

Communication Competence Of College Administrators: Characteristic Of Good Leadership And Management

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Abstract: Communication is an indispensable tool in the success of organizational operations. Administrators should not ignore communication as one of the key elements in the success of their organization. Competence should be manifested by their broad knowledge about communication theories and principles, by their skillful application of communication strategies and procedures, and by their tactful utilization of appropriate communication channels and media. Through a descriptive survey method and purposive sampling, this study assessed the level of competence of the administrators' communication abilities along the areas of managerial writing, understanding messages, interpersonal communication, and group communication.

Index Terms: Administrators, College, Communication, Communication Abilities, Competency, Leadership, Management

1 INTRODUCTION

COMMUNICATION can be seen as the foundation of leadership and management. Daft (2008) defined leadership as communicating with others in such a way that they are influenced and motivated to perform actions that further common goals and lead toward desired outcomes. He continued that managers and leaders have huge communication responsibility in directing and controlling an organization. Hersey, Blanchard and Johnson (2008) support Daft when they identified communicating as one of the three leadership competencies and defined it as a process of interacting with others in a way that people can easily understand and accept. They referred to it as a process competency because one must communicate well in order to meet a goal. In the same light, Hynes (2005) mentioned that a contemporary manager has a greater opportunity than ever to make a significant difference in the success of an organization and increase the quality of work life for fellow employees. She also added that a contemporary manager requires effective communication skills, which are becoming more complex, making them more difficult to master. Johnson and Ridley (2008) aver that nothing will quickly undermine good work but poor communication. They said that even the most brilliant and talented professionals risk misunderstanding, relational carnage and lawsuits when they fail at the task of communication. However, they also perceive that there are professionals who are naturally gifted in the art and technique of imparting information, ideas and even emotions, wherein these individuals impress with an intuitive ability to establish rapport with those they encounter. With this, the administrators are expected to have the greatest responsibility in enhancing their effectiveness and competency in communication.

Schumacher (2007) and Barrett (2008) posited that communication is the key to the responsibility of good leaders. The fact that they spend more time in communication, their employees consider communication ability as one of their important characteristics as good leaders. Further, he agreed that if leaders want to create an innovative organizational culture and a learning organization it is very important that they know how to communicate well with their employees within the organization. Further, he agreed that if leaders want to create an innovative organizational culture and a learning organization it is very important that they know how to communicate well with their employees within the organization.

2 ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATION ABILITIES

Leaders and managers should be skilled in communicating to convey information and knowledge within the organization. The following are the communication abilities as conferred by Hynes (2005): Managerial Writing. This has two unique characteristics which are (1) collaboration when creating documents, and (2) documentation in managerial works. Managerial Writing includes routine messages such as memos, notices, electronic messages, and managerial reports and proposals (Hynes, 2005). Reports are among an organization's most important communications. They appear in a variety of forms, carry out a number of functions, and ensure the efficient transfer of data within an organization. Managerial reports should be well - organized and objective, and they transfer verifiable information that addresses some purpose or problem. Internal reports can contribute to the management functions. Reports are essential to managers' ability to control organizational actions. Managers are required to plan, organize, execute, evaluate, and improve, and they need some media for carrying out these tasks (Wayne and Scriven, 1991). Understanding Messages. Understanding messages includes active listening and understanding nonverbal and intercultural communication. Active Listening includes identifying the main or supporting points, organizing, summarizing, visualizing, personalizing the message, and taking notes. For Denney (2003), active listening occurs when a manager has little opportunity to directly respond to the speaker which includes identifying the main or supporting points, organizing, summarizing, visualizing, personalizing the message, and taking notes. In 1992, Brownell preferred to call it Interactive listening because managers can verbally interact

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with the speaker by asking questions and summarizing. Nonverbal Communication accompanies oral and, by logical extension, written messages, while consisting of signals delivered through means other than verbal. Intercultural communication is a communication between and among people from different cultural background and is an instrument utilized which transmits a meaning, composes and reinforces identify and expresses feeling in a group (Schumacher, 2007). Intercultural Communication is implied in significant differences that occur in communication patterns, habits, and traditions across cultures. Differences in worldview, language usage and other jargons are considerations when describing intercultural communication (Porter & Samovar, 1985). Communication system through which cultural values are instituted and reinforced is referred to by Deal and Kennedy (as cited in Miller, 2009) as cultural network. This consists of formal organizational channels, such as newsletters, and informal interactions with employees. On the other hand, organizational culture is formed due to the notion that cultures are socially created through the interaction of organizational members. This centralizes on communication in which culture is not merely transmitted through communication but in which communication is constitutive of culture (Eisenberg and Riley, 2001). Interpersonal Communication. This communication includes abilities on conflict management, negotiations, delegations of tasks, and conduct of interviews (Hynes 2005). Conflict requires managers to analyze their goals, it creates dialogues among employees, and it forces creative solution. Negotiation as an integral aspect of management is used when collaborating about budget allocations, better purchasing prizes, higher salaries demands, increased time for deadlines, better salaries and benefits, and the like. The conduct of interview comes in different kinds such as performance appraisal, employment, persuasive, grievance, exit, problem – solving, and informational. No matter what situation, the process is an intensive communication transaction designed to obtain of share certain predetermined kinds of information. Group Communication. This area incorporates managing meetings and teams and making formal presentations. Meetings are an important organizational communication process that continues to be useful for coordination of work functions. In managing teams, one should use a variety of communication strategies to maximize the team's effectiveness. This area also embraces coordinating with the members of the organization and forming committees for a certain task.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Communication Competence of Administrators along Managerial Writing

Table 1 presents the perceptions on the competence of the administrators' communication abilities along managerial writing. The mean ratings of the indicators range from 3.53 to 3.63 which are all interpreted as "very much competent." The same interpretation can be given to the area mean of 3.58. These findings imply that the administrators are perceived by the faculty members to be greatly proficient in composing, writing, and disseminating messages in written form. Similarly, they are very much competent in presenting clear and concise messages and in following the institutional format for producing reports and documents. These statements received the highest mean scores in the section. The written

communication is further characterized by the use of positive words that convey courtesy to the receiver. The data also show that there are institutional formats in writing memos, notices, and other correspondence. This is consistent with Miller's (2009) idea that organizations that will emphasize rules and regulations for efficient organizational functioning rely heavily on written communication in the form of employee handbooks, instructions, mission statements, rules, and performance evaluations.

Table 1. Communication Competence of Administrators along Managerial Writing

Indicators	Mean
Presents concise and clear written messages	3.63
Follows the institutional format and procedures of producing and reproducing written reports/ documents.	3.63
Uses positive words to convey courtesy to the reader of the message.	3.61
Writes commonly used words and avoids clichés and jargons to maintain common understanding of the written communication.	3.60
Disseminates messages, letters, or memos which clearly depict what he / she means to say or accomplish.	3.59
Informs his/her subordinates of the vitality or urgency of the written messages or notices.	3.58
Selects the appropriate written communication medium necessary for faster and proper flow of information.	3.55
Composes the message in a logical and coherent manner	3.55
Includes data or information that is appropriate content of the written communication.	3.54
Uses concrete words rather than abstract words in order to facilitate reading comprehension.	3.53
Area Mean	3.58

NcNamara (2008) emphasized that several organizations take a deliberate, formal approach to ensuring sound communications by developing a plan for both internal and external communication. In doing this, he mentioned some of the things that could be considered in starting an institutional procedure of communication. First is the key messages that need to be conveyed; second is to whom these key messages should be conveyed; third is the approach that is best to reach the intended receivers; fourth is the best person to communicate the key message; fifth is an evaluation or feedback on how the communicators are able to reach the receivers; and ultimately, the impact on the receivers. Moreover, Walker (as cited in Miller, 2009) indicated that the assistance of communication experts should be considered in order to ensure that effective communication plan will be developed to tailor to the needs of concerned individuals and of the organization in general. The item with the lowest mean of 3.53 is "the use of concrete rather than abstract words in order to facilitate reading comprehension". This implies that some use abstract words in constructing written messages to their subordinates. Some examples of these abstract words are "account for" which simply means to explain; "hold to account" meaning hold responsible; and "keep the banner flying" meaning keep working (Sagar, n.d.). Oftentimes, we also hear the words, "go the extra mile" which is usually used to mean do beyond what is required of the job wherein such action is helpful, advantageous and brings honor to the team and the workplace; and another is "make a difference" which is used to mean initiate change, do something unique, or do something which has never been done in the past. The use of abstract words in communication may be influenced by various factors such as the following: the sender's perspective

of the receiver, the extent of the sender's vocabularies, the sender's comprehension and definition of his or her terminologies, the difficulty of expression with the use of appropriate words or language, and the increase of jargons in our society at present. Consequently, receivers who may not be aware of the sender's intention, meaning, or language of conveying messages, may take the words or the whole message as abstract. The worse result is when receivers immediately judge the message as irrational and indecisive. In his discussion on the barriers of communication, Kline (1990) pointed out that misinterpretation of the meanings of words can arise because the same words can mean different things to different people and different words can mean the same thing to different people. One of the tips of Fenson (2007) for masterful communication is being watchful of the language used. Metaphors, commonly known as figures of speech or idioms, can be encouraged as long as these should offer something that the audience can relate to or have common thought or feeling. One must opt for clear, positive language and straightforward sincerity to foster shared understanding and earn the support of the group.

3.2 Communication Competence of Administrators in Ensuring Understanding Messages

Table 2 presents the perception of competence along understanding messages. The mean ratings range from 3.36 to 3.62, with a area mean of 3.43, all interpreted as "very much competent". The highest mean imply that the administrators were perceived to be very approachable when the subordinates speak with them regarding certain matters or when exploring problems. The lowest mean rating of 3.36 portrays that administrators are very much competent in developing a listening climate to motivate subordinates to open up solutions to problems. In 2008, a study of Lang-akan found out that the administrators' actions on addressing concerns and problems were perceived respectively by the subordinates as effective and not very much. With his findings, he recommended that employees should be given more time or attention so that they will feel that they are a part of the organization and that they will become more committed, competent, and creative in their work.

Table 2. *Communication Competence of Administrators in Ensuring Understanding Messages*

Indicators	Mean
Is approachable when I speak with him/her regarding a matter or when exploring problems.	3.62
Takes notes of suggestions and recommendations.	3.45
Asks relevant questions to the topic or subject matter you just discussed or is presenting.	3.45
Maintains and strengthens good intercultural communication within the dept.	3.42
Is aware of the signs of the forthcoming events and takes corrective actions immediately if necessary.	3.41
Is patient and does not push his / her own culture way of communicating to different individuals.	3.41
Is alert in listening actively to small details on specific situations.	3.40
Asks appropriate questions and chooses the right words in composing questions when deriving facts.	3.40
Takes time to discuss or assess the rumors with the subordinates when necessary.	3.37
Develops a listening climate to motivate subordinates to open up solution to problems.	3.36
Area Mean	3.43

This study showed that the administrators had the lowest mean rating on developing a listening climate to motivate subordinates to open up solution to problems. This seems to run counter to the perception that administrators were approachable as implied by the highest mean rating of 3.63. Probably, there are some who are unable to build up a listening climate. When subordinates see that their superiors listen they would not hesitate to approach the latter. Krone, Garrett and Chen (1992) stressed the importance of listening to effective communication. They posited that when good listening climate is established, subordinates can get and understand the message and establish in mind the goal of the communication without being interrupted or even annoyed. The existing atmosphere in the venue of communication, the timing or schedule, the present occasion and circumstances, and the rapport between the communicators, are the factors that could affect the attention and participation of subordinates in communication. Without these, they will not listen anymore even though the superiors do their best to communicate with them. In addition, they will refrain from open communication, as well as, from being open in their communications and in solving problems. In connection to this, Ulrich and Smallwood (2007) pointed the importance of timing of the message to be shared and the process of sharing it. They posited that communication cannot be done anytime just because an individual feels to communicate. Timing and atmosphere are factors that communicators need to consider. Furthermore, Hannum and Martineau (2008) cited that the information can be exploited to tailor the timing, content, and channel of communication. This is because not everyone is interested in or has the time to think about all the information that is being communicated to them during a certain time. Thus, communicators should understand the information needs of different groups. To uphold this, Barrett's (2000) idea can also be considered. He said that managers should ensure that employee communication connects to the goals of communication and that the internal communication is integrated into the present operational processes in the organization. In this way, collaboration and participation of communicators can be increased.

3.3 Communication Competence of Administrators along Interpersonal Communication

The level of competence of administrators as shown is table 3 ranges from 3.27 to 3.58. The area mean is 3.40 and interpreted as "very much competent". As gleaned in the table, encouraging cooperation and teamwork rather than competition is the highest in rank. Emphasizing relationship in the department in achieving productive goals follows and is just consistent with the former. In performing the first one, administrators show great appreciation of the accomplishments of the faculty members by rewarding them as a group or a team. The administrators also inspire the faculty members by rewarding them or giving them words of encouragement to work closely together despite their individual differences or personal circumstances. Moreover, regardless of the result of the given tasks, the subordinates receive an encouragement to pursue improvement and excellence or to maintain good results in whatever they do. These are usually done by administrators to eliminate or minimize competition among individuals in the college and to motivate them to work as a group or team.

Table 3. Communication Competence of Administrators along Interpersonal Communication

Indicators	Mean
Encourages cooperation and teamwork rather than competition.	3.58
Emphasizes maintaining relationship in the department in achieving productive goals.	3.54
Knows when is the proper time and the proper use of allotted time to negotiate.	3.43
Negotiates with confidence and positive attitude.	3.41
Confers with staff in strategic venue of negotiation with proper physical arrangement of the place.	3.40
Trusts and delegates tasks for a certain activity or project.	3.38
Responds positively to comments and complaints.	3.36
Uses questioning techniques during interviews.	3.36
Attempts to mutually solve problem.	3.29
Accommodates or initiates occasions to divert conflicts yet settles the latter in a gentle manner.	3.27
Area Mean	3.40

Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) said that leaders tune in to the team's emotional state and look for unhealthy or unproductive norms that inhibit cooperation and team harmony. Additionally, only by getting emotions into the open can the team build new norms and move to a higher level of group satisfaction and performance. In 2008, Daft cited several factors that leaders should use to influence team cohesiveness. One of the factors cited is team interaction which is done by frequent communication among team members in order for them to get to know one another and become better devoted to the team. Another factor is shared mission and goals where team members should agree on the purpose and direction in order to be more cohesive. The ultimate factor is personal interaction with the team which means that members find their common ground and enjoy being together. The administrators had the lowest rating in accommodating or initiating occasions in diverting conflicts. There are, however, some factors that may be considered in this item. Factors such as lack of time to initiate conversations due to ample activities during the period of conflict; pressures from both parties; personal circumstances of other parties involved and concerned; and differences among the subordinates may be considered. Subordinates may think that their superiors do not care or do not plan to do something about conflicts in the workplace. Some superiors do not rush to intervene in the conflicts because they consider conflicts only as distractions which can be tolerated because these may wane. Other administrators are very much concerned but use another person to settle the conflict lest they get involved. In relation to these, Neher (1997) identified conflict management, in rank of negotiating and bargaining, as one of the primary functions of organizational communication. He gave greater emphasis to the role of communication in managing threats to organizational order and control, identifying solutions to problems, and ways of managing conflict, negotiating and bargaining. In fostering conflict resolutions, leaders should effectively handle disagreements and conflicts, settle disputes by focusing on solving the problems without offering egos, provide support and expertise to other leaders with respect to managing people, and evaluate the feasibility of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms ("Leadership Competency", n.d.).

3.4. Communication Competence of Administrators along Group Communication

In this last area, the administrators are rated very much competent. The mean ratings ranging from 3.30 to 3.54, gave an area mean of 3.43, all interpreted as "very much competent" as exhibited in the table below.

Table 4. Communication Competence of Administrators along Group Communication

Indicators	Mean
Accepts suggestions on venues and time of meetings or conferences.	3.54
Encourages maximum participation and teamwork on various activities and events.	3.50
Assigns immediately a committee for planning and coordinating.	3.48
Facilitates intellectual discussions in decision-making.	3.46
Speaks and presents a conversational approach if he/she is talking to the group in various situations.	3.46
Manages an orderly and organized gathering or meeting.	3.45
Varies leadership style when communicating to different groups or individuals.	3.40
Organizes persuasive appropriate presentations during meetings or assemblies.	3.38
Makes a timely decision – not too early, nor too late.	3.36
Is open to criticisms.	3.30
Area Mean	3.40

Item 3, "accepts suggestions on venues and time of meetings or conferences," has the highest mean score of 3.54. This implies that the faculty members' suggestions are being acknowledged by administrators during meetings or conferences. Denning (2007) said that when one encounters new ideas, he or she usually seeks to preserve his or her existing viewpoint. Sometimes, when one makes a decision to explore change, he or she actively looks for elements that confirm the decision already made without getting the comments or suggestions of others. Still Pearson (1983) agreed when he pointed out that one of the special hints of effective communication is to ensure that the receiver has a chance to comment or ask questions. In March 2006, Caldeira stated in his article that leaders or managers can become communication champions. By inviting open and honest dialogue, leaders or managers create an environment of inclusion where communication is encouraged, valued and rewarded. They encourage employees to express their ideas, suggestions and disagreements. He said that this develops a foundation of trust, which in turn, creates a culture of innovation and enterprise. It can be gleaned from table 5 that the second highest rated item is "encouraging maximum participation and teamwork on various activities and events". This confirms the previous findings that administrators usually encourage cooperation within the faculty members in the college rather than individual competition. In her study, Bayacsan (2008) found a very high rating of teachers about their heads in maintaining harmonious relationship among members of the staff, encouraging teamwork, and settling conflict among the group. She cited that these behaviors of administrators will convince teachers to work easily and happily in an atmosphere where trust, warmth, and consideration prevail. Furthermore, the specific behaviors under her data presentation on supportive leadership styles such as assisting the employees to attain their goals, appreciating their contributions, and being sensitive to their employees' need for equity, were the behaviors of heads that

were mostly preferred by the teachers. Martin (2007) recommended that one should not worry much about criticisms, because one is not any good and that criticism is always valid. In the same light, to improve one's performance and get ahead in an organization, Lussier and Achua (2007) suggest that one has to be open with criticisms. However, how willing a person is to accept these depends on some personality traits of effective leaders. Feedbacks or criticisms on performances should be solicited from observers. If somebody wants to improve his or her performance, and wishes to have a successful career, he or she must seek honest feedback on how to improve. Deiner (2003) agreed when he also proposed that when there are criticisms, whether it is asked or not, these should be viewed as an opportunity to improve, staying calm even when the other person is emotional, and never get defensive. For him, feedback or criticisms should be used to improve performance.

4 CONCLUSION

The administrators have commendable communication competence along the areas of Managerial Writing, Understanding Communication, Interpersonal Communication, and Group Communication. However, there are still some areas to improve such as using concrete words in written communications, assessing rumors, establishing a listening climate in the department or college, responding to comments, complaints and criticisms, initiating conflict resolutions and diversion activities, and relaying decisions.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Schools should establish and maintain an institutional format of communications and supervise the observance of the protocols regarding the chain of command and flow of communication. The institutions' decision-makers or policy-makers may review the policies formulated in the past in order to check which is being followed. Causes of problems and non-compliance should be traced and actions should be promptly initiated. Policies and the changes should be often disseminated and be reminded to all employees in the institution through proper media or channel of communication. The Colleges have to make available to its constituents the organizational chart or flow chart of communication in order to facilitate the chain of command. The colleges have to also assign a person to keep up a systematic record keeping in the department. Records should be categorized or indexed for easy acquisition and retrieval in the future. The administrators should be encouraged to attend related seminars, workshops, or trainings in order to maintain and continue to develop their competence in communication.

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