

**The Role of Information Communication In
Effective Public Administration**

By

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Introduction

Information is the art of informing or the condition of being informed. its science is concerned with the gathering, manipulation, classification, storage and retrieval of recorded knowledge. It is communication of knowledge. It can be communicated orally, visually, in writing or simply by signs. It is sourced from personal interaction/discussion; research; experience; news media; textbooks; journals; internet; conferences; seminars, and workshops.

Communication is the art and science of transmitting information, ideas and attitude or opinions from one person to another or from one group to another through a common system or symbols; Benson-Ehuwa, Virginia (1988). The three elements of communication are the sender, the receiver and the message. The process of communication starts from the sender, who encodes it and passes it on to the receiver who decodes it, and responds by way of a feedback to the sender. The circle of communication terminates with the response of the receiver. Communication becomes effective when the stimulus as it was initiated and intended by the sender, or source, corresponds with the stimulus as it was perceived and responded to by the receiver. In other words, communication becomes effective if the recipient reacts positively to the expectation of the sender. For any communication to be effective, it should be devoid of ambiguity and incomplete statements, Obodo & Ogbu (1999). The most important channels/means of communication are oral, written and visual communication.

Public Administration is the instrument of policy formulation and implementation - Okpata, F.O. (2004). Effective public administration is the one that is goal-oriented; that meets the intentions of the policy formulators, and that which effectively and efficiently organizes both human and material resources, and directs persons to accomplish specified objectives with available resources.

The Role of Information Communication In Effective Public Administration

Information is extremely valuable in effective public administration because it discloses/defines public policy and the method of meeting the intention of the political class.

The efficiency and effectiveness of any administration is anchored on the unhindered flow of information communication. Policies are formulated, but for such policies to be implemented, they have to be fully analysed and communicated to those whose duty it is to carry out the implementation of the policies. In other words, the implementer, that is, the public officers, must be sufficiently informed of the roles expected of them, and such information must be communicated through a means most suited for the purpose.

In any given administration, there are two broad ways by which information could be communicated. These are internal and external methods of information communication. Each of these is very important for the following reasons:

Internal Method

Information communicated in unambiguous manner stimulates action and receives a better response. On the other hand, information which is laden with confusion and ambiguity can be cured of such defects through direct approach to the originator within the establishment.

Instruction is communicated and intelligence is imparted from Permanent Secretaries to Directors, from Directors to Executive Officers; from Executive Officers to Clerical/Secretarial Staff as a vital part of normal administrative functions.

The creation of workers' interest in the process, results, and policy of the business are important parts of management's function of motivation.

Adequate and timely communication of information about changes in the workers' condition of service, such as the Federal Government's Monetization Policy, which has adversely altered the existing conditions of service, and the likely retrenchment of civil servants, lessen the shock implementation of the policy will inflict on the workers, and ensure acceptability of the development by the affected people.

Workers are given the opportunity to communicate to their superiors through the appropriate channel. This is important in two ways:

The worker is able to complain to his superior on official issues and seek clarification on how to deal with issues relating to duties assigned to him. The superior obtains information from his subordinates, which often enables him to make decisions and/or improve methods.

External Method

Flow of information communication among relevant departments ensures general understanding and adherence to policy guidelines. Similarly, information communication between a government agency carrying out projects for communities and the benefiting communities enhances good understanding and better relationship between the parties.

Communication of positive information on issues of interest increases confidence and reliability. On the contrary, communication of negative information on issues and policies that are resented by the people create bad image for the government, irrespective of the long-term benefit of such issues or policies, such as the deregulation of the downstream oil sector and the attendant constant rise in the cost of petroleum products.

The Relevance of Sources of Information in Effective Public Administration

The following sources of information are now discussed to show their relevance to effective public administration:

Personal Interaction/Discussion: A great deal of information is gathered from opinion sharing and discussion between persons on issues pertaining to administration could lead to Alternative better results approaches suggested. could be ex-rayed and an approach that

Research: Studies could be carried out on methods applied by certain countries or administrations in carrying out certain government policies. Such a study will consider the role of interest groups in the achievement of any administrative objective. Comparative approach in administration guarantees good standards and satisfactions.

Experience: It has often been said that experience is the best teacher. Constant practice leads to perfection. Our experience of the merits and demerits of the application of certain methods of solving administrative problems reinforces our belief in the effectiveness and success of any chosen method.

News Media: A lot of information are gathered through the news media both electronic and print. Certain programmes in the media discuss government policies, and the discussants often applaud or condemn certain policies and suggest methods of implementation.

Textbooks: Most textbooks in Administration and Management are replete with discussions on (information) communication, and the best methods of dissemination and effective administration.

Internet: The internet affords us the opportunity of accessing information on methods of administration elsewhere, and leaves us with the option to choose which method should be most suited to our needs.

Conferences/Seminars: At conferences/seminars resource persons present papers on specified areas. On occasions, policy issues are discussed and suggestions made on how implementation could be effectively carried out.

Workshops: At workshops practical approach to methods of solving problems raised at the forum are demonstrated and options explored. Such are the best methods of imparting knowledge, which leads to effectiveness.

Desired Quality of Information Communicated for Effective Public Administration

Information communication plays a major role in effective Public Administration. However, for any information communicated to achieve the desired objective, it has to have the following qualities.

Accuracy and Reliability: These are very crucial in that good decision can only be made on the basis of accurate and reliable information.

Tailord Information: The presentation layout and detail of information can affect its usefulness.

Completeness: The recipient should be satisfied that he or she has received all the information needed.

Brevity: The relevant facts in the information should not be obscured by irrelevant details. This could be avoided by keeping the information as brief as possible.

Legibility: The user must be able to read and understand the information. **Significance:** The significance of the information must be apparent to the recipient.

Value Adding: Unless the information actually contributes something new and useful to the user, it is a waste of resources, avoid a break down. Data or information collected is promptly processed and disseminated to appropriate units of management for effective utilization. Staff involved in information processing need to be skilled in the manipulation of the equipment in use as this is a major basis for successful information communication process. Many word processing systems are able to provide communication facilities often described as electronic mail (email). This facility can be used for both internal and external mail as long as receiving terminal is linked to the appropriate communication system.

Rather than send printed copies of correspondence within the organization, for example, memos and circulars, they may be keyed in and sent electronically to other work stations, which may be situated in various departments within the organization. At the receiving work station, the screen would show that documents are waiting to be viewed, and a list of all the electronic mail that had been received might be displayed on the screen for reading, and printed out if a paper copy is required.

Another modern introduction to information communication system is the Global System Mobile (GSM). It is of universal usage and is designed for direct communication between the caller and the receiver. Verbal information and directives are communicated by top manager and administrators to their subordinates for immediate action; and it has facilities for sending text messages and e-mail.

Management Information System

MIS is the combination of decision making and transaction processing. It consists of interrelated components - a system - that processes information used in the management of an organization.

Effective management of information system is the basis of all rational decisions and its essence is based on the strategic importance of information as a vital resource at both personal, organizational and national levels.

Information as a processed data is a vital resource therefore, developing and sustaining system that produce, store, transmit and process in for nation is a priority function in the development of a functional public administration.

Quality information and its effective management result in rational decision in the development of public administration thus, rational decision making becomes a function of the amount, quality and magnitude of information available to the decision maker in administration.

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