significant effect on student engagement in public universities in Nairobi City County, Kenya (p=0.001). The R-squared is (0.329) this indicates that 32.9% of the total variation in the student engagement model is explained by the flow of information.

Table 2: Effect of Information Communicated on Student Engagement

Variable	Unstandardized Beta	Standardized Beta	P-value	R-Squared	Adjusted R-Squared
Flow of information	0.310	0.359	0.001	0.329	0.326

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The study examined the effect of the flow of information on student engagement in Nairobi City County. In an attempt to establish whether there was indeed a relationship, between the variables, the study looked at information flow patterns within public universities in terms of Upward communication, Downward communication and Lateral communication. Several observations were made about these information flows. Firstly, Lateral communication was well established with over 70% of respondents indicating that they easily shared information with each other. Downward communication and upward communication on the other hand were not as efficient. For instance, students felt that the university did not understand their

needs and that they were not consulted enough on how to make the university better even on issues that directly affected them. Only 33.5% felt that they were involved by the university when making decisions that involved them.

Secondly, only 26.4% of the respondents agreed that they could freely communicate their opinions and suggestions to the university management despite the students indicating that there were indeed avenues provided by the universities for such communication. Infact, most of the university management representatives interviewed indicated that they had an 'open-door' policy and involved students when making decisions, through the representation of their student leaders at various levels. This suggests that there may be some underlying issues that probably discourage students from raising their concerns despite being provided with the channels to do so. It might also help explain why 34.6% of the respondents admitted to fearing to give honest feedback to the management about issues.

The Pearson Correlation indicated that there was a positive relationship between flow of information and Student engagement, where, r=0.359, p<0.05. Flow of information was also seen to have a statistically significant effect on student engagement in public universities (p=0.001). The R-squared was (0.329) indicating that 32.9% of the total variation in the student engagement model was explained by the flow of information.

Conclusions

The study concluded that information about universities was readily available, indicating that university managements were making conscious efforts to communicate with their students. The information however is often times not the kind that the students actually need and does not come in good time.

Lateral communication (student-student) is well established in public universities and students easily share information with one another. Downward (management-student) and upward (student-management) communication was however wanting with students feeling that they are not consulted enough even on issues that directly affect them. This is despite having representation by their student representatives at various levels of the decision-making processes in the university. Students also stated that they could not freely communicate their opinions to the management despite being provided with channels to do so.

Recommendations

Public universities should invest in modern information dissemination channels, such as university websites, mobile apps, and social media platforms, to ensure that students have easy access to relevant information regarding their academic programs, campus events, and administrative updates. This supports Organizational Information Theory by ensuring efficient information flow within the university. Public universities should establish mechanisms for open and responsive communication between students and university authorities. This includes regular town hall meetings, suggestion boxes, and online forums where students can voice their concerns and ideas. Public universities should establish clear and comprehensive communication policies that outline the channels, frequency, and modes of communication between the institution, faculty, and students. These policies should also specify the responsibilities of different stakeholders in ensuring effective communication.

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