

COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND STUDENTS' CRISES RESOLUTION IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The 21st century argument for the promotion and management of Information and Communication in the delivery of education in developed and some developing economies gave birth to a planned form of using technology to bridge the gap between the university management and staff and students. Information and communication (IC) for emergency management functions best when its design follows from a solid understanding of the socio-technical systems that it is meant to support. This study examined the impact of Information and Communication in the management of crisis and to determine the existing relationship between staff/student needs and conflicts in the public universities in South West Nigeria. The increasing number of crises made communication a more demanding job for managers. Organizations face small crises every day, such as charges of denial of staff and students needs in Nigeria universities.

This study adopt the descriptive research design of survey type. Nigeria is made up of six geo-political zones namely: North-West, North-East, North-Central, South-South, South-East, and South-West. Thus, a purposive simple random sampling method was adopted and the South-West geo-political zone was selected out of which three (3) Federal universities and three (3) State universities were randomly selected. A stratified sampling technique was also used to select 2,400 consisting of 300 students and 100 academic and non-academic staff from each university. The instrument used was a self constructed questionnaire titled, Information Communication Technology and Crises Resolution Questionnaire (ICTCRQ). Before administration, the questionnaire was validated with reliability coefficient of $r = 0.87$. Data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics tools to test the research hypotheses for the study. The result reveals that there is a significant difference between the level of information communication management and crisis between the Federal and State Universities. ($df = (5, 397)$, $F_{cal} = .297 > F_{tab} = .157$; $P < .05$). The study also revealed that is a significant relationship between information communication management and student crisis resolution in Universities ($r=0.66$, $P<0.05$).

On the basis of the findings, it is therefore recommended that Management of the university system has a task of playing the unique leadership role to identify early conflict signals, prevent emergence of conflict and control or resolve an existing ones with the effective uses of modern ICT gadgets to ensure effective and efficient attainment of the university objectives.

Keywords: Technological education, benchmarking, economic liberalization, hardware, software, socio-technical system

Introduction

Universities in Nigeria could be said to be moving towards realizing the set goals in the first two decades of political independence in 1960, as the few universities established in the country then could be said to possess world class stature and produced outstanding scholars in virtually all their programmes. The students had access to comfortable accommodation, while regular supply of electricity, pipe-borne water and proper feeding and clothing were as sure as the sunrise. The learning condition was congenial, and the University authorities were relating with the students as responsible individuals and indeed as the future leaders of the country. Job opportunities were automatic dividends of university education.

Thus, on admission into the university, the successful candidates saw themselves as the privileged few, admitted to develop their potentialities and translate them into concrete legacy for posterity. They saw the university as a better home that produce fulfillment and happiness in work (study) and play because they were relatively satisfied with the university's environmental returns.

During the last three and half decades, Nigerian universities have, regrettably metamorphosed from citadels of learning into "centers of violence" (Rotimi, 2005). This is so because students' crisis presumed to be mediated by inadequacies in their needs satisfaction has become the order of the day. The nasty experience being faced by the Nigerian university students is well captured by Osha (2000) who avers that the university system has not fared well in Nigeria since the 1967 civil war, the breakdown of infrastructure is almost total, the electricity supply has considerably worsened just as water shortages have become seriously acute. He adds that the much valued residential hostels as well as the overcrowding in the classrooms are not only an eyesore but have led to even more stressful conditions, while arbitrary and high handed administrative procedures have worsened as students are not considered as significant aspect of the management equation. Worse still, productive teaching and research have become a herculean task as many lecturers have resorted to the sale of substandard handouts at exorbitant rates in an attempt at breaking even.

The development and modernization of most economies took its root from technological education which is a catalyst to the development of Information Communication Technology (ICT). Education in itself is the transmission of information from one medium to another whereas communication according to Thompson and Cat-Basil (2003), is described as a message or signal that reduces the uncertainty in the mind of the receiver. However, technology is a key component in achieving effective transmission of information and communication. The knowledge and the processing of information are the key drives for wealth creation and social and economic development. Thus, crisis resolution with Information and Communication Technology entails the usage of hardware and software to retrieve process and transmit data in order to guide against crisis and to resolve crisis in the universities.

Communication and Information Technology and Crisis Resolution

Communication is just not for conveying information, but to persuade and influence people. Although, communication skills have always been important to managers, the ability to persuade and influence others is even more critical today. To persuade and influence, managers have to communicate frequently and easily with others. Daft (2008) notes that people find interpersonal communication experiences unrewarding or difficult and thus tend to avoid situations where communication is required. Effective persuasion doesn't mean telling people what you want them to do; instead, it involves listening, learning about others' interest and needs, and learning people to a shared solution. Green (2001) stressed that new computer technology increases educators' capacity to use data systematically to manipulate the interactions inherent in teaching and learning situation.

Over the years, the behaviourists have shown interest in finding out the causes of certain human behaviour with the intention of finding a standard pattern of human action and inaction based on “cause” and “effect” phenomenon. Communication is not just sending information, honoring the distinction between sharing and proclaiming is crucial for successful management.

To corroborate this, Daft (2008) asserts that:

When people interact, they put themselves into each other’s shoes, try to perceive the world as the other person perceives it, try to predict how the other will respond. Interaction involves reciprocal role-taking, the mutual employment of empathetic skills. The goal of interaction is the merger of self and other, a complete ability to anticipate, predict, and behave in accordance with the joint needs of self and other. It is the desire to share understanding that motivates executives to visit employees on shop floor, hold small informal meetings, or eat with employees in the cafeteria. The things managers learn from direct communication with employees shape their understanding of the organization. (p. 659).

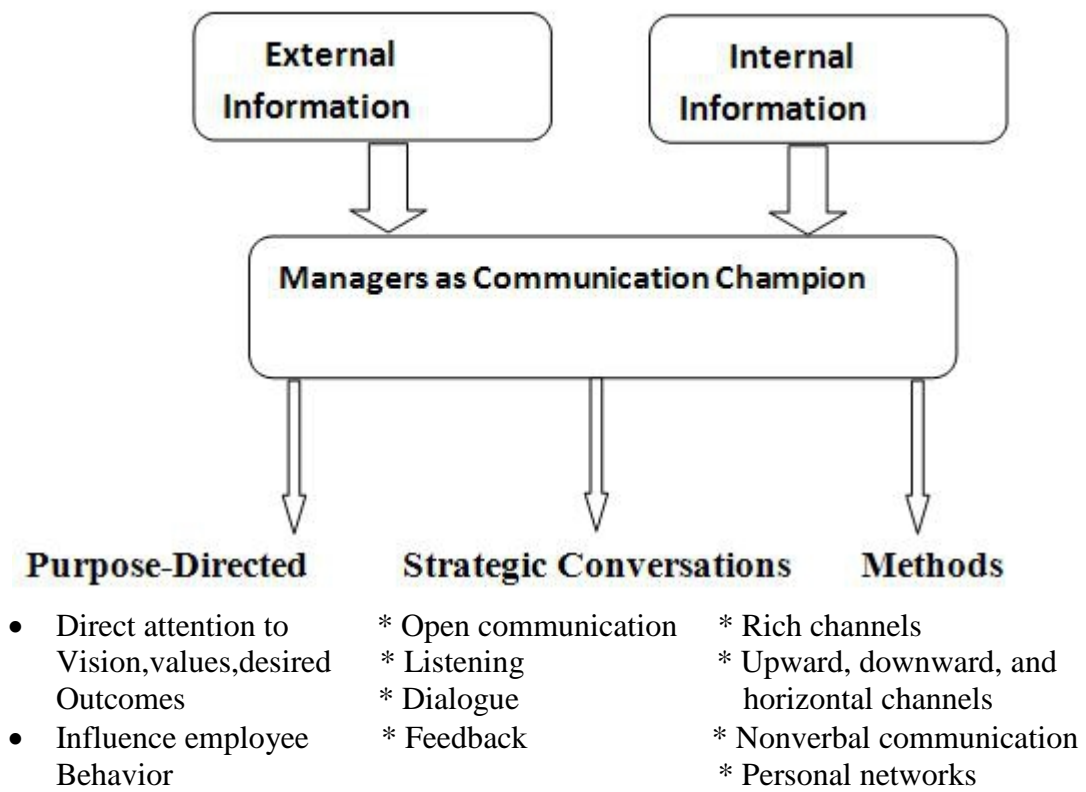


Figure 1: The Manager as Communication Champion Model
 Source: Adapted from Mintzberg (1973)

The roles of management in championing communication entails gathering important information from both inside and outside the organization and then contribute appropriate information to others who need it.

According to Agu and Anyikwa (2002), information communication refers to all technical gadgets that are used for the generation, retention, and transmission of information like the computer, the e-mail, the fax, telephones, the internet etc. All these gadgets provide fast and easy way of collecting and disseminating data in instructional communication. The channel richness of communication is the amount of information that can be transmitted during a communication episode. In crisis management, the capacity of

an information channel is influenced by three characteristics: (1) the ability to handle multiple cues simultaneously; (2) the ability to facilitate rapid, two-way feedback; and (3) the ability to establish a personal focus for the communication.

The use of information communication to resolve university crisis entails that all technical gadgets that are used for the generation, retention, and transmission of information like the computer, the e-mail, the fax, telephones, the internet etc. are efficiently and effectively put into regular usage in the dissemination of information before and during crisis. All these gadgets provide fast and easy way of collecting and disseminating data in instructional communication. It is also important to note that the channel richness of communication should be a major focus in resolving students’ crisis in the universities.

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Highchannel

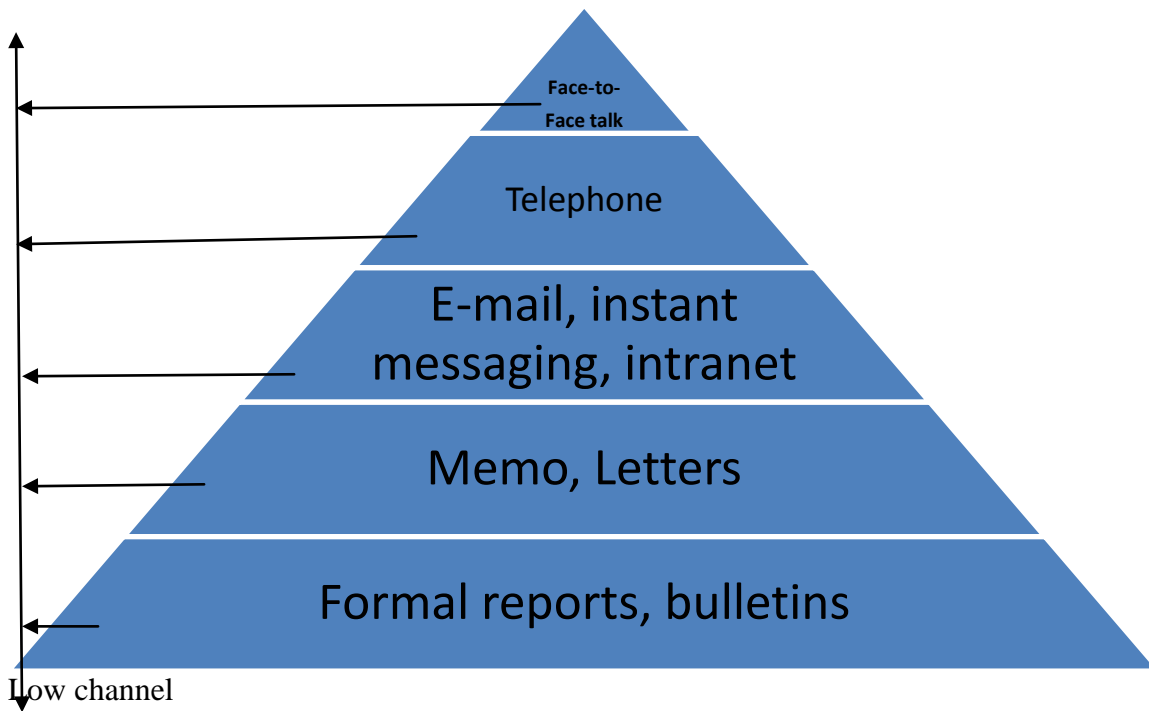


Figure 2: The Pyramid of Channel Richness
Source: Daft (2008: 662)

High channel richness has the advantages of being personal, two-way, and fast feedback, while the disadvantages are no record, spontaneous, and dissemination hard. On the other hand, Low channel richness advantages are provision of records, premeditated, and easily disseminated, but with a disadvantage of been impersonal, one-way and slow feedback.

A clear point of the discussions was the need for improved measurement of key constructs. To assess the impact of ICT on crisis, a robust set of measures is required that can be applied over time and space, and with respect to many event types. There are examples from other areas where reliable and valid measures of key constructs have helped sustain inquiry in the area (e.g., assessments of economic vulnerability). The development of such measures in the area of crisis resolution would enable benchmarking (e.g., of efficacy of planning, response and recovery efforts), and enhance credibility of work in the domain for

policy makers, researchers and the general public. Three different constructs received considerable attention during crisis resolution: control, trust and system state.

Control as a central problem in crisis resolution is a common term used in manufacturing. A number of challenges were raised to its use in crisis management, where systems tend to be much more open-and therefore less subject to influence-than typical manufacturing systems. Nonetheless, the question remains: what are appropriate measures for determining whether planning, response and recovery processes are (i) operating within tolerance limits and (ii) not subject to nonrandom sources of error?

A second recurring construct in need of operationalization was trust. The question of how to measure trust arose in discussions of single operators using technologies, through policy makers attempting to assess the information provided to them from the field. In the first case, given the complexity of much ICT, at which points of contact between human and technology do (and should) trust occurs? Options discussed included “at the point of interaction” (e.g., the input or output device) and “at the point of processing” (e.g., the CPU or the instruction set provided to the CPU). A driving question was, what do users need to be able to see or explore in order to trust the technology?

The third important construct in need of measurement was system state. Participants recognized the need for viewing crisis resolution as a multi-disciplinary endeavor, and the task of doing research on ICT in crisis resolution as therefore requiring a similarly multidisciplinary approach. A number of opportunities for future research were identified in measuring the state of socio-technical systems (e.g., critical infrastructures). Specific examples included benchmarking of performance (e.g., reliability) of critical infrastructure systems, though other less obvious examples (such as management trust in such systems) were also discussed.

Information and communication (IC) for emergency management functions is best when its design follows from a solid understanding of the socio-technical systems that it is meant to support. Yet as is evident from past and more there are significant gaps in scientific understanding concerning how IC should be designed used and evaluated. An agenda for IC-centered basic research in the domain of crisis resolution is needed to identify questions which will enable researchers to begin to close these gaps that arouse from university students’ crises caused by ineffective communication. (Quarantelli, 1997; Stewart and Bostrom, 2002; Orlikowski and Iacono, 2001).

Reviewed literature shows that universities in Nigeria, especially since the post civil war have witnessed series of conflicts, violence and destruction of lives and properties and other unimaginable practices which are quite injurious to academic excellence (Smah 2007, Osha 2000 and Rotimi 2005). The challenge of meeting the demand for academic freedom; The challenge of responding to the demands of powerful unions such as the Nigeria Labour Congress(NLC), Academic Staff Union of University (ASUU), Non-Academic Staff Union of University (NASU) and so on; The challenge of running a cult-free association amongst students; The challenge of generating sufficient funds to meet rising expectation; The challenge for institutional autonomy in an era of economic liberalization / meltdown; The demand for transparency and accountability; The challenge of responding to university admission in the midst of tight competition; and The challenge of quality effective information communication to control and resolve crises remains an object of research.

Statement of the Problem

Student crisis in Nigerian universities has assumed an unmitigated dangerous dimension that every stakeholder of the university system is at a crux. Almost on daily basis are new reports on our universities’ bulletins, on the national newspapers and academic journals of the confrontation by university students on campuses. Many students and lecturers

have been kidnapped, maimed, raped or even lost their lives while valuable properties have been looted, destroyed or burnt due to students' crisis. There is hardly a full academic session that student and staff crises will not result in loss of studies, delayed graduation for students and economic waste for students, parents and the country as a whole. The issue of globalization as a way out of mis-information or deficiency recorded when ICT gadgets are not available or sufficient to control/or resolve crises remain an object of research.

Research Questions

1. Is there any difference between the level of information communication management and crisis between the Federal and State Universities in South West Nigeria?
2. Is there any relationship between information communication management and student crisis resolution in Universities in South West Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

H.o1: There is no significance difference between the level of information communication management and crisis between the Federal and State Universities in South West Nigeria.

H.o2: There is no significant relationship between information communication management and student crisis resolution in Universities in South West Nigeria.

Methodology

Design

Descriptive research design was used with survey methods to ascertain the role of ICT in the management of crises in Nigeria public universities.

The population of this study comprised of all the 6 Federal Universities and 6 States in South West Nigeria as at 2012.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

Nigeria is made up of six geo-political zones namely: North-West, North-East, North-Central, South-South, South-East, and South-West. Thus, a purposive simple random sampling method was adopted. South-West geo-political zone was selected out of which three Federal universities (University of Ibadan, University of Lagos, Federal University of Technology, Akure) and three State universities (Lagos State University, Adekunle Ajasin University, and Osun State University). Also, a stratified sampling technique was used to select 2,400 consisting of 300 students and 100 academic and non-academic staff from each university.

Instrumentation

The instrument for data collection was a self developed questionnaire titled: The instrument used was a self constructed questionnaire titled, Information Communication Technology and Crises Resolution Questionnaire (ICTCRQ) which has a 25-items based on Likert scale format of Strongly Agree (SA) =4 points, Agree (A)=3 points, Disagree (D)= 2 points, and Strongly Disagree (SD)= 1 point. The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity by colleagues, and test-retest reliability method. The reliability value was $r = 0.87$ which indicated that the instrument was reliable before administration.

The researcher with the assistance of two graduate students administered the questionnaire to the respondents. Completed copies of the questionnaire were retrieved immediately.

The statistical tool used to analyze the data comprised of simple descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation, correlation and one way ANOVA at a level of 0.05.

Results

Hypothesis one

There is no significance difference between the level of information communication management and crisis between the Federal and State Universities in South West Nigeria.

In analyzing this hypothesis, a one way ANOVA was used to ascertain the level of differences between the Federal and State Universities.

Table 1 Summary of Difference in the Level of Information Communication Management and Crisis between the Federal and State Universities in South West Nigeria.

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-cal.	F-val.	Sig.
Between Groups	3453.31	5	1426.78	.297	.157	P<.05
Within Groups	246882.52	394	41147.09			
Total	250335.83	399				

* Significant

Table 1 show that there is a significant difference between the level of information communication

management and crisis between the Federal and State Universities. (df =(5, 399), F-cal = .297 > F-tab= .157 ; P < .05). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant relationship between information communication management and student crisis resolution in Universities in South West Nigeria.

Table 2 Summary of Relationship Between Information Communication Management and Student Crisis Resolution in Universities in South West Nigeria

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r- cal	r-tab	Decision
Information Communication Management	150	40.70	13.64	.0.66	.40	*
Students' crisis resolution	150	16.50	17.68			

* Correlation is positively significant at 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The result of the test performed indicates that there is a positive and significant relationship between information communication management and student crisis resolution in Universities (r=0.66, P<0.05). This implies that the hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between information communication management and student crisis resolution in Universities in South West Nigeria.

Discussion of Results

The analysis of results revealed that information is essential to the survival of an organization. The significant relationship between information communication management and students crisis resolution is buttressed by Popoola (2002 & 2004) that in an information rich society or organization, information management is capable of solving any problem be it administrative, crisis or otherwise. On the issues affecting the university system both at Federal and State universities, managing information is necessary for better decision making regarding human and material resources which are always the focus of crisis as corroborated by Adebayo ,2007; Erwat & Fabunmi,2006; and Oyewusi, 2008).

In the process of solving universities crisis, the study revealed that information communication management has impact on the university management in making and communicating decision effectively but not on long term basis and this is supported by the finding of Ajayi, Omirin and Fadekemi (2007). The study align with the finding of Martensson (2000) that most school managers make use of formal group meeting, the

telephone, informal individual meeting, internet facility as their information materials to avert crisis.

Conclusion

The study found out that there is a high level of information communication management and students' crisis in Nigerian universities but it is more pronounced at the Federal universities than the State universities. Also, availability, retrieval, processing, and analysis of information through technological gadgets in the universities as a relationship with crisis management.

Contribution to the Study of Knowledge

The study has contributed significantly to knowledge in the sense that, it has enabled the university management to be aware of the vital role information communication management plays in crisis resolution and the need to have modern ICT gadgets to manage crisis in short and long term situations at the universities in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The outcome of the study provides a reasonable evidence for the following recommendations:

1. Management of the university system has a task of playing the unique leadership role to identify early conflict signals, prevent emergence of conflict and control or resolve an existing ones with the effective uses of modern ICT gadgets to ensure effective and efficient attainment of the university objectives.
2. The university staff and management should be train and re-train on how to acquire, process, store, retrieve, and analyze information communication for making decision during crisis.
3. Adequate and modern information communication gadgets should be purchased for the universities in Nigeria.
4. University managers should have access to where information is stored so as to encourage them obtain necessary information useful during crisis resolution.

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